



Ibrahim Musa is the President, Media Forum of The Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). In this interview with Apex News Exclusive, he took President Muhammadu Buhari administration to the cleaners on human rights and insecurity among others.

By Anthony Maliki

What is your assessment of President Muhammadu Buhari administration in the last five years especially on the anti-corruption fight?

My assessment of the President's anti-corruption drive can't be different from that of most informed Nigerians. It is poor to say the least. The corruption going on under his watch surpasses that of those before him. This will come to light when he leaves office and a serious government arrives; though unfortunately the Nigerian elites tend to protect one another irrespective of party divide. Imagine how the head of the corruption agency the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is accused of what he is assigned to fight by the Attorney-General and the same Minister is also accused of shady deals by the same corruption agency. Even though the President's supporters always claim he himself is not a thief, but what is the name of a friend or accomplice of a thief please?

What are your thoughts on Buhari's human rights issues?

The human rights record of this administration is also poor. This has been espoused also by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. It claims in a recent press statement that a security outfit of this government, SARS, is involved in 82 cases of torture and extra-judicial killings in a year. Another notable case is the missing of a blogger, Dadiyata. It is now over a year when his family last saw him being abducted by people dressed in mufti. To date he has vanished into thin air. The military has been severally accused of trampling upon the rights of citizens by Amnesty, such that instead of the Army to redress itself, it opted to tarnish and rubbish the image of the human rights watch.

In what affects the Islamic Movement directly, Amnesty conducted an independent inquiry into the military attack on Sheikh Zakzaky and members of the Islamic Movement of December 2015, and concluded that the military has killed hundreds of unarmed civilians using disproportionate force. At first the military denied that and branded the international agency as agent provocateur. However, the Judicial committee of inquiry instituted by Kaduna State Government also came to the same conclusion, saying that it is on record the military dug a mass grave in the outskirts of Kaduna and buried 347 victims of Zaria massacre. It even said the military officers in charge of that evil operation should be apprehended and tried in a competent court of law. But instead of that to happen, they were promoted as if they are not proven criminals.

Insecurity has been Buhari's key points before coming to power. Five years on, what has the administration done rightly or wrongly to check the matter?

Nothing explains how bad the security situation is like the way bandits are having a field day in the president's home state, Katsina. We are witness to the fact that in the last election, his home state was said to have voted him by more than 90%, but today they are at the fore front condemning him and disowning him, because he has failed them. What former President Olusegun Obasanjo said recently that nowhere is safe in Nigeria anymore is true.

This administration has started on the wrong foot of killing its citizens in Zaria and acting as if nothing has happened. I believe it sets the example that in Nigeria you can kill and go away with it. It showed to the world that the lives of its subjects don't matter to it. Probably that is why it hasn't done anything concrete to deal with the armed banditry and kidnappings going on especially in the North. Unless this regime changes its mind-set on the sanctity of life in Nigeria, it can't decisively deal with the menace of killing innocent people by armed men, be it from the nation's army or the rag-tag army of bandits.

The issue of removal of Service Chiefs has been agitating some sections of the polity, what are your views on the position?

We also believe these Service Chiefs have overstayed their welcome. Time has proven their incompetence in securing the lives and property of citizens. Nobody is in doubt over this, except probably the President himself, who always claims no part of Nigeria is under the control of armed bandits and insurgents, while the reality on ground proved otherwise.

But remember we have been the first to call for their ouster in the aftermath of December 2015 outrageous attack on the Islamic Movement in Zaria. The way and manner that callous operation was conducted and handled was to say the least unbecoming of a democratically elected government. It simply demonstrated that the heads of the nation's security agencies aren't human at all. I don't think in the whole world there is any government that has killed over a thousand lives and behaved as if nothing has happened in recent memory, apart from this Buhari regime. And I don't think this regime will remove them because of their complicity in Zaria genocide. If they sack them now, they will certainly face the International Court of Justice.

The economy has been locked down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Is the federal government handling the matter well by issuing out palliatives?

Which palliatives? Apart from the cronies of the regime, nobody has seen let alone touch the billions of naira syphoned in the name of COVID-19 pandemic. Go to the Islamic Republic of Iran and see how the government is caring to make sure people stay at home. If the government has the people at heart it should contact the Iranian government and learn how it is managing the pandemic, even though it is still raging there. Here in Nigeria there is no proper record concerning the pandemic, which is very crucial in fighting the coronavirus. We are just

lucky the virus for one reason or the other has not been killing people like in America or Brazil, but when it starts, though we don't pray for that, it will expose the cluelessness of this regime the more.

What are your observations on how the federal government is managing the COVID-19 pandemic? Are there better ways you think good solutions could be achieved?

The way Buhari regime is fighting coronavirus is grossly inadequate. I think they should look for a certain Professor who advocated for a home-grown solution to the pandemic. We shouldn't become a copy-copy nation. He opined that some nations that were successful in fighting the pandemic to a standstill adopted this measure. The government should invest more on providing essential services to Nigerians. If they do this, any disease that attack us will find a lot of antibodies in our bodies to fight it.

Since the abrupt return of your leader, Sheikh Ibrahim Elzakzaky from India for medical attention, the movement has been quiet. Before then there were issues that your leader was not really ill but acting in order to spike protests and be set free.

It is not that the Movement has been quiet. In the legal front our leading counsel, Mr Femi Falana (SAN) has file a fresh motion demanding the court to quash the charges against our leader Sheikh Zakzaky and set him free. But due to this corona wahala, and the determination of el-Rufai's government to delay the court process, the state high court is yet to sit on the matter.

But our street protest has been going on. In fact, on Friday June 26, 2020 thousands of our members staged peaceful protests in over 30 towns of Northern Nigeria, including Abuja. In the federal capital itself there is a daily protest that has been going on even with the pandemic lockdown. Probably it hasn't come under the notice of the press because the authorities haven't attacked it.

And most importantly we have been praying fervently to Allah the creator to increase our leader in health and release him from the evil clutches of this regime.

For anybody to say that our Sheikh has been faking his illness, it shows he is not aware of how the crisis started. This is a leader who was attacked by the full force of a military unit and refused to run away. He rather entrusted himself to Allah. In his last phone conversation during the Saturday attack by the army on his house he was quoted to have said 'Only Allah will save me.' And indeed Allah came to his rescue. He is still alive despite the many bullets wounds he sustained during the attack. We believe it is Allah that has kept him to this day alive, but that doesn't mean he is well. Medical records are there to prove he deserves a proper medical attention. So, for somebody to start saying the Sheikh is faking it to be released is really unfortunate. Even the psychological trauma that the Sheikh has gone through since December 2015 is enough to kill an otherwise healthy person, let alone somebody who has been shot at close range.

Besides, is the IMN compromise and deviating from its course for justice of its

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members killed in Zaria and other places?

There is no compromise in our dictionary, because we are on the side of justice and truth. I agree with you the agitation on the streets has gone down, but you know we are a Movement. We are still mobilising for another day. Just like anything in the country has slowed down a bit, definitely it will also affect our struggle for the freedom of our leader.

There are also insinuations that external forces are pushing you to revolt against the Nigerian government for whatever cause known to IMN. What are your comments on that?

The Islamic Movement has been around for almost forty years without any record of armed struggle and I don't think this will change, though we are constantly being provoked. It is only the security services that always believe we will revolt, but they have forgotten that we are the students of Imam Khomeini who believe in mass struggle as against armed struggle. We will keep on calling the masses of this country to our side, to our world view, until when Allah wishes to grant us victory. It is then you will see multitude of people across the nation embracing our call to Islamic way of life. Till then we will keep on oiling the mobilisation machinery.

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