

A Call on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to End the Bloodletting in Benue State

**His Excellency
President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR
Aso Rock Villa,
Abuja**

Your Excellency,

With profound respect and deep patriotic concern, we, the members of the Mutual Union of Tiv in America (MUTA), write to you with a sense of urgency and hope. MUTA is a sociocultural organization of Tiv sons and daughters in the United States, committed to promoting the welfare, dignity, and progress of Tiv people, and to advancing peace and justice for all Nigerians.

Mr. President, the ongoing massacres and systematic dispossession of Tiv communities by armed Fulani militias, which began around 2011, have claimed thousands of innocent lives, including women, children, and the elderly. These attacks have displaced millions of families from the lands of their ancestors. When Your Excellency assumed office over a year ago, many of us believed that a bold and decisive response would soon bring relief to our people. Today, that hope is under immense strain as the situation continues to deteriorate.

The conditions in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps are dire. Preventable nutrition-related and sanitation-related diseases are ravaging the displaced, stripping families of the little strength they have left. Yet they cannot return home. Armed groups have not only occupied their lands but remain poised to kill anyone who attempts to return. Most of these displaced people are farmers whose livelihoods, identity, and dignity are tied to their land. Therefore, their loss is more than physical; it is existential.

Your Excellency, Nigeria's greatness rests upon its unity, its diversity, and the courage of its leaders to confront hard truths. Unfortunately, we fear that some of the information presented to you about the situation in Benue State has been incomplete or misleading. A narrative has been circulated that these atrocities result from mere skirmishes between herdsmen and farmers. But skirmishes do not result in thousands murdered in their sleep. Skirmishes do not empty entire communities for over 15 years. Skirmishes do not lead one group to occupy the lands of those they have violently displaced.

What is unfolding is not a local misunderstanding, it is a sustained campaign of violence that bears the markings of ethnic cleansing, like what is happening in Plateau, Southern Kaduna, and Taraba states.

Even more troubling is the apparent inability, or unwillingness, of security agencies deployed in affected communities to prevent these killings or reclaim seized lands. Time and again, residents have reported imminent attacks to the authorities, yet no meaningful action is taken. Whether this failure stems from negligence or lack of capacity, the result is the same: innocent Nigerians continue to die.

Your Excellency, we must also draw your attention to the undeniable role of Nasarawa State as a staging ground for many of the attacks on both Tiv communities within Nasarawa and bordering areas of Benue State. Local authorities and residents have long known that many armed militias retreat to safe havens in Nasarawa after

perpetrating violence across the border. This is an open secret.

It is therefore deeply concerning that when a prominent Tiv son, Professor Zacharys Gundu, voiced this truth in frustration at a News Central TV town hall, "*Crisis in the Heartland: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Benue*", the Governor of Nasarawa State, Abdullahi Sule, responded, not with introspection, but with a defamation lawsuit. Instead of engaging with the substance of the concern, the governor chose to attack the messenger. This, in our view, represents an attempt to silence truth and criminalize free expression at a moment when Nigeria most needs honest voices willing to confront uncomfortable realities.

Mr. President, we believe strongly that unless the movement of armed Fulani militias through Nasarawa State is curtailed, meaningful peace will remain elusive. Your Excellency has long been known for your ability to de-escalate tensions and hold together diverse interests. We therefore appeal to you, as a father of the nation, to:

- I. Order the immediate removal of armed groups occupying Tiv ancestral lands in Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba States, and facilitate the safe return of displaced persons. These families deserve the chance to rebuild their lives, return to their farms, and restore dignity to their communities.
- II. Disarm the armed groups that have continued to terrorize the innocent Tiv people of Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba States.
- III. Impress upon Governor Sule that both his lawsuit against Professor Gundu and the continued use of his state as a sanctuary for violent non-state actors only deepen national instability. We respectfully urge you to counsel him to rise to the statesmanship his office demands, drop the case against Professor Gundu, and commit fully to preventing terrorists from using Nasarawa State as a base of operations.

Finally, Your Excellency, at a time when Nigeria faces severe international scrutiny following its designation by the United States as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), it is imperative that every arm of government works to restore confidence in our nation's commitment to human rights and rule of law.

We trust your leadership, wisdom, and moral courage to champion and address the above issues. The resettlement and reintegration of these displaced Nigerians is paramount. May God guide and strengthen you as you lead our nation through these difficult times.

Respectfully,

Prof. Akaa Daniel Ayangeakaa
MUTA President

Prof. Joseph T. Zume
MUTA SEC Chairman