



# Nigeria: Investigating common narratives of violent conflict in Nasarawa State

*An Examination of the hostilities against Christians in the period January 2013 – May 2016*

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# Nigeria: Investigating common narratives of violent conflict in Nasarawa State

An examination of the hostilities against Christians  
in the period January 2013 - May 2016



*Destruction in Nasarawa State, Nigeria (Source: NCSAN)*

Nigeria Conflict and Security Analysis Network (NCSAN)  
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Throughout this paper, the data collected clearly points to Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen and government policies as being responsible for the persecution of Christian communities in Nasarawa State. The phrase *Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen* is used to designate those responsible for most of the attacks against indigenous Christian communities in Nasarawa State in the years 2013-2016. However, the study is fully aware that in most reports across northern Nigeria, the term *Fulani herdsmen* is also in use. The choice of *Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen* has been taken to accommodate the controversy regarding the identity of those allegedly involved in the attacks, in both formal and informal reports. It is also an effort to demonstrate that Muslim herdsmen have fought jihad and continue to participate in Islamic militancy across Africa. However, it is not intended to target one particular socio-religious or ethnic group. Government policies reflect the programs and strategies of the government in promoting Muslims and Islamic agenda, while at the same time, Christians and Christian communities are deliberately excluded and marginalized. This is evident in the context of political appointments, the selection and installation of traditional rulers, creation of Development Areas, the grading of traditional rulers and the creation of local districts and chiefdoms.

For security reasons, the names of those interviewed cannot be published in this report. The interviews were conducted with different categories of people considered as *victims, witnesses or policy makers, government officials, security personnel, religious leaders and influential community leaders* in Nasarawa State. There was no distinction in gender, class, religion, ethnicity or political affiliation. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview those considered as *perpetrators* (either suspected, arrested or in custody) to hear their own side of the story.

## Abstract

Nasarawa State has been engulfed in various forms of conflict since its creation in 1996. Many researchers, policy makers and government officials have explained the conflict in terms of politics, ethnicity and economic contestation over land and resources. In most cases, the religious component of the conflict has been completely downplayed, marginalized, excluded or neglected. This report seeks to test and challenge all explanations limited to purely political, ethnic and economic considerations. Emerging evidence suggests there is a strategic agenda to target and persecute ethnic groups that are predominantly Christian. The persecution of Christians is linked to the fact that the creation of the state in 1996 out of Plateau State territory was viewed by many Muslims as an actualization of a Muslim dream, the opportunity to regain what was lost in Plateau State, a Christian majority state. In particular, field research conducted by the Nigeria Conflict and Security Analysis Network (NCSAN) on conflicts which occurred from 2013 and to 2016 reveals that Christians have been specifically targeted. The targeting of Christians appears to be carried out by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen and by deliberate government policies to marginalize Christians and Christian communities. This is evident in political power-sharing and domination through traditional rulership. Islamic identity tends to give the Muslims undue advantage over the affairs of the state. State government policies are crafted to favor Islam and Muslims. The ongoing persecution of Christians in Nasarawa State, like many other places in northern Nigeria, has been ignored. This study unearths the drivers of persecution against Christian communities in Nasarawa State and, importantly, it provides the basis for a policy proposition that encourages the need to build common citizenship among the people.

## Introduction:

### Objectives, methodology, limitations and structure

For a very long time, there have been various kinds of violent conflict taking place in Nasarawa State. However, there is lack of agreement among scholars, researchers, policy makers and academics about the nature and the factors that motivate these violent conflicts. While some scholars link these conflicts to the narrative of ethnicity, others contend that they are driven by political considerations, namely a struggle for power over the control of policies and political privileges for a particular group. Another group of scholars maintain that the conflict is simply a competition over economic resources. Yet, like most cases in northern Nigeria, the politicization of conflicts has overlooked the historical and religious background which continues to dictate the superiority of one religion over the other. The polarization of perspectives with regards to violent conflict in Nasarawa State is dictated both by lack of research and lack of data. In particular, the lack of data has deprived scholars from providing incisive analysis that exposes the underlining religious reasons for the violent conflict. This lack of information has meant that the state is missing effective policy considerations for building inclusive governance, strengthening common identity and citizenship and for promoting peaceful co-existence where religious rights are respected.

This research therefore investigates the narratives that confine violent conflicts in Nasarawa State exclusively to ethno-political and economic reasons. It argues that below the surface of the violent conflicts in Nasarawa State lies a strategic agenda orchestrated to persecute Christians and reduce them to the level of second class citizens including grasping their lands. The persecution appears to be carried out by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen and by deliberate government policies. The evidence for this is based on intense field research carried out by the Nigerian Conflict and Security Analysis Network (NCSAN) from July 2015 to May 2016. Empirical evidence suggests that in most of the conflicts, Christians have been specifically targeted for violent attacks during which churches and properties have been burnt down for no other reason than that they belong to Christians. Hence the title of this paper: *Investigating common narratives of violent conflict in Nasarawa State: An examination of the hostilities against Christians in the period January 2013 – May 2016*.

### Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to investigate the continuous persecution of Christian communities and ethnic groups in Nasarawa State. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the drivers of persecution against Christians in Nasarawa State, highlighting new developments in persecution evident in recent violent incidents. Furthermore, it examines the socio-political dynamics that encourage persecution and the killing of Christians in Nasarawa State. It exposes the nature and extent of Christian victimization in these violent conflicts. In other words, it traces how Christians are specifically targeted and provides data for the types and extent of atrocities committed against predominantly Christian communities. It examines whether the recent atrocities against

Christians in Nasarawa State can be linked to the Boko Haram conflict, or whether the perpetrators simply take advantage of the Boko Haram conflict (as well as of government negligence) to persecute Christians. The research also gives an overview of how Christians see their situation, and questions if there has been any effort at the level of the state to end the persecution.

## Methodology

The research has been conducted predominantly using mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data gathering. The qualitative method used extracts evidence through the examination of primary sources, e.g. historical documents, archives, interviews, newspaper reports and written sources. It permits the observation of violent incidents where they happen, and allows flexibility in observing and explaining the violence on the evidence of different actors: victims, security officials, policy makers and opportunists. The qualitative method is supported by using the quantitative approach which is deployed to generate numerical data and statistics from a large sample of the population. Using face-to-face interviews, physical observation and telephone interviews, it is possible for the quantitative method to reconstruct (in measurable data and structured pattern) the number of Christians killed, injured or missing in Nasarawa State during the period under review. This includes Christian churches destroyed as well as houses, shops, farms and other properties belonging to Christians that were destroyed or damaged. The combination of both the qualitative and quantitative methods is important in formulating facts and uncovering the patterns of atrocities committed by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in Nasarawa State. The choice of Nasarawa State to investigate the persecution of Christians is an extension of previous research conducted in Taraba State, reporting on the nature of persecution against Christian communities in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Furthermore, Nasarawa State is accessible to members of NCSAN who speak Hausa, Tiv and other local languages of the area. Their personal and professional contacts enabled them to collect data through interviewing security managers, policy makers, as well as religious and traditional rulers. Combining the results of the interviews with data taken from archival research, security reports, newspaper accounts, historical and official documents, NCSAN provides a tabulation of the atrocities committed against Christians in different areas of Nasarawa State and within different time-periods. The data is collected and categorised according to Local Government Areas, LGAs or Development Areas, DAs. The former is the third tier of government in Nigeria, while the latter is created by the state to ensure that development reaches rural communities. For the purpose of analyzing the data collected, qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis are employed.

Qualitative content analysis is mostly employed to answer questions such as what, why and how<sup>1</sup> and to examine virtually any kind of communication material, including narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, observations and print media. Discourse analysis involves the examination of the language of all verbal and textual materials, both spoken and written. The aim is to explore the ways discourse is constructed and explore the

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<sup>1</sup> Heikkilä, Kristiina and Ekman, Sirkka-Liisa, 2003: Elderly Care for Ethnic Minorities – Wishes and Expectations among Elderly Finns in Sweden, in: *Ethnicity and Health* 8(2), pp. 135-146.

functions served by particular constructions. Attention is paid to the socio-cultural and historical background of those interviewed, their use of language and the meanings contained in the use of coded language. Since the area of study is Nasarawa State, the target population is the victims of persecution and marginalization in this state. In the context of this paper, victims are not limited to any particular religion or ethnicity. It includes anyone who has suffered, or lost relatives and properties in these conflicts. It needs to be pointed out that the National Population Commission puts the population of Nasarawa State at 1,869,377.<sup>2</sup> Across the different Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State, 392 people were selected for interviews. This was combined with random data collection from across the state.

## Limitations of the study

The security situation in some parts of Nasarawa State made it impossible to reach certain areas. Some informants nursed suspicions and as such were economical with the truth regarding facts about the violent conflict in the state. It is suspected that not knowing the purpose of the research made respondents reluctant to divulge information. However, the limitations have not in any way rendered the study invalid since very useful discoveries were made.

## Structure of the paper

This paper is divided into five sections. Section One provides a conceptual clarification of the meaning and drivers of persecution in violent conflict in relation to Christians in Nasarawa State. It also presents a brief history of Nasarawa State as a background study. Section Two examines the nature of violent conflict in Nasarawa State. It outlines the contending perspectives that seek to explain the factors behind these conflicts. The section also provides a critical evaluation of the contending narratives, justifying the need for deeper investigation. Section Three analyzes the deeper reality of violent conflict in Nasarawa State, unearthing the religious component as the basis of violent conflicts in Nasarawa State. Since the goal of the research is to examine the persecution of Christians in Nasarawa State, this section presents four sets of data: Christians that have been killed; churches destroyed or damaged; Christian properties that have been destroyed; Christians ending up in IDP camps. Based on this new evidence, Section Four presents the factors that explain the violence against Christians in Nasarawa State. It specifically looks at the Islamic ideology that drives the persecution of Christians, the political domination of Christians and the marginalization of Christians in traditional institutions and leadership. Finally, Section Five outlines the drivers of persecution against Christians in everyday life in Nasarawa State. Based on this evidence, the research concludes with the claim that there is a systematic targeting and persecution of Christians in Nasarawa State.

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<sup>2</sup> National Population Commission, 2009. 2006 Population and Housing Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Benue State priority tables, vol. 1, National Population Commission, Abuja.

## Section One:

# Conceptual clarification and the history of Nasarawa State

### Conceptual clarification: Persecution, violent conflict and drivers

The meaning of persecution is derived from a Latin concept indicating the action of being followed with hostility, and has been expanded to include the action of being discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or social status.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Commission for Refugees identifies different forms of persecution: physical harm, loss of freedom, a discriminatory treatment, which leads to consequences of a substantially prejudicial nature (for instance, serious restriction on the applicant's right to earn his or her living, to practice his or her religion, to access normally available education facilities).<sup>4</sup> An additional form is "the deliberate imposition of severe economic disadvantage or the deprivation of liberty, food, housing, employment or other essentials of life".<sup>5</sup> It is widely accepted that, as a rule, persecution is carried out by state actors, but the law differs from country to country with regards to non-state actors. In Austria, persecution is attributable to state authorities. In Switzerland, Denmark and Belgium, if persecution is the work of private individuals, the acts they commit are seen as not only being consciously tolerated by the state, but also the state's refusal and/or inability to offer protection may lead to the state's culpability. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that perpetrators of persecution include both state and non-state actors.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Nasarawa State, there is evidence to suggest that state and non-state actors are agents of persecution against Christian communities.

The concept of conflict in its broader sense refers to disagreement in opinions, perceptions and ideas.<sup>7</sup> It refers to the irreconcilable difference in interests, beliefs and choices. The term indicates a situation where incompatible interests between persons, groups, organizations or nations lead to a struggle between them. Dependent upon the context, the nature of incompatibility and the struggle that follows could turn violent between individuals or groups, states or non-state actors. Violent conflict entails the use or threat of physical force by groups with different interests over certain issues, policies or resources. In most cases, the group which dominates the structures of power dictates the control of resources. Violent conflict due to incompatible differences can lead to communal conflicts based on regional, socio-religious, political and ethnic interests.<sup>8</sup> In Nasarawa State, the violent conflict is between non-state

<sup>3</sup> Fischel De Andrade, Jose, On the Development of the Concept of 'Persecution' in International Refugee Law, <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r27152.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2015), p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status, Geneva, UNHCR, 1979, § 52-54.

<sup>5</sup> Tieszen, Charles, Re-Examining Religious Persecution Constructing a Theological Framework for Understanding Persecution. Religious Freedom Series, 2008, Johannesburg: AcadSA Publishing, pp. 37-40.

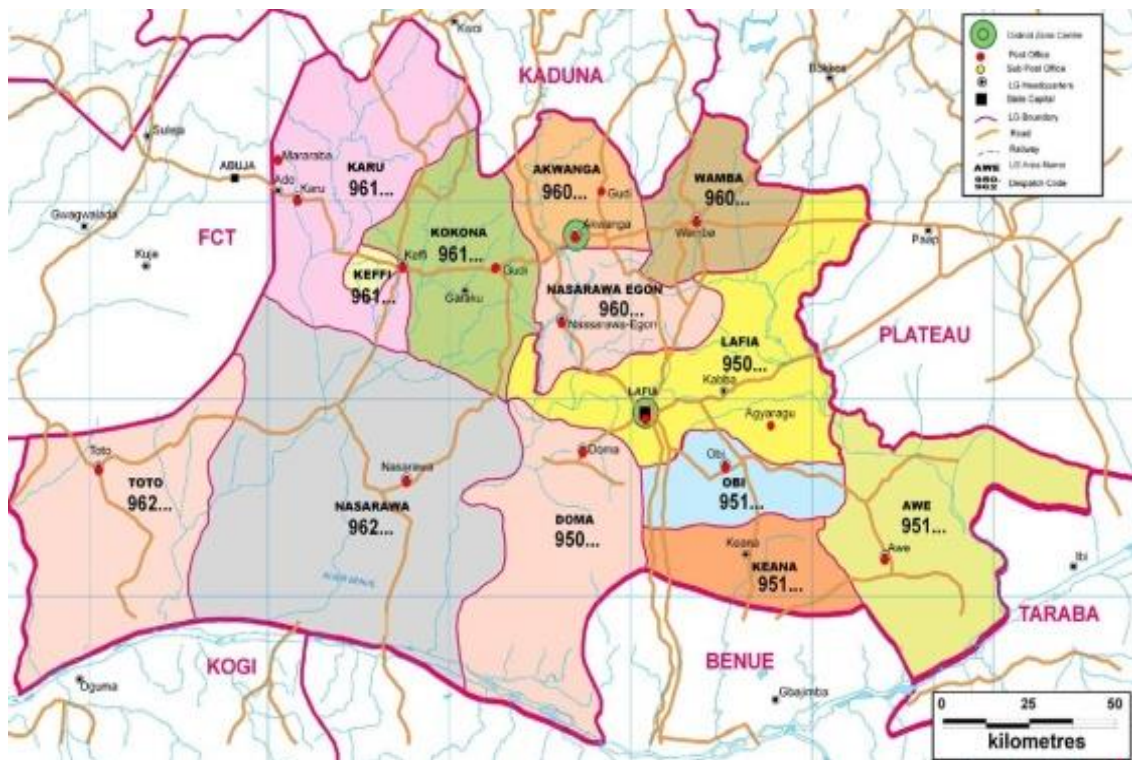
<sup>6</sup> Fischel De Andrade, Jose, On the Development of the Concept of 'Persecution' in International Refugee Law, <http://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r27152.pdf> (accessed 25 February 2015), p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> Diez, Thomas et al, The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Transformative Power of Integration, in: International Organization, 2006, 60(3), pp. 563-593.

<sup>8</sup> Wallensteen, Peter and Axell, K., Conflict Resolution and the End of the Cold War 1989-1993, in: Journal of Peace Research, 1994, 31(3), pp. 333-349.

actors, aided by government policy of deliberately targeting one community based on ethno-religious considerations. In this context therefore, the sources of persecution refer to the factors that influence the persecution and discrimination against other groups. On the basis of data collected in this study, the dominant factor for the persecution of Christians in Nasarawa State is religion as linked to Islamic supremacy. This is reflected in other areas including socio-economic policies, inequality within traditional institutions and marginalization in the distribution of political power and privileges.

## The History of Nasarawa State



(Source: [www.nigerianmuse.com](http://www.nigerianmuse.com))

Before independence, Nasarawa was part of the Northern Region in the three region structure of 1954. After independence in 1960, the military coups of January and July 1966<sup>9</sup> ushered in the administration of Yakubu Gowon, a native of the Middle Belt region whose authority was rejected by General Odimegwu Ojukwu, the then governor of the Eastern Region, on the grounds of seniority.<sup>10</sup> However, ethnic sentiments coupled with other factors plunged Nigeria into civil war.<sup>11</sup> Gowon, a young general, barely 34 years of age and from a minority Christian tribe in Plateau State, dismantled the three regions established by the colonial administration in 1967. He created twelve states of the three regions, one of which was the Benue-Plateau state, reducing the influence of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim hegemony over indigenous tribal communities in the Middle Belt region. The 1976 military government of General Murtala

<sup>9</sup> Nnoli, Okwudiba, *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria*, 1995, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Luckman, R., *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt, 1960-1967*, Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 269-270.

<sup>11</sup> Nnoli, 1995:131.

Muhammed created 19 states out of the existing 12 federal states and the Nasarawa region became part of Plateau State, a predominantly Christian state.<sup>12</sup> In 1996, intense military politics led to the creation of more states by General Sani Abacha, and Nasarawa State was carved out of the present Plateau State.

Nasarawa State is made up of 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs): Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, Nasarawa-Eggon, Obi, Toto and Wamba.

By 2003 Governor Abdullahi Adamu created 16 Development Areas (DAs) related to the local government system. The development areas created were: Agidi, Agwada, Akun, Akwanga-West, Azara, Ekye, Farin-Ruwa, Gadabuke, Giza, Jenkwe, Karshi, Lafia-East, Lafia-North, Loko, Panda and Udege. Tanko Al-Makura, the current governor, created 2 more DAs, Daddere and Umaisha in 2014. The financing of DAs (not mentioned in the Nigerian constitution) was established on the basis of State Assembly laws. The establishment of extra administrative jurisdiction appears to be strategic in rewarding supporters, empowering Muslim villages and reducing the influence of Christian dominated areas. This is achieved by having Muslims in more positions of authority, Muslim communities benefiting more from government social amenities. This helps the government win the support of the Muslim population while oiling the patronage system. Nasarawa State shares common boundaries with Benue State to the south, Kogi State to the west, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja to the north-west, Kaduna and Plateau States to the north-east, and Taraba State to the south-east.<sup>13</sup> With over 30 ethnic groups in the state, Nasarawa is described as being the melting pot of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The major ethnic groups are Alago, Eggon, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Egbira, Migili, Kantana, Rindere, Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri, Tiv, Afo, Gade, Nyanpka, Jukun, Mada, Ninzam, Nankere, Bassa, Agatu and Kuler among others.<sup>14</sup> According to the 2006 National census figures, Nasarawa State has a population of 1,869,377.

The state government has since challenged the figures at the census tribunal court. The challenge is based on the nationally accepted growth rate of 2.83% and also, because of the state's proximity to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, there is an undocumented influx of economic migrants into the state, particularly into Karu and Keffi Local Government Areas. Consequently, the current population of the state is estimated at 2.5 million.<sup>15</sup> Another source argues that "going by the official demographic projection, Nasarawa State should have had 3.1 million people as far back as 2006".<sup>16</sup> However, it must be pointed out that like all population figures in Nigeria, religion is excluded from the framework. Yet, unconfirmed figures from interviews seem to indicate that the Christian population of the state could be slightly higher than Islam. The high projection of Christians is linked to many of the new settlements close to

<sup>12</sup> Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) Report on Revenues, Deductions, and Analysis of Disbursement and Utilization of Funds of Selected State Governments 2007 - 2011 – Nasarawa State, p.3.

<sup>13</sup> A people Bridge of Fortune - 6 years of (Dr.) Abdullahi Adamu in Nasarawa State, Lafia, Government Printer, 2005, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 19.

Abuja. Yet, this is a narrative that is difficult to defend without a data. The state also has abundant natural and mineral resources. In fact it is known as the “Home of Solid Minerals.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Obaje, Nuhu George, *Geology and Mineral Resources of Nigeria*, Springer-Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg, 2009, p. viii.

## Section Two:

# Conflict in Nasarawa State, contending narratives and critical observation

### Violent conflict in Nasarawa State

The joy that followed the creation of Nasarawa State was short-lived. A few months after its creation, Nasarawa State was drowned in orgies of violence.<sup>18</sup> Bloody clashes erupted between Igbira and Bassa in Toto LGA. This was followed by another violent conflict between the Tiv and other ethnic groups in Awe, Keana, and Obi LGAs. The conflict led to the gruesome beheading of the Sarkin Azara, Musa Ibrahim (who was a Muslim) on the 12 June 2001; this led to the killing of scores of Christians in retaliation. By 2013, there was another violent clash that claimed many lives and properties of Christians. The Judicial Commission of Inquiry puts the number of people killed at 667 while properties worth over ₦2.3bn, were destroyed.<sup>19</sup> This was followed by more violence that resulted in unreported killings, arson and intense fighting involving the Hausa-Fulani and the indigenous groups such as the Eggon, Alago, Tiv, Mighili, Bassa and many others.

This list of violent incidents targeted at Christians, is not exhaustive. However, the incidents mentioned above represent the pattern of conflicts in the state. The time-period for this study (January 2013 - May 2016) was chosen because the evidence is still fresh and recollections of what exactly happened are still sharp, unlike when seeking data on incidents that took place many years ago. However, the Islamic ideological motivation has remained the same.

### Contending narratives, critical evaluation and the quest for deeper explanation

Over the years, contending narratives on the nature of the violence in Nasarawa State have emphasized the issue of environment, ethnicity, political contestation and economic competition as the basis for the conflict. Egwu and Enna, distinguished professors at the Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, both blame climate change for the conflict in the state.<sup>20</sup> Climate change has led to internal migration and contestation over resources. Okoli and Atelhe link the Nasarawa violent conflict to environmental degradation, desertification, loss of wetlands and droughts.<sup>21</sup> This led to the violent clashes in Akpanaja, Ondori and Rukubi (in Doma LGA) in November 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Ugwu, Anthony and Prof. Enna D.M., Conflict Transformation in Nasarawa State: The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Option, in: Global Journal of Political Science and Administration 3(3), 2015, pp. 58-73.

<sup>19</sup> Enna, D.M., Resurgence of Ethnic Minority Identity through Performance, paper presented at the African Theatre Association International Conference held in the University of Legon, Accra, Ghana, 9-12 July 2014, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ugwu and Enna, 2015, pp. 66-67.

<sup>21</sup> Chukwuma, Okoli and Atelhe, George, Nomads against Natives: A political Ecology of Herder/ Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, in: American International Journal of Contemporary Research 4(2), 2014, p. 80.

On the other hand, Ayih directly links the conflict in Nasarawa State to the population explosion, economic pressure and contestation over economic opportunities.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Nchi indicts the political class and blames the failure of political leadership for the conflict. Politicians ride on the back of ethnic, religious and regional identity to get to office, encouraging division and conflict.<sup>23</sup> Using the 1997-1998 conflict in Toto LGA, Usman argues that conflicts in Nasarawa State are related to ethnic identity and the desire to preserve the ethnic homeland and heritage.<sup>24</sup> Other conflicts were between the Alago and Eggon ethnic groups in Assakio town,<sup>25</sup> where the Eggon ethnic militia, *Ombatse* (Eggon Traditional Cultic Militia) was alleged to have been used for the attacks.<sup>26</sup>

Generally, the contending narratives above cannot be dismissed outright. The climate change theory espoused by Egwu, Enna, Okoli and Atelhe looks at the issue of survival and migration as the basis of the conflict in Nasarawa State. However, it forgets to mention that migration and the occupation of territories along the Middle Belt region, particularly Nasarawa State, did not originate with climate change. The theory concerning the population explosion and the political economy of conflicts proposed by Ayih in the context of the Nasarawa State conflict provides an incisive analysis on the relationship between poverty, relative deprivation and conflict. Ayih's contribution is plausible in many respects. For instance, it captures properly the fundamental and existential conditions that create land scarcity and hunger, which in turn, precipitate the herder/farmer conflict. Although Ayih acknowledges the reality of poverty and its impact on violent conflict in Nasarawa State, he neglects to mention that not all ethnic groups that migrate to the state seek traditional rulership and political domination of indigenous Christian groups. The Igbos and Yorubas of the South also migrate to Nasarawa State for economic reasons but they do not seek to rule the ethnic groups of Nasarawa State in the way and manner the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen seek to do.

Furthermore, Nchi lays the blame at the foot of politicians and political power. He reiterates the culture of impunity and how this culture has aided the spread of violent conflicts not only in Nasarawa State but also in Nigeria in general. Nchi excludes an important element in his analysis and conclusion. This element is linked to the way and manner politicians ride on the back of democratic principles to come to office only to turn their backs on democracy and to promote an Islamic agenda. In this way, ethnic groups that are predominantly Christian are targeted and excluded from political power-sharing. In fact, they are forced to live as second class citizens and government policies are deliberately enacted to suppress these groups.

Aboki's study, entitled "And the Innocent Died", failed to navigate some critical areas. For instance and surprisingly, churches were burnt and other Christian religious establishments such as schools were destroyed, which he listed and yet he never saw the religious dimension of the conflict. Not only Aboki, other authors such as Audu, James and Zaddock also joined the band

<sup>22</sup> Ayih, S. O., *Nasarawa State: Past and present*. Abuja, Nigeria: Umbrella Books, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Nchi, S.I., *Religion and politics in Nigeria: The constitutional issues*. Jos: Greenworld, 2013, p. 229.

<sup>24</sup> Usman, David, *The Social and Economic Adjustment of Victims of the 1998 Violent Inter-ethnic Conflict in Toto Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria*, ABU Zaria: unpublished PhD thesis, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with informant in Agwatashi, Obi Local Government Area, 25 November 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with informant in Doma, Doma Local Government Area, 29 November 2015.

wagon of ethnic narrative for explaining the conflict in Nasarawa State. Alemika and Okoye's work, published by Human Rights Monitor, attempted to investigate the religious undertones of the conflict. No thorough interpretation of available evidence was done in the work. More disappointing is the fact that the work does not make a clear distinction between ethnic and religious factors. Yet it provides important data on the religious persecution of Christians in its conclusion.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the contending narratives above seem to neglect the religious component of the conflict. Furthermore, they do not take into consideration the data and evidence that specifically expose the religious nature of the conflict in Nasarawa State. In order to examine the religious aspect of the conflict and the persecution of Christians in particular, the Nigerian Conflict and Security Analysis Network (NCSAN) conducted intensive field research in Nasarawa State from July 2015 to May 2016. This research is motivated by the patterns of recent conflicts in Nasarawa State as well as the need to re-examine past conflicts and interpret them in the light of new evidence. Based on the data gathered, NCSAN argues that there is evidence to suggest Christians are targeted and persecuted in Nasarawa State. This evidence is presented in two categories. In the first category, the research examines a number of violent incidents from January 2013 to May 2016. It provides data on the number of Christians killed and injured, as well as the number of Christian churches and property damaged. Additionally, it presents data and analyses the Muslim domination of Christians through political and traditional institutions. The second category deals with the persecution of Christians in everyday life in different parts of Nasarawa State.

## Section Three:

### Examining violence against Christians by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in Nasarawa State (January 2013 – May 2016)

In this section, data is presented concerning the different categories of violence against Christians by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen. It is important to realize that no claim is made that this data is complete. The researchers estimate that the information gathered on violence could be 60% of the total violence committed. This means the situation is in all probability worse than the data suggest. The incompleteness of the data is caused by two factors: the researchers were not able to go everywhere for security reasons; and not everyone they met was able or willing to talk, also for security reasons. As far as violence against Muslims is concerned, the researchers have diligently searched for data, but no one was willing to talk or to share documented information.

#### Violence against Christians in Nasarawa State

In investigating the deeper reality of the violent conflict in Nasarawa State, the NCSAN team examined a number of violent conflicts in the period January 2013 – May 2016. The team provides four sets of data. The first set indicates the number of Christians killed or injured. The second set enumerates the number of churches attacked so far. The third set examines the properties of Christians destroyed, which includes houses, farm lands, shops and other valuable items. The final set scrutinizes the IDP camps where Christians are kept, and mostly without government support. Evidence suggests that indeed Christians are particularly targeted for persecution on the account of their faith. They are uprooted from their homes and neglected by the state government.

#### First set of data: Christians killed and injured

##### Overview - Estimated number of Christians killed and injured in different areas of Nasarawa State

Name of area	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
Awe LGA	32	7	6	<b>45</b>	26	12	25	<b>63</b>
Daddere DA	3	0	1	<b>4</b>	2	6	4	<b>12</b>
Doma LGA	82	20	24	<b>126</b>	36	29	37	<b>102</b>
Ekye DA	37	0	0	<b>37</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Giza DA	78	18	14	<b>110</b>	37	53	22	<b>112</b>
Jenkwe DA	148	0	0	<b>148</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Kokona LGA	32	0	0	<b>32</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

Lafia East DA	89	61	49	<b>199</b>	148	113	70	<b>331</b>
Lafia LGA	59	40	22	<b>121</b>	108	112	29	<b>249</b>
Obi LGA	0	3	1	<b>4</b>	5	2	2	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>878</b>

From the available statistics it follows that in the areas covered by this investigation 826 Christians were killed, while 878 Christians were injured in the period under investigation. These numbers must be considered as underestimating the real numbers of Christians killed or injured. Apart from the disclaimer saying that the information gathered on violence could be 60% of the total violence committed because of restrictions on the researchers, data on Christians injured are also limited because part of the data delivered by the sources had only registered the total numbers of Christians killed, without specifying men, women and children, and without mentioning the numbers injured.

Breaking down the number of Christians killed in men, women and children, it follows that 46% were men, 30% women and 24% children. For Christians injured these percentages were slightly different: 41% men, 37% women and 22% children. These percentages were derived from the table above after taking out the data for areas or places where only the total numbers of Christians killed were registered:

	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	<b>Total No. of Christians killed</b>	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	<b>Total No. of Christians injured</b>
Numbers with details	231 (46%)	149 (30%)	117 (24%)	497 (100%)	362 (41%)	327 (37%)	189 (22%)	878 (100%)
Numbers - no details <sup>1/</sup>	329	0	0	329	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>878</b>

<sup>1/</sup> The totals for Christians killed were put under "No. of Christian men killed".

It is understandable why the number of Christian men killed was the highest. As defenders of the family, they had to do all within their powers to buffer the invaders. As a result, many were killed. Most women who were killed were either ambushed or attacked while going to the stream to fetch water or to the farm. This is without prejudice to the many attacks that occurred in the night when families took rest or sleep.

Lafia East Development Area has the highest number of male Christians, female Christians and children killed. This is probably because of the ethno-religious contestation over ownership of Assakio, the headquarters of Lafia East Development Area between the Christian dominated Eggon Ethnic Group and the Muslim dominated Alago Ethnic Group. In addition, the Muslim dominated village of Azara and other related villages would have served as safe-havens or paths for the hired Hausa-Fulani herdsmen to access Assakio and its environs easily.

The recent attacks are more in Awe Local Government Area, which borders Benue state, and is dominated by Tiv Christian, because the Tiv Christians who fled the area in the wake of the violent conflict are forced to return for the purpose of farming in order to make a living. It is unknown to them their attackers are still hunting for them and thus they fall prey. The media

hype by government that the conflict has ended has also contributed in deceiving the people that the conflict is over.

The following tables present the details about the places where they were killed or injured:

#### Awe Local Government Area: January 2013 - May 2016

	Place	No. Of Christian men killed	No. Of Christian women killed	No. Of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Borkono	13	2	1	16	5	1	2	8
2	Gidan Bumem	3	0	2	5	4	1	6	11
3	Gulbi Dutse	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	1
4	Guyuwa Koyi	0	2	0	2	6	1	4	11
5	Ihuman	9	1	0	10	6	3	5	14
6	Kekura	3	1	0	4	4	6	2	12
7	Tse Udera	1	1	3	5	0	0	6	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>63</b>

(Source: Chairman Awe branch of CAN, Local clergy of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ, ERCC, as well as NKST and Catholic Church)

#### Daddere Development Area: May 2016

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Tudu Adabu	3	0	1	4	2	6	4	12

(Source: ERCC cleric in Daddere, the headquarters of Daddere Development Area)

#### Doma Local Government Area: January – April 2015

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Adamba	0	0	5	5	3	3	1	7
2	Ajimaka	2	5	1	8	3	2	4	9
3	Akuya Anzari	3	0	1	4	0	0	1	1
4	Angbalggah & Angba Riri	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
5	Angiri Ruwa	23	0	0	23	0	0	0	0
6	Anguwan Waji	3	1	0	4	0	0	1	1

7	Anguwan Waje	23	0	0	23	0	0	0	0
8	Anzhiakolo	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
9	Atamala	1	0	0	1	3	0	1	4
10	Awata	2	0	0	2	0	5	1	6
11	Awonge	2	0	0	2	6	3	1	10
12	Bassa	2	0	4	6	3	2	1	6
13	Burum Burum	4	1	0	5	2	5	1	8
14	Doka	1	0	0	1	2	3	7	12
15	Kogo Lemu	2	1	0	3	4	2	2	8
16	Ogbushini	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
17	Ondzu	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
18	Sabon Gidan	2	4	6	12	5	3	2	10
19	Sakwato	0	4	0	4	0	0	7	7
20	Tudun Allu	2	1	5	8	1	0	3	4
21	Tudun Iggah	0	3	0	3	2	1	4	7
22	Yelwa	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>102</b>

(Source: Fieldwork by NCSAN and documents collected from the head office of the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Lafia, Nasarawa state)

#### Ekwe Development Area: August 2013 – April 2015

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Idadu	28	0	0	28	0	0	0	0
2	Igababo	9	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

#### Giza Development Area: December 2013 – April 2015

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Ajo	0	3	0	3	1	4	0	5
2	Dogo Antsa	0	3	2	5	7	0	1	8
3	Gidan Sule	3	2	5	10	2	0	0	2
4	Gidan Kparev	13	4	3	20	6	8	14	28
5	Ikpe	2	1	0	3	2	1	0	3
6	Ikyaior	2	1	1	4	1	3	2	6
7	Kadarko	9	0	0	9	0	0	0	0

8	Kalachi	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	7	8	2	<b>17</b>
9	Kanyi	1	0	1	<b>2</b>	2	6	1	<b>9</b>
10	Myom	2	1	0	<b>3</b>	4	9	1	<b>14</b>
11	Nyiyongu	0	0	1	<b>1</b>	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
12	Ruwan Baka	30	0	0	<b>30</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
13	Sarkin Noma	10	0	0	<b>10</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
14	Tse Utsaha	2	1	1	<b>4</b>	3	7	0	<b>10</b>
15	Uhina	4	0	0	<b>4</b>	2	0	1	<b>3</b>
16	Yaji	0	2	0	<b>2</b>	0	4	0	<b>4</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>112</b>

(Source: Fieldwork by NCSAN, information obtained from NKST Church and Tiv Socio-cultural group known as Mzough U Tiv)

#### Jenkwe Development Area: August 2013 – April 2015

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Atamala	9	0	0	<b>9</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
2	Duglu	60	0	0	<b>60</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
3	Gidiyen & Murya	79	0	0	<b>79</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

#### Kokona Local Government Area: August 2013 – April 2015

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Bassa	32	0	0	<b>32</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

#### Lafia East Development Area: October 2013 – April 2015

	Place	No. Of Christian men killed	No. Of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Adogi	9	1	0	<b>10</b>	6	3	5	<b>14</b>
2	Agbecheme	0	0	3	<b>3</b>	3	1	1	<b>5</b>
3	Alligani	2	1	1	<b>4</b>	0	7	1	<b>8</b>
4	Amawa	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	2	3	1	<b>6</b>
5	Anguwan Ayaba	0	0	2	<b>2</b>	8	5	9	<b>22</b>

6	Anguwan Madaki	1	0	3	4	1	3	1	5
7	Anguwan Magaji	5	0	0	5	7	3	1	11
8	Assakio	14	6	8	28	9	12	6	27
9	Bakin Kogi	5	1	0	6	6	3	1	10
10	Chabo	2	0	0	2	6	2	1	9
11	Chorum	1	2	3	6	3	1	0	4
12	Dadin Kowa	0	4	1	5	7	0	0	7
13	Desum	3	0	3	6	3	4	0	7
14	Gallo	2	6	0	8	2	5	1	8
15	Gera	0	3	1	4	9	3	2	14
16	Gidan Gambo	2	4	2	8	9	12	3	24
17	Gwayaka	4	6	2	12	7	4	9	20
18	Hagher	2	4	0	6	3	1	2	6
19	Joor	2	1	2	5	2	1	6	9
20	Kayarda	3	2	1	6	8	4	1	13
21	Lega Obi	0	3	1	4	6	0	0	6
22	Partong	2	0	1	3	7	1	3	11
23	Pepe Ruwa	1	4	1	6	0	7	3	10
24	Rafin Pah	2	3	1	6	0	4	0	4
25	Sabon Layi	0	0	4	4	0	7	0	7
26	Saminaka	2	0	0	2	3	1	0	4
27	Sabon Gida	0	3	2	5	5	2	0	7
28	Sidio	2	0	0	2	5	2	1	8
29	Tse Tyondu	1	0	1	2	0	3	0	3
30	Tudun Makeri	2	1	1	4	0	0	2	2
31	Tudun Wada	0	0	2	2	8	2	4	14
32	Tunga Dauda	3	1	0	4	4	6	2	12
33	Ugah	13	2	1	16	5	1	2	8
34	Za'ayem	4	2	2	8	4	0	2	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>331</b>

(Source: Fieldwork by NCSAN and data collected from secretary of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ, ERCC, in Assakio)

#### Lafia Local Government Area: October 2014 – April 2015

	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Agyaragu Tasha	12	0	0	12	4	5	1	10
2	Agyaragu Tofa	0	1	6	7	8	2	3	13
3	Aku Kpandam	0	8	1	9	15	31	3	49

4	Akuya	4	2	6	<b>12</b>	7	12	0	<b>19</b>
5	Awunza	4	0	0	<b>4</b>	6	1	5	<b>12</b>
6	Barkin Abdullahi Diko	12	5	1	<b>18</b>	17	14	2	<b>33</b>
7	Buzu	2	3	0	<b>5</b>	13	1	5	<b>19</b>
8	Gada Biyu	2	0	0	<b>2</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
9	Onyu	3	7	2	<b>12</b>	13	21	7	<b>41</b>
10	Sabon Gbakom	9	7	3	<b>19</b>	13	18	1	<b>32</b>
11	Tudun Amba	6	7	3	<b>16</b>	12	7	2	<b>21</b>
12	Tudun Iggah	5	0	0	<b>5</b>	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>249</b>

(Source: Fieldwork by NCSAN, Rev. Iliyasu Musa, COCIN Church, Lafia LGA Chairman of the Christians Association of Nigeria, CAN)

### Obi Local Government Area: April 2016

S/n	Place	No. of Christian men killed	No. of Christian women killed	No. of Christian children killed	Total No. of Christians killed	No. of Christian men injured	No. of Christian women injured	No. of Christian Children injured	Total No. of Christians injured
1	Abagu	0	2	1	<b>3</b>	1	0	2	<b>3</b>
2	Odobu	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	4	2	0	<b>6</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>

(Source: Christian Elders' forum of Obi Local Government Area)

## Second set of data: Churches destroyed or damaged

**Overview – Estimated number of churches destroyed or damaged in different areas of Nasarawa State**

Name of area	No. of churches destroyed or damaged
Ekye DA	9
Giza DA	17
Jenkwe DA	4
Lafia East DA	69
Obi LGA	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

From the available statistics it follows that in the areas covered by this investigation 102 churches were destroyed or damaged. All of this took place in the period February 2013 – April 2015.

The parish of St. Francis Assakio of the Catholic Diocese of Lafia located in Lafia East Development Area incurred a lot more damage than any other parish. This is because of its dominance in the area.

It must be mentioned that Assakio, Ekye, Giza and Obi are predominantly Christian areas. The persecution of Christians is not only to uproot them from their ancestral homes, but also to substantially weaken the spread and influence of Christianity in the area by attacking their churches. Furthermore, these areas are among the most fertile in the state, with lush vegetation and high soil fertility. The persecution of Christians here is supported by the government policy to take Christian lands and to turn them into grazing fields, further weakening Christian presence in the area.

The following tables present the details about the places where churches were destroyed or damaged:

#### **Ekye Development Area: August 2014**

	<b>Place</b>	<b>Church</b>
1	Agyemaka	Catholic Church
2	Akpananja	Catholic Church
3	Ankoma	ERCC
4	Atadara	Catholic Church
5	Ciyawa	ERCC
6	Gida Rai	ERCC
7	Idadu	ERCC
8	Igababo	ERCC
9	Pantila	ERCC
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9 Churches</b>

*(Source: Christian clergy of affected denominations in the area)*

#### **Giza Development Area: December 2013 - April 2015**

	<b>Place</b>	<b>Church</b>
1	Ajo	Catholic Church
2	Anum	Catholic Church
3	Dogon Antsa	Catholic Church
4	Ianwua	Catholic Church
5	Ikpe	Catholic Church
6	Ikyaior	Catholic Church
7	Kadarko	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
8	Kalachi	Catholic Church
9	Kanyi	Catholic Church
10	Myom	Catholic Church
11	Nyiyongu	Catholic Church
12	Ruwan Baka	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ

13	Sarkin Noma	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
14	Tse Utsaha	Catholic Church
15	Uhina	Catholic Church
16	Umurai	Catholic Church
17	Yaji	Catholic Church
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17 Churches</b>

(Source: Christian clergy of affected denominations in the area)

#### Jenkwe Development Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Church
1	Anguwan Waje	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
2	Duglu	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
3	Gidiyen	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
4	Murya	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4 Churches</b>

(Source: Christian clergy of affected denominations in the area)

#### Lafia East Development Area: October-December 2013

	Place	Church
1	Adogi	Catholic Church
2	Agbecheme	Catholic Church
3	Aguwan Ma'aji	Catholic Church
4	Akina	Catholic Church
5	Akuni	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
6	Akuni	Catholic Church
7	Aligani	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
8	Aligani	Catholic Church
9	Amawa I	Catholic Church
10	Amawa II	Catholic Church
11	AmueTyo	Catholic Church
12	Anguwan Ayaba	Catholic Church
13	Anguwan Dadi Owara	Catholic Church
14	Anguwan Danshe	Catholic Church
15	Anguwan Haske	Catholic Church
16	Anguwan Logne	Catholic Church
17	Anguwan Madaki	Catholic Church
18	Anguwan Mupum	Catholic Church
19	Assakio	Catholic Church
20	Assakio	Baptist Church
21	Assakio	The Lord Chosen Church
22	Assakio	Evangelical Church Winning All
23	Assakio	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
24	Asumubu	Catholic Church

25	Bem	Catholic Church
26	Chabo	Catholic Church
27	Chorum	Catholic Church
28	Dadin Kowa	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
29	Dadin Kowa	Catholic Church
30	Demsun	Catholic Church
31	Fadama Bauna	Catholic Church
32	Gallo	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
33	Gallo	Catholic Church
34	Gera	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
35	Gidan Buba	Catholic Church
36	Gidan Gambo	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
37	Gidan Gambo	Catholic Church
38	Gona Owara	Catholic Church
39	Gwayaka	Catholic Church
40	Hagher	Catholic Church
41	Ibyer	Catholic Church
42	Joor	Catholic Church
43	Kayarda I	Catholic Church
44	Kayarda II	Catholic Church
45	Kiguna I	Catholic Church
46	Kiguna II	Catholic Church
47	Lega Obi	Catholic Church
48	Na'analong	Catholic Church
49	Naamiwil	Catholic Church
50	Nasarawa	Catholic Church
51	Partong	Catholic Church
52	Peper Ruwa Adamu	Catholic Church
53	Peper Ruwa Chia	Catholic Church
54	Rafin Pah	Catholic Church
55	Sabon Gida	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
56	Sabon Gida	Catholic Church
57	Sabon Gida	Church of Christ in Nations
58	Sabon Line	Catholic Church
59	Samunaka	Catholic Church
60	Sarkin Noma	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
61	Shella	Catholic Church
62	Sidio	Catholic Church
63	Tse Tyondu	Catholic Church
64	Tudun Makeri	Catholic Church
65	Tudun Wada	Catholic Church
66	Tunga Daudu	Catholic Church
67	Ugah	Catholic Church
68	Ukapado	Catholic Church
69	Za'a Yem	Catholic Church
	<b>Total</b>	<b>69 Churches</b>

(Source: Christian clergy of affected Christian denominations in the area)

## Obi Local Government Area: April-June 2014

S/n	Place	Church
1	Akwika	Catholic Church
2	Anguwan Mallam	Catholic Church
3	Farin Ruwa	Catholic Church
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3 Churches</b>

(Source: Christian clergy of affected denominations in the area)

## Third set of data: Christian property destroyed or damaged

### Overview – Estimated destruction of Christian property or damage done to Christian property in different areas of Nasarawa State

It is important to say that there is no full documentation of the property destroyed in the communities, while for security reasons the NSCAN team could not visit many villages to compute the damages.

Name of area	Houses <sup>1/</sup>	Shops	Cars / motorcycles	Food items	Small cattle incl. poultry
Awe LGA	7			Foodstuff (unspecified)	
Azara DA	24				
Doma LGA	114			Foodstuff (unspecified)	
Ekye DA	117			Foodstuff (unspecified)	
Giza DA	135				
Jenkwe DA	246		5	Foodstuff (unspecified)	
Lafia East DA	15	9	11	1,692 tubers of yam; 100 bags of grain; 13 bags of beans; 4 drums of palm oil	56 goats; 36 pigs; 5 sheep; 53 chickens
Lafia LGA (1)	77		16	1,400 tubers of yam; 135 bags of grain; 27 bags of beans; 7 bags of groundnuts	10 cows; 38 goats; 18 chickens
Lafia LGA (2)	7			Foodstuff (unspecified)	
Lafia North DA	8			Foodstuff (unspecified)	
Obi LGA	37				
<b>Total</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Many food items</b>	<b>216 animals</b>

<sup>1/</sup> The destruction of houses normally also implies the destruction of clothing, household items etc. These items are not further specified in the tables.

The data shows that 787 houses were destroyed, as well as 9 shops, and 32 cars and motorcycles. Though incomplete, the data presented also suggests that many households were completely deprived of their livelihoods. The despair this must have caused is confirmed by the high number of internally displaced Christians, as shown hereafter in the fourth set of data on camps for Christian IDPs.

NCSAN gathered that the land mass from Iggah in Doma LGA to Igbabo in Ekye DA down to the bank of River Benue (an area roughly 70 kilometers wide and 60 kilometers long) has been taken over by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen. The indigenous Christian communities were not literally ejected from the area during the conflict but had their homes and farm produce destroyed. That means, there was no deliberate government policy to eject them, but lack of protection forced them to flee. An informant, who is a top government official, hinted that it is likely that the Nasarawa State government plans to turn the area into a grazing reserve for the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in total defiance to the objection of the indigenous Christians who are the original inhabitants.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding this third set of data on property destroyed or damaged, the evidence collected by NCSAN team indicates that not all the victims were willing to be identified. Victims in some communities and villages in Azara and Lafia East Development Areas, as well as Lafia and Obi Local Government Areas, consented to having their names published as individuals whose properties were destroyed or damaged.<sup>28</sup> However, other victims in other communities and villages of Jenkwe, Ekye, Giza and Lafia North Development Areas as well as Doma and Awe Local Government Areas, only agreed for the names of the villages and the number of houses destroyed to be noted - without the victims being identified. This is because many people were still living in fear. If they complained and declared their formal identity as complainants, it could make their homes and families obvious targets for further attack. There seems to be good reason for this fear. Most of their communities were only attacked once compared to other communities where victims agreed to be identified or interviewed as victims.

For the reason stated above, the tables below containing detailed data are ordered into two sections. First come several tables that include the names of the affected proprietors. Further tables follow with only the names of the villages attacked.

#### **Azara Development Area: March-December 2013**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Property destroyed or damaged</b>
1	Stephen Iyav	Abuni	1 house
2	Sanka Joseph	Akiri	1 house
3	James Pila	Baure	1 house
4	Haman Ali	Dogon Daji	1 house
5	Jonathan Apebeen	Dorowa Wuse	1 house
6	Terseer Ayongu	Gidan Asha	1 house
7	IgbiasuweGwebe	Gidan Bu	1 house
8	Peter Tsav	Gidan Faku	1 house
9	Joshua Iyav	Gidan Iordye	1 house
10	William Kanyi	Gidan Kwaghsono	1 house
11	James Chia	Gidan Viye	1 house
12	Nathaniel Pila	Hunki	1 house

<sup>27</sup> Interview in Randa-Sarki, Lafia North Development Area, on 23 November 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Despite the risk, these individuals were willing to come forward because they wanted the atrocities to be made known.

13	John Iordeer	Jimmy	1 house
14	Msughter Daniel	Kafin Mui	1 house
15	Abraham Iyav	Kanje	1 house
16	Michael Asuma	Kogin Dole	1 house
17	Paul Gya	Kumar	1 house
18	Sylvester Gya	Kurmo	1 house
19	Aondowase Viashima	Ribi	1 house
20	Ijerker Gya	Rigiyan Giwa	1 house
21	David Aheen	Sarkin Kolu	1 house
22	Victoria Moses	Tsohon Gidan Wuse	1 house
23	Fidelis Ajekwe	Wenki	1 house
24	Bunde Ajekwe	Wuse	1 house
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 victims</b>		<b>24 houses</b>

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State, Chairman-Azara DA branch of CAN)

#### Lafia East Development Area: July 2013 – September 2014

	Name	Place	Property destroyed or damaged
1	James Ayuba	Assakio	1 house (2 rooms), 1 car (Honda Civic 2002 model), 240 tubers of yam
2	Danjuma Ayuba	Assakio	1 house (1 room), 1 thatched house (2 rooms, 1 motorcycle
3	Kenneth Ezhim	Assakio	1 house (3 rooms), 600 tubers of yam
4	James favour	Assakio	1 house (1 room), 8 goats, 17 pigs
5	Donald Agu	Assakio	1 house (2 rooms), 4 bags of maize, 4 drums of palm oil
6	Dennis Danlami	Assakio	2 shops of assorted cosmetics worth over one hundred thousand Naira each
7	Joshua Audu	Assakio	1 house (1 room), 10 bags of maize, 4 bags of beans
8	Allu Mary	Assakio	1 house (2 rooms), 1 car (Toyota Camry 2004 model), 21 goats
9	Daniel Soja	Assakio	562 tubers of yam, 19 bags of maize, 2 bags of beans
10	William Azu	Assakio	1 house (2 rooms), 1 car (Toyota Corolla 2008 model)
11	Emmanuel Akayi	Assakio	21 bags of rice, 4 bags of beans
12	Esther Danlami	Assakio	1 shop for selling brewages, with over eighty thousand naira worth of items
13	Fidelis Gabriel	Assakio	1 house (1 room), 1 motorcycle, 80 tubers of yam
14	Simon Obery	Assakio	1 filling station with 6 drums of Kerosene, 10 drums of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS)
15	Matthew Angyu	Assakio	1 house (1 room), 30 bags of rice
16	Augustine Chukwu	Assakio	1 mini-sized pharmacy with drugs worth over 300,000 Naira
17	Dubem Anieze	Assakio	1 car (Peugeot Van 504), 1 motorcycle, 12 bags of maize

18	Ani Chukwunonso	Assakio	1 provision store with items such as bread, milk, assorted detergents and other related items
19	Christopher Aboga	Mai Akuya	1 house (2 rooms), 1 thatched house (1 room), 17 goats
20	Daniel Uchechukwu	Mai Akuya	1 shop where cooking utensils and other related items are sold, worth hundreds of Naira
21	Godswill Agu	Mai Akuya	1 motorcycle, 180 tubers of yam, 3 bags of beans
22	Oliver Daniel	Mai Akuya	1 house (1 room), 5 sheep, 19 pigs, 53 chickens
23	Emeka Eze	Mai Akuya	1 pharmacy with drugs worth about 250,000 Naira
24	Emmanuel Okoro	Mai Akuya	1 provision store, 2 motorcycles, 30 tubers of yam, 4 bags of rice
25	Wilson Asilika	Ugah	1 thatched house (3 rooms), 1 motorcycle, 10 goats
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 victims</b>		<b>15 houses; 9 shops with inventory; 4 cars; 7 motorcycles; 1,692 tubers of yam; 100 bags of grain (maize, rice); 13 bags of beans; 4 drums of palm oil; 56 goats; 36 pigs; 5 sheep; 53 chickens</b>

(Source: Fieldwork by NCSAN, information obtained from Eggon Cultural and Development Association, ECDA, as well as documents obtained from Tiv Socio-Cultural Group, Mzough U Tiv in Assakio)

#### Lafia Local Government Area (1): May 2014 – January 2015

	Name	Place	Property destroyed or damaged
1	Clement Adamu	Aku Kpandam	90 tubers of yams, 26 assorted bags of grains (millet, guinea corn, maize, rice)
2	Samuel Ide	Aku Kpandam	1 house (2 rooms)
3	Labari Anga	Aku Kpandam	1 thatched house (4 rooms)
4	Ekah Alade	Aku Kpandam	5 cows, 21 goats
5	Iliya Audu	Aku Kpandam	1 house (2 rooms), 31 bags of maize
6	Samson Bala	Aku Kpandam	1 motorcycle (Jincheng), 4 bags of beans
7	John Kuje	Aku Kpandam	1 house (1 room)
8	Francis Ebuga	Aku Kpandam	280 tubers of yams, 14 bags of rice
9	Danjuma Jatau	Aku Kpandam	1 thatched house (2 rooms), 8 bags of maize
10	Likita Joseph	Aku Kpandam	1 house (1 room)
11	Livinus Akulu	Aku Kpandam	1 thatched house (4 rooms), 7 goats
12	Timothy Ebolo	Akuya	1 house (3 rooms), 1 car (Peugeot Van), 16 bags of grains
13	Danladi John	Awunza	1 house (1 room), 7 bags of grains
14	Joseph Egah	Awunza	1 thatched house (3 rooms), 1 motorcycle
15	Philibus Duniya	Awunza	1 house (1 room), 1 bag of maize

16	Luka Arughan	Awunza	1 house (3 rooms), 3 bags of local rice, 1 bag of beans
17	Moses Atuku	Awunza	1 thatched house (2 rooms), 3 goats, 18 chickens
18	Timothy Usman	Barkin Abdullahi Diko (B. A. D.)	1 house (3 rooms)
19	Likita Asibi	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
20	Stephen Abalaga	B. A. D.	1 house (1 room)
21	Istifanus Kutsum	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (4 rooms)
22	Manyi Filibus	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
23	Sylvester Kigbu	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
24	John Wuye	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (6 rooms)
25	Joseph Ezhim	B. A. D.	1 house (1 room)
26	Abel Sylvester	B. A. D.	1 house (1 room)
27	Obile Bala	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
28	David Sylvester	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
29	Alex Ebbe	B. A. D.	1 house (3 rooms)
30	Ayuba Allu	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (4 rooms)
31	Yakubu Ari	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
32	Abudaga Kwakibi	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (5 rooms)
33	Dauda Envulu	B. A. D.	1 house (3 rooms)
34	Festus Audu	B. A. D.	1 house (1 room)
35	Silas Otse	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (4 rooms)
36	Joseph Alahu	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
37	Offor Nasala	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
38	Peter Allu	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (2 rooms)
39	Grace John	B. A. D.	1 house (3 rooms)
40	Patience Habila	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
41	Emmanuel Joseph	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (5 rooms)
42	Mathew James	B. A. D.	1 house (3 rooms)
43	Stephen Auta	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
44	Julius Lazarus	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
45	Thomas Maimako	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
46	Sunday Yakubu	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
47	Daniel Moses	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
48	Obadiah Akyen	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
49	Peter Usman	B. A. D.	1 motorcycle
50	John Asilika	B. A. D.	1 car (Peugeot 504)
51	Adigizi James	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (4 rooms)
52	Titi Musa	B. A. D.	1 house (2 rooms)
53	Allahnana Ogah	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
54	Obadiah Abimiku	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
55	Bashayi David	B. A. D.	1 thatched house (5 rooms)
56	Ayuba Anga	B. A. D.	2 motorcycles
57	Victor Kudu	B. A. D.	1 house (1 room)
58	David Stephen	B. A. D.	1 house (3 rooms)
59	Joseph Jagu	Onyu	1 house (3 rooms)

60	Sunday Allu V.	Onyu	1 thatched house (2 rooms), 5 cows, 10 bags of maize
61	Hosea Esan	Onyu	2 motorcycles (Jincheng), 1 bag of beans
62	Samuel Malla	Onyu	1 thatched house (2 rooms)
63	Ayuba Akpavan	Onyu	9 bags of rice, 4 bags of guinea corn, 3 bags of beans
64	Joshua Ekom	Onyu	1 thatched house (3 rooms), 3 goats
65	Danjuma E. Allu	Onyu	1 house (1 room), 2 bags of beans
66	Seth Aku	Onyu	1 house (2 rooms), 1 motorcycle (Honda)
67	Francis Aku	Onyu	1 house (1 room), 4 bags of beans
68	Patience Aku	Onyu	1 house (1 room), 1 motorcycle (Jincheng)
69	Habakkuk Musa	Onyu	1 thatched house (4 rooms), 4 goats
70	Yohanna Tsaku	Onyu	1 house (2 rooms), 1 car (Peugeot 505 Salon)
71	Moses Anzaku	Onyu	1 house (1 room)
72	Julius Akolo	Sabo Gbakom	3 bags of rice, 4 bags of beans, 7 bags of groundnuts
73	Augustine Ombuguadu	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (2 rooms)
74	Paul Abimiku	Sabo Gbakom	1 thatched house (4 rooms)
75	Godwin Francis	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (2 rooms)
76	Solomon Abihu	Sabo Gbakom	400 tubers of yam
77	Daniel Efe	Sabo Gbakom	1 motorcycle
78	Shagari Stephen	Sabo Gbakom	170 tubers of yam, 3 bags of rice
79	Sunday Ovyne	Sabo Gbakom	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
80	Sunday John	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (2 rooms)
81	Luka Algoho	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (1 room)
82	James Ogiri	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (2 rooms)
83	Godwin Ayuba	Sabo Gbakom	210 tubers of yams, 4 bags of beans
84	Peter Akolo	Sabo Gbakom	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
85	Stephen Angbalaga	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (1 room)
86	Anthony Obile	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (2 rooms)
87	Emmanuel Musa	Sabo Gbakom	1 motorcycle
88	Joseph Ibrahim	Sabo Gbakom	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
89	Stephen Ovyne	Sabo Gbakom	250 tubers of yam, 4 bags of beans
90	John Akolo	Sabo Gbakom	1 motorcycle
91	David Obile	Sabo Gbakom	1 car (Peugeot Van 404)
92	Michael Musa	Sabo Gbakom	1 thatched house (2 rooms)
93	John Allu	Sabo Gbakom	1 thatched house (3 rooms)
94	Clement Angbalaga	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (1 room)
95	Lamaba Ibrahim	Sabo Gbakom	1 house (1 room)
<b>Total</b>	<b>95 Victims</b>		<b>77 houses; 4 cars; 12 motorcycles; 1,400 tubers of yam; 135 bags of grains (guinea corn, maize, millet, rice); 27 bags of beans; 7 bags of groundnuts; 10 cows; 38 goats; 18 chickens</b>

(Source: Fieldwork by NCSAN and information obtained from Eggon Cultural and Development Association, ECDA, in Lafia LGA)

### Obi Local Government Area: April - May 2014

	Name	Place	Property destroyed or damaged
1	Umaru Afiku	Abagu	1 house
2	Francis John	Abanyi	1 house
3	Danjuma Ibrahim	Abioga	1 house
4	Gaya Agato	Aganga	1 house
5	Danlami Kuje	Agun	1 house
6	Danladi Akwashiki	Agwade	1 house
7	Joseph Jambi	Aguwan Amidu	1 house
8	Likita Akwashiki	Aguwan Lami	1 house
9	Danlami Tsaku	Aguwan Mama	1 house
10	Alkali Alize	Aguwan Sule	1 house
11	Aboki Ugulu	Agwatashi	1 house
12	Yusuf Ibrahim	Akaba	1 house
13	Musa Kumabugu	Akani	1 house
14	Godiya Bala	Akani	1 house
15	Yakubu Tsaku	Akeleku	1 house
16	Jacob Agulu	Akpeka	1 house
17	Musa Agulu	Akwika	1 house
18	Emmanuel John	Ampani	1 house
19	Monday Bulus	Ashiga	1 house
20	Rev. Umaru Akunden	Atabla	1 house
21	John Akwashiki	Atabula	1 house
22	Yusufu Angulu	Dooso	1 house
23	Noma Akwashiki	Edevi	1 house
24	Gideon Yakubu	Gada Biyu	1 house
25	Kande Matthew	Gidan Waya	1 house
26	Bitrus Bala	Gidan Waya	1 house
27	John Jambi	Gwashiri	1 house
28	Monday Sarki	Kutari	1 house
29	Iya Yakubu	Kutari	1 house
30	Peter Bulus	Kyakale	1 house
31	Rev. Titus Bulus	Muriya	1 house
32	Michael Yukubu	Mutum Daya	1 house
33	Joshua Bulus	Odobu	1 house
34	James Bala	Ome	1 house
35	Isaac Sabo	Ranzagwa	1 house
36	Audu Kuje	Riri	1 house
37	Augustine Auta	Tse Aga	1 house
<b>Total</b>	<b>37 victims</b>		<b>37 houses</b>

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

## List of villages attacked and property destroyed (names of owners withheld) February 2013 – April 2015

### Awe Local Government Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Awe	7 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

### Doma Local Government Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Angba Iggah and Angba Riri	18 houses, foodstuff	The villages were attacked twice each and on different occasions.
2	Angiri Ruwa	42 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked several times.
3	Atamala	12 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked twice.
4	Bassa	38 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked on different occasions.
5	Ondzu	4 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 places</b>	<b>114 houses, foodstuff</b>	

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

### Ekwe Development Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Ankoma, Ciyawa, Gida Rai and Pantila	72 houses, foodstuff	The attacks took place on different days.
2	Idadu	26 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.
3	Igababo	12 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.
4	Ogbushini	7 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 places</b>	<b>117 houses, foodstuff</b>	

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

### Giza Development Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Kadarko	20 houses	The town was attacked in the evening.
2	Ruwan Baka	108 houses	The village was attacked once.
3	Sarkin Noma	7 houses	The village was attacked once.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 places</b>	<b>135 houses</b>	

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

### Jenkwe Development Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Anguwan Waje	27 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked three times.
2	Anzhiakolo	20 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked twice.
3	Duglu	72 houses, foodstuff	The town was attacked once, at night.
4	Gidiyen and Murya	127 houses, 5 cars	Islamic militants attacked on two different occasions.
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 places</b>	<b>246 houses, 5 cars, foodstuff</b>	

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

### Lafia Local Government Area (2): February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Tudun Igga	7 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

### Lafia North Development Area: February 2013 – April 2015

	Place	Property destroyed or damaged	Remarks
1	Gada Biyu	8 houses, foodstuff	The village was attacked once.

(Source: General Secretary, ERCC headquarters, Akwanga, Nasarawa State)

## Fourth set of data: Camps for Christian IDPs

### Overview – Estimated number of Christians in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) inside and outside Nasarawa State

Date of existence	Name of camp	Men	Women	Children	Preg-nant women	Lactating Christian women	Aban-doned children	Children born in camp	Total
November 2013 – December 2015 <sup>29</sup>	Daudu (Benue State)	2,288	2,871	934	517	102	1	9	6,722
December 2013 – September 2015	Mararaba Akunza (Nasarawa State)	1,472	2,012	618	321	76	2	4	4,505
April 2014 – date	Aningo (Plateau State)	2,349	1,547	871	387	32	2	11	5,199
July 2014 – February 2015	St. William Cathedral (Nasarawa State)	614	219	34	23	17	1	0	908
December 2014 – May 2015	Shabu (Nasarawa State)	1,230	1,783	590	51	43	4	2	3,703
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,953</b>	<b>8,432</b>	<b>3,047</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21,037</b>

(Source: Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Nasarawa State Chapter, and Nasarawa State Emergency Management Agency, NASEMA)



IDPs lining up for food and handouts at a camp in Shabu, Lafia North DA. (Source: NCSAN)

<sup>29</sup> By saying the camp is closed, it simply means that the government no longer takes any responsibility whatsoever for the people who are still there. Most of them have moved into the host community and are still in Daudu.



*IDPs in Aningo camp of Qu'an-Pan LGA, Plateau State. All the IDPs are from Nasarawa State, among them are some Muslims. (Source: NCSAN)*



*IDPs listening to the address of some political leaders of Benue State who visited the camp at Daudu, Guma LGA, Benue State. (Source: NCSAN)*

The Local Government Areas of Keana, Obi, Awe, as well as Giza and Ekye Development Areas of Nasarawa State are on the border to Christian dominated Benue State. In fact, most of the Christians in these localities are Tiv who share ethnic affinity with their kith and kin from Benue State. Therefore it is understandable why Daudu, located in neighboring Guma LGA of Benue State, was considered to be a safe haven rather than any other place. In this camp, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic diocese of Makurdi assisted the displaced Christians with bedding, food and medicine, among other things. But due to the huge numbers, these donations were just a drop in the ocean. The gifts were helpful but certainly not enough.

The governor of Nasarawa State, Tanko Al-Makura, did not visit Daudu (unlike his Benue Christian counterpart) and some informants saw this as confirmation of his hatred for Christians.

In Aningo camp, there were two policemen to provide security. Even though not enough, their presence gave confidence to those in the camp that the government of Plateau State was caring about their security. Christian organizations, such as the Plateau State branch of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Catholic Women's Organization (CWO) of the Catholic diocese of Shendam, the Society of Saint Vincent, provided material support (i.e. food and clothing) to the displaced persons. NCSAN discovered that meals were shared in the camp without bias between the Christians and the few Muslims in the camp. It was observed that the IDPs were exposed to extremely harsh weather conditions. This camp totally lacked medical assistance, since the Christian organizations usually assisting IDPs do not bring medicines. The lack of health personnel at the camps is largely responsible for the lack of provision of drugs and other health related needs.

The actual number of Christians displaced when the violent conflict began is much higher than the 21,037 registered in the camps (see overview table above). This is because some are taking refuge in homes of kith and kin that are not affected by the conflict. Since most of the attacks on the Christian communities were carried out at night, there are parents who do not know the whereabouts of their children as everyone ran for safety for the duration of the attacks. However, some of the children whose parents cannot be located, ended up in IDP camps. These unaccompanied children are aged between 4 and 12 and there were ten such children in the camps mentioned above.

It is important to mention the current mindset which the violent conflict has created in Nasarawa State. Rather than running to Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital for safety, the displaced Christians ran to the neighboring Christian dominated and controlled states of Benue and Plateau. The Christians were probably counting on historical ties and faith-motivated sympathy to assist them in getting accepted and possibly integrated into the host communities. Persons interviewed in Shabu camp, which is located less than 9 kilometers from Lafia, seat of Nasarawa State government, stated that no senior government official had paid them a visit, but that the governor had visited the camp set up for Muslims who left their houses out of fear of reprisal attacks by Christians. Informants say there are 2 IDP camps for Muslims in and around Lafia Metropolis. However, the NCSAN team was not permitted to enter these camps by the (Muslim) camp officers.

## Section Four:

### Understanding the religious motivation for the persecution of Christians

As discussed earlier, many researchers and policymakers have explained the conflict in Nasarawa State on the basis of climate change, ethnicity, political contestation and economic competition only. This narrative not only shapes public opinion but is equally supported by the government, the media and some international organizations. Human Rights Watch describes the violent conflict, particularly the killing of Christians in 2011, as a clash between “Fulani herdsmen and farmers”.<sup>30</sup> They argue that the extreme environmental problems in northern Nigeria and the agricultural advantages in Nasarawa State make the state more attractive to herders and farmers. The arrival of these settlers over the years means stiff competition over space and environmental resources with the native Alago, Alago, Tiv, Eggon, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Egbira, Migili, Kantana and Rindere. Consequently, the ongoing conflict is depicted as being more about land and environmental resources than religion. It is claimed that since settlers and the indigenes belong to two different religions, Islam and Christianity, any violent conflict between them is likely to be interpreted in terms of religious differences rather than the fundamental issues central to the violent conflict in the first place.

However, the empirical evidence based on data collected, and the detailed information provided by victims, witnesses and survivors on the ground contradicts this. It shows that proponents of the environmental, ethno-political and economic narrative have downplayed, marginalized or deliberately refused to consider the religious component of the conflict. In particular, the evidence demonstrates that there is a systematic and strategic scheme to dispossess lands and properties belonging to Christians and Christian communities in an attempt to substantially displace Christians. Thus, the atrocities committed by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen, in addition to some policies of the Nasarawa State government, indicate there is a *jihad* to ensure that the Islamic presence takes precedence over any civil, social and political institutions. For example, officials of political parties are predominantly Muslim and associations (such as the National Union of Road Transport Workers/NURTW) are heavily dominated by Muslims.

This dominance by Muslims - not only in political matters but also in other spheres of human endeavor – has caused many to question whether economic factors are the true reason for the conflict. Experts are beginning to ask: if the conflict is all about land and environmental resources, why are mostly Christians the targets and victims? Why are churches being burned down and pastors’ residences attacked? Why are properties, shops, farms and businesses belonging to Christians destroyed? Why are traditional rulers mostly Muslim? What gives Muslims the right to rule over Christian majority communities? Why should farm products belonging to indigenous Christian farmers be used as animal feed for Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen? Why does the government allow the influx of Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomads into

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<sup>30</sup> Odemwingie, Edegbe, Nigeria: The Grazing Routes to Ethnic bloodshed, Partners for Democratic Change and Institute for War and Peace, 2014, <http://accessng-sl.org/nigeria-the-grazing-routes-to-ethnic-bloodshed/>, accessed 20 March 2016.

Nasarawa State unabated? What explanation should be given to the fact that only majority Christian communities end up in IDP camps across the state? Why are the perpetrators, mostly Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen left unpunished?

Considering the aforementioned questions, the environmental, ethno-political and economic discourse is seen to be seriously distorted in many ways. First, the perspective fails to decipher the links between funds received from the Middle East and the explosion of missionary (*dawah*) activities aiming to Islamize non-Muslim territories. This funding is either promoted by the pro-Saudi Wahhabi-inclined Dawah group dedicated to the missionary propagation of Islam, or the Pro-Iranian Umma Group, dedicated to the implementation of Sharia law and Islamic governance.<sup>31</sup> Saudi NGOs, including the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) have funded a plethora of projects in Nigerian villages and towns in the north, including Nasarawa State. Among other projects, the funding is used for building mosques, Islamic educational institutions, health clinics and community centers. Scholarships are also provided for Nigerian Muslim students to study in various universities in Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup> The central doctrine that accompanies these missionary activities is the ideology of proselytization and the conversion of non-Muslims by whatever means. The ideology promotes the view that Islam is under attack by all sorts of infidels and apostates, which demands a *jihadist* response by whatever means. What is overlooked by many researchers in Nigeria is the impact this ideology is having on the Islamic faith of nomads and the methods used in the propagation of this faith.

Second, because of this negligence by academics, the historical role of herdsmen in the emergence of Islamic *jihad* in Africa has not been investigated. Importantly, how this role is being redefined by the contemporary forms of *jihad* and terrorism is hardly discussed by scholars, policy makers and researchers at all. As mentioned in the NCSAN Taraba report, the Fulani Jihad's Manifesto, traced back to Dan Fodio in 1820, outlines how Fulani Muslim pastoralists can conquer pagan territories, live in urban communities, exercise influence among rulers and still retain links with their kinsmen.<sup>33</sup>

Third, the environmental, ethno-political and economic discourse excludes the historical migration of Muslims into non-Muslim territories such as Nasarawa State. Migration into and the domination of non-Muslim areas is enshrined in the concept *darul Islam*. This principle is explained as a religious motivation for the atrocities perpetrated by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in Taraba state.<sup>34</sup> Since both Taraba and Nasarawa States share some similarities in the pattern of attacks by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen, there is no need to repeat the

<sup>31</sup> Hiskett, Mervyn, The Maitatsine Riots of in Kano, 1980: An Assessment, in: Journal of Religion in Africa 17(3), 1987, pp.209-223.

<sup>32</sup> Nakhleh, Emile, Nigerian Terrorism: Causes and Solutions, LobeLog Foreign Policy, 2014, <https://lobelog.com/nigerian-terrorism-causes-and-solutions/>, accessed 20 March 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Biyar, A.D.H., The Wathiqat ahl, al-Sudan: A Manifesto of the Fulani Jihad, Journal of African History 2(2), 1961, pp. 235-343. This manifesto is considered to be one of the oldest surviving original documents and goes back as far as 1820.

<sup>34</sup> Abdulkarkindo A. and Alupse, B., Violent Conflict in Divided Societies - The Untold Story of killings in Taraba State, 2015, [http://www.academia.edu/19068568/Violent\\_Conflict\\_in\\_Divided\\_Societies\\_\\_The\\_Untold\\_Story\\_of\\_killings\\_in\\_Taraba\\_State](http://www.academia.edu/19068568/Violent_Conflict_in_Divided_Societies__The_Untold_Story_of_killings_in_Taraba_State), pp. 48-54, accessed 2 April 2016.

explanation here. However, with regards to Nasarawa State, the study extends the analysis to the historical role of nomads in Islamic jihad and the ideology at the basis of such role.

## Darul Islam, the role of herdsmen in Islamic jihad and violent conflicts in Nasarawa State

The data presented above shows that in the violent conflicts in Nasarawa State, perpetrated mostly by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen, Christians and Christian communities are being particularly targeted. Christian churches are being destroyed, properties damaged and ancestral lands confiscated and occupied by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen. A Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomad told the NCSAN team in an interview: “*Komai na Allah ne. Ko wane fili na Allah ne, ba naku ba, ba na kafirai ba, na Allah ne*”<sup>35</sup> (Translation: Everything belongs to Allah. Every piece of land belongs to Allah and not you, not for you infidels but for Allah). The interpretation of this statement should be placed within the context of the concept of “God” in Islam. Thus, the phrase “everything belongs to Allah” means the Muslim-God is the one true God and not the understanding of God as presented by Christians. Muslims accuse Christians of *shirk*; associating another god (Jesus) with Allah. In other words, Christians fail to understand the mystery of God, they relax the rules and ascribe a son (Jesus) to God when God has not ascribed a son himself. Christians turned Jesus into God, and this for mainstream Muslims is *shirk* and fully unacceptable. The Muslim God is the one true God, with no equal. He is the most compassionate and the most perfect. He is the creator of the universe and no one else. Therefore, the sovereignty of Allah must be the foundation for all socio-political and economic systems, and society must be governed in accordance with the Quran and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. This means that human beings must, individually and collectively, surrender all rights of lordship, legislation and authority over others. No person, class or group can lay claim to sovereignty. Allah is the real law-giver and absolute legislation rests in him.<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, when a Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsman claims that every piece of land belongs to Allah, it means, the land belongs to the Muslim-God and by right to the Muslims. In fact, Islam is the supreme religion, a religion revealed through the Prophet Muhammad to perfect all other religions. The Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomad therefore has a right not only to the land, but a religious obligation to ensure that Islam reigns supreme over that land. It is this understanding of God in Islam that is at the basis of the distinction between *darul Islam* the house of Islam, and *darul al-harb*, the house of war. The former is composed of the Muslim faithful, while the latter is a reference to those within the realm of the infidels.<sup>37</sup> Over time, *jihad* has come to mean the struggle against the devil or one’s own desires (*nafs*) as well as fighting those of non-Islamic faith.<sup>38</sup> This includes waging war against unbelievers to convert them to Islam and encourages a biased outlook and the view that conquering non-Muslim territories for Allah is a religious duty.

<sup>35</sup> Interview Islamic Scholar and a Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomad, Nasarawa Eggon, Nasarawa State, 3 July 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Mawdūdī, Abu Ala, Political theory of Islam, in: Islam in Transition; Muslim Perspectives, edited by Donohue, John J. and Esposito, John L., Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 263-264.

<sup>37</sup> Ferguson, John, War and Peace in the World’s Religions, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> Churchill, Paul, Interpreting the Jihad: Militarism Versus Muslim Pacifism, The Acorn, 1991, p. 20.

This same ideology motivated the historical role of Muslim herdsmen in Islamic *jihad* in Africa. The role of herdsmen in Islamic *jihad* in Africa can be traced back to the time that Arab Islamic forces defeated the Byzantine army in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and gained control over coastal North Africa, converting the nomadic Berber tribes to Islam.<sup>39</sup> It was these Berber-speaking herdsmen who helped to spread Islam between Maghreb (North Africa) and Western Sudan (known to Arabs as Bilad al-Sudan, land of the black). The Berber herdsmen helped spread Islam through Islamic *jihad* into the band of countries dividing White and Black Africa, a band which cuts through Mauritania, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea.

Itinerant Islamic scholars, accompanied by Berber-speaking herdsmen, and other tribal nomads from the Sahel region, moved among rural communities to conquer the communities and convert them to Islam. At this time, most Islamic *jihads* came from the countryside and not from commercial or capital towns.<sup>40</sup> The Fulbe and the Somali herdsmen provided the main fighting forces for Islamic *jihads* that were staged in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Africa. For instance, in the 1670s, Nasir al-Din, a Berber herdsman and Islamic scholar, organized a *jihad* against local communities in Mauritania, forcefully occupying their land and converting many to Islam. Uthman Dan Fodio, the founder of the Sokoto caliphate in northern Nigeria himself is a descendant of this Fulani herdsmen who promoted Islamic *jihad*. Dan Fodio was born in Maratta, Sokoto state, but belonged to the clan of Fulani herdsmen known as the Toronkawa. He was brought up in Degel, a little village whose inhabitants had mostly migrated from Futa Toro in Senegal, which is why they are called Toronkawa, literally, the people of Toro.<sup>41</sup>

The process of sedentarization of these nomads before and after colonization never extinguished the need to spread the *jihad* and conquer more territories for Islam. This reality exists among both nomads who are now settled and those who still remain herdsmen. Today, leaders of terrorist organizations across Africa, have nomadic backgrounds. For instance, Iyad Ag Ghaly, the so-called “Lion of the Desert” and chief of Ansaru al-Dine, and Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the one-eyed former AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) commander are all former nomads.<sup>42</sup> Again, herdsmen make up a substantial number of the fighters belonging to Islamic groups in Mali, Niger, Chad and other parts of Africa. This is reinforced both by the migration of other herdsmen from across the Sahelian region as well as the contemporary rise in the activities of terrorist organizations. These herdsmen use sophisticated weapons and ammunition. In Nigeria, there is a resurgence of violent conflict and Islamic *jihad* perpetrated by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen in majority parts of the Middle Belt region, particularly Kaduna, Plateau, Taraba, Benue and Nasarawa States. Attempts to claim that these herdsmen have nothing to do with Islamic *jihad* is incorrect; such claims have the potential to derail government policy for countering the attackers.

<sup>39</sup> Levzion, N. and Pouwels, R., *The History of Islam in Africa*, Ohio University Press, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Boyd, J. and Shagari, S., *The life and legacy of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodiyo*, Macmillan Publishers, Oxford, 2003, pp. 1-13.

<sup>42</sup> Jubber, Nicholas, *Mali's Nomads: Bulwark against Jihad*, 2014, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/fall2014/mali-nomads-against-jihad>, accessed 2 April 2016.

As for Nasarawa State, findings by various research organizations and think-tanks show that herdsmen in Nigeria have access to increased volumes of arms, many of which enter the country via Islamic mercenaries and transnational criminal networks spread across Africa's volatile Sahel region, especially Mali, Niger and Chad.<sup>43</sup> Evidence suggests that many of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomads fighting in Nasarawa State are well-armed with sophisticated weapons and AK-47 rifles, like the ones seen in battles in Libya, Sudan and most of Mali. NCSAN observes that Muslims too have been killed and their properties destroyed in these conflicts. However, most of these deaths were caused by cross-fire or stray bullets. The first violent conflict in Nasarawa State between the Bassa and the Egbura in 1997-1998 was explained as an ethnic conflict. Both the Bassa and the Egbura ethnic groups lay claims to ownership and control of Toto Local Government Area because each claims to be the first to arrive and settle in the area. However, this explanation is not valid as there is a deep seated religious factor to the conflict. The Egbura ethnic group cooperated with the Fulani during the Dan Fodio *jihad* and embraced Islam. As a result, they enjoyed a special relationship with the Hausa-Fulani Muslim rulers of the Nasarawa Emirate. The Bassa ethnic group on the other hand had resisted Islam and later embraced Christianity.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, the wave of atrocities and persecution against the Bassa ethnic group by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen is based on their affiliation to the Christian faith. During the conflict, churches were attacked. This made the Catholic Diocese of Lafia close St. Jude's parish Toto, as churches there came under attack. The parish was reopened in 2009.

The attacks against Christians and Christian communities in Nasarawa State by Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomads have not only been ignored by the state and federal governments, but over the years, government policies have also helped to push the agenda of Islamic supremacy over and above any attempts at solving the conflict. For instance, some informants in Gudi town, located along Garaku-Akwanga road, lamented that, in order to ensure that Muslims had a good control of power in the state, the capital was moved from the initially proposed Christian dominated Akwanga town to Muslim controlled Lafia, where an emir and emirate system could impose full Islamic influence in the whole area.<sup>45</sup> This issue is further discussed in detail below in the section on the political and traditional domination over Christians in the state.

## The political domination of Christians and Christian communities in Nasarawa State

The effort to persecute and dominate Christians and Christian communities in Nasarawa State politically is linked to two important factors. First, the recent surge in the Christian population has become a worrying sign for the Muslim establishment and ruling class who would like to portray

<sup>43</sup> Cf: Onouha, Freedom, Porous Borders and Boko Haram's Arms Smuggling Operations in Nigeria, 2013, [http://studies.aljazeera.net/mritems/Documents/2013/9/8/20139810737330580Porous%20Borders\\_bokoharam.pdf](http://studies.aljazeera.net/mritems/Documents/2013/9/8/20139810737330580Porous%20Borders_bokoharam.pdf), accessed 27 April 2016. Cf. also Omitola, Bolaji, Between Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen: Organised Crime and Insecurity in Nigeria - 2014, 2016. <https://www.issafrica.org/uploads/5th-Crime-Conf-2014/X002-Bolaji-Omitola.pdf>, accessed 22 April 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Gaya, B., Population Displacement in the Tiv-Jukum Communal Conflict, in: Nnoli, O. (ed.), Communal Conflict and Population in Nigeria, Enugu: PARCEP, 2003, pp. 167-207.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with informants in Gudi, Akwanga Local Government Area on 26 November 2015.

Nasarawa State as a Muslim-majority state. Since the creation of Nasarawa State, and in addition to its proximity to Abuja, the Federal Capital territory, the influx of Christians has been unprecedented. Over 30% of the inhabitants are Christian Igbo traders, Tiv farmers and business men/women. Additionally, the Catholic Diocese of Lafia which was established in March 2001, five years after the creation of Nasarawa State, has grown to over 226,576 Catholics,<sup>46</sup> with more than 30 parishes and independent missions. The diocese alone has four secondary schools (St. John Bosco Boys Secondary School, Doma; St. Peter's Boys Secondary School, Garaku, St. Kizito Girls College, Duduguru and Our Lady of Apostles Girls College, Akwanga) and a good number of primary schools.<sup>47</sup>



*St. William Catholic Cathedral of the Diocese of Lafia (Source: NCSAN)*

The Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) has well over 121,389 members with schools and health clinics.<sup>48</sup> Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and Baptist Church have a membership of 93,271. The membership of Methodist and Anglican churches is in the range of 60,392 and 75,029 respectively.<sup>49</sup> The Pentecostal churches in their numerous forms also constitute a significant population in the state. The Nasarawa State hierarchy of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) lists their numbers at about 150,552.<sup>50</sup> Totalling the figures, there are as many as 727,209 Christians in Nasarawa State with a population of 1,869,377 according to the 2006 national census. This not only shows that there has been a significant growth in the number of Christians, but also disputes the official government position that "Christians are about 14% of the population" in the state.<sup>51</sup> Unofficial reports claim the population of Christians

<sup>46</sup> Retrieved from [www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dlafia.htm](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dlafia.htm) on 19 November 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with informant at the premises of St. William's Catholic cathedral, Lafia on 5 December 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with informant in Alushi, Agidi Development Area on 4 December 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with informant in Akwanga, Akwanga Local Government Area on 3 December 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with informant in Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital on 5 December 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Liman, Sa'adatu Hassan and Wakara, Abubakar, Muslims of Nasarawa State: A Survey, NRN Background paper No. 7, 2012, p. 3.

to have grown to 51.3% in Nasarawa State.<sup>52</sup> This figure is expected to reach almost 55% by the year 2030. The sudden growth in the population of Christians is likely to tip the balance of power.

The second reason for the effort to persecute and dominate Christians and Christian communities in Nasarawa State is reflected in what was mentioned earlier, that the creation of Nasarawa State in 1996 out of current Plateau State was viewed by many Muslims as an actualization of a Muslim dream, the opportunity to realize what was lost in Plateau State, a Christian-majority state. Coupled with the increase in the number of Christians, the Muslim dominated government enacts policies that deliberately empower Islam and Muslims politically. Zachariah Zamani Alumaga, a legal adviser to the *Ombatse*, an Eggon socio-cultural group, claims that the government orchestrated an influx of Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomads as mercenaries into the state for political gain, something the state government has denied.<sup>53</sup>

One among the many policies enacted by the government was to ensure that the state capital or the local government capitals are situated in areas with dominant Muslim influence. An informant in Alushi contends that Akwanga, a predominant Christian town, was initially selected as the capital of Nasarawa State.<sup>54</sup> However, intense pressure from the Muslim community both in and outside the state ensured that the capital was moved to Lafia. The reasons were first, because it was the seat of the emirate and has a large Muslim population. This enables the Emir to influence policies that favor the Muslim community, such as the payment of Hajj fares to travel to Mecca for pilgrimage. The second reason is that General Sani Abacha, the military president who created Nasarawa State, is a Kanuri Muslim. Historical evidence confirms that the Kamberi of Lafia emirate migrated from Kanuri enclaves of Borno and the two are considered as consanguine tribes who have laid claim to Islamic tradition in Nigeria longer than any other group. Therefore empowering the Kamberi of Lafia with emirate, and having one of their own as the Emir, was a tacit way of favoring the Muslim minority group over Christian communities.

Another policy is for the government to rename most towns and villages into Hausa, a language easily identified with Muslim settler communities in Nasarawa State. For instance, the place known today as Lafia was originally called Anane, but was renamed Lafia by the Muslim migrant community, the Kamberi who originally came from Kanem Bornu Empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup>

Another policy constructed to marginalize Christians is the creation of Development Areas. The overt reason for the creation of new units of government is usually the attempt to bring governance closer to the people and the people closer to government. In the case of Nasarawa State, evidence suggests, it is being done to weaken the influence of Christians in particular areas,<sup>56</sup> and at the same time, appoint Muslim administrators over and above more competent Christians in a Christian dominated area.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with informant in Mada Station, Akun Development Area on 28 November 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Zachariah Zamani Alumaga, Nasarawa Eggon on 18 July 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with informant in Agyragu, Jenkwe Development Area on 3 December 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Dickson, Eyoh, Differentiating Communities in Central Nigeria: Political and Economic Change in Colonial Lafia, Nigeria, 1900-1950, in: The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 29(3), 1997, pp. 495-496.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with informant in Udege, Udege Development Area on 30 November 2015.

Another area where Christians are marginalized is the allocation of social development projects. For instance, the Christian dominated village of Odoibu in Obi LGA has few holes for water, no clinic, only a dilapidated primary school building etc. This is the case despite the huge population in the community. This is however not the case in Ogessa which is Muslim dominated. Informants in Nasarawa LGA as well as in Loko DA are of the view that social services projects such as schools, clinic and rural roads are done in favor of Muslim dominated settlements.

In order to ensure that Muslims have a grip on the levers of political power, all the military administrators and elected state governors have been Muslims since the creation of the state in 1996.<sup>57</sup> A Muslim informant in Keffi contested this position, saying the Muslims have always headed Nasarawa State by dint of their hard work and political acceptability across faith lines and ethnic divisions.<sup>58</sup> It is difficult to justify this view. Many local narratives indicate that during elections, there is an influx of Muslims from other states to help vote for a Muslim governor. As described previously, this invading Muslim population is displacing the indigenous Christians and taking over their lands and other economic sources. The Muslims who are indigenous to Nasarawa State seem favorably disposed to connive with other Muslims who are not indigenous to the state to inflict the pain of marginalization on the Christian population. This is probably in pursuance of the united Muslim *umma*, which is exercised at the detriment of the good of the Christians. Christians, especially those in Lafia LGA, lamented that a Muslim who comes from as far as Sokoto and Kano states is more likely to get a Certificate of Indigeneship than an indigenous Christian from Barkin Abdullahi, popularly known as (B.A.D), a village that is less than 30 Kilometers from Lafia. Thus, state politics is skewed in favor of ethnic groups that have huge Muslim populations. This accounts for the emergence of a Muslim governor at elections.

#### Names of Administrators/Governors of Nasarawa State

	Name	Administrator/Governor	Years	Religion
1	Abdullahi Ibrahim	Military Administrator	1996 - 1998	Muslim
2	Bala Mande	Military Administrator	1998 - 1999	Muslim
3	Abdullahi Adamu	Governor	1999 - 2007	Muslim
4	Aliyu Doma	Governor	2007 - 2011	Muslim
5	Umaru Tanko Al-Makura	Governor	2011 – date	Muslim

Beyond the governorship of the state, there are other institutions which are always headed by Muslims, allegedly to help support and promote the Muslim agenda of the government. For instance, the leadership of the state owned newspaper called *Nigerian Newsday* and the television/radio arm of Nasarawa Broadcasting Service (NBS) has remained a special prerogative of Muslims. The state owned *Nigerian Newsday* newspaper that is being produced weekly and sold within and outside the state has had the following persons as general managers: Rabiuh Ibrahim (2000 - 2008), Abubakar M.B. Ibahim (2008 - 2013) and currently Rabiuh Abdullahi (from

<sup>57</sup> Interview with informant in Garaku, Kokona Local Government Area on 7 December 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with informant in Keffi, Keffi Local Government Area on 7 December 2015.

July 2013). As for the NBS, seven different directors have headed the organization: Gani Shafa (1997 - 1998), Suleiman Addra (1998 - 1999), Dalhatu Bawa (1999 - 2001), Gani Shafa (2001 - 2004), Suleiman Addra (2004 - 2007) Musa Abdullahi (2007 - 2011), and currently Yusuf Musa (from 2011). According to this list, no Christian has ever headed the establishment. In 2008, there were agitations from the Nasarawa State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) over the bias and lopsided nature of appointing headship of media houses in the state. As a result, one Ephraim Audu, a Catholic Christian, seemed likely become general manger of NBS, but was assassinated near his house in Bukan-Sidi area of Lafia on 16 October 2008. A Muslim informant, who works with NBS, disclosed to NCSAN that Ephraim Audu's assassination cannot be completely disassociated with the likelihood that he was poised to become the next general manager of NBS.<sup>59</sup> The assassination of Ephraim Audu was the first case of a journalist losing his life in such a circumstance in the state. It is therefore interpreted by more than five informants in different parts of the state as a deliberate means of frustrating Christians from occupying very sensitive positions.

All the managers from inception till date are Muslims, who are alleged to have allowed religious sentiments to influence editorial policies. For instance, Islamic religious activities are often given prominence over Christian stories. This is irrespective of whether the Christian story is of a human angle and would have made a good headline as pointed out by a Christian who works with the newspaper establishment as a reporter.

Meanwhile, these are the kind of socio-political dynamics that helped prepare the way for the massive attacks of Christians. The 2011 governorship elections, which saw the emergence of Governor Umaru Tanko Al-Makura of the Muslim dominated Congress for Political Change (CPC) who defeated the incumbent, Aliyu Akwe Doma of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), heralded an era of religiously motivated violent killing of Christians, particularly in the Southern Senatorial District. Some informants in Tudu Adabu, Imom, Azara, Tunga, Keana, Giza and Kadarko expressed views of Governor Al-Makura's complicity in the attacks on Christians.<sup>60</sup> The popular view canvassed by respondents is that Governor Tanko Al-Makura did not trust the Christian population to support his gubernatorial ambition. Most of those interviewed claim his ambition to win the 2015 election gave birth to the hatched plan to displace the Christian communities. To this extent, unconfirmed reports have it that the governor was responsible for the hiring of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim nomads to kill and dispossess Christians of their land. The crux of this implicating statement has consistently re-echoed in the Nasarawa State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria's (CAN) communication on the conflict. For instance, in a press release entitled "Nasarawa State Crisis: Who is Deceiving Who", published on 24 November 2014, CAN categorically stated that "it should be noted that our constant mention that the Fulani mercenaries/militia/fundamentalists were imported is neither imaginary nor an allusion but a statement of fact and the question from where they were imported and by whom can best be answered by the executive governor of the state who is the chief security officer."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Interview with informant in Tudun-Kauri Area of Lafia metropolis on 4 December 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Press Release by Nasarawa State Chapter of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) entitled: Nasarawa State Crisis: Who is Deceiving Who?, 2014, p.3.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.2.

By 2013 and 2014, the conflict had snowballed claiming the lives of many Christians, injured scores and displaced thousands, particularly in the Southern Zone of the state as shown in the data presented in this report. Christians in the state are being deliberately targeted. CAN indicated in a statement that “it is evident that houses of Christian brothers were selectively burnt down in Muslim dominated areas along Tudun- Amba, Sabon-Gari, Rice-Mill, Shinge, all within Lafia metropolis between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014. Among which were two houses belonging to the general secretary of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC)...residence, vehicle and motorcycle of the Reverend-in-charge of ERCC Gidi-Gidi were burnt down by insurgents/fundamentalists.”<sup>62</sup> In addition, CAN also pointed out that “Christian worshippers were blocked in churches in Shabu, e.g. ERCC Shabu. Cars and motorcycles of worshippers were burnt down, including the vehicle of the church Treasurer of ERCC Shabu, while some Christian youths were butchered to death...between the Emir of Lafia’s palace and precisely after Juma’at prayers, three Christian worshippers who were on their way back from church activity were attacked and killed. They were butchered and grilled like *suya* (local meat delicacy) and eaten in a show of cannibalism.”<sup>63</sup> The facts of these atrocities against Christians and Christian communities in Nasarawa State by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen are presented in the data above.

## The Muslim domination of Christians in traditional institutions

A document obtained from the Nasarawa State Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs indicates that there are 53 graded emirs and chiefs in the state, six out of which are vacant. A detailed breakdown shows that there are 22 first class graded emirs and chiefs; out of which only 7 are Christians (14 are Muslims, 1 is vacant). There are 20 second class graded emirs and chiefs, out of which only 4 are Christians (13 are Muslims, 3 are vacant). Out of the 11 third class graded emirs and chiefs, only 2 are of the Christian faith as shown by the tables below (7 are Muslims, 2 are vacant). Thus out of the total 53 traditional chiefs that occupy the structures of traditional power base, 34 are Muslims while 13 are Christians (6 are vacant). This means that Christians are underrepresented and can hardly influence any traditional policies. Traditional chiefs play a vital role in the recommendation of ministers at the federal level, the selection of military cadets to represent their constituencies and in allocating lands and giving approval for the purchase of land in their domains.

### First class graded emirs and chiefs

	Name	Title	LGA/DA	Religion
1	Mr. Samson Gamu Yare	Chun Mada	Akwanga	Christian
2	Alh. Abubakar Umar	Emir of Awe	Awe	Muslim
3	Alh. (Dr.) Kabiru Musa Ibrahim	Emir of Azara	Azara	Muslim
4	Alh. Ahmadu Aliyu Onawo	Andoma of Doma	Doma	Muslim
5	Vacant (he is dead)	Gom Mama	Farin-Ruwa	-

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with informant in Umbi Area of Lafia metropolis on 4 December 2015.

6	Alh. Aliyu Baba Dauda	Gomo Babye	Gadabuke	Muslim
7	Dr. Ayuba Agwadu Audu	Zhe Migili	Jenkwe	Christian
8	Alh. Mohammadu Bako	Emir of karshi	Karshi	Muslim
9	Pharm. Luka Panyam Baba	Esu Karu	Karu	Christian
10	Mr. Emmanuel O. Elayo	Osana of Keana	Keana	Christian
11	Alh. Mohammadu C. Yamusa	Emir of Keffi	Keffi	Muslim
12	Dr. Sylvester O. Ayih	Abaga Toni	Kokona	Christian
13	Alh. (Dr.) Isa Mustapha Agwai	Emir of Lafia	Lafia	Muslim
14	Alh. Ahmadu Al-Makura	Sangarin Kwnadere	Lafia- North	Muslim
15	Mal. Abubakar Ahmed Sabo	Sarkin Loko	Loko	Muslim
16	Alh. Hassan Ahmed	Emir of Nasarawa	Nasarawa	Muslim
17	Dr. Bala AbaineAngbazo	Aren- Eggon	Nasarawa Eggon	Christian
18	Alh. Aliyu DanganaOgiri	Osuko of Obi	Obi	Muslim
19	Barr. Joel Sabo Aninge	Odyong Nyanpka	Panda	Christian
20	Alh. Halilu Bala Usman	Osu Ajiri	Udege	Muslim
21	Alh. Usman Abdullahi	Ohimege Panda	Umaisha	Muslim
22	Alh. Lawal Musa Nagogo	Oriye Rindre	Wamba	Muslim

(Source: Fieldwork by NSCAN)

## Second class graded emirs and chiefs

	Name	Title	LGA/DA	Religion
1	Alh. Abubakar Sadiq Kaika	Osu Agwada	Agwada	Muslim
2	Alh. Usman G. Umbugadu	Aren Akun	Akun	Muslim
3	Vacant (he is dead)	Chu Ngah	Akwanga West	-
4	Alh. Aliyun Ashuku	Wuse of Wuse	Azara	Muslim
5	Alh. Umaru Suleiman	Aku Khe of Akiri	Azara	Muslim
6	Mr. Moses Alade	Utushoho of Agbashi	Ekye	Christian
7	Alh. Musa Abari Agye	Osakpa of Akpanaja	Ekye	Muslim
8	Alh. Umaru Elegu Abu	Sangarin Giza	Giza	Muslim
9	Chief Jonathan G. Iwala	ZheDuglu	Jenkwe	Christian
10	Alh. Abbas Usman Babba	Sarkin Arikya	Lafia East	Muslim
11	Alh. Abdullahi Magaji	OronAkhe	Lafia East	Muslim
12	Mr. OsulInarigu	Osakyo of Assakio	Lafia East	Christian
13	Alh. Mahmood Umaru Bwalla	Sarkin Shabu	Lafia North	Muslim
14	Alh. Ahmadu Kwanaki Guto	Oche Agatu	Loko	Muslim
15	Alh. Abdullahi Moh'd Hassan	Sarkin Adudu	Obi	Muslim
16	Alh. Balarabe S.M. Alhassan	Sarkin Daddere	Obi	Muslim

17	Dr. Umar Abubakar Apeshi	Osoho of Olosoho	Obi	Muslim
18	Mr. Christopher Jatau	UhereAshea	Panda	Christian
19	Vacant (he is dead)	Sarkin Toto	Toto	-
20	Vacant (he is dead)	Oguma Bassa	Toto	-

(Source: Fieldwork by NSCAN)

### Third class graded emirs and chiefs

	Name	Title	LGA/DA	Religion
1	Alh. Hassan Mahammed	Sarkin Ribi	Awe	Muslim
2	Alh. Umaru Shuaibu	Sarkin Tunga	Awe	Muslim
3	Mr. Ishaku Dahilo	Esudadayako	Gadabuke	Christian
4	Mr. Fabian Orogu	Osokadoko of Kadarko	Giza	Christian
5	Alh. Ahmed A. Hassan	Sarkin Uke	Karshi	Muslim
6	Alh. Jibrin Waziri	Sarkin Gurku	Karu	Muslim
7	Alh. Mohammed Usman	Oseshi of Alosi	Keana	Muslim
8	Alh. Hamidu L. U. Omaku	Sarkin Adogi	Lafia East.	Muslim
9	Vacant (he is dead)	OriyeAwuma	Lafia North	-
10	Vacant (he is dead)	ArenKoron Kuje	Lafia North	-
11	Alh. Ibrahim D. Galadima	Sarkin Ara	Nasarawa	Muslim

(Source: Fieldwork by NSCAN)

At this juncture, it is important to mention how Islam came to Nasarawa State to avoid the oversight of writing so much about Islam and Christianity without saying a word on how they came into existence in the state. It is difficult to establish when Islam first entered the territory known as Nasarawa State. Long before the *jihad* that led to the spread of Islam to the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria where Nasarawa State belongs, Muslim Hausa traders were active in the region. These traders did not only come to the region with their items of trade but also with their religion, Islam. Some argue that Islam has long been an identity of the Hausa-Fulani and therefore the religion could be said to be as old in the state as presence of the Hausa-Fulani. Meanwhile, after the *jihad* of 1804, princes from the Sokoto caliphate were usually sent to the newly conquered territories. This led to the establishment of an Islamic settlement in Bagaji that later metamorphosed into Keffi emirate. Based on this evidence, Keffi is the oldest and earliest Islamic emirate in the state. Hence, Keffi-Nasarawa axis is arguably the birthplace of the organized Islamic enclave in Nasarawa State. For Christianity in the state, the Eggon hills, located near Nasarawa Eggon town, remains the undisputed birthplace of Christianity in 1912, when missionary activity commenced to evangelize the area, carried out by Dutch missionaries. While both Islam and Christianity made converts from animists, it should be stressed that the two religions co-existed without any known record of violent conflict until the threshold of Nigeria's return to multi-party democracy in 1999.

In northern Nigeria, the British helped the expansion of Islam by extending the rule of Muslim emirs into neighboring pagan territories. The preference for Muslims to be chosen as traditional rulers by the respective state governors is based on the principle of: *Cuius regio, eius religio*: (whose realm, his religion), which means that the religion of the ruler dictated the religion of the ruled. Following the spirit of this principle, Muslims have always ensured that Muslims emerge as traditional rulers in almost all parts of Nasarawa State. The imposition of Muslims as local chiefs was to favor and encourage policies that guarantee the interests of Islam and of Muslims generally.

In Nigeria, the administration of non-government allocated lands is in the hands of traditional rulers. They decide on how land is used and who uses it. There are widespread allegations, which field research corroborates, that traditional rulers who are Muslims often deny Christians the right to use land. In some extreme cases, their lands are taken from them and handed over to Muslims, especially Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen. Any resistance on the part of Christians usually results in violent conflict. Such cases abound in Awe, Keana, Obi and Doma LGAs of the state. Under the supervision of the traditional rulers, who are Muslims, people of their faith have unrestricted right to land. However, this is not the case with Christians, who do not hide their anger. The resultant consequences are violent attacks upon Christians by Muslims, as has been the case for years. For instance, the killing of Christians within Lafia and the surrounding area - as listed in the documentation above - is argued to have tacit approval from the emir of Lafia. The emir's inability to even condemn the killings of Christians and destruction of their properties is suggestive of an endorsement.

In a related development, Christians incurred varying degrees of losses in term of property. The emir of Awe, in Awe LGA of the state is allegedly accused of facilitating the coming and accommodating of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen that killed Christians not just in Awe but even beyond. Unconfirmed reports state that Tunga town in Awe LGA was the base from which the Hausa-Fulani Muslims herdsmen were crossing the river Benue to go wreak havoc on Christian communities in surrounding villages on the Benue and Taraba borders. The Sarkin Tunga, Alhaji Shuaibu, is yet to refute his alleged complicity in accommodating the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen for the purpose of killing and displacing Christians from their ancestral land. In Obi LGA, Christians had their homes burnt, in Azara DA Christians suffered the same fate, just as Christians in Lafia East DA are lamenting the destruction of different kinds of properties in addition to the churches that have been destroyed. Many Christians were killed and injured in the same Development Area.

To further show that there is a link between the traditional rulers who are Muslims and the violent conflicts in the state, it needs to be pointed out that in Akwanga, Karu, Panda and Nasarawa Eggon, where there are traditional rulers of the Christian faith, there are no cases of violent conflicts. The attacks on Christians occur mainly in places where the traditional rulers are Muslims. The only places where Christians are traditional rulers and where violent conflicts are prevalent are Keana, Kadarko, Agbashi and Asakio. NCSAN research discovered that these incidents have usually been an overflow from violence in neighboring places where Muslims are traditional rulers.

## Section Five:

### Other sources of pressure on Christians in Nasarawa State

Pressure on Christians in Nasarawa State has become endemic. Fieldwork in most parts of Nasarawa State suggests that there is a systemic and structural injustice that many Christians face, being more than only direct violence meted out on some of them. Therefore, in the following section some indications are given about the (extensive) violation of religious rights and freedom of Christians in Nasarawa State.

#### Pressure on Christians in everyday life

The amended 1999 Nigerian Constitution guarantees freedom of worship, which is not to be carried out to the detriment of others. However, in Nasarawa State, it is a common phenomenon that Muslims block the federal highway in Lafia metropolis during *Jumat* prayers. Instead of going to mosques to pray, Muslims pray on the federal highway which runs through the city from the Akwanga-Nasarawa Eggon axis to Makurdi, the Benue capital. As long as the prayers last, Christians and people of other faiths must halt their journey and wait for the prayer to end and the road to be made accessible again,<sup>64</sup> as narrated by an informant. This attitude is not only found in Lafia but also in Masaka. A female Mass Communication student of Nasarawa State University, recounted to NCSAN that Muslim students in Keffi usually block the road on the campus to pray. This has always caused traffic disruption and hardship for people wanting to use the blocked road.<sup>65</sup>



*Muslims praying on Lafia-Makurdi Express Way at the Tudu-Kauri Area of Lafia metropolis (Source: NSCAN)*

<sup>64</sup> Interview with informant in Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Local Government Area on 8 December 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with informant in Dutsen Mahoni area of Keffi, Keffi Local Government Area on 15 December 2015.

When asked about the security implications of causing such traffic jams at a time when Boko Haram is hunting for soft targets, an Islamic cleric located at Dutsen Mahoni area of Keffi said it is actually unwise from a human point of view but that Allah will always protect his people beyond human logic and permutations.<sup>66</sup> He is of the view that dying during the worship of Allah translates into inheriting *aljanafidasi* (reward of eternity).<sup>67</sup> However, a pastor in Dudugulu argues that rather than blocking the roads and causing untold hardship to Christian road users, the Muslims should imbibe the ethics of pluralistic society that places “live and let live” above any personal gain, be it religious or otherwise.<sup>68</sup> Aside from the security risk of blocking roads, it has also led to people missing serious appointments due to unnecessary delays.

It needs to be mentioned that some Muslims consider the practice of praying *Jumat* prayer on the highway as an anathema. For instance, a Muslim informant in Anguan Rimi Area of Lafia argued that following the Islamic principle of *najessa* (dirt avoidance), praying on the road rather than consecrated place such as a mosque is unacceptable. In his opinion, the road is an unfit place of worship because it is considered not pure enough for a place of prayer.<sup>69</sup> In Massaka, which is the Nasarawa State neighborhood to Abuja, a Muslim informant who is also dissatisfied with the practice of praying on roads, reveals that this action is a deliberate ploy using the guise of religion to infringe upon the rights of non-Muslims of being allowed to move unhindered at all times. He calls the practice an “attitudinal provocation” of non-Muslims.<sup>70</sup>

Another discrimination against Christians is a bias in the siting of development projects. For instance, Tudu Adabu and Daddere are neighbouring towns, located along Lafia-Obi road. Tudu Adabu is Christian dominated and more populated than Daddere, which is Muslim dominated. However, the government of Nasarawa State decided to make Daddere the headquarters of the newly created Development Area. By this decision, Daddere is positioned to be more developed as an administrative unit than Tudu Adabu.

In Agwada DA, Apawu-Kasua is Christian dominated, which is starved of social amenities such as healthcare dispensary, boreholes and secondary schools among others. However, the closest village of Apawu is Muslim dominated and has a government hospital, senior secondary school, and police outpost to provide security. A Christian informant in the locality is of the opinion that if social amenities cannot be provided for each of the villages, one would expect that social amenities should be centrally sited where both villages can access with ease.<sup>71</sup> However, this is not the case here. A human rights activist in Lafia informed NCSAN that bias against Christians in siting projects in favor of Muslims is a common phenomenon that dots the territorial landscape of Nasarawa State.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Interview with informant in Dudugulu on 4 December 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with informant in Ugwan Rimi Area of Lafia metropolis on 6 December 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with informant in Masaka, Karu Local Government Area on 9 December 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with informant in Apawu-Kasua, Agwada Development Area on 27 November 2015.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with informant in Lafia metropolis on 6 December 2015.

<sup>71</sup> This is an opinion expressed in the course of interviews in Nasarawa, Toto and Awe, Agwatashi during fieldwork for this study.

<sup>72</sup> This is an opinion expressed in the course of interviews in Lafia, Awe, and Agwatashi during fieldwork for this study.

## Failing government structures for resolving conflicts

Obviously, while the government has always claimed that it has structures aimed at resolving the violent conflicts in the state, informants on the streets of Lafia, Awe, Keana and Agwatashi refute this claim, arguing that the lack of such structures is partly what is responsible for the incessant nature of the conflict.<sup>73</sup> From documents obtained in Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital, NCSAN discovered that government has, on five occasions, to set up a High-Powered Judicial Commission of Inquiry to look into the violent conflicts in the state. For instance, Governor Abdullahi Adamu in 1998 set a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to examine the immediate and remote cause of the conflict between the Bassa and Egbira in Toto LGA and its environs. The commission had seven terms of reference, which included identifying and bringing perpetrators of the violent conflicts to book.<sup>74</sup> The commission submitted its findings to the government after due diligence in public hearing. However, NCSAN was reliably informed that the recommendations of the commission were not implemented. No one has been punished for the killings and the affected persons and families have not been rehoused. The key issues that triggered the conflict are still not being taken note of by government. The lack of action and implementation of recommendations was the fate of another inquiry that looked into the 2001-2002 violence between the Christian Tiv and Muslim-Hausa of Azara and their allies.

The government of Nasarawa State led by Governor Tanko Al-Makura has set up three Commissions of Inquiry to look into the violent conflicts in Assakio, Agyaragu and the activities of *Ombatse* in Nasarawa South Senatorial District. Communities and ethnic groups submitted their memoranda stating their views and understanding of the conflict. The reports on Assakio and Agyaragu were submitted and have not received any attention yet. However, the report that concerns *Ombatse* and its activities was published in November 2014 as a government white paper. NCSAN obtained the white paper and observes that the recommendations are far-reaching, but whether they will be implemented has yet to be seen. The Federal Government of Nigeria has approved the stationing of an army battalion in the state, a squadron of mobile police in Lafia as well as the siting of a police helipad for aerial surveillance, not only of Nasarawa State but the entire north-central geo-political zone that has turned into a hotbed of conflict and bloodletting. NCSAN discovered that Governor Tanko Al-Makura has been embarking on peace advocacy visits to traditional rulers and heads of Local Government Areas in the state since late 2014: such peace-advocacy teams visited the Emir of Azara, the Osakpa of Akpanaja, Oriye Awuma, Aren Koron Kuje and Zhe Migili among others.<sup>75</sup> In addition, the wife of the state governor has also been meeting with women groups in the state and canvassing for peace.

While the Commissions of Inquiry were set up to look into the various violent conflicts in the state, it is to be noted that these commissions always consisted of more Muslims than Christians. Some observers see this as a deliberate attempt by the government to make sure that any decisions made by the commission go in favor of Muslims. For instance, if decisions are to be made by allowing members to vote, it is obvious that Christians are the minority and so the

<sup>73</sup> Advocacy Tour on Peaceful Co-existence to L. G. C & Traditional Councils in the state, Nasarawa Today 2(3), 2004, p. 54.

<sup>74</sup> Interview in Abagu Village of Daddare, Daddare Development Area on 28 November 2015.

<sup>75</sup> See footnote 75.

Muslims in the majority will have their way. It is, therefore a worrisome development that has caused many to question the sincerity of the government in setting up the Commissions of Inquiry at all.

## Manipulation of state policies to put pressure on Christians

An informant in Daddere observes that Muslims in Nasarawa State are using political power to marginalize Christians, and that the prevailing violence is causing this now more than ever. The informant added that Abagu village in Obi LGA previously had as many as four polling units in 1979. But today only two polling units are available in the Christian populated village of Abagu.<sup>76</sup> The two others were moved to the Muslim dominated Obi town, the headquarters of Obi LGA. With this kind of arrangement, votes can easily be manipulated to favor Muslim candidates during elections, the informant added. Due to the weak electoral system of the country, having a polling unit in your domain increases the likelihood of stuffing the ballots in favor of those candidates agreed upon by residents living close to the polling units. Where religion plays a major role in election (as is the case in Nigeria), moving the polling units to the Muslim dominated town of Obi means the Muslim candidates vying for positions stand the chance of getting high votes from Muslim controlled polling units.

Looking at the nature of conflict in Nasarawa State, it will always be difficult to distinguish the religious forms of conflict from the ethnic aspect. As an ethnic group that is predominantly Muslim goes against another ethnic group that is predominantly Christian, the motivation may be religious, but the target and victims are not only religious but ethnic as well. However, evidence from this research suggests two important elements. First, religious contestation accounts for the tension and conflicts in most parts of Nasarawa State. Second, the religious motivation for most of the conflicts has been neglected, downplayed or excluded by most researchers, experts and policy makers, particularly when conducting research and drafting reports for conflict resolution policies and frameworks.



*Destruction of Christian homes at Tudu Adabu, Daddere Development Area  
(Source: Fieldwork by NSCAN)*

<sup>76</sup> Interview with informant in Abagu village on 27 November 2015.

Another example of manipulation is to be found in Kwandare district of Lafia North DA and has a complex history. An Informant in Tudun-Amba Area of Lafia reveals that the village of Kwandare was previously known as Tunare.<sup>77</sup> How and when it became Kwandare is not clear. However, interviews in Danka, Randa-Sarki and Randa-Magaji, all occupied by Christians of the Eggon ethnic group suggest that Kwandare was an Eggon settlement that was later taken over by the Gwandara ethnic group, who are predominantly Muslims. The change of name from Tunare to Kwandere was to give a Hausa outlook. The Gwandara are a sister tribe of the Hausa and trace their origin to Kano, in North-West Nigeria. While the Gwandara are few in the area, they control the traditional stool that is recently up-graded to first class status. In Randa-Sarki, an informant mentioned that the change of name would have occurred so that Muslims can have it easy to rule over the Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religion.<sup>78</sup> It is not clear why he arrived at this conclusion. However, NCSAN was told in most places that traditional rulers must sign and approve that an individual reside in their domain before such a person is issued a certificate of indigene. In Kwaghghire Village in Obi LGA and Agyaragu Tofa of Lafia LGA among many other places, there has been a sustained complaint that Christians are often discriminated against when it comes to issuing Certificates of Indigeneship, which are an essential requirement for securing a job with either the state or federal government. The implication is that this causes Christians to be at a disadvantage when seeking such employment.

The political leadership in the state has a policy of sponsoring people on pilgrimage. However, the application of this policy is done in such a way that Christians do not benefit as much as Muslims. For instance, data collected indicates that in 2014, the government of Nasarawa State under the leadership of Umaru Tanko Al-Makura sponsored 100 Christians on pilgrimage to Israel<sup>79</sup> and unconfirmed reporting has it that 417 Muslims were sponsored for travelling to Mecca.<sup>80</sup> This shows that one religious group benefits more from the government than the other.



*Vandalized church of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) at Gwayaka, Lafia East Development Area (Source: NSCAN)*



*An untouched mosque opposite a destroyed church (Source: NSCAN)*

<sup>77</sup> Interview in Randa-Sarki, Lafia North Development Area on 23 November 2015.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with informant in Randa-Sarki on 26 November 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Retrieved from [www.leadership.ng/news](http://www.leadership.ng/news) on 11 December 2015.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with informant in Nasarawa State Government House, Shendam Road, Lafia on 4 December 2015.

## Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the narratives of violent conflict, and to further examine the persecution of Christians in Nasarawa State. To do this effectively, the study was divided into five sections. Section One provided the conceptual clarification of persecution, violent conflict and sources of persecution within the context of violent conflict perpetrated by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen against Christians, who are predominant in the state. It also presented a brief history of Nasarawa State as a background study. This chapter discovered that there are plausible theories for claiming that Nasarawa State was created for the Muslim population to achieve a socio-political dominance they had never had before.

Section Two surveyed the nature of violent conflicts in Nasarawa State, presenting a critical evaluation of the contending narratives and arguing that there is a need for a deeper investigation, linking the conflicts to the persecution of Christians in the state. Section Three supports this argument by showing four sets of data for the period January 2013 – May 2016: number of Christians killed and injured; number of churches destroyed or damaged; amount of Christian properties destroyed or damaged; number of Christians in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Many Christians were injured or lost their lives. Many lost their houses and other properties, and had to flee for their lives. Many of them have not been able to return to their (destroyed) homesteads.

While it is not impossible to have relevant authorities in the state to resolve the conflict, it does not look as if this is likely to happen (at least not in the immediate future). The reason is that the persecution of Christians has become something from which many that are in authority are directly benefitting. Therefore, the likelihood of them fighting the system that has made them what they are, is very remote. As a result, it is up to international agencies (as well as other organizations within the country) to rise up resolutely and halt the persecution of Christians in Nasarawa State. It is troubling that both state policies and the Muslim population in general in Nasarawa State seem set on implementing the unwritten law that “Islam rules, Islam is never ruled.”<sup>81</sup> This mentality creates an operational environment of suzerain-vassal relationship between Muslims and Christians in the state. Such Muslim dominance will surely lead to severe reductions in the liberties of Christians in the state as has already been made manifest in the issuance of Certificates of Indigeneship.

Nasarawa State is a bellwether. What happens in this state is - due to its strategic location - likely to have a multiplier effect in surrounding states. Therefore, it is feared by NCSAN that Nasarawa State is likely to remain one of the main areas for the persecution of Christians in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The biggest concern is the allegedly simplistic explanation from some observers that the conflict is more about political and economic contestation rather than

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<sup>81</sup> Sampson, Isaac Terwase, *Religious violence in Nigeria: Causal diagnoses and strategic recommendations to the state and religious communities*, 2014, [http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/146626/ichaptersection\\_singledocument/557b9fed-dcb2-4cde-ae778f84898108a1/en/ch\\_5.pdf](http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/146626/ichaptersection_singledocument/557b9fed-dcb2-4cde-ae778f84898108a1/en/ch_5.pdf), accessed 2 April 2016.

religious domination. The continuous promotion of Islamic supremacy over and above other religions in the affairs of the state remains an obstacle to peace.

## Appendix A

Focal group discussions took place in three places within the Southern Senatorial District of the state. Participants agreed that there is a clear imbalance of power between Christians and Muslims. Since the power-structure in the state favors Muslims, they are taking advantage of this to persecute Christians.

- 1) On 19 November 2015 focal group discussion took place at YMC Hall in Bukan-Sidi area of Lafia. 173 Christians participated arguing that all needs to be done to liberate the Christians from attempts to eliminate them from actively participating and benefiting from socio-economic space. The clergy enthusiastically explained their perspective of the violent conflict.
- 2) On 21 November 2015, 131 discussants, including the clergy, met at Government Day Secondary school, Agyaragu, to explain their view of the violent conflicts. Christian women emphasized the fact that they and their children (and the unborn) face the problem of being treated as second-class citizens.
- 3) On 13 December 2015, 107 Christians gathered at Local Government Educational Authority Primary School, Awe. As in the other discussions mentioned, this was an inter-denominational interaction. It was stated that the insistence on requiring a Certificate of Indigeneship is a deliberate means of ensuring that not many Christians compete for jobs since they have less chance of obtaining this document from Muslim traditional rulers.

## Appendix B

The pictures below show photographic evidence of destroyed Christian homes and churches in Rutu, Doma LGA. Some of the Christians depicted claim they are the only surviving members of their families after deadly attacks on the community. They are returning to their ruins without the company and warmth of loved family members.





(All photos: NSCAN)