

# OPENING POSITION PAPER OF THE FULANI COMMUNITIES OF JOS NORTH, JOS SOUTH, RIYOM, AND BARKIN LADI LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, ON PEACE IN THIS AREA

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 19 May, 2013, about 93 members of the Fulani Communities of Jos North, Jos South, Riyom, and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State, met at the Crest Hotel in Jos, to dialogue together about the incessant crises that have engulfed this area, and the way forward.

1.2 The 19 May meeting was facilitated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), as part of its efforts to help build peace in the area. The Fulani dialogue was one of five facilitated by the HD Centre within the same two-week period, the others being among the Afizere, Anaguta, Berom, and Hausa.

1.3 The delegates to the 19 May Fulani meeting expressed their unreserved appreciation and commendation to the HD Centre for starting this process and promising to continue with it as long as the parties are willing through dialogue and negotiation to search for a lasting settlement of their disputes. The Fulani Community welcomes any initiative and intervention from any quarter towards the actualization of peace and peaceful coexistence of people in Plateau State and Jos North, Jos South, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas. Our religion, Islam, is a religion of peace and has encouraged Muslims to be forgiving and always willing to embrace peace initiatives and participate actively and sincerely in reconciliation process aimed at peaceful settlement of disputes between them and others as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. In view of the heavy loss of lives and property incurred by all parties during the lingering crisis in Jos and environs, no individual community will achieve any meaningful development unless there is genuine peace. Members of the conflicting communities are all yearning for peace; they are willing and eager to open a new chapter in their co-existence. None of them have an alternative place they can call home except their present abode. Therefore everyone must be willing and ready to make concessions if the need eventually arises so that lasting peace and tranquility may prevail between them.

1.4 This document, the "Opening Position Paper of the Fulani Communities of Jos North, Jos South, Riyom, and Barkin Ladi Local Governments, on Peace in This Area", was first drafted by the Fulani Dialogue Steering Committee, whose members are listed on the last page hereof. The Steering Committee's draft opening position paper was distributed at the 19 May Fulani meeting, read out, and discussed extensively. The delegates unanimously authorized the Steering Committee to revise the position paper in light of their comments and suggestions, and to issue the revised paper as their official "Opening Position Paper". This is what the Steering Committee has done in preparing and issuing this document.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Without belabouring our nasty experiences and predicaments in 2001 and 2008, we need to point out that the Berom people have wreaked lots of havoc on our people and caused very serious damages in our relationship and our well being in Plateau State. The experience of the Fulani community of Plateau State from 2010 to date as a result of the barbaric and unjustifiable attacks on their people

by the Berom people is most pathetic, horrible, agonizing, thought provoking and most excruciating. Its therefore of great interest to summarily state and highlight some of these unfortunate events and their devastating effects on our people so that the whole world and any other person or group of persons interested in genuine dialogue with us for peace can understand the nature of our grievances against the Berom people in Plateau State.

2.2 Thus, in 2010 and following years the Beroms with the endorsement of the Government of Plateau State and the Berom Traditional Council have attacked the Fulani Community at various places in Jos South, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State without any or the slightest provocation and mercilessly killed them, stole their cattle in large numbers, burnt their houses and forcefully ejected them from their legally acquired land. Hundreds of Fulani including men, women, and children have been killed and many more wounded. Large numbers of cattle have been stolen or killed. Thousands of Fulanis have been displaced and their dwellings destroyed. All our efforts to seek justice, through the traditional and local government authorities and through the security agencies, have been frustrated and have gone nowhere.

2.3 It is therefore pertinent at this stage to state that, despite the steps taken by the Fulani people by way of reporting these atrocities committed against their people and the terror unleashed on them nothing has been done by the authorities. No single arrest was done. No single cow was recovered. This is despite the clarity and glaringness of their complaints and the fact that the Fulani people know their attackers and know where their cows were and have reported same. In this regard therefore, for the achievement of peace and peaceful coexistence between the Berom people on one hand and our people on the hand, we suggest that, all problems associated with the issues of compensation, indigeneship, grazing reserves, resettlement of the displaced, access to stock routes, development of nomadic schools, discrimination and employment opportunities etc are discussed and addressed by all parties involved in any dialogue for peace particularly were such dialogue is with our people.

### 3.0 ISSUES

3.1 **Cattle rustling/denial of access to areas where rustled cows are hidden.** A very pressing issue is that recently, some elements within the Berom people have resorted to cattle rustling as their major business to the detriment of the Fulanis who are the owners of the cows. It is well known that Vwang-vom district, which is the major hideout for the culprits and which is also the area where the rustled cows are hidden and arranged for disposal by the Beroms have remained a no-go-area even to security agents. This is an issue of serious concern and should be addressed in such a way as to nip it in the bud and to return the rustled cows back to their owners. The culprits should be brought to book in order to serve as deterrent to others who may want to indulge in such act in the future and to subsequently avoid recurrence of crisis with the Fulanis who would be desperate to recover their stolen cows.

3.2 **Compensation.** The Berom people should take steps to return all cows stolen or taken away from the Fulani people. Where such return of cows is not possible, the Berom people or the Government of Plateau State should assess the monetary value of all the cows stolen or taken away from the Fulani people and compensate them adequately.

**3.3 Indigeneship.** The Fulani Community believe that the issue of indigeneship is one of the causes of dispute between them and the Berom people in Plateau State. The Berom people regard the Fulani people as strangers or settlers in Plateau State. It is our contention that indigeneship issue is related to citizenship rights in Nigeria and it is a purely constitutional matter. There is no law in Nigeria that allows any person or group of persons to identify and or regard any person or group of persons as strangers or settlers in any part of Nigeria and no law equally allows any person or group of persons to identify themselves as indigenes of a place. It is therefore our position that to ensure peace both the Berom people and our selves should urge both the Federal Government and the National Assembly to expedite action through legislative means to address the issue of indigene/settler divide in Nigeria once and for all and particularly that, the matter is not within the legislative competence of the Plateau House of Assembly. In addition, discrimination on this basis against the Fulani people by the Government of Plateau State should be discouraged in its entirety.

Furthermore, if long stay in a particular place in Plateau State is anything to go by, then the Fulani Community in Plateau State should have been regarded as indigenes of Plateau State. This is because as far back as 1728 a Fulani family existed in Vwang Turu in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. This family met the land in this area as a virgin land and settled on it in the same way the Berom people settled in that area. This is the family of Abubakar Yashi who was born in 1732. Mallam Abubakar gave birth to Mallam Gidado in 1826 and Mallam Gidado in turn gave birth to Mallam Ahmadu Gidado in 1913 on same piece of land in the same village. It is in record that the Berom people challenged the family ownership of that piece of land by this Fulani family which resulted in the defeat of the Berom people by this Fulani family in a Court of Law in 1987 and the family were since officially given Certificate of Occupancy with Registration Number: PL4541 based on their historical occupation of that land. It is the Berom people that forcefully ejected this family from their legally acquired land in the year 2001. How do we reconcile this fine history of a Fulani family with the unfounded claim of the Berom people that the Fulani are not indigenes of this area?

**3.4 Employment opportunities.** The Berom people have always frustrated all efforts by the Fulani people to be employed in Government establishments/agencies always on the basis that the Fulani people are strangers and/or settlers in Plateau State even though they are Nigerian citizens and are entitled to all rights and privileges to which other Nigerians residing in Plateau State are entitle to.

**3.5 Official marginalisation of the Fulani community.** In fact, The Plateau State Government has been very unfair to the Fulani community in the distribution of many state resources. We would like to urge the Plateau State Government to be fair enough to equally respect our rights as bona fide citizens of Plateau State irrespective of our religion or tribe and to extend development projects especially roads, hospitals, portable water, electricity, etc. to our people.

**3.6 Denial of freedom to business practices and farming activities.** In addition to cattle rearing, the Fulani community also participate in farming activities and other legitimate businesses in the effort to enjoy a decent livelihood like every other citizen. However, the Berom people, with the connivance of the Plateau State Government and the Police, have consistently denied the Fulanis the right to freely

carry out these activities through confiscation of their legally acquired farmlands and orchestrated attacks and destruction of their properties. This must be brought to an end as a sign of willingness to peaceful co-existence.

**3.7 Grazing reserves.** Grazing reserves are areas specifically set aside and protected by government. The Fulani Community in Plateau State is very much aware that both grazing reserves and stock routes were established in Nigeria since 1964 and backed by law in 1965. They were established in some areas of the following current states in Nigeria (Borno, Bauchi, Kaduna, Niger, Kwara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Taraba, Adamawa, Katsina, Nassarawa and Plateau State). In the South West of Nigeria same was done in Oyo and Ogun States. For long, Fulani people have been using these grazing reserves and stock routes without much disturbance. But in Plateau State the experience is different. About 60% of the area of the grazing reserve in Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State has been taken over by farmers and the Government of Plateau State has not done anything in that regard. The Fulani Community in Plateau State is also aware that apart from the grazing reserve in Wase Local Government Area no other one exist in the state particularly in Jos South, Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Jos North Local Government Areas. The Government should therefore with the joint effort of the Berom Elders in the above mentioned Local Government Areas ensure that grazing reserves are protected where they exist, or are created where they do not, in all farmer/grazer flashpoints particularly in Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State. This is in order to address problems associated with farmer/grazer conflicts between the Berom people and the Fulani in these Local Government Areas mentioned. The Government should in this regard support the current peace initiative between the Berom people and the Fulani people by establishing a permanent COMMISSION to address all problems associated with farmer/grazer conflicts in Plateau State and Nigeria in general. The Commission should be saddled with the responsibility of settling all farmer/grazer conflicts as well as the creation and management of grazing reserves in the country, under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. The Commission should also regulate the administration of national and international stock routes where they exist. Where they do not, the Commission should map them out properly, establish and protect these routes accordingly and unfettered access to such routes allowed the Fulani people as doing so is critical to ameliorating farmer/grazer conflicts.

**3.8 Denial of access to grazing areas by security agents.** While the Berom people, with impunity, continue to cultivate and build their houses on areas that are officially designated as cattle routes and grazing reserves respectively, they also attack grazing cattle, kill them and maim the herdsmen. Meanwhile, the Plateau State Government refused to take appropriate action despite several complains by the Fulanis. This has helped in fanning the embers of the series of farmer/grazer conflicts in Plateau State. In the circumstance, the security operatives have continued to intimidate the Fulani herdsmen and blocked them from getting access to the areas to feed their livestock without any genuine reason. This is a clear demonstration of denial of our rights to food and feeds for our livestock and has remained a source of great concern leading to mistrust and misgivings. We want to urge the authorities concerned, in the interest of fairness and justice, to ensure that our people are allowed to freely exercise their constitutional rights without intimidation or harassment.

**3.9 Resettlement of internally displaced herdsmen.** The Berom people should genuinely support the Fulani Community in urging both the Federal and State Government to resettle all internally displaced herdsmen from Plateau State in the interest of peace and domestic tranquility. Till date, the Plateau State Government has done nothing to either resettle them or bring succour to their suffering. Neither has the government made any attempt to retrieve their farmlands that were illegally taken over by the Beroms in Jos-South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs. Meanwhile, majority of affected persons are still homeless and need to return and repossess their houses. The Berom people should not frustrate legitimate efforts by Fulani to return back home, reclaim and re-posses their legally acquired lands and properties where it is possible. Where it is not possible, the Fulani people should be compensated adequately for their loses. This is with particular reference to villages in Jos South, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State where more than 600 Fulani people were killed and their houses and farms ransacked by the Berom people.

**3.10 Nomadic schools.** The Plateau State Government has for long neglected the nomadic schools which are the only hope of the Fulani children to be educated. The schools have remained in a state of total dilapidation for years while the teachers have deliberately absconded even though they continue to enjoy salary in the name of the school. Meanwhile, the Plateau State Government has continued to frustrate several communal efforts aimed at rehabilitating the schools. This must be a policy to ensure that our communities remain illiterate forever and permanently incapacitated to stand against all the injustices often unleashed on them by the Beroms. The Fulani Community calls for the establishment of more nomadic schools particularly in Jos South, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State. The Fulani Community also calls for urgent renovation and development of the existing nomadic schools in Plateau State. This will go a long way in enhancing cordial relationship between the Fulani people and their Berom neighbours in the areas mentioned. As it is now, the Fulani Community is experiencing high level of discrimination by the Government of Plateau State in this regard.

**3.11. Unwarranted blockage of highways.** The tradition of unwarranted blockage of the highway between Barkin-Ladi/Kassa along Jos road and Abuja-Jos Road by irate youth, who often maim and kill innocent commuters is a serious threat to the peace process on the Plateau and should be stopped as the highway respectively constitute the only link between Jos, the Plateau State capital with about 14 LGAs in the State and to other parts of Nigeria.

**3.12 Unwarranted arrests and harassment of Fulani people.** It has become a tradition of the Beroms to often commit crime and then connive with the police to arrest the Fulanis, instead of the real culprits, and subject them to harassment, maltreatment and extortion. Till this moment, some Fulani youth below the age of 18 are still in police detention and all effort to secure their freedom has failed. There is therefore, the need for the dialogue to insist on the freedom for this youth as an indication of sincere commitment to the peace process.

**3.13 Unjustifiable closure of Mahanga mosques.** The mosque in Mahanga village in Riyom LGA has remained closed by the government for long without any justifiable reason. This is a direct denial of our right to freedom of worship and demonstration of intolerance and hatred to our religion. This must be stopped if any meaning peace is intended to be achieved.

### **3.14 The problems between the Berom and Hausa in Jos North LGA.**

The Fulani Community of Plateau State is aware that the dispute between them and the Berom in Plateau State is inextricably connected with the Jos North Local Government Area Crisis which is mainly between the Berom people and the Hausa people of Jos. Peace between the Fulani Community and the Berom can hardly be achieved without solving the problems between the Berom people and the Hausa people of Jos North Local Government Area. It is interesting to note that considering the nature of the crises generally in Jos North Local Government Area, it is clear that anytime there is crises in Jos North Local Government Area, the Berom people will start attacking and killing Fulani residents in Jos South, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State. It is therefore important for the Berom people to extend hand of friendship to the Hausa people of Jos North in the interest of peace and domestic tranquility. It is our belief that, once there is no problem in Jos North Local Government Area between the Hausa of Jos North Local Government Area and the Berom people, there will be problem generally between the Berom people and the Fulani people residing in Berom dominated Local Government Areas of Plateau State.

**3.15 Longstanding communal suspicion and dispute over ownership/land matters in Jos.** The Fulani Community believe that the issue of ownership of Jos has been in the forefront in causing most of the crises that engulfed Jos and environs which is mainly between the Hausa people of Jos and the Berom people. We urge the Berom people to resort to the path of dialogue in order to achieve peace. It is believe that, claims of exclusive communal ownership of Jos by Berom people has no foundation in law and jurisprudence and same should be discarded in the interest of peace and tranquility in Plateau State. Ownership of land has for long been taken away by the Land Use Act and same has been vested on the government. What do the Berom people means when they say they are the "owners" of Jos North, Jos South, Riyom, and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State? Can ownership by a group of people or community co-exist by another group or individuals? Can one community or a group of communities be declared owners of a Local Government Area or public places within a Local Government Area? This is impossible. Therefore, it is our contention that no law in Nigeria recognizes ownership of a whole town by a tribal group. It is therefore pertinent for the Berom people to have a rethink over their claims on not Jos North Local Government Area alone but other Local Government Areas for peace to be achieved.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

**4.1 Validation of the draft position paper.** By means of a voice vote administered at the 19 May, 2013 Fulani meeting, by the Chairman of the Steering Committee, participants overwhelmingly **ACCEPTED** the draft position paper, **AUTHORIZED** the Steering Committee to amend it in accordance with their discussion, and **ENDORSED** it, as amended, as the collective declaration for peace by the Fulani Community of Jos-South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs of Plateau State Nigeria.

**4.2 Adoption of the Steering Committee.** While suggesting for the improvement of the representation of the Fulani community of Jos South in the Steering Committee, the participants, by means of another voice vote administered by the Chairman, overwhelmingly **APPROVED** the composition of the Steering

Committee of the HD Centre Fulani Dialogue Forum and **MANDATED** the Committee to represent them at all levels of the Process towards a lasting solution to the lingering crisis in Jos-North, Jos-South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs of Plateau State Nigeria.

**4.3 Names and signatures of the members of the Steering Committee.**

We the undersigned members of the Fulani Dialogue Steering Committee hereby state that the foregoing "Opening Position Paper of the Fulani Communities of Jos North, Jos South, Riyom; and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State, On Peace in this Area", has been made and adopted by us in accordance with the wishes of the Fulani meeting of 19 May, 2013.

S/n	Name	Status	Signature	Date
1	Alhaji Shehu Buba	Chairman		17/6/13
2	Salisu Musa Usman <i>UMAR</i> <i>SALISU</i>	Secretary		17/6/13
3	Arda Idris Gidado	Member		17/6/2013
4	Haruna Boro Usaini	Member		17/6/13
5	Nura Abdullahi	Member		17/6/13
6	Mohammed Adam	Member		17-6-13
7	Danladi Chiroma	Member		17/6/2013
8	Ardo Mahmud Adam	Member		17/6/13
9	Alh. Bello Uthman	Member		17/6/13

[Note: HD has been authorized by the Chairman of the Fulani Steering Committee to issue the foregoing as the opening position statement of the Fulani community, although it has not been possible to obtain all the signatures in good time. The signatures will be added as soon as possible.]