

BEYOND TERRORISM : BOKO HARAM ATTACKS AND NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS IN NIGERIA

*Kaniye S.A. Ebeku **

ABSTRACT

In recent times, frequent and increasing terrorist attacks in Nigeria by an Islamic organization called Boko Haram have reached threatening dimensions and are causing serious security concerns nationally and internationally. As of April 2012 there have been well over 160 separate attacks reckoning from July 2009 when the first attack was launched. Importantly, however, while there is no question that Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria constitute serious acts of terrorism and pose major security challenges nationally and internationally, this article contends that the attacks go beyond issues of terrorism and poignantly raise anew important and long-standing national constitutional questions in Nigeria. Specifically: (1) the question of convocation of a sovereign national/constitutional conference to discuss critical questions of nationhood; and (2) the question of the status of Islamic law (Sharia) in the Nigerian Constitution. The central aim of this article is to show how Boko Haram attacks raise these questions. The article suggests that addressing these long-standing constitutional questions in a comprehensive sovereign national conference have become urgent and unavoidable, and that therein lies the solution to the Boko Haram terrorism and not the barrel of guns.

* LLM (LSE, London), PhD (Kent). Professor of Public Law and Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Calabar; Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Uyo.