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Insecurity: Why peace efforts in Northwest Nigeria are not sustainable

By Editorial

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Nigeria and Niger Republic Border Security



By Ahmad SALKIDA and Yusuf ANKA.

Background

Jibia, a border community in the North West of Nigeria, sits precariously on the road cutting through Katsina town into Niger Republic. The fierce desert wind frequently blazes through, triggering a storm of dusty earth over the market stalls and farmsteads. Traveling on the road from Katsina, capital of Katsina State, the presence of the ubiquitous checkpoints mounted by security personnel is unmistakable. Sadly, the securitymen at the various checkpoints along the road are devoted to transactions having little to do with actual security. Little surveillance or scrutiny of human and cargo traffic was going on. Rather, commercial vehicle drivers are seen routinely stretching out hands at each checkpoint to drop naira notes.

There are several rural Nigerians fleeing from villages in Katsina State and going towards Jibia, the border town with Niger Republic. These include families comprising women, a few men and children. These are families fleeing from villages that had been razed by bandits, left bare of livestock, farm produce and housewares. The bandits are ruthless, and no village had any provisions of defense capable of withstanding their assault and giving shield to villagers. The villagers are the life of trauma of rape and open humiliation they have suffered in the hands of the armed bandits for months. Moving into an uncertain future, but happy to be leaving behind a hostile, brutal existence, the families are taking any means of transport, including riding a donkey. The border post is marked by some buildings and simple shades, some of which are marked out for the official duties of the Immigration and Customs services. Beyond these and the roadblocks, there are only occasional community clusters across the vast expanse of bushland and fields.

On the road

There were seven check points manned by different services of the Nigerian security within the 30 miles stretch between Katsina and Jibia local government area that sits along the border with Niger Republic. The highway was active in the hours of the day and considered safe. However, the road from Zurmi in Zamfara state that connects to Jibia is classified as the most dangerous, most unsafe and most treacherous highway in the North-West region of Nigeria. The security personnel at the check points on the highway evidently are not equipped to address the magnitude of violence associated with that highway. Strutting across the road with their

rifles strapped across the shoulders, the security officials, without exception, appear overly driven to receive ‘contributions’ from commercial vehicle drivers, rather than securing anybody or anything.

A tenuous peace

Natives in the territories around this dangerous highway confided that the road is relatively safer now because the bandits, rustlers and militia groups operating in the northwest rarely ventured out during the raining season. The terrain in the raining season hampers movements, making swift attacks and escapes impossible. They additionally attribute the relative lull in violent campaigns to the on-going exploration of grounds of peace between the government (Katsina and Zamfara states) and the bandits. As evidence of returning peace, the residents pointed to the Fulani settlers in the territory who have returned to their regular business of selling livestock, milk and fat (*mai-n shanu*). They are basking in the livestock boom as the women and children hawk the milk and fat across the communities while the men sell the rams for the season.

Nevertheless, tension is still palpable in the air and it is obvious that the peace is tentative. Also, it appears that some people are unsatisfied with the peace negotiations by the state government, positing that one side of the divide has been favoured. For instance, some of the livestock being sold at the Gidan Bore market, going by our investigations are rustled cows. These are cows rustled from surrounding villages now brought back to the community to be sold.

Bala Dauran, a resident of Gidan Jaja in Zurmi told The ICIR:

“My neighbour brought my attention to over ten of my rustled cows being sold in the market in Gidan Bore. Before I could make it to the scene, most of the cows were already sold, there was nothing I could do because the Fulani men that sold them had left. But with the help of some vigilante men we put up a chase. As we made progress in a bid to apprehend them, they sensed that they were being tracked and they abandoned the few remaining livestock in their possession and fled. I was only able to retrieve two of my cows, the frailest of them all.”

Going by the terms of the amnesty granted the rustlers and the bandits by state governments, it is assumed that the rustlers retain what they had rustled. So, in these communities, the villagers keep seeing an influx of their livestock that had been rustled being presented for sale in the markets with little resistance. As an opening for tension among the communities, the governments that initiated the amnesty have not fully addressed these pockets of disenchantment among the villagers.

To underline the shaky nature of the peace process, some commercial vehicle drivers that risk plying the Zurmi-Jibia road told our reporters that they would not use the road again once it is end of the raining season. Nigerian refugees in Niger Republic express the same fears.

“I am not fully convinced that the relative peace has everything to do with the ongoing peace process because over the years there has been a reduction of attacks at the height of the raining season. For me, I will wait until December before I can celebrate or contemplate returning home,” said Maryam Hamso, from one of the Nigerian border communities, called Hamso.

There's a price



Smugglers retro – fitting their vehicles

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While many in Zamfara and other states of the Northwest under the dreadful hold of banditry and insecurity genuinely want a return of peace, there are others who actually thrive or even benefit from chaos and confusion.

For example smuggling, particularly of banned items, continues to thrive unhindered, while security men, including soldiers, policemen, customs and immigration officials, also continue to laugh all the way to the bank.

One of the commercial transport drivers involved in smuggling activities, who cannot be named, said those of them engaged in the business understand the risks and dangers involved but added that there really is no problem unless “you have refused to pay the bribe for each category of items or when it is time for the officials to sacrifice you as an indication that they are working.”

He added that every month there are a few of them that get unlucky. For instance: “I was arrested last year by the Customs because there were visiting officials when I was crossing with large quantities of petrol loaded in jerry cans in a truck. I paid huge sum before I was released at the headquarters in Katsina.”

A lot of criminal activities also go on in this region, with security men either aiding and abetting them or turning a blind eye. There is free passage for all persons, no matter where they come from and no matter what they carry. And there is some order and structure to the illegal activities. There is also language that is used and understood by all.

For instance, a pass is the waiver for passengers without official documentation to proceed to their desired destination across the border. For each passenger, there's a fee of between N500 and N1, 000 paid to Immigration officials. A regular police checkpoint on the highway collects N100 from each commercial passenger driver.

The investigative team of three, two reporters and a fixer paid 500 Naira each to cross the border. They were not asked to pay more because they dressed up like distressed villagers from the Katsina or Zamfara communities. As the reporters prepared for the reporting trip to the Northwest, the local fixer had warned that they must never an appearance that will give them out as visitors.

According to him, dressed as poor and distressed locals, the ransom would be low if they were kidnapped. Most likely, they would not even attract the kidnappers' attention.

At the border, passengers with official documentation pay N200 each to the customs desk. As long as the passenger has fulfilled the pass requirement, nothing else is probed concerning the passenger's mission and luggage.

There are others, either because they are not documented or because they carry banned items, who chose to cross the border through bush parts. The bike riders at Jibia border post are part of the entrenched system. With N200 or N300, an undocumented passenger can choose to avoid the Immigration and custom desks altogether, electing to be ferried through the bush paths by the bikers.

It was very risky to take a smart phone for the purpose of taking pictures as too many curious or wary eyes would be on them, but the reporters discretely put their smart phones to use.

One of the most shocking scenes, witnessed by the reporters is that at a few of the check points, the security officials engage children of between 13 and 15 years of age to collect the stipulated bribes from the drivers.

Rice merchants and gunrunners, we are informed, regularly take advantage of the lax security to bring their wares into the country in a steady flow. Several people who spoke to the reporters said that most of the merchants work closely with the security officials, cutting deals, agreeing to terms and pushing their deliveries across targeted destinations.

The rice merchants barely hide their operations. Rather than drive trucks to across the border with their merchandise, they go through the more laborious route of offloading the goods a few hundred meters away from the border security post and use smaller carriers like motor cycles, horses or cattle to ferry from them from hideouts in Niger Republic into Katsina for onward transportation to other parts of Nigeria.

According to Aminu Jibia, a shop owner and resident of Jibia who transported arms in the region for over three years before he stopped early in 2018 following the surge in banditry in the region, smuggling of arms is rampant in the area.



Smugglers at work

“Arms are fitted inside customized seats in vehicles. We meet panel beaters who reconstruct the seats of commercial vehicles into mini containers for us. In the night, we fit in at least five to six dismantled AK47 in each of the front seats and the back seat can take as much as 25 rifles. The boots of the cars are only loaded with normal luggage of passengers who are unaware of the contraband in the car,” said Jibia.

When asked if he has ever been caught, he answered “No, security officials are more interested in the passengers and the boot of the car, we either pay bribes to go unchecked or when they insisted on a search, it doesn’t go as far as where the contraband is concealed.”

What type of vehicle have you used for arms trafficking? He was asked. “I used Peugeot 406 more, but I have also used Toyota Hilux,” Jibia stated.

The Fleeing Displaced Nigerian Villagers

Thousands of persons have been displaced by the insecurity occasioned by kidnapping and attacks by bandits, with most of them fleeing into communities in Niger Republic. Our reporters tracked several hundreds of them who fled villages such as Sabon Birni, Isah, Rabah and Goronyo, as well as Gidan Roudji in Sokoto State to camps where they are being accommodated in Dan Kano, Basira and the rural communities of Chadi in Niger Republic.

About 500 displaced Nigerians are being accommodated in Basira, a community with just a single public school. Another 500 fleeing Nigerians are quartered in Chadi where there is no medical facility in the community.

“They have rustled our animals, they have killed our people and we have not seen any security to help us. We have to run to Niger Republic, we are now in a village called Chadi in the past 5 months,” said Adamu Galube, a refugee.

In terms of basic health amenities, these Nigerian refugees do not have access to water and only depend on rainwater for drinking and domestic use. In most of the communities, there are no health facilities, and irregular supply of basic medicines and other consumables.

It has not been possible for the refugees to enroll their children in public schools. A mother of six who does not know the whereabouts of her husband said that school is a luxury that they could not afford even when they lived in Nigeria. Another mother, Maimuna, said since they fled Zamfara school for children has stopped. “It is only here in Niger Republic that we were able to sleep with our two eyes closed,” but schooling for her children is out of the question because they are all displaced. She then called on the Nigerian government to send maize flour for them to be able to survive. “We are starving.”



Refugee woman and children, labourers on a farm

According to Hauwa, mother of six and several dependents, “as a refugee and mother not knowing where my husband is, school for my children is the last thing on my mind. I only think of three things more often now, the safety of my family, what to eat with my children and shelter to protect ourselves from the rain and cold.” The refugees said that the government of the host country has promised to ensure that their children are enrolled in schools but we could not get any official of the government in the country to confirm this.

Most of the displaced persons who spoke to the reporters are more occupied with the task of surviving from day to day. They offer themselves and children as daily paid laborers to their hosts in their farmsteads and use what they get each day to fend for their families.



A refugee mother and her children

Another mother said that she and her kids go out every day to work for what they can eat and, according to her, a day's work can only provide money for feeding that last two days. So, they have to go out and work again and again.

“There are days when we are not paid money, we are given grains and food as payment for a full day's work with my children because those that employed us don't have the money to pay for our services,” said a mother of four.

Living a life of subsistence, they hardly pay attention to more tangible needs like school enrolment. There are no designated refugee camps where these people live. Some of them actually rent where they stay, others stay in any open and public place while some move from one location to another in search of acceptable abode.

Their situation is dire and horrifying for the reporters to witness. Sarkin Hwawa Shago, the traditional ruler of Burkusuma, Sabon Birni in Sokoto State narrates a gripping tale of misery.

We are now in Basira in Niger Republic after we fled Sokoto. Our locality has 77 communities but no community has a single person at home. Children are not going to school. Pleas on the Federal Government as well as the Sokoto State government.

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help with security fell on deaf ears. We have nothing to feed our families since insecurity has stopped us from farming,” said the traditional ruler.

Choosing between the “Ingilishi” and the “Hwaranshi” territories.

Among the fleeing Nigerian refugees there is none who has anything reassuring to say about Nigeria. They describe as disappointing the total lack of interest in their condition by the Nigerian authorities. No word or indeed any humanitarian intervention has come from any government in Nigeria to them and neither from the Sarkin Musulmi to encourage them.

“We have been informing our local chiefs since that is the only thing we can do, but aside the rice they once gave us from Nigeria, they have done or said nothing,” Sarkin Hwawa Shago_said.

Nigeria is referred to as the “Ingilishi” territory which we understand to be the native corruption of “English” while the Niger Republic is referred to as the “Hwaranshi” territory, clearly a corrupt reference to the French speaking territory such as Niger Republic. The refugees express comfort and relief at staying in the “Hwaranshi” territory given the sense of safety they feel as well as their belief that the bandits are more afraid of the French security agencies than they are of the Nigerian forces. Asked if they were willing to go back to Nigeria any time soon, none among them is contemplating that in the near future.

“We survive first and seek out schools for the children thereafter,” declared Shago.



Sarkin Hwawa Shago the traditional ruler of Burkusuma

Who else is concerned about the plights of these refugees?

The reporters met with officials of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, (UNHRC) in Basira community while they were taking records of new arrivals. The officials confirmed that they normally start with taking records followed by delivering critical supplies. They stated that they had already supplied food items to the refugees on two different occasions. This was confirmed by the refugees, who, in spite of the rains, find themselves sleeping in the open. They mostly arrived bare having been impoverished by bandits who destroyed their farms and rustled their livestock. Some, before they escaped North West Nigeria had sold their livestock to pay for ransom to free their loved ones who had been kidnapped by bandits.

In Niger Republic, living as refugees, they are left with nothing. A local official with the UNHRC who does not want to be named said, “there is no interest and commitment to address the problems here. Maybe the media will need to step in to generate the kind of attention that will begin to address the problems.”

Many of the refugees place the guarantee of security as top priority for them to consider returning home to pick up pieces of their lives back. They observed that if they were assured of security they could go back and resume their farming. Security, for them, is the assurance that they could live where they have a shelter without fear of losing it unexpectedly, work in the farms without the fear that bandits would come and raze the farms, and earn income from proceeds of the farms they cultivate without the fear that they would be kidnapped for ransom. They desire amenities like shelter, water, healthcare and education opportunity for their children but none of these, they aver, compares to the assurance of security. Basiru Ibrahim, a civil servant who abandoned his work in Sokoto and now lives as a refugee said, “I fled because of incessant attacks. They forced us to vote them now they have failed to protect us.”



Basiru Ibrahim

Typically, the Nigerian officials are unperturbed.

According to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, which is working with local authorities and other humanitarian partners to assist the refugees, more than 40,000 people have now been forced to cross from North West Nigeria into Niger as a result of an upsurge in violent attacks on civilians over the last ten months. The U

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spokesperson Babar Baloch said, “the escalating violence in the Nigerian states of Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina has led to a new humanitarian emergency in Niger’s border regions.”

There is no exaggeration in this as our reporters witnessed healthcare issue, shortage of food and portable drinking water, while there are already cases of starvation and malnutrition amongst the refugee population. From observation, over 50% of the refugees are still without any form of shelter. In their search for shelter they move from community to community with some of them crossing territories outside of the Maradi areas in Niger Republic.

“Nigerian refugees continue to arrive in more than 50 villages in the departments of Guidan Rounji, Guidan Sori and Tibiri. On September 11 alone, more than 2,500 people fled when civilians were targeted by armed groups on the Nigerian side. As the security situation continues to deteriorate in Sokoto State, we are expecting more refugees to arrive in Niger,” the UNHCR spokesperson stated.

“People are seeking safety from indiscriminate attacks unleashed by organized armed groups on men, women and children alike. There have been frequent reports of kidnappings, torture, extortion, murder, sexual violence and destruction of houses and property,” he lamented.

Another official of the UNHR stated that the Sokoto State governor, Aminu Tambuwal, promised to visit the refugees, but despite detailed arrangements, he did not show up. Since then, no government agency or official from Nigeria or has as much as inquired about the welfare and status of these refugees, as at the time of filing this report. There is also no demonstration of any intention to reschedule the earlier planned visit by the Sokoto State governor. Nor is there any official acknowledgment of the spill over of refugees to the neighbouring country.

The official further revealed that “a 747 Cargo plane carrying 98 metric tonnes of relief items from UNHCR landed in Niamey on Monday (September 23). But more resources are urgently needed to support refugees and their hosts. An inter-agency refugee response plan launched this week (a week ago) seeks US\$ 35.5 million by the end of this year. So far, we have 6 per cent of the required funding.”

The cat and mouse game called peace initiative in the North West?



Zamfara State governor, Bello Matawalle

Initiating peace deals in this period has become a yearly routine. It is important to note that armed groups started calling for peace talks towards the demise of Governor Abdul'aziz Abubakar Yari's tenure. It usually becomes a steady chorus in the crisis territories two to three months before the rainy seasons. A major feature in the banditry that has consumed Zamfara state in the past couple of years is the Buharin Daji splinter group of the Fulani bandits. Daji's group was the most ruthless of the groups. The group's leader, Buharin Daji, was killed sometime in March 2018 by Dogo Gyedi, who leads another group, and according to multiple accounts, the latter has very strong links with local and foreign Jihadist groups.

Gyedi's group is known to maintain a formidable force and a colossal arsenal while building a steady liaison with the Ansaru terror group. Neither of these two formidable groups is party to the on-going peace process initiated by the new Zamfara State governor, Bello Matawalle. There is a feeling among stakeholders in the conflict that the peace process is a public show standing on shaky ground with its boycott by armed groups like Haliru Mairakumi, Gajere, Dogo Gyedi, yan bakwai-bakwai, some

major Fulani bandit groups. What this means, in the reckoning of informed watchers of the crisis, is that a significant population of the armed Fulani groups are not surrendering and therefore not taking the peace process seriously.

The ethnic coloration in the banditry is not being acknowledged or addressed by government. For instance, many of the people that spoke to our reporters believe that the dominant victims in the relentless onslaught of the Fulani bandits in Zamfara are mostly the Hausas who have been the principal victims of kidnappings and payments of ransoms. The Hausas are also believed to have been the major victims of rustling too. Given that the state government has offered amnesty to the Fulani bandits without creating any basis to give succour to Hausas who have lost farm stock, leaves ground for discontent even in the midst of the on-going peace initiative.

This is compounded by the boastful tone of the Fulani groups at the peace meetings at both the governors offices in Gusau and Katsina. The commanders who were brought into the sessions with government officials rather than table any grievance and make demands preferred to boast that nobody can do them anything, declaring how unconquerable they were. Given that the raining season is mostly an off season for the militias and the terror groups, it remains to be seen whether these groups of the bandits are not taking advantage of the naivety and desperation of government officials to get some unmerited concessions and await the end of the raining season for them to unleash further mayhem. Those who have surrendered include Sabo, Yusuf Kachalla, Yusuf Kwachabawa, Dan Shehulle, Alhaji Garki, Nashawari.

However, there are indications that many of the bandits that surrenders in Zamfara State have since moved to other places to continue their criminal activities.

Our reporters have tracked the movements of some bandits, who embraced the peace initiative in Zamfara and it was confirmed that they have moved to neighbouring Katsina or Niger states to continue with banditry.

A video has surfaced online, verified by our reporter and shows it was recorded on October 2, 2019 at Mayanchi-Anka junction, in which more than 300 armed bandits stopped at a gas station, robbing and forcing the fuel attendant to fill up their

bikes. They did not harm or attack bystanders, but chanted that they are on their way to Birnin Gwari in Kaduna state.

A Fulani source said, “most of the bandits are not happy with the Kaduna State government for not participating in the peace process. You know the process comes with the unconditional release of our brothers and cash rewards,” said the repentant bandit.

Gains and Gaps of Ongoing Peace Initiatives by Governor Matawalle

Even though Matawalle has publicly expressed no interest in payment of ransom, a member of the state reconciliation committee, Alhaji Abdullahi Shinkafi said the body has designed a process to award monetary compensation to armed groups consistent with the strength and type of rifles surrendered. Locals who have been keeping a close eye on the process said that there is almost a stampede among the bandit groups to source unimportant weapons to surrender to the government since that is an opportunity to receive vital cash for their operations.

Also, some of the bandit groups which have not featured in the negotiations are believed to be currently releasing their captives ostensibly as a fallout of government ongoing buyout. Quite critical also, is the suspicion that members who have received the buyout and have ostensibly put down their arms and surrendered are being targeted by opposing bandit groups that are determined to continue their violent campaigns.

“And because the number of violent armed groups determined to fight on outweigh the ones interested in the peace process, we have seen fighters returning to violence, especially the ones whose leaders were assassinated,” said a top security source. Also, some of the bandits that claimed to have repented are not back to normal communities. They still maintain and occupy their camps in the vast forests,” Shinkafi said.

Even now that the borders are officially closed, the lax security at Nigeria-Niger border, has made arms shipment and delivery into the country a normal daily r for the bandits and terror groups. Specifically, the Sububu forest in Shink

neighbouring Niger Republic, is believed to be a shipment ground for arms in the areas.

What is not being reported about the ongoing peace process?

The terrorism component of the crisis in the North West is either being missed or deliberately overlooked. However, last week the Zamfara State government confirmed the presence of Boko Haram in the state. Competent sources in the region say that Ansaru terror group has been present in the region for years but have grown in alarming numbers lately following insurrection that begets more insurrections in the Lake Chad, where some of ISWAP's most daring Ka'id and Munzirs deserted the group and found a new home in parts of Katsina, Niger and Zamfara states.

It was reliably gathered that hundreds of Jihadists have moved from the North east to Zamfara and other forests areas in the North West, pledging allegiance and forging partnerships with local Amirs. Thus, the criminal bandit gangs operating in the North west, rustling cattle, kidnapping and attacking people, are a mix of Boko Haram jihadists and local bandits.

Multiple knowledgeable sources believe that these Jihadists from different backgrounds are mainly using the area as a refuge, for evangelization and forging partnerships with other groups before they engage in an all-out war with the state and what to them are criminal armed groups.

Sani, a former Boko Haram member who now works with Ansaru, was asked if there were plans to stage attacks at the end of September 2019 with the connivance of politicians. His answer was "it may take time before we begin attacks, the unruly Fulani armed groups outnumber us, but we are working on a strategy, and we have no business with politicians."

All the bandit and militia groups in the peace process with the state government have insisted that vigilante groups must be disbanded. This might be an indication that much more than the police and the military, the factor that truly presents a major resistance to the marauding bandits is the vigilante groups. The vigilante g much like the Civilian Joint Task Force, CJTF, in the North east, have been the

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force holding the bandits back and sometimes showing more determination than the military against a ruthless foe. However, like their North east counterparts, there are documented complaints of vigilantes carrying out reprisal attacks that further complicates the problem.

What is the effect of raining season to be conflict?

Since the start of the crisis and its escalation into major violence over a decade ago, the rainy season has always been a season of lull in hostilities. With or without negotiations, hostilities cannot be sustained at this time of the year. The season has always been a period when some of the armed groups are susceptible to peace talks. It is a period of incubation and healing for their wounded. The terrains become impassable. In most cases, this is the period for them to move out of forest areas which become unstable during the rainy season due to flooding. During this period, they stay under trees and open places, roads are blocked by water ways and the grasses have grown tall, making them to easily fall into the waiting traps of security forces and vigilantes.

Because the rainy season brings a lull to hostilities, farmers freely plant their seeds but the greatest nightmares of farmers are the harvesting season when hostilities are intensified at all levels. “After the raining season people who are deceived that the peace process involves the majority of the bandits will be shocked,” said one of the bandits in an audio recording that our reporters were able to listen to.

What are the ethnic and religious motivations of this conflict?

The crisis started as a misunderstanding between herders and vigilante groups, who tend to protect farmers and farmlands from invasion by pastoralist herders, who are principally Fulani. This can be traced back to Dansadau with the attacks carried out by Dangwannawa and later Buharin Daji, the Fulani militia leader in 2012/2013. It later became a conflict between herders and farmers, and later, cattle rustlers against any livestock owner. About 90% of the pastoralist herders are Fulani while the farmers are mainly Hausa

However, it later became an ethnic conflict between Hausa and Fulani with both ethnicities holding people captive over actions of the other.

Other factors that contributed to the ethnic transformation of the crisis, according to Shehu Lili, a member of the banned vigilante group, include non-inclusion of Fulanis in the vigilante groups, victimization of many Fulani youths who latter embraced banditry as self-defense. Escalating encroachment of grazing areas and forest reserves as a result of over population and demand for crop farming are also remote factors.

Our reporters witnessed cases of displaced Hausas not allowing displaced Fulani to settle with them at the refugee camps in areas like Anka.

There is an the impression that in every Fulani household in the region there must be one person who is a rustler and that in cases where they are not directly involved they do not resist harbouring other criminal elements including militia members.

“These claims a bit extreme,” said a top Miyetti-Allah official in Gusau who does not want to be quoted. At the refugee camps within and outside the country the displaced accuse the government of not showing interest in protecting them but sending polio staff to the borders to inject their children. “Officials seem to be more concerned in eradicating polio than eradicating armed bandits that killed, maimed and sent hundreds of thousands out of their ancestral settlement,” said a resident of Zamfara who threatened to deal with the health workers the next time they come.

Two of the refugees currently in Niger Republic said it is shameful to say they are Nigerian citizens because Nigeria has failed them but Niger Republic is protecting them. ‘Shame on Nigeria. They have chased us away, killed us, chased our families and properties. We have disintegrated but the only thing you bring to us is polio?’ Peace deal with Buharin Daji and former Governor Yari’s government in the past only lasted for nine months. The current process is following the same doomed trajectory, they argued.

Refugee women and children in a camp in Niger republic

Nigerians from about 76 communities are displaced and living in Niger Republic. One angry and frustrated displaced villagers declared: “The Nigerian government should be ashamed. Whoever is a Nigerian leader should feel shameful including the Sultan of Sokoto because he has failed to do anything as a Muslim leader. Muslims are being killed and chased away and Niger government has put them in shame for protecting us. It is a shame on Nigeria.

Basiru says “as a civil servant I had to flee from Nigeria to come here in Niger for safety. Our people feel safe here in Niger since we have peace. Nobody has come to support us from Nigeria but Nigerien authorities are always coming

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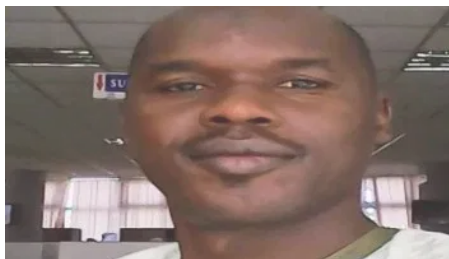
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