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## Behind the gates of Darul-Islam

By Bashir Yahuza Malumfashi | Published Date Aug 7, 2009 22:20 PM

Contrary to what the Attorney-General told the Federal Government that their mode of operation contravenes the doctrine of the rule of law, Malam Bashir told Weekly Trust that our they established the town 16 years ago in order to live and practise pure Islamic religion without mingling with other corruptive and sinful world. He also disassociates his people from Boko Haram and other fundamentalists who cause violence in the name of religion.

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As he clarifies, “We face Allah with all our actions. We are no threats. We’ve been living in this town for 16 years now. Let them come and investigate if for one day any of us has ever been arrested on any criminal or civil unrest. Our aim is to practise the proper ethics of Islam without associating with the sinful world. That was why we migrated from various states down here.

“Here, we abhor alcoholism, brothels, lesbianism, homosexuality, fornication, adultery and all sorts of cultural, religious, economical corruption. Our aim is not to infringe on the rights of other people. They have their rights to live and we have our own too. After all, there’s no compulsion in religion. “Let us be clear, we did not dissociate ourselves from the Niger State government facilities. We refer our sick ones to their hospitals if their cases are above the knowledge of our medical team. Our doctors profess Islamic medicines like using honey and other herbs originated from the teachings of Muhammad (SAW).

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“Four years ago, the S.S.S. and other security operatives from Abuja visited us and conducted a thorough search into our houses with the motive to find any incriminating weapon, but nothing of such was found with us. That confirmed to government that we are peaceful and not in any way violent or threatening the peace of anybody.

“They made us to sign an undertaking not to be violent, to be law-abiding and we did that. We have a copy of that undertaking and they have theirs. Four days ago, the Divisional Police Officer of Mokwa visited and invited us to his office. We sent some delegates who went there and re-signed a similar undertaking. We have a copy and they too retained a copy. Then what does the government want us to do again?” Malam Bashir asked.

When asked from where and what made them to inhabit the area, he told Weekly Trust that he and 20 others together with their families from Kano decided to migrate to the town 16 years ago and sought the permission of the village head of Masha in order to practise their religion without interference and corruption.

He added that their population grew by the day and their total number has so far reached 4,000, including women and children.

“Unlike what the Attorney-General said, all of us are Nigerians from various states like Kano, Jigawa, Sokoto, Katsina and a lot from Niger and Kogi states. Some of us are Hausas, Fulanis, Igbiras, Nupes, Yorubas and others. It is only Igbo people who are not with us here. We invite anybody to come and investigate us if we are foreigners,” Bashir explained.

The leader said unlike the recent Boko Haram sect, they are not a sect; that they’re just Muslims without associating with any Islamic sect like Izala, Darika, Shi'a or Salafiyya. “We are just Muslims trying to live according to Allah’s injunctions in the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). We welcome anybody to come and see for himself, entertain and accommodate questions on our activities, way of life and religion. If we’re found to be doing things contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, we are ready to accept changes based on tangible proof from the tangible sources mentioned. We have a library with relevant Islamic educational stuff,” he added.

How do they run their lives within the confinement of Darul-Islam town? The leader said they are not against western education added that they have schools where they teach their children, and even adults, western and Islamic education, though not in the secular manner as done in formal government schools and colleges.

He condemned the allegations going round that they are against government institutions. He said they are not against orthodox medication because they normally refer their sick to government hospitals if they defy local treatment. They mingle and associate with people all over the country as they engage in farming, carpentry, trade, tailoring, textile trade, menial jobs in Abuja, Lagos, Kano and other towns and cities within the country.

If that is the case, who is eligible to stay and live in Darul-Islam town? Bashir answered, “we open our doors to anybody who wishes to visit us or live here with his family even if he is a Christian or pagan. It is not our doing, it is the command and teachings of the Islamic religion to accept a stranger and accord him or her all necessary hospitality. If anybody wishes to live with us, it must be on condition that he will fear Allah and is ready to practise Islam hundred per cent based on the teachings of the Qur'an and tradition of Muhammad (SAW). The person should obey the laws and rules of Allah. We cannot allow anybody to live in our midst if he is dubious or corrupt, if he will not observe the mandatory obligations of Islam, which are prayers, fasting, zakah, pilgrimage, etc.”

Hence Darul-Islam is within the jurisdiction of Mokwa Local Government Area of Niger State. How do they relate with government in terms of discharging their civic responsibilities? “We have no any stake with government in terms of asking them to provide social amenities and the likes because we don’t want to associate with anything that would corrupt us and

our families.

"I remember four years ago, a delegation of the Federal Government visited us and promised to build schools and modern market for us. We consented, but up till now, they have not come. That is why we resorted to living within our means, so we provide all our social amenities such as schools, houses, mosque, library and community roads within the town.

"We agree and believe there is the existence of governments of Federal, State and local. We live in our town very peacefully without breaking the rules of the nation, state or the local government. For the past 16 years of our stay here, there is no any instance where one of us has been involved in any criminality. If there is anything incriminating found in us, let the security prove it.

"We cannot and would not attack any police station, harass or intimidate any policeman or obstruct any security agency from carrying out their lawful duties. We are law-abiding. The laws of Allah we worship and obey are against all forms of corruption or terrorism. We cannot involve ourselves in politics as it is being practised by Nigerian politicians, which is based on 'lame democracy.'

"We wish no harm on anybody and we don't want anybody to harm us. During his tenure, the former governor, Engineer Y.Y. Kure visited us in four instances. He discussed and ate with us. He commended us for our orderly conducts and his deputy had convinced us to even accept polio vaccination for our children. But the present one, Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, has not even once consulted or tried to know anything from us since he came to power,"

One of the teachers and a resident of Darul Islam town, Malam Shu'aibu Balogun said he migrated from Ikenne in Ogun State. He said he wanted to draw the attention of the public to the fact that they are not Islamic fundamentals and their name is not Daras-salam, as some people have tagged them. He explained that Darus-salam means the "city of Islam" and is not synonymous to any sect.

"Let us be categorical to the government and anybody who feels concerned over our issue that we have no agreement with any foreign government or religious group, be it Taliban, Shi'a or even Osama bin Laden and the like. We are lone rangers, treading the path of Islam as enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah," he emphasised.

What if by human nature, one of them commits adultery or theft, what type of punishment would they apply to him or her since they do not recognise the customary or magistrate courts? Bashir answered thus: "Though, we don't want and have any criminal in our midst, criminals like killers, cultists, drunks, hemp smokers or drug addicts are not welcome in our community. If such things happen, upon valid certification and burden of proof, we will apply what Allah and His messenger provided as punishment to the type of offence he or she commits and up till now, such things have not happened," he said.

Another resident, Adam bin Abubakar, who hails from Azare in Bauchi State and holds a diploma in Computer Science, told Weekly Trust what attracted him to the town seven years ago. He attributed his migration to the good conduct of the people of Darus Islam town. He said "we have no linkage with those rebels who call themselves Boko Haram. We condemn their manner of approach. We also refute a baseless allegation made against us by Shaikh Albani who alleged that their leader, Muhammad Yusuf, was one of us. That was not true," he stressed.

Weekly Trust has contacted some of the indigenes of Niger State who live in the neighbouring surroundings of Darul-Islam town. Musa Halidu, who resides in Gbete village, said though for the past 16 years of their existence, he has not for one day heard that the members engaged or were arrested in connection with any crime, but he still felt that government should investigate them so that if they have any criminal plan they may want to execute in future, they can be stopped on time.

Another Nigerlite, Mr Mathew James, a Christian, advised Darul Islam members to stick to their practice and not allow any politician or sinful people to corrupt them.

The Public Relations Officer of the Niger State Police Command, Assistant Superintendent of Police Richard Ogbuche said they are aware that Darul Islam people worship at a place about 30 kilometres to Mokwa and they have not been found with anything incriminating. He said the police have investigated the group and found them innocent of all forms of crimes and have been monitoring them.

“When the Boko Haram sect was routed in Borno State, we commenced thorough search along the Mokwa road so that members of the sect do not join Darul-Islam or enter Niger State and hide. About 30 policemen were stationed at Makera to monitor the movement of people and Darul Islam group,” he said. And they continue to live happily ever after.

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