

Genocide in Nigeria: 20.10.2020: By Pastor 'Femi Atoyebi, SAN

I will start these comments with the words of Archbishop Fulton Sheen to this effect:

“The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil.....”

On Tuesday, 20 October 2020 at about 1900hrs, war-like gun shots were heard under cover of darkness at the Lekki Toll Gates in Lagos where our youths have been holding their peaceful protests against bad governance for about 10 days without any accident.

I have seen and watched a lot of videos on their peaceful operations and arguably, no one can dispute the fact that it's been peaceful at the Lekki Toll Gate. I recall a day when a young man walked into their midst spotting a T-Shirt with the inscription: #Revolution. He was not only challenged, but politely turned back on the basis that their campaign was not for a Revolution, but a quest for a better government that would give them a future, because if they left things as they are now, the future of their dream would remain only a dream. I have no doubt in my mind that, that is both legitimate and desirable.

The government's response was to open fire on defenseless and unarmed youths who were holding both our dear nation's flag in their hands and singing her anthem. In my view, that singular act is a betrayal of their faith in their motherland and it has killed whatever ounce of nationalism that may remain in those youths. I have seen peaceful protests lasting for months in other civilized climes while government ensured law and order without disrupting the protests. In our case, the Military, without proper or any notice at all, opened fire and shot at our youths apparently with intention to kill, maim, and or cause grievous boldly harm to our children.

I condemn this cowardly act in the strongest possible terms and I call on all well-meaning Nigerians to do the same. I watch with horror our national flag stained with the innocent blood of our youths. It is an affront on our democracy and a bad stain on our national flag and the future we all hope for. By that callous act, government has also breached trust and it will now need to find ways to rebuild the trust of both our youths and other demographics in the country. I call on the government to urgently constitute a high-power judicial enquiry into this with a view to identifying those who have committed these heinous crimes against our nation and bring them to book so as to serve a deterrent to others. In modern day governance, I am of the firm view that employment of brute force can never be the most reasonable or effective rule of engagement in resolving social ills without looking at and addressing the root causes, as it can only serve to inflame nerves and needlessly complicate an otherwise simple problem. I also call on government to direct that the Military should immediately stand down from all the places they have been deployed to ease the needless tension created by their ill-advised intervention; while it engages with the youths who constitute about two-thirds of our population with a view to finding a lasting solution to their legitimate demands.

On a final note, I will also appeal to our youths to find a medium to engage with government with a view to accentuating their demands without exposing themselves to dangers.

God bless our youths. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.