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By Ola Agbaje and NDUBUISI ORJI

**Tuesday, February 9, 2010**

Renowned cleric and Vicar-Generel, Catholic Archdiocese of Kaduna, Monsignor Matthew Kukah, has accused the Nigerian government of being the number one promoter of violence in the country. Kukah spoke at the Airport Hotel, Lagos, as guest speaker at a public lecture organised by old boys of the St Charles Grammar School, Osogbo, as part of activities to make their 50 years anniversary.

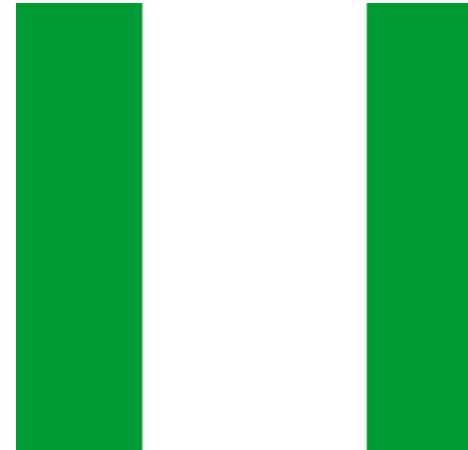
Speaking on the topic: Violence and Political Failure In Nigeria: Quality Education as a Panacea, the Catholic priest said the main reason violence still persists in the country is because of the inability of the government to assert its will. He said unending violence in the country is a symptom of political decay in the country.

He linked the unending orgy of violence in the country to the military regime which seized power through violence. Kukah said though the country is now in a democracy, the people are yet to be weaned of the violent tendencies because past transitions in the country had never brought about a clean break from the violent past.

“Violence crept into our polity and is still part of it because of the nature of the military regime,” he stated.

Kukah also said the issue of violence in the country is also as result of the crisis of legitimacy amongst the Nigerian leadership. He said it must be pointed out that office holding is not necessary leadership.

“A distinction must be made between leadership and political office holder. A lot of Nigerians today, if asked to name their leaders, they would readily remember the late

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Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Mallam Aminu Kano because of the role they played in their lives. But they would find it difficult to even remember name of our past leaders or heads of state.

“ Most governments don’t just know what to do. The real problem is that those who govern do not understand the issue.”

He noted that because of the weakness of the Nigeria State, it does not even have the capacity to curtail violence . “The state has inherent problem of the capacity to assert its will.”

Monsignor Kukah stated that the problem of violence must be isolated from religion, arguing that violence is outside the frame of our understanding of God because everybody agrees that no religion preaches violence.

Besides, he said, the inability of the government to contain violence in the country is what has led to a culture of impunity. He pointed out that if prominent men are punished for crime committed by them, it would send the right signals to the society at large that nobody is above the law.

Kukah said it is common to hear that people are arrested for violence. But it is never heard that they are prosecuted.

He said though Nigeria is a failing state, education can still redeem the situation, noting that it is education that has made the difference between the muslim youths in the South West and their counterparts in the North. According to him, the decay in the society has permeated the education sector as youths are now acquiring certificates through dubious means at “ miracle” examination centres through the connivance of their parents who provide the fund for the operators of such centres.

However, he noted that the panecea for the problem of violence is quality education. According to him, when the youths are well educated, they would be able to appreciate issues better.

Also speaking at the public lecture, former Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Lagos State, Prof Yemi Osibajo, who was the special guest of honour said it is because of the culture of impunity that the government has not been able to find those who killed Chief Bola Ige, Harry Marshal, A.K Dikko and others.

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