

**ZAUREN HADIN KAN MALAMAI DA KUNGIYOYI NA JIHAR KANO
(COALITION OF ULAMA AND CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS, KANO STATE)**

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**CALL FOR ALL MUSLIMS (INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS) TO SHUN THE UP COMING NATIONAL
CHARADE**

**BEING A TEXT OF THE PRESS RELEASE BY THE COALITION ON THE PROPOSED NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

1.0 Preamble:

Gentlemen of the Press!

This press conference/release has been necessitated by the realities on ground following the release of the final list of delegates to the National Conference and the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria has slated March 17, 2014 as the date for its final inauguration.

The Kano State Coalition of Ulama and Civil Organizations formed in August 2011 following series of consultations among religious bodies, community development associations, professional bodies and civil society groups in Kano State has been actively discussing with all stakeholders on how to engage with some Federal Government policies that affect Nigerians, particularly the Muslim population across the divide of the Niger. The Coalition has made publications, press releases and submissions on the Security Situation in Kano State; Security Challenges In Northern Nigeria and on the National Dialogue.

2.0 Our Submission to the Presidential Advisory Committee on National Dialogue:

Gentlemen and Ladies of the Press! Permit me to remind you of some essential aspects of our submissions and positions to the Presidential Advisory Committee at its public hearing held in Kaduna late last year:

In that submission, after expressing our reservations, we stated and I quote:

"However, for the avoidance of doubt, we join those who consider the call for the establishment of a very vague and teleguided National Dialogue/Conference as being half-hearted, and diversionary. We equally view it as inadequate and a potential waste of time and resources. **Hence we call for the convocation of a National Conference, with NO no-go area(s) and which should thus be Sovereign in terms of its mandate, powers and freedom.** To achieve this, we call for an expedite action to amend the existing constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria so as to remove all impediments to the

convening of a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) and to provide the necessary legal basis for it."

Furthermore, in order to have an objective and fruitful discourse in a truly representative conference we suggested that:

"1) ... representation to the SNC should be determined proportionate to the OFFICIAL National Census of 2006; consequently we propose that one person should represent a population of 250,000 2) ... delegates to the SNC should be elected through universal suffrage"

We went further to state that:

"... issues to be discussed at the Conference should include but not be limited to: 1) Desirability or otherwise of Nigeria's continued corporate existence; 2) Mode of separation, should any part desire so; 3) Desired changes should the choice be on corporate existence; e.g. type of political system; nature of separation of powers; nature of distribution of powers; etc 4) Citizenship, indigeneship, and nationality questions; 5) Resource allocation; 6) The role of religion in national life; and 7) National language(s)".

3.0 Islamic Views on Dialogue and Conflict Resolution:

In the light of the current stance of the FG to organize the Conference, for the avoidance of doubt, we wish to state categorically that:

1. Islam encourages dialogue and mutual understanding on issues.
2. Dialogue is beneficial once justice and equity are observed.
3. There is always the need for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.
4. Failure to resolve grievances either through dialogue or justice system, tend to build up cumulative tensions and widespread tendencies which suggest that people can create their own versions of justice and restitution.
5. Leaders (spiritual and mundane) have the unique responsibility of providing guidance as well as setting benchmarks for conduct.
6. Mutual relations are often challenged by failures to resolve conflicts or perceptions that one group is better or favoured than the others.
7. Religion has an essential role to play in our lives and is the only way to peace and harmony.

4.0 Our Reservations:

The above notwithstanding, there are several disturbing issues about the proposed conference:

1. **Ethnicity:** Instead of promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and unity for the common interest of our Nation, the conference is geared towards promoting ethnic and tribal sentiments. The emphasis on ethnicity is unfortunate and will only heighten tensions and erode mutual trust. Islam frowns against all forms of ethnic and tribal sentiments and forbids Muslims from tackling issues from that perspective. The Qur'an states: [Q43:13]. **O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and Tribes, that ye may know Each other (Not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the Most honoured of you In the sight of Allah is (He who is) the Most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).** The Prophet SAW said: *"Each of you is from Adam and Adam was created from dust. There is no superiority for the Arab above a non-Arab, nor for the White above the dark-skinned except for piety."*
2. **Selection of Delegates Instead of Election:** Contrary to all popular views submitted to the President by the Committee, the FGN has decided to hand-pick delegates to the Conference based on political and other primordial considerations and affiliations not our collective interest.
3. **Fate of the Resolutions not Certain:** Previous experience with the pre-conference committee report shows that even if the conference arrives at meaningful resolutions, the President is at liberty to temper with it as he did with the collated report on the pre-conference committee, where he rejected the fundamental issues unanimously agreed upon by all groups during the pre-conference hearings namely; Autonomy of the conference (SNC), Election of delegates by universal suffrage, Holding the conference after 2015 elections and Enacting enabling laws on the conference to allow for referendum and adoption of its resolutions, etc.
4. **Timing/Duration of the Conference: Another key issue of concern is the 3 months duration (March to June 2015, approx).** This period is the most crucial time for all political maneuvers towards 2015 and any delays in the conference proceedings may lead to either a stalemate, haphazard decisions or inconclusive discussions, or a combination of all.

5.0 Stand of Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) on the National Conference:

Gentlemen and Ladies of the Press! After failing to convince the Presidency to postpone the Conference, NSCIA under the leadership of His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto, Alh Dr Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III mni, CFR, issued out a press release titled: "CRITICAL ISSUES ON THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE, mentioning that

"The NSCIA wishes to place on record its strong reservations which represent limitations to the potential value of the Conference. Among these are: ... The Timing of the Conference; Credibility of Delegates; Denial of the Place of Population Size; Offending the Faith of Nigerians (by offering only 6 slots each to Muslims and Christians); Unhealthy Emphasis on Tribal and Ethnic Groups; Decision-making in the Conference;

The Press Release was concluded with Suggestions on Improving the Impact of the Conference stating that: "Nomination by all stakeholders should, as a precondition for acceptance, reflect religious and other diversities and spread."

6.0 Analysis of the Delegates List:

Unfortunately, despite all this, below is an extract from the official list of delegates for the conference based on their religious affiliations, Muslims and Christians respectively (see appendix 1 for the full analysis):

1. Representation from Federal Government and Its Affiliates:

Elder Statesmen 14:23; Retired Military & Security 1:5; Association of retired Police 2:4; Retired State Security 1:4; Traditional Rulers 6:7; Retired Civil Servant 2:4; Nigerian Economic Summit 0:2; National Youth Council of Nig 2:4; National Association of Nigeria Students 1:5; Former Governors 1:5; Association of former Speakers 2:4; Federal Government of Nigeria 6:14; Former Local Government Chairmen 2:4; **Total 40:85**

2. Representation from Interest Groups:

Nigerian Labour Congress 5:7; National Council of Women Society 5:7; Market Women Association 2:4; FIDA 0:2; NAWOJ 0:2; Civil Society Org 7:17; Europe 0:2; America 0:2; Africa 1:1; Asia 1:1; People living with disability 2:4; South-South Zone 0:15; South-West Zone 2:13; South-East Zone 0:15; North-East Zone 10:5; North-West Zone 14:1; North-Central Zone 4:11; Professional Bodies 3:12; National Academies 1:3; **-Total 59:128**

Now, without need for deep analysis, it suffices us to say that the guidelines released by the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) for nomination of delegates to the Conference stated that " Socio - Political/Cultural and Ethnic Nationality Groups shall nominate 15 delegates each, per geo-political zone **to reflect religious and ethnic diversities**" but to our

great surprise the list which was composed by the FGN and supposedly moderated by its agents, has clearly violated the above guideline, laid by the SGF manifesting what has now long been recognized as the Federal Government strategy in its dealings with Nigerian Muslims i.e. deliberate marginalization of Muslims.

Thus, even though most of the interest groups listed above submitted their list in stark disregard to the religious diversity of this country, the Office of the SGF didn't find it odd and proceeded to release the final list of delegates with this skewed distribution against Muslims, even in the predominantly Muslim areas of the South-West.

7.0 Our Stand on the Conference:

We therefore, for the avoidance of doubt, wish to reiterate our stand on the Conference as follows, that:

1. This conference is ill-intentioned, poorly timed and deliberately skewed against Muslims in Nigeria.
2. That the deliberations of the conference will not produce any meaningful results and it will only worsen group animosity and ill-feelings in our country.
3. That we don't have any confidence on the Conference and have nothing to do with its resolutions as it is going to be just a meeting of hand-picked individuals, the majority of whom would not represent our collective interests and aspirations.
4. That for a Conference of this nature to have its real impact, it has to be conducted over a period of between 6 to 12 months and not at a period of intensified political activities such as elections preparations and the composition of the delegates appropriately reviewed.
5. That going by the precedent of what became of the Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee on the Conference, we have no confidence in the outcome of the National Conference, as the FGN is poised not to allow issues to be discussed objectively and/or manipulate the outcomes to suit narrow interests!

8.0 Our Recommendations:

In conclusion, based on above observations, anomalies and deliberate manipulations, in terms of the delegates anointed for the Conference, we hereby recommend:

1. That the Conference be postponed to any period from June 2015 when all Elections would have been concluded.

2. That, if the Conference must proceed in this period, the FGN should consider that since Nigeria's population (according to World Fact Book Published by the CIA) is distributed as follows: Muslims 50%, Christians 40%, Others 10%, it presupposes then the composition of delegates to the Conference should reflect same pattern with at least 50% Muslim representation subject to confirmation by Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA).
3. That the Conference should be given freehand to discuss and agree on its Agenda, and Operational Modalities.
4. That the Conference proceedings be televised live and its resolutions transparently adopted via a referendum by all Nigerians.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we strongly commend the stand of NSCIA and call on all Muslims to rally around whatever decision it takes. Meanwhile all Muslims are hereby called upon to start *Al-Qunut* (Special Prayers) seeking Divine Intervention on the issues.

We want to reiterate that injustice is the fastest and surest path to perfidy and doom. Leaders must avoid being influenced by sentiments, selfish interests and whims in whatever form in discharging their responsibilities and in dealing with their subjects.

Signed:

Dr. Musa Muhammad Borodo
Chairman
Coalition for Ulama and Civil Organizations

**APPENDIX A: ANALYSIS OF DELEGATES BASED ON RELIGIOUS
AFFILIATION**

INTEREST	Muslims	Christians	Total	% Muslims
Elder Statemen	14	23	37	37.8%
Retired Military & Security	1	5	6	16.7%
Association of retired Police	2	4	6	33.3%
Retired State Security	1	4	5	20.0%
Traditional Rulers	6	7	13	46.2%
Retired Civil Servant	2	4	6	33.3%
Nigerian Labour Congress	5	7	12	41.7%
Trade Union Congress	6	6	12	50.0%
Organized Private Sector	3	3	6	50.0%
Nigerian Economic Summit	0	2	2	0.0%
National Youth Council of Nig	2	4	6	33.3%
National Ass of Nig Students	1	5	6	16.7%
Other Youth Organisation	3	3	6	50.0%
National Council of Women Soc	5	7	12	41.7%
Market Women Assoc	2	4	6	33.3%
FIDA	0	2	2	0.0%
NAWOJ	0	2	2	0.0%
Women in Mgt, Bus & Pub Service	1	1	2	50.0%
APGA	1	1	2	50.0%
Accord	2	0	2	100.0%
Labour Party	1	1	2	50.0%
PDP	1	1	2	50.0%
APC	0		0	#DIV/0!
Muslim Leaders	6	0	6	100.0%
Christian leaders	0	6	6	0.0%
Civil Society Org	7	17	24	29.2%
Europe	0	2	2	0.0%
America	0	2	2	0.0%
Africa	1	1	2	50.0%
Asia	1	1	2	50.0%
People living with disability	2	4	6	33.3%
Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria	1	1	2	50.0%
Nig Guild of Editors	1	1	2	50.0%
NUJ	1	1	2	50.0%
Broadcasting Org of Nigeria	1	1	2	50.0%
South-South Zone	2	13	15	13.3%
South-West Zone	1	114	15	6.6%

South-East Zone	0	15	15	0.0%
North-East Zone	10	5	15	66.7%
North-West Zone	14	1	15	93.3%
North-Central Zone	4	11	15	26.7%
Professional Bodies	3	12	15	20.0%
National Academies	1	3	4	25.0%
Judiciary	3	3	6	50.0%
Former Governors	1	5	6	16.7%
Senators Forum	3	3	6	50.0%
House of Reps Forum	4	2	6	66.7%
Association of former Speakers	2	4	6	33.3%
Federal Government of Nigeria	6	14	20	30.0%
36 States & FCT	50	59	109	45.9%
Former LGA Chairmen	2	4	6	33.3%
Chairman, Deputy Chair & Secretary	3	3	6	50.0%
Total	190	303	493	38.5%