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**THE SALAF, JIHADI SALAFISM
AND THE INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA**

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Introduction: Salafism and Quest for Backward Doctrinal Compatibility

The idea of upholding the *Salaf al-salih* (or pious predecessors) as exemplary models for later generations of Muslims did not emerge in recent times. It is not invented by later generations as an afterthought. It is rather based on the admonishments of the Qur'an and the Sunna to always regard the foundations of Islam established by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and the immediate succeeding generations after him as the principal guidelines for the continuity of Islam. In several Chapters, the Qur'an has urged obedience to Allah and the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W).¹ The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) had stated that the best generation was the one in which he lived followed by the two subsequent ones in order of proximity to his own generation. In a related statement the prophet (S.A.W.) had also urged Muslims to firmly hold on to his path and that of the rightly guided successors after him. Similarly he had also condemned as hell bound all negative innovations that transgress the bounds of his prohibitions. All these statements indicate that using the Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet (S.A.W), that of the rightly guided successors and the general record of the earliest generations from the prophet (S.A.W.) as the modular motivation for subsequent Muslim generations in their endeavour to establish the Islamic way of life is

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¹ See for instances Qur'an 3:32, 4:59, 8:1, 8:20 etc.

an early principle. Terminologies like *Salafism*² may be frequently resorted to in recent times. But the principal idea behind the term, namely using the past record of the early generations as model for subsequent future establishment or revival of Islam is as old as Islam Itself.

Ever since the end of the early centuries of Islam, taking that early period as a model had been the focus of vision for those involved in the revival of Islam. Phrases like “*following the path of the Sahaba*”, “*adopting the methods of Ahl al Sunna wa al-jamaa*”, “*following the path of the Prophet (S.A.W.)*”, “*following the way of the Salaf*” and many others have been terminological symbols for Islamic revivalists who often exhibit conflicting doctrinal interpretations and mutually discordant implementations of those concepts. However the effort in developing concepts that evoke backward compatibility with the pioneer generations was informed by the earlier Qur'anic and Prophetic admonishments to stick to the guidance of the early generations so as to preserve the early models of Islam and sustain doctrinal authenticity by ensuring backward compatibility of later Islamic revivals with the past.

Salafism is one of those terminologies whose advocates claim to seek backward doctrinal compatibility with the path of the worthy predecessors. The term has been in existence centuries but in the 20th and 21st centuries it became a subject of intense interest and varied applications.³ It is a terminology that links the past with the present at the lexical level. It is a bridging lexicon that removes alienation of later generation from the early pioneer generations of Muslims referred to by the Prophet (S.A.W) as the best of generations. While the term Salaf literally means predecessors, technically it

² For a resourceful collection of articles on Salafism and its various dimensions see the book edited by Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. London: Hurst and company, 2009.

³ While Salafism or Salafiyya as terminologies seeking to organize a trend may be subjected to interpretive differences, the word Salaf itself refers to that community whose general acceptance by the Muslim Umma is a mainstream attitude in the Muslim World. Even if a particular Muslim may not accept views of a particular group that may call itself Salafist he accepts the Salaf as a model community and most likely considers himself their follower.

is the concept of seeing those generations as models of imitation. Striving to uphold those generations as models of imitation is often viewed by advocates as compliance both with the Qur'anic injunction of obedience to Allah and the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) and compliance with the Messenger of Allah's testimony to the exemplariness of the pioneer generations.

The Salaf therefore constitute a historical model community upon whom there is a general Sunni Muslim consensus. Salafism itself refers to the movements that later emerged claiming to revive their legacy. They may not be based on the consensus of the Umma. Salafist movements can have diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives. But they almost all agree that the Salaf constitute a worthy historical model of imitation. The Salaf and Salafism can be compared to a text and its diverse interpretations. It is like the Quran which is a basis of universal Muslim consensus and its interpretations on which Muslim scholars may have diverse and at times conflicting views. We may also compare Salaf and Salafism to history and interpretation of history.

There may be a consensus that a particular historical event had taken place. But the interpretation of that historical event may not be governed by consensus. Similarly a destination and the many routes that lead to that destination may be compared with the Salaf and Salafism. The Salaf were at a historical community made up primarily of the first three generations referred to by the Prophet (SAW) as the best of communities. Salafism itself is a later phenomenon brought about by revivalists, writers, activists, jihadists, politicians and general followers who claim to be adopting the Salaf record as a model for imitation while the Salaf did leave a record worthy of imitation, the imitators bear full responsibility for their utterances, actions and the imperfections that may emerge through the claims to imitate the Salaf.

I.Diverse Salafist Perceptions:

Like all great ideas Salafism is characterized by multiple perceptions. Its adherents exhibit highly diversified visions of their Salafist endeavour. Because of the vastness, richness and widely varied lifestyles of the Salaf generations, later Salafists (who often depict diverse and sometimes conflicting

perspectives on determination of what constitutes compatibility with the Salaf heritage) find enough historical precedence to justify their approach of interpreting the Salaf's record. As it is universally the case with all human behaviour there was no uniformity in style and approach of the Salaf even during the life time of the Prophet (S.A.W.) The Sahaba had diverse orientations. However, there were sufficient concrete common factors binding them all together which made them an exemplary community for later generations. These later generations include the Salafists whose principal claim is that of upholding the Salaf record in their revival of Islamic values. They have various areas of focus. Depending on their orientations they have different visions of their Salafist mission. Some focus on intellectual endeavour with much concern for scholarship especially around the Qur'an and Sunna without serious political advocacy for an Islamic State. Quest for doctrinal purity through scholarly retrieval of the Salaf legacy as viewed by such Salafists is their main motivation as exemplified by Nasir al-Din al-Albani and others of similar persuasions. Others engage in intense political advocacy to revive the Salaf political legacy. While the intellectually oriented Salafists find refuge in scholarship and puritanist propagation, the political Salafists advocate for political change as their expression of compatibility with the Salaf al-Salih. More recent of such Salafists have even formed political parties for example, in the pre-Sisi Egyptian political dispensation where some of them were loosely allied to the Muslim Brotherhood and its presidential flag bearer Muhammad Mursi. Quite apart from the above two, are the third Salafi trend that has become prominent especially after 9/11, namely Jihadi Salafists.

The three main Salafi currents discussed above all claim to relate to the early foundation of Islam in different ways. The intellectually oriented and scholarship based, Salafists primarily focus on retrieval of the Salaf legacy through scholarship and documentation without entangling themselves in denying the necessity of changing societies seen to be incompatible with the legacy of the Salaf. Retrieval of legacy naturally leads to advocacy for applying the retrieved Salaf legacy. The advocacy for applying the Salaf tradition to society is the main preoccupation of those Salafists who advocate for change of society based on the Salaf tradition. The third, jihad oriented Salafist cur-

rent advocates jihad to bring about change thus going beyond retrieval of legacy and advocacy for returning to the Salaf tradition. The jihadi Salafists analyse incumbent power structure as *Tagut* and go about to take up arms against it and its allies. This wave of insurgency has engulfed many parts of the world.

II. Jihadi Salafism and the Insurgency in Nigeria:

One of the most recent of such insurgencies is the *Nigerian Jamaat Ahl al Sunna li al da'awa wa al jihad* better known through its media generated name of *Boko Haram*. The phrase "*Boko Haram*" was made prominent around 2009 by the Hausa service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The name denounces as illegitimate the western oriented educational tradition in Nigeria known in the North of the country as *Boko* as opposed to the traditional system of Islamically oriented education. The western oriented educational tradition was set up with the coming of British Colonialism into the country in the 19th century. The system prevailed almost intact after independence. Through its products, it provides the country's elites who run the post-colonial political, economic and educational systems bequeathed by the British rulers when the country became independent in October 1960. The name *Boko Haram* culturally targets that system.

The media name *Boko Haram* condemns the above described Nigerian system as illegitimate. However, some members of the movement itself claim that it is the cultural set up of western education rather than all its contents that they are against. They, for example, claim not to oppose science and technology. A clear indication of that claim was seen in 2009 when the leader of the movement **Mohammed Yusuf** was captured by the Nigerian Armed Forces. There was a widely but unofficially and informally circulating video clip through mobile telephony in which he was interviewed by the army. The officer interrogating him asked: "you are opposing Western education (*Boko*) yet we found products of such education like computers when we captured your headquarters". Muhammad Yusuf responded that those were products of technology (*Keri*) and not western education (*Boko*). The point made by the officer and many others is that, those products were produced in the western oriented school system and yet western education is

condemned not just by the term "*Boko Haram*" which the movement did not create but also by verbal and written discourses of the leadership of the movement. The implication of Muhammad Yusuf's response is that it is the cultural climate of western education rather than its ultimate technological products that his movement opposed. In fact not only are the technological products of western oriented education enjoyed by the movement whose leader for instance gave interviews and engaged in debates in technological set ups like media houses. In addition, the movement even enjoyed the patronage of human products of western education like Buji Foi, a cabinet member in the Borno State Government who defected to the movement and was executed like Muhammad Yusuf himself in the 2009 war against *Boko Haram* in Borno. While the interview with the armed Forces was a unique and accidental opportunity given to Muhammad Yusuf to clarify the appearance of contradiction in the phrase "*Boko Haram*" (meaning western "*oriented*" education is illegitimate), the movement itself never necessarily interested itself in sustained clarifications of this appearance of contradiction in the eyes of many. It very rarely did that.

The movement does not only dissociate itself with names like "*Boko Haram*" and less flamboyant ones like "*Yusufiyya*" sometimes used locally echoing the last name of Muhammad Yusuf. It also dissociates itself (both in that interview and a few other occasions) with the idea that it rejects western education in totality including the systems technological products. The generality of the public is also not really interested in making such fine distinctions. There is a general adaptation of the media term "*Boko Haram*" because of its simplicity and ease of reference. The media phrase is so popular that some members of the movement themselves very often refer to the organization as "*Jama'atu Ahli al Sunna li al Daawati wa al Jihad*" that is commonly known as *Boko Haram*". Thus the name *Boko Haram* has an inescapable attraction and referential convenience even for some of its members.

Government circles also almost never use any other name than *Boko Haram*. From the president of the Republic to the National Assembly leaders down to high profile government officials the usage of the term *Boko Haram* is dominant. Government officials only use *Boko Haram's* official name in

contexts and negotiations with the movement or dialogue calls. The vast majority of the government officials and majority of the general public more commonly use the easy name "*Boko Haram*". This broad usage is part of media success and media leadership in appellations and coinages in many newly emerging circumstances. Unless a group gives itself a deliberately simple, attractive and convenient name like Hamas, Hizbullah, IRA, Al-Qaida, Senderoluminoso etc. the media will fill the vacuum and give it a name of easy reference that doesn't require sophistication or deep foreign language skills to pronounce. This is for them to convey opinions and ideas with ease. Because the media needs to cover new phenomena especially with conflict focus, it cannot afford to allow unpronounceable or highly inaccessible names to slow down its function of easy reference to news events. But when a name is well known as a result of sustained presence in the news scene, the media sometimes uses the complicated name and then refers to the short convenient appellation. For example the "*Jamaatu Ahli al Sunna li al Dawaw al Jihad*" otherwise known as "*Boko Haram*" was also coined by the BBC and adopted by some officials of the movement and the public.

As stated above the movement officially refers to itself as "*Jamaatu Ahli al Sunna li al Dawaw al Jihad*". We had said earlier that those movements that say they are following the Salaf, claim striving for backward doctrinal compatibility with the tradition of the Salaf. The official name of the *Boko Haram* movement when analysed is replete with Salafist claims. In the first place the term "*Ahl al Sunna*" in the name is meant to convey the impression that they are following the path of the Sunna. We have earlier stated the Hadith admonishing the Umma to follow the Sunna of the Prophet (S.A.W) and that of the rightly guided caliphs. The phrase *Ahl al Sunna* in the name of the organization leaves a clear impression that the movement wishes to be seen as following the path of the Salaf thus appearing to associate itself with the "*Sunna*" following communities.

The other component of the Movement's name "*al Da'wa wa al Jihad*" (propagation and jihad) extends its claim to the pursuit of propagation and jihad thus collapsing together political advocacy to bring about Sharia rule and armed campaign against governments targeted as representing *Tagut*.

These two are usually advocated separately by those political advocacy oriented Salafists and Jihadi oriented ones. It is then very clear that even at the nominal level of self-appellation; *Boko Haram* makes a grand Salafist claim asserting that it is following the path of *Ahl al Sunna*.

The movement's Salafist claims do not stop at the naming of their organisation. It is also reflected in the naming of their headquarters. Their headquarters is based in the Northern part of the city of Maiduguri, the Borno State capital in the North East of Nigeria. Borno State is the heartland of the former Kanem-Borno caliphate now scattered across several countries like Chad, Niger, Cameroun, and Nigeria etc. In Nigeria, Borno and Yobe States (among the 36 States of the country) are at the centre of former Kanem-Borno with many other sub-state entities now attached to other parts of Nigeria. The key *Boko Haram* leaders were almost all either born in Borno or Yobe but were mostly based in Maiduguri, the main urban centre of the two states that used to be one until they were separated as a result of creation of more states in the country.

The Headquarters of the *Boko Haram* movement before its destruction in the 2009 battle was located in Goni Damgari quarters (sometimes the alternate name "*bayan quarters*" is used) located in Northern Maiduguri where their main centre and mosque were situated. The centre was named after a key icon of many Salafist advocates: Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328).⁴ The Ibn Taymiyya centre in Maiduguri was their headquarters even though they spread out to many areas of the city to propagate their views very often near the homes of their allies. Many Salafists consider Ibn Taymiyya as their spiritual point of reference. Apparently *Boko Haram* movement's doctrinal admiration of Ibn Taymiyya is obvious in their naming of their headquarters after the hero of many who claim to be spreading the creed of *Ahl al Sunna wa al Jamaa* and complying with the tradition of the

⁴ For a wide ranging collection of articles on this thirteenth century scholar see Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (eds) *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*. Oxford: Oxford University press, 2010.

Salaf al-Salih. The centre is called "*Markaz Ibn Taymiyya*" but commonly known in Maiduguri as *Markaz*.

The *Markaz* was destroyed during the 2009 battle between *Boko Haram* fighters and the Nigerian Armed forces. Very often when calls for dialogue are made for the Movement to give up fighting and join normal life some of the conditions given by their leaders who occasionally give media statements include the reconstruction of the *Markaz Ibn Taymiyya* as well as other conditions like release of their incarcerated members, putting an end to arresting them and prosecution of those responsible for the extrajudicial killing of their leaders. The symbolism of their headquarters is so critical to them that it is an initial condition whenever the issue of negotiations with them by government comes up as it often did. The *Markaz* was the base of their executed leader. Its naming after Ibn Taymiyya is also of additional importance (for this analysis) of their claim of belonging to the *Ahl al Sunna*.

The claims of the movement of belonging to the fold of *Ahl al Sunna wa al Jamaa* and the *Salaf al Salih* do not stop at the level of symbolic naming and self-appellation. In fact majority of their leaders, most prominently including Muhammad Yusuf, were doctrinal offspring of organizations and circles claiming to belong to *Ahl al Sunna wa al Jamaa* and followers of the Salaf in the city of Maiduguri. Many of such groups adopt Sunna or Salaf related lexicons in their self-characterization and most admired Muhammad Yusuf prior to his armed insurgency, as an eloquent and promising youth leader of their loosely allied groups, an *Amir al Shabab* as they fondly called him. Muhammad Yusuf was initially enjoying their patronage and given time in their major centres and mosques to display his oratorical skills in support of their common doctrines. They parted ways with the leader of *Jamaatu Ahli al-Sunna li al Daawa Wa al Jihad* after he took up arms. This trend is similar to the case of Saudi and other Salafists who started with propagation only to part ways with their parent organizations after graduating from Da'awa to Jihad. Muhammad Yusuf's own graduation from "Da'awa" to "Jihad" was a defining moment that separated him from the broad community of the self-characterized Sunni/Salafist establishment. The establishment of Sharia even through armed challenge to incumbent gov-

ernment was a watershed moment that witnessed the Salafist groups disowning a hitherto darling of that doctrinal community. There was also the risk of associating with the former *Amir al-Shabab* now that he was a target of the armed forces and the security agencies along with his followers and associates. Muhammad Yusuf's organization did not only part ways with the parent groups that gave its members their da'awa and doctrinal apprenticeship, but *Boko Haram* members went underground to continue with their guerilla style insurgency against what they considered enemy targets.

The parting of ways between the new *Jamaatu Ahli al-Sunna li al Daawa wa al Jihad* and their doctrinal ancestors who assume the position of guardians of the Sunna and the tradition of the Salaf had its costs. Naturally the *Boko Haram* fighters often targeted their erstwhile mentors and even assassinated some of them. However, the conflict is over power and control rather than doctrine. In terms of doctrines, the same doctrinal instruments are used both by the *Boko Haram* leaders and the presumed *Ahl al Sunna/Salafist* community. They have the same instruments of copious reference to Ibn Taymiyya, at times Ibn Abdulwahab and utilization of the Sunnî/Salafist lexicons. The remarkable differences is therefore not over doctrinal instruments but strategies. The *Jamaatu Ahli al-Sunna li al Daawa wa al Jihad* has either abandoned daawa and assumed jihad or adopted the two parallelly while the rest of the Salafist/ Sunnî community cooperates and works with government and limits itself largely to daawa.

III. Template Insurgency and the Expansion of the Conflict's Parameters:

The *Boko Haram* insurgency has raged on without respite since their fighters went underground after their 2009 defeat by government forces in conventional confrontation in the city of Maiduguri. The guerilla style insurgency has even proved more deadly than the conventional warfare of 2009 despite tens of thousands of casualties and captives as a result of the conflict. The present danger faced by the country is not only the carnage and destruction of mostly innocent civilians and their property as a result of the conflict. The real danger is the confusion that has set in resulting in massive expansion of the parameters of the conflict. The previous known parameters

of *Boko Haram* insurgents (fighting government security agents, civilians who give information about them, civilians whom they target as enemies for various reasons), have significantly changed.

The expansion of the parameters of the conflict has created a situation whereby no enlightened Nigerian believes the violence is from *Boko Haram* alone. While the conflict started with war against *Boko Haram*, it would be naive to insist that *Boko Haram* was the sole actor in this newly expanding broad targeting system. The violence meted out against innocent civilians virtually at random and the recently broadened parameters that go beyond all declared and attributed goals of *Boko Haram* clearly indicate that there are subterraneous forces at play. There have been convincing indications of the interplay of extraordinary factors but no serious commitment had been exhibited to investigating these newly expanding parameters of the conflict.⁵ Despite occasional media disclosures of such new dimensions that go beyond conventional analysis, the focus is still on *Boko Haram* alone, thus giving cover to the subterraneous forces at play.

To understand the situation better, we are suggesting a template theory as an instrument of analysing the present expanded parameters of the *Boko Haram* conflict. *Boko Haram* emerged in its classic form when it took up arms around 2009 even though its roots are much more complicated than the media publicized watershed moment of the 2009 confrontation with the security forces. When they took up arms their targets were largely police stations, security forces, agents and informants who reported them to officials, politicians and key functionaries associated with the ruling party in the State, those who doctrinally challenged them in public and propagated that

⁵ The well-publicized case of "APO Eight" as the Nigerian media dubs it is another case of "template accusation" where by security forces actually killed certain individuals under the pretext that they were Boko Haram members. Partly because it happened in the Nation's capital of Abuja, there was a groundswell of calls for investigation as the victims were not Boko Haram members and that fact was known to the security forces. See a Nigerian media report on the event and pressures for investigations in Weekly Trust Newspaper of Saturday 28th September, 2013 page 3. The report was filed by Abbas Jimoh.

their cause was wrong. There were other targets but those just mentioned were the most notable initial targets of the insurgents. But the expansion witnessed later appeared to have made *Boko Haram* a mere "template". The *Boko Haram* template is an open instrument that is adopted by other interested players who prefer their armed attacks to appear like and be "mistaken" for *Boko Haram*. Such interested players adopting the *Boko Haram* template imitate the operational style, paraphernalia and symbolism of the *Boko Haram* fighters. That way they can be mistaken for *Boko Haram* and be covered up without specific attention to or investigation of the newly intervening phenomenon. The template covers the new interest group. It is like using the business registration of another businessman for the second party to bid for contracts with the registered company used as a tool for business by the second party. This *Boko Haram* template has been adopted by many who hope to be mistaken for *Boko Haram*. The implication is that not all that is reported as *Boko Haram* attacks are actually *Boko Haram* activities. But the actual subterranean forces that adopted the *Boko Haram* template prefer to hide under the cover of the adopted template so they can operate underground, unnoticed, unbridled and uninvestigated. It is like a guerrilla style insurgency within another guerrilla style insurgency. It is an anonymous sub-insurgency that both "plagiarises" the modus operandi of *Boko Haram* insurgency and disavows initiation and implicitly attributes responsibility for action to *Boko Haram*. That way no one can target these new forces for either investigations or accusations. The adopted template is what is witnessed by the public even though as stated, many have noticed that there are other actors using the *Boko Haram* template. Who are these subterranean forces using the *Boko Haram* template to hide their identities.

Because it is freely available like commodity in an open market or "open source code" computer programmes that can be adopted by anyone, the *Boko Haram* template is also openly and freely available to any potential user without "permission" or "control". The users of the template can neither be predicted nor counted. However, because of the persistence of the expansion of the conflict's parameters, inconsistencies and contradictions in the prosecution of the insurgency have forced many observers to reach the con-

clusion that indeed other forces are at play. Some of these players who have been using the *Boko Haram* template may be enumerated in very broad terms for the purpose of clearer grasp of the conflict's direction.

1. Members of the *Jamaat Ahl al Sunna li al Da'awa wa al Jihad* were the pioneer insurgents who provided the template pretexts to other forces that want to attack their calculated targets but would prefer to remain not only underground but anonymous. *Boko Haram's* AK 47 assault rifles, homemade bombs and other weapons were ready instruments for imitation along with slogans sometimes accompanying their operations. All these and other paraphernalia and operational styles were provided by the original authors of *Boko Haram* insurgency to be plagiarized by others as template for replication.

2. In other parts of Nigeria such as Niger Delta and Gombe State political vigilante groups had eventually transformed into fighting forces engaging in urban insurgency. Many observers have commented on the involvement of political vigilante groups in the urban insurgency characterized as *Boko Haram*. They also carry out assassination campaigns hidden under the "safe" template of *Boko Haram* insurgency.

3. Political and other enemies often become targets of the assassination campaigns. The assassins resort to *the Boko Haram* template so as to provide the killers with adequate cover. The killings would be dismissed as *Boko Haram* actions and therefore the issue would be seen as too big for immediate inquiry. This adequately covers up the real assassins, their sponsors and motives.

4. Though *Boko Haram* had engaged in several attacks on banks to do away with millions of Naira, other robbers have also occasionally used the *Boko Haram* template to rob banks and try to give adequate indication that they were *Boko Haram* fighters.

5. A dramatic dimension set into the scene of template insurgency when on several occasions discoveries were made of the involvement of *Boko Haram* style attacks by non-Muslims. On many occasions arrests were made of Christian attacks but no serious investigations were made public. Some-

times attacks said to be from *Boko Haram* by "insurgents" in military uniform were made in many places like Konduga, Beniskeik and other places in Borno and Yobe States of North eastern Nigeria. Many of these attackers were said to have been by Christian "Insurgents". The problem is that any template insurgency abiding by the template rules of replicating the archetypal *Boko Haram* style is readily reported by official circles as *Boko Haram* attacks. No investigations as to the possible involvement of non *Boko Haram* template insurgents take place.

6. There is also the rampant case of extortionists who either made telephone calls (before the ban on telephone communication in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa) or wrote letters claiming to be *Boko Haram* fighters, and asking for large sums of money from the victims. They tell the victim that they needed the funds to carry out "God's work". The extortion is often followed by implicit or explicit threat of attacks if not complied with. *Boko Haram* insurgents could be doing this occasionally though they generally appear well funded somewhere. But it was clear to many residents of Borno that many of them were extortionists using *Boko Haram* template to blackmail innocent citizens. Some of such extortionists were killed by *Boko Haram* fighters because they argued they were using their names falsely for their own benefits.

Conclusion:

These instances of template insurgency are merely non-exhaustive examples. There are certainly other cases of exploitation of the *Boko Haram* insurgency to implement individual objectives of persons, interest groups or organizations. It is their expansion of the parameters of the conflict that creates a seemingly endless cycle of violence.

The city of Maiduguri itself has in recent months witnessed less violence partly as a result of the intervention of the city's youth. They formed themselves as non-gun-carrying militia mounting road blocks and hunting *Boko Haram* members. However the rural areas have been witnessing a terrible wave of escalation such as what happened in recent weeks in Beniskeik,

Yadi-Buni, Damaturu, Konduga and many other parts of Borno and Yobe States.⁶ The carnage (after the stage of parameters expansion) is largely characterized by random and blanket targeting of unarmed civilians.

The escalation continues in spite of the state of emergency declared in three North Eastern States, severing of communication systems especially in Borno state and government committees set up to seek solutions to the conflict. The tragedy is the reticence on vacuum of knowledge and on disclosure of what may be known. A part from the broad statement that war is waged against *Boko Haram* there are no publicly known investigative pursuits of the expanded parameters that appear to be going far beyond *Boko Haram*. In the meanwhile the Killings and destruction continue relentlessly. It is not clear who are engineering the violence in addition to the original initiators whose template is now used far beyond their own initial parameters. The external and internal forces fuelling the violence are largely invisible except for very few cases. Only a strong sense of commitment, political will and delving into the roots of the conflict and its expanded parameters to seek genuine solution can save the population from an anonymously engineered holocaust.

⁶ For a graphic image of the random killings and the destructions of the residential and the Business centres see the report "Insurgents Sack Benisheikh and Kill 50" Daily Trust of Friday 20th September, 2013, page 73. Also see the recent article "Mr. President Do More to Tackle Boko Haram" on the carnage in the conflict and lack of serious official commitment to its resolution in Sunday Trust of Sunday 6th October, 2013, page 61. The article was by a former Minister Femi Fani Kayode.