

How We Averted The Repeat Of Zaria Massacre During COAS Tukur Buratai's Visit To Southeast

By

Southeast Based Coalition Of Human Rights Organizations

(SBCHROs, Onitsha Nigeria, 7th of December 2016)-The leadership and affiliate members of the **Southeast Based Coalition of Human Rights Organizations (SBCHROs)** gladly wish to inform all Nigerians and members of the international community that the repeat of the Zaria Massacre by the Nigerian Army in the Southeast was almost a done deal, but for our timely, proactive and preventive outcries and alarms.

Ahead of the visit of the Southeast by the Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Tukur Yusuf Buratai, specifically to Owerri, the capital city of Imo State, for the opening ceremony of the 2016 Chief of Army Staff's Conference and in furtherance of the Jihadist Nigerian Army's so called "Operation Python Dance"; all the strategic places leading to Owerri, Imo State particularly Onitsha and Asaba end of the ailing Onitsha Bridge, Upper Iweka area particularly the Aba Park and its surrounding Ogbaru Main Market and the Onitsha-Owerri Road; were flooded with battle ready soldiers armed with heavy weapons and other war equipment. It was on account of these that we swung into advocacy action as a matter of immediacy and promptness, so as to avert the repeat of what happened in Zaria in December 2015.

It is recalled that the entourage of the Chief of Staff, in the present of COAS Lt Gen Tukur Yusuf Buratai himself, ran into a religious procession organized by the leadership of Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) or the Shiite Muslim faithful along Sokoto Road in Zaria, Kaduna State, Northwest Nigeria, leading to a misunderstanding over the blockage of the Zone, through which the COAS and his entourage were supposed to pass.

The mere misunderstanding over the road blockage; which is an age-long pattern of worship adopted by Muslim worshippers in the northern part of Nigeria; later led soldiers acting under COAS's express instructions and supervision, to open fire killing dozens of unarmed and defenceless Shiite Muslim faithful. Having assessed the gravity of the killings and attendant public outcries; the COAS swiftly manipulated the atrocious act and claimed "assassination attempt" on his life. The Army reacted and justified the massacre as "self defense within rules of engagement". The claim of "assassination attempt" was never backed with any scene of crime objects or evidence such as casualties, the wounded, the shattered vehicle or agents of violence (i.e. firearms, etc).

As a further show of shame, force and impunity, the COAS later mobilized his killer-troops for expanded killing spree, invasion and destruction of the Shiite Muslims' sacred places of worship; forbidden under the UN System, whether in war or in peace times; during which a corporal soldier was beaten to death in anger by provoked survivors of the massacre.

At the end, over 800 unarmed and defenceless Shiite members were massacred; among them the leprous Kaduna State Government admitted burying 348 in mass graves. The massacre took place between 12 and 14th of December 2015. Just as the COAS and his Army repeatedly, falsely and wickedly accused unarmed and defenceless Pro Biafra Campaigners of "being violent and armed", same false and wicked claims were repeatedly made against the IMN and its faithful.

We, evidentially, invite all Nigerians and members of the international community to again click and read the following report of the Vanguard Newspaper, dated 15th December 2015: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/armyshiite-clash-i-escaped-by-the-will-of-god-buratai/>.

It was account of the foregoing, clearly borne of religious bigotry and sworn hate against the IMN and its faithful, that we preventively raised alarm or issued an early warning signal for the purpose of averting repetition of same in the Southeast. Stationing of dozens of battle ready soldiers at Aba Park, near Onitsha Upper Iweka was not accidental on the part of the Jihadist Nigerian Army. It was clearly deliberate and a suitable scene for planned but failed invocation of “assassination attempt on the life of the COAS” during his trip to Owerri, Imo State.

For clarity, Aba Park, near Onitsha Upper Iweka, is located very close to the densely populated Ogbaru Main or Relief Market. But for our early warning signals, Anambra State may most likely have been thrown into another grief; losing hundreds of its enterprising, law abiding and defenceless citizens eking for decent living in their shops to scripted “assassination attempt”; just as it lost at least 120 residents and visitors at Nkpor and its environs on 29th and 30th of May 2016 including students of University of Port Harcourt and other institutions of Higher Learning in Enugu, shop owners at Nkpor and its environs, returnees from early Morning Mass at Nkpor, tailors, footballers and traders from Aba, etc. The folied massacre would have taken place at Aba Park and Ogbaru Relief Market, near Upper Iweka in Onitsha with hundreds of casualties

We, therefore, acted knowing fully that the Igbo Race is an age-long endangered species in Nigeria particularly under the present brutish Buhari Administration. While the entire peace loving People of the Southeast are rejoicing over our timely intervention against a clear cut army of occupation in Igbo Land and its planned social havocs, we also wish to bring their immediate attention to this fact too!

Justification Of Massacre Of Unarmed Pro Biafra Campaigners By COAS:

It is a tragedy that art of soldiering in Nigeria has been irreparably ridiculed, abused, bastardized and left in the hands of coconut heads. Today in Nigeria, citizens with Ape-like quotients are uniformed, armed and made “generals” in the guise of “officers of the Nigerian Army”. It is totally saddening and shocking as how a citizen can unrepentantly, shamelessly and beastly tell lies against the dead and his fellow living.

We had thought that the COAS, Lt Gen Tukur Yusuf Buratai would come to the Southeast apologetic and deeply remorseful; having failed woefully to use his office and overhead votes to nail the truth to the coffin and resurrect lies of unpardonable proportions as it concerns the brutal and wicked massacre of over 250 innocent and unarmed Pro Biafra Campaigners or Activists. We never know that the COAS is this wicked, immoral and conscienceless by remaining a stickler of wicked falsehood against all odds including availability of quantum of damning evidence.

This is another attestation to our reference of the Nigerian Army under Lt Gen Tukur Yusuf Buratai as “Jihadist Nigerian Army”. The attitude of the COAS is akin to one of the arch Jihadists of 12th Century AD; Caliph Saladin (**Nasir Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub**) of Egypt who ordered the living and dead bodies of Christian soldiers and children killed or captured to be eaten or used as meat during “the Crusaders Wars” over the Battle of Jerusalem. He lived from 1137-1193 and reigned from 1174-1193

The COAS, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai had in apparently selective media chat during his courtesy call on Governor Rochas Okorocha, falsely and wickedly claimed that “soldiers massacred Pro Biafra Campaigners because they were violent and armed” and that “they (Pro Biafra activists) shot soldiers, policemen, DSS officers and other security operatives during their armed protest”. The same wicked and false claims were made by the COAS against the unarmed and innocent Shiite faithful as a justification for massacring over 800 of them in three days. In all these, the local media has been influenced and cowed into repeated use of the word “clash”, so as to create impression of non-State actor violence during protest or procession, which does not exist.

As a further confirmation of soldiering tragedy and decadence afflicting the Nigerian Army of present composition and leadership, a so called “General” of Tukur Buratai’s calibre in all his years of military career since 1981, cannot elementarily differentiate between armed rebellion, or armed uprising; riot and nonviolent protest or procession and circumstances necessitating or guiding them; yet he calls himself a Lt General! Since Lt Gen Tukur Buratai has chosen to be blended in uninformed and crude soldiering with stars of a general; we have decided to use this medium to educate him and expose his ignorance.

- 1. A group that chooses armed struggle or armed rebellion or armed uprising must have a structure, weaponry usually Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), a territorial base, targets and their attendant havocs. Clearly, armed rebellion is antithetical to nonviolence or pacifism.***
- 2. A riot is a spontaneous reaction of a mass of provoked or disenchanted people or a group of people, directed against a State or non State actor leadership over an economic issue or a social immorality; which is strictly timed. It can be violent but its degree is no way comparable to violence applied in the armed uprising or armed rebellion or armed struggle. Agents of violence usually use in riot are used tyres, metals, sticks, fuel, lighters, clubs, catapults; and in rear cases machetes and daggers.***
- 3. A nonviolent protest or procession is totally pacifist and foundation of natural rights of man; from biological womb. It is a direct opposite of the two, above mentioned and an embodiment of pacifism. At extreme circumstances, it can migrate to riot particularly when State agents apply crude and brazen force; but it can never migrate to armed rebellion or armed uprising in the immediate or short term.***

Yet it may be dumped in a long run by its proponents for armed uprising; on account of State rapacious crackdown, massacre and persecution. It is also an act of impossibility for religious faithful and others in civil procession or vigil to carry arms. Members of the Catholic Church do not carry arms during their Corpus Christ procession, so also IMN faithful or those in night or day vigil in a secured place undertaking by members of the civil public.

In the instant case, neither riot nor armed uprising was applicable. Nonviolent protest and procession were strictly the case. It is, therefore, a truism that the COAS has refused to see these correctly or that he is not educated to the level of understanding technical or modern concept of soldiering and the workings of the international civil-military system including policing and managing lawful or even riotous assemblies.

To this effect, the COAS has continuously rigmaroled in absurdities; by going round the cycle with his barefaced lies against the dead and the living over the regime atrocities committed by him vicariously and consciously.

What the COAS and his co-travellers in the referenced heinous crimes did is locally, regionally and internationally reprehensible and abominable. Even in war situation, the use of arms by State actors and their enemies is highly regulated under the Geneva Conventions or Laws of War of 1949 and their three Protocols. Killing of non-combatants and destruction of their homes, properties and sacred places of worship in war situation are totally forbidden; not to talk of a massacre of such magnitude in a non-war situation.

COAS Tukur Yusuf Buratai and his killer-troops abominably stormed a Church where unarmed citizens were praying in the dead of the night through a night vigil and opened fire on them; killing scores of them and took their corpses away after wounding scores of others; yet he remorseless referred and justified the massacred citizens as “armed and violent”.

As if that was not enough, his army under his seal and firm directive also stormed the premises of well fenced National High School in Aba in a broad day light; where over one hundred unarmed and defenceless citizens were clapping and singing; opened fire on them, killing over 30 of them and wounded over 40; and took most of their corpses away till date. Few days later, 13 of them were found dumped in a Burrow Pit, with marks showing that they were shackled, manacled, shot and killed.

On 17th of December 2015, the COAS’s killer soldiers stationed at the ailing Niger Bridge sighted a group of jubilant citizens and opened fire on them; killing over 10; after which most of their corpses were taken away. Three of them were later dumped at the Onitsha General Hospital with a policing cover from the Onitsha Central Police Station. The jubilant citizens were signing and clapping over the court-ordered unconditional release of Mr. Nnamdi Kanu, on account of which they were sighted and shot dead. Despite all these, the COAS has remained adamant and remorseless, cooking up all kinds of lies against the dead, so as to desperately escape culpability.

It is a shame that the COAS as a Lt General he says he is, has forgotten so soon, in spite of various peace keeping missions he has undertaken internationally that “soldiers and police personnel act punishably unprofessional when they turn their weapons against non-combatants or civilians and that lives of soldiers and police personnel cannot be more important than those of innocent and defenceless citizens”; yet the COAS is telling Nigerians that once “flags and holy bibles are raised in the direction of soldiers, it translates to mass shooting and massacre of the flag and bible bearers”. The truth which the Army Chief is hiding from the generality of Nigerians is that there exists an operational death code adopted by the Army where Pro Biafra Activists are pencilled down for mass murder and considered more “death-value” than Boko Haram and Fulani terrorists. In the recent tour of Northeast by the Army Chief with selected journalists, this was also reportedly disclosed.

It is also recalled that we had in November 2015 warned the COAS and his main partner-in-crime, former IGP Solomon Arase of dire consequences of their issuance of lethal warning to unarmed and defenceless Pro Biafra activists. We had then warned them of unmitigated consequences of their planned action as such would hunt and haunt them for the rest of their lives.

Today, former IGP Solomon Arase has virtually disappeared into self exile, thinking that his atrocious page would one day be forgotten in the human rights circles; and the COAS is here; emptying all the battalions of the Nigerian Army to protect him during his visit to the Southeast. He should be lest assured that the People of the Southeast that he massacred their prime bread winners for no just cause are not cannibals and butchers gunning for his head under unorthodox circumstances but he must get it into his head that there is no hiding place for perpetrators of regime atrocities and crimes against humanity. At the appointed time, he will be made to face justice both locally and internationally.

Also what is left of his career in the Nigerian Army will soon end and chicken will return home to roost. We will ensure through legitimate and lawful means that he spends his post service career running from pillar to pole for enmeshing himself in regime atrocities of unpardonable and earth-shaking proportions. His post service career will be so darkened that only the likes of clan warlords in Somalia and Afghanistan will require his consultancy services.

COAS Tukur Buratai and designated lieutenants and former IGP Solomon Arase must be held to account for the butchering of over 250 unarmed and innocent citizens and attempted murder of over 300 others. Efforts by Igbo sons and daughters in Diaspora made so far to bring Lt Gen Tukur Buratai, former IGP Solomon Arase and other regime atrocities' committers to account for their crimes are very commendable.

We urge other Igbo sons and daughters in other parts of the world particularly in Senegal, Botswana, South Africa, North and South America, Europe and Oceania to explore fully existing judicial and diplomatic remedies available in their countries of residency for the purposes of **punitive and compensatory justices** against the named atrocious State agents irrespective of how short or long it takes!

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