

OUR CONCERN OVER THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION
A Statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN)

We, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, deeply appreciate the sincere efforts made by the past and present Administrations of the Nigerian Government to address the multifaceted challenges facing our dear Nation – in the areas of national unity, security, the economy, corruption, and so on. We equally recognize the successes recorded so far in some of these areas: the increased emphasis in the fight against corruption and the decrease in the cases of insurgency in the North-Eastern parts of the Country.

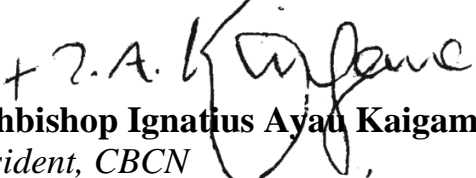
However, we are equally aware that in some areas the situation has deteriorated and in others new and more complex challenges are emerging. As spiritual leaders committed to the task of building a strong Nation founded on lasting values and solid principles, we are compelled by the increased restiveness in many sectors of our society to address these words to those upon whose shoulders God and the Nigerian People have entrusted the responsibility of leadership and governance. Equally being addressed here are all other Nigerians who are also co-responsible for building of a Nigeria characterized by stability, peace, respect for one another and for the rule of law.

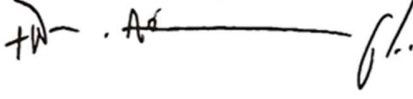
The stability of every nation is, to a large extent, dependent on its security: security of its borders, internal security, economic and social security, etc. Without security, all plans for the development of a country could remain a mirage. It is a matter of grave concern to us that in recent times there has been an unacceptable increase in the degree of violence in the Country which has raised the level of insecurity in almost all aspects our public and private life. From North to South, East to West, clashes between marauding criminals who claim to be herdsmen and the local populations now threaten our mutual co-existence. In many parts of the country, the spate of kidnapping and armed-robbery has made travelling on our roads and retiring in our homes a nightmare for many Nigerians. In the Niger Delta region many militants have renewed their violent activities, which are now further distressing our already fragile oil-based economy. More and

more dissatisfied youths in some parts of the country are protesting their continued political marginalization and economic deprivation, leading to the loss of many promising lives as a result of clashes between them and the security forces.

In the light of all this, we call on the Government to take more seriously its duty of protecting the life and property of every Nigerian, bearing in mind that this is the primary responsibility of any Government. In the same vein, we urge all Nigerians to assume their individual and collective responsibilities in the task of building a solid and vibrant nation, by respecting the existing laws and by using peaceful channels to resolve issues that may arise. Although it is the responsibility of the Government to make and enforce laws, the Citizens equally need to realize that no Government can be expected to direct the personal life of every of its Citizens. There is therefore a need for the conversion of hearts for all.

Finally, aware that our Nation is under the watchful care of God, our loving and merciful Father, we request all Nigerians to intensify their prayers for the Country. We as Catholics have been doing this for decades and are testimonies to God's answers to our prayers, as we have on various occasions moved back from the edge of the precipice. We therefore invite all the other Nigerians to take up this very effective instrument of nation-building which, fortunately, is accessible to all.


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