

## **WORLD PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY THE EYN NATIONAL PRESIDENT REV JOEL S. BILLI AT EYN JIMETA, YOLA ON THURSDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY, 2020**

### **Protocol**

The EYN Vice President,

EYN General Secretary,

The National Spiritual Adviser,

The Administrative Secretary,

Secretary Ministers' Council,

Directors,

Provost and Lecturers of KTS,

DCC Chairmen and Secretaries,

Fellow Ministers of the Gospel,

My faithful, committed and peaceful but wounded and marginalized members,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Security Agents here present,

Ladies and Gentlemen

### **Preamble**

EYN-Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) was established at Garkida Adamawa State by the Brethren Christian Missionaries from the United States of America on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1923. Three years from now, EYN will be hundred years old. It is the largest Christian denomination in the North-East with its Headquarters at Kwarhi near Mubi.

Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) is an indigenous Church with indigenous leadership and now has branches in many major cities in Nigeria such as Abuja, Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Zaria, Bauchi, Minna, Jos, among others. EYN has grown international with branches at Togo, Niger Republic and Cameroon with an estimated population of 1.5 million communicant members.

## **Effect of Insurgency on EYN**

Gentlemen of the Press, it will interest you to know that EYN is one of the three Historic Peace Churches (HPC) in the world. The other two are the Mennonites and the Society of Friends otherwise known as Quakers.

The practical demonstration of the Peace Heritage of the Church was displayed during the over 11 years of insurgency in the northeast perpetrated by the Boko Haram Islamic Fundamentalist sect and no reappraisal attacks was done by members of the EYN.

I want to put it on record without fear of contradiction that EYN is the single Christian Denomination that is worse hit by the activities of the Boko Haram. Over 700,000 members have been displaced with only seven out of 60 District Church Councils that were not directly affected by the insurgency. EYN has lost over 8,370 members and 8 Pastors with the numbers increasing on daily basis. Many of her members have been abducted with 217 out of the abducted 276 Chibok school girls belonging to EYN. Over 300 of the 586 churches either burnt or destroyed with uncountable number of houses belonging to our members looted or burnt.

## **State of the Nation/Call on the government.**

The world at large is passing through one of the greatest challenges in recent times; that is the Corona virus pandemic. As a church, we commend the Federal Government under President Muhammadu Buhari and the President Task Force on Covid-19 (PTF) for the proactive measures taken in addressing the challenge of Covid-19.

We salute our frontline health workers for putting their lives on the line for the generality of Nigerians.

We sympathize with families who lost their loved ones as a result of this global pandemic.

We call on all Nigerians to adhere to safety protocols and guidelines so that Covid-19 be defeated.

I wish to commend the renewed zeal by our gallant military and other security forces in tackling the menace of Boko Haram. However, I call on the Federal and State Governments of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa to as matter of urgency rescue the remaining abducted Chibok school girls and return them safely to their families. I also call with a loud voice on the Federal Government under President Muhammadu Buhari to rescue Leah Sheribu Neta, Alice Loksha and hundreds of those abducted by the Boko Haram.

While we remain committed as Nigerian citizens in supporting the Government of the day in achieving its mandate, EYN was shocked at the Democracy Day Speech of President Buhari on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 where he said, "All the Local Governments that were taken over by the Boko Haram insurgents in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa have long been recovered and are now occupied by the indigenes of these areas who were hitherto forced to seek a living in areas far from their ancestral homes." That was unfortunate, misleading and demoralizing. The fact on ground is this; EYN had four District Church Councils (DCC) prior to the insurgency in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State to which none is existing today. There are over 18,000 of our members who are still taking refuge in Minawao, Cameroon. There are also about 7000 of EYN members who are taking refuge in other IDP Camps in Cameroon among which are Ngaudare, Bavangwala, Karin Beka, Zhelevede, Garin Njamena, Mazagwa and Moskwata. Yes, there are people now in Gwoza town and Pulka, but all areas behind the Gwoza hills where the concentration of Gwoza population is still not inhabited. The total number of IDPs in the Cameroon Camps who are over 95% from Gwoza is over 47,000 who have never received attention from the government be it State or Federal. The bulk of displaced members of EYN live in Maiduguri, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Taraba, the FCT and some are spread across many States of the Federation.

Displaced communities of Gwoza Local Government Area that are not inhabited are: Chinene, Barawa, Ashigashiya, Gava, Ngoshe, Bokko, Agapalwa, Arboko, Chikide, Amuda, Walla, Jibrili, Attagara, Zamga Nigeria, Agwurva, Ganjara, Zhawazha, Balla, Timta, Valle, Koghum, Kunde, Pege, Vreke, Fadagwe, Gava West, Sabon Gari Zalidva, Tsikila and Hambagda.

More worrisome is the fact that from the end of last year 2019 to June, 2020, there had been over fifty different attacks on different communities carried out by the Boko Haram and most were either unreported or under reported by both the print and electronic media.

I shall be specific with facts and figures to buttress my point.

1. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2019, Boko Haram attacked Bagajau community of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State killing 9 Christians, Damjuda Dali the head of the household and his two children with their friends burnt down in their room Daniel Wadzani, Ijuptil Chinampi, Jarafu Daniel and Peter Usman. Others were Ahijo Yampaya, Medugu Auta and Waliya Achaba.
2. On the 29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2019, Mandaragirau community of Biu Local Government Area of Borno State was attacked where 18 Christians were abducted. The older was

Esther Buto 42 years old and the youngest of them was Saraya Musa 3 years. The Church building and foodstuff were destroyed as well as the primary school.

3. On the 02:01:2020, Boko Haram attacked Michika Community of Adamawa State and abducted Rev Lawan Andimi the EYN District Church Secretary, also the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Chairman Michika LGA who was gruesomely murdered on the 21:01:2020.
4. 18:01:2020 was another dark day for EYN as Boko Haram attacked Kwaragilum village of Chibok LGA of Borno State and abducted six female members of EYN. They were: Esther Yakubu, Charity Yakubu, Comfort Ishaya, Deborah Ishaya, Gera Bamzir and Jabbe Numba.
5. As if that was not enough, 27:01:2020 was yet another gloomy day as Tur Community of Madagali LGA of Adamawa State was attacked by same Boko Haram Islamic Fundamentalists where 10 EYN members had their houses looted and burnt.
6. 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 2020 was catastrophic as Boko Haram again attacked Leho community of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State where all three of EYN Churches were burnt, EYN Leho 1, Leho 2 and Leho Bakin Rijjiya.
7. On the 20 Feb, 2020, Boko Haram overrun Tabang community of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State abducting a 9 year old boy, Mama Joshua Edward sustained bullet wounds and 17 EYN members' houses were razed down.
8. 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. 2020 was a black Friday for EYN as Garkida community, the birth place of EYN was attacked by Boko Haram where the first EYN Church was burnt down. Two other Churches Anglican and Living Faith were also burnt. EYN Brethren College of Health Technology, EYN Rural Health Department and its vehicles, prominent Christian houses and shops were looted and burnt. Mr Emmanuel Bitrus Tarfa was abducted.
9. On 29<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2020 was the date Boko Haram attacked Rumirgo community of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State killing 7 persons amongst them one soldier, four Muslims and two Christians.
10. 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2020 Boko Haram yet again attacked Rumirgo of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State and carted away with a truck loaded with foodstuff.
11. On 03:04:2020, Boko Haram attacked Kuburmbula and Kwamtiyahi villages of Chibok LGA of Borno State abducted and murdered three persons. They were Meshack John, Mutah Nkeki and Kabu Yakubu. Over twenty houses were razed down.
12. 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 witnessed the attack by Boko Haram on Mussa Bri, Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State, looted and burnt Christian shops belonging to Samuel Kambasaya, Yuguda Ijasini and Matiyu Buba.

13. On 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 Wamdeo community of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State was overrun by Boko Haram. They burnt two vehicles, burgled stores killing five persons. Amongst those killed were Pur Thlatiryu a Security of EYN Clinic, Ndaska Akari and Yunana Maigari.
14. 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 was a black day for EYN yet again as Boko Haram unleashed havoc on Debiro, Dakwiama and Tarfa communities of Biu Local Government Area of Borno State, burnt two EYN Churches, razed down the two villages, killing Mr Audu Bata and some houses in Tarfa.
15. 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 was a day Boko Haram revisited Mussa Bri of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State. They killed Luka Bitrus and Mrs Ijaduwa Shaibu got several machetes cuts.
16. On the 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 Kwabila village of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State witnessed the dastardly acts of the Boko Haram. Dauda Bello, Baba Ya'u and a female Kawan Bello were killed while Aisha Bello, Rufa'i Bello and Amina Bello sustained various degrees of injuries and were receiving treatment at Askira General Hospital. That was an attempt to wipe out an entire family.
17. Three days after, on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2020, Boko Haram returned to Kwabila village of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State killing Bello Saleh the head of the household while Amina Bello who had been receiving treatment died in the Hospital.
18. On 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2020, Kidlindila community of Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State witnessed its own share of the Boko Haram attack after experiencing twice of such attacks in 2019. A lady by name Indagju Apagu was abducted, Wana Aboye sustained gunshot injury while Apagu Marau's car was carted away and several houses looted.
19. The 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 was a thick cloud of man's inhumanity to man as Boko Haram devastated Mbulabam of Chibok LGA of Borno State abducting a young girl by name Mary Ishaku Nkeke while her two brothers Emmanuel and Iliya went missing for three days.
20. The following day 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 the same Boko Haram came to Kautikari community Chibok LGA of Borno State killing three Mr Musa Dawa 25 years old married, Mr Yusuf Joel 30 years single and Mr Jacob Dawa 35 years married. Five women and girls were abducted all members of EYN. They are Martha Yaga 22 years single, Mary Filibus 13 years old single, Saratu Saidu 22 years single, Eli Augustine 21 years married and Saratu Yaga 20 years married.
21. Five days after, being 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2020, Boko Haram yet again invaded Kautikari community of Chibok LGA of Borno State killing Bira Bazam 48 years old married and Ba Maina Madu 62 years old. Three girls were abducted, Laraba Bulama 20 years old single, Hauwa Bulama 18 years single and Maryamu Yohanna 15 years single.

22. The month of June ended on a sad note for EYN as Boko Haram attacked farmers of Nasarawo, Kautikari of Chibok LGA of Borno State killing Mr Zaramai Kubirvu 40 years old married.

Gentlemen of the Press, it will interest you, Nigerians and the international community to know that, there are several villages and communities not occupied by their inhabitants, communities deserted due to continuous attacks by Boko Haram besides the ones mentioned earlier.

**The deserted villages are:**

In Chibok Local Government Area of Borno State, the following communities are deserted, Bwalakle, Nchiha, Kwaragilum A & B, Boftari, Thililaimakalama, Kakalmari, Paya Yesu B and Jajere.

Communities in Askira/Uba LGA of Borno State are Bdagu, Pubum, Ngurthavu, Kwang, Yaza, Bagajau, Huyim, Shawa, Tabang, Barka, Gwandang, Autha, Paya Bitiku, Gwagwamdi, Yimirali, Dembu A & B.

Communities in Damboa LGA of Borno State are Kubirvu, Bilakar, Klekasa, Kwamjilari and Chillari.

Communities in Madagali LGA of Adamawa State are Vemgo, Gulla and Humshe.

The persistent attacks by Boko Haram are not limited to the areas highlighted above in southern Borno and northern Adamawa, but are also being experienced in northern Borno, Kala-Balge, Monguno, Kukawa, Mobar etc.

**Our Prayer**

- a. We call on President Muhammadu Buhari to as a matter of urgency deploy at least a Battalion of military to the deserted areas behind the Gwoza Hills as enumerated above to ensure the speedy return of the IDPs to their ancestral land.
- b. The government to immediately reconstruct and rehabilitate all houses, schools and worship places destroyed by the insurgents in the deserted villages by the Northeast Development Commission.
- c. Government to deploy more security personnel to volatile areas to mitigate further attacks.
- d. The Federal Government to marshal out plans to evacuate the over 47,000 IDPs in Cameroon Camps back to their ancestral homes by the end of 2020.
- e. Government to live up to its constitutional responsibility by putting a stop to the continuous killings, abductions, rape and all forms of criminality across the country.

- f. Government to urgently address the activities of Fulani Militia, Armed Bandits and Kidnappers terrorizing our communities.
- g. Religion is a sensitive issue in Nigeria; we therefore urge the States and Federal Government to ensure that Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is taught in public schools in some of the northern states where it is not done. This when done would contribute in molding character of the citizens.
- h. Appointments should reflect Federal Character and any breach of that is unacceptable to the Church. We demand immediate reversal and correction of the imbalance in most appointments by President Muhammadu Buhari where his appointments have always been skewed to favor a particular section and religion.
- i. While we as a Church support the Federal Government fight against corruption, we frown at the selective nature of the fight and demand that rule of law must be respected.
- j. While we commend the Federal Government for the efforts made towards diversifying the economy in the midst of Covid-19 challenge, we encourage the government to ensure that job opportunities are created for our teeming unemployed youths, this when done would reduce youths restiveness.
- k. From the look of things, the Federal Government under President Muhammadu Buhari has run out of ideas and is overwhelmed with the security challenges; we call on the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) to come to the aid of Nigeria in tackling the security challenges.

While we appreciate President Buhari, the Higher and Lower Chambers for the establishment of the Northeast Development Commission, we call on them to ensure that the deplorable state of our roads are reconstructed and rehabilitated.

## **Conclusion**

As a Church, though abandoned by the Government, I call on all EYN members to remain law abiding citizens, upholding our peace heritage and keeping an unwavering faith in God whom we believe will one day deliver us.

Thank you all for listening

Long Live EYN

Long Live Adamawa State

Long Live Federal Republic of Nigeria