



March 31, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to you as concerned groups, individuals, and organizations alarmed at the land grabbing and violence in northern and central Nigeria conducted by the Fulani Herdsmen. The Fulani, an ethnic tribe that is traditionally devoted to cattle herding, are native to Nigeria and lived at peace alongside other ethnic tribes and religious communities for centuries. However, in recent years the Fulani have committed numerous attacks against other ethnic tribes and Christian communities, and these attacks have become significantly more violent in the past year. President Muhammadu Buhari is ethnically Fulani, and we fear there may be continued silence from his administration regarding the atrocities being committed. Because Nigeria is heavily influenced by the United States, our hope is that the U.S. government will urge the Nigerian government to intervene in these horrid crimes.

The Fulani have posed a threat to many of the farmlands in the northern and central regions. Recent attacks in Benue State have massacred hundreds of children, women, and men and displaced thousands more. Victims have reported that the Fulani have taken over their farmlands and converted them to grazing lands for their cattle. The Agatu Local Government Area was left in ruins after Fulani razed village huts and militarily took over the land. The attacks have left surviving families homeless and without any means to support themselves since their land and livelihood has been taken from them. And yet, the state and local governments have failed to act. Federal police have failed to arrest suspects or otherwise provide protection to defenseless indigenous villagers.

In Benue, the Fulani recently seized and currently illegitimately occupy four major towns and over one hundred villages along the Benue River. There are estimates that 180,000 people, primarily farmers, are or will be affected by their occupation. There is also fear that the Fulani who have conducted such attacks have subscribed to a radicalized ideology of Islam. This creates an even larger threat to the Agatu people, of whom eighty-percent are Christian. Previous attacks by the Fulani include several incidents last May in Plateau State where seventy Christians were killed and many churches and homes destroyed within a single month. Reports indicate that the attackers shouted "Allahu Akbar" during the attacks. An eight-year-old survivor of the Agatu attacks was quoted, "If I have my way, no one should be eating cow meat again. I hope it will stop the killing in Agatu."

In light of the President of Nigeria's visit, we ask for the United States government to urge President Buhari and his government to intervene in these inhumane Fulani herdsman targetings of villagers and to prevent further attacks from happening. We also ask that all seized lands be

A Vital Voice for Those Suffering in Silence

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immediately restored to their rightful owners in order to prevent further incentives to land grab through intimidation, violence, and murder. Impunity must end.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Buwalda', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ann Buwalda
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