THE SITUATION IN NIGERIA

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Category: Africa

Once again news is coming out of Plateau State in Nigeria of horrendous inter-ethnic clashes. The simple analysis is that the violence is a religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. Certainly, religion plays a huge part in the situation, but the fact that the fighting is between settled, indigenous farmers (who happen to be Christian) and nomadic herdsmen (who happen to be Muslim) should point us to a more complicated reality. From time immemorial, there has been conflict between settled populations and wandering herdsmen. The religious aspect heightens the conflict and makes it easier for the two sides to demonize one another. This video from Al Jazeera gives a balanced report of what is happening.

Ruth Gledhill, has a harrowing report from the local Bishop:

> *Yesterday I interviewed Archbishop Kwashi by telephone for our report in today's Times. He said he began to hear about the massacres as he was conducting a confirmation service. A messenger from one of the three predominantly Christian villages attacked ran to the church where he was celebrating, to show him photographs of the massacres on their digital cameras...*
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> *Nearly all the photographs received at The Times have dead children in them. They are too distressing for publication here.*
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> *...The Archbishop said: 'It was not a good sight at all. The villagers had no chance whatsoever. They were slaughtered. I could see machete wounds in the necks of children. Kids from age zero to teenagers, all butchered from the back, macheted in their necks, their heads. Deep cuts in the mouths of babies. The stench. People wailing and crying. Some have lost their voices. I could not stand it. From what I saw from a distance, it was over 100 killed in one village. I donâ€™t know what sparked it off. I thought we were making headway after the previous crisis in January.*
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> *'There have been several meetings (between Muslims and Christians). I myself and a Muslim cleric on our own initiative have just started getting together with a couple of senior leaders and thinkers, trying to see if we could bring our own contribution to a peaceful co-existence. This came from somebody else.*
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> *'I think it is all Christians killed. The Muslims who were living with them in the villages I heard had left the village. We are hoping now that the government of Nigeria will see that we have a very, very big problem. The kind of cooperation that came into play - that could violate a curfew - that could take the law into their own hands - it is a very strong organisation. (Read the whole report.)*

When you've finished reading, please take a minute or two to pray for the situation in Nigeria.

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As the day went on, he heard about the two others. He went to one of the villages to look for himself but decided to stay on the boundaries and not get too close as he could not cope with the stench and the terrible wounds he saw on babies and children in particular.
He believes the Muslim occupants of the villages were tipped off as they all left before the massacres, he reported. Also, he believes a significant organisation was behind the killings because they happened during curfew with the army in the area, as it has been since the January killings.

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