

**THE ALBATROSS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN DURING THE 2001 MILITARY
INVASION OF ZAKI-BIAM AND THE ADJOINING AREAS**

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ABSTRACT

Women and children just like their men counterpart play critical roles for the development of every society, the world over. However, women and children are the weaker persons and as such, during the times of crises they are mostly affected. It is in this regard that this paper discusses the albatross of women and children during the military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the adjoining areas on the 22nd – 24th October, 2001. The paper notes that the Nigerian military invaded Benue State on a retaliatory expedition and inflicted collective justice on several communities. The paper using the experience of Zaki-Biam and the adjoining areas dissects the causes of this unsavoury act. It further espouses the consequences of the invasion from women and children perspectives. It concludes by emphasizing that, the military invasion of the areas under consideration has negatively affected the category of people under review and such crises should be discouraged for peace and stability of the area, Benue State at large and Nigeria on the broader perspective. The study largely dwells on oral interviews and published works concerning the subject matter.

KEYWORDS: Albatross, Women, Children, Military Invasion, Zaki-Biam and Adjoining Areas.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 2001 military invasion of Zaki- Biam, a lot of scholarly articles have been written by scholars of different shades of life. This they did to express their opinions, experiences and suggest policy options for preventing future occurrences of the crises. Some of these articles focused on the factors, actors and issues in the Zaki-Biam carnage, others have explained how the invasion gave impetus to poverty in the areas. Others harp on the economic implications of the military invasion of Zaki-Biam, other scholars have extended their studies to cover the social and economic effects while some appreciate the Zaki-Biam massacre in poetry. Relatedly, some scholars also approached the phenomenon from justice and ethical considerations. However, little attention has been given to the challenges faced by women and children during the military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the adjoining areas, even though they are one of the major victims of the said invasion.

It is in line with this that this paper profiles the pathetic plight of women and children as victims of the 2001 military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the adjoining (neighbouring) areas. The essence is to espouse the precarious conditions of these victims and its effects on the development of the areas and in the process broaden policy options for averting its future occurrence. To achieve this objective, the

paper considers some critical questions thus: what is the content of military? Where is the location of Zaki-Biam? What are the areas adjoining Zaki-Biam? What are the causes of military invasion of the study areas? What were the effects of military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the neighbouring areas on women and children? What needs to be done to prevent future occurrence of such scenarios? These are the core issues interrogated by this paper.

Conceptualizing Military

The word 'military' was first used in the year 1585 and it was called Militarie. It was derived from the Latin word Militaris, and from Latin, miles, meaning "Soldier" that is French, but is of uncertain Etymology, suggestion being derived from mil-it-ary, going in body or mass.¹ The word is identified as denoting someone that is filled...in use of weapons, or engaged in military service, or in warfare.²

As a noun, the military usually refers generally to a country's armed forces or sometimes, specifically, to the senior officers who command them.³ In general, it refers to the physicality of armed forces, their personnel, equipment, and the physical area which they occupy.⁴ As an adjective, military originally referred only to soldiers and soldiering, but it soon broadened to apply to land forces in general, and anything to do with their profession. The names of both the Royal Military Academy (1741) and United States Military Academy (1802) reflect this scenario.⁵

However, at about the time of Napoleonic wars, 'military' began to be used in reference to armed forces as a whole, and in the 21st century, expressions like military service, 'military intelligence, and 'military history' encompass Naval and Air Force aspects. As such, it now connotes any activity performed by armed forces personnel.⁶ In his conceptualization of military, T.P. Agba states that:

The military is a specialized institution created by the government of a polity and bestowed with the primary role of protecting the territorial integrity of the polity. It specializes in the use of handling of arms and armoury, and the planning and execution of war. The military is also bestowed with keeping the peace and protection of lives and property of both individuals and corporate bodies of the polity it is created to serve.⁷

The bottom line of the roles of the military is to ensure conditions which would directly or indirectly cause the wellbeing of citizens. This is to say that the appropriate execution of the roles of the military by men and officers of the armed forces of any society would lead to improved wellbeing of the citizens.⁸ Relatedly, C.S. Orngu stipulates that:

The military institution is structurally organized system which functions without the premise of established doctrines and a distinctive tradition of discipline. In very

simplistic terms, the military institution of a country relates to its armed forces which comprise the Army the Navy and the Air Force.⁹

The military base of a country, therefore, provides for the establishment of an institutional machinery to facilitate cooperation among these three dominant armed forces for the enhancement of the security and socio-political goals of that country.¹⁰

The word “military” is connected with soldiers or the armed forces.¹¹ This means that the military is a combination of all the armed forces like the army, air force or navy of a country. The implication here is that any of the above named services of the armed forces forms a part of the military organization of a country. It, therefore, means that the army as military is an organization authorized by its greater society to use lethal force, usually including use of weapons, in defending its country by combating actual or perceived threats. The military may have additional functions of use to its greater society such as advancing a political agenda, for example, communism during the Cold War era and as a form of internal social control.¹² The military, apart from the defense of the territorial integrity of its greater society, also have the additional responsibility of containing internal insurrections and these have to be such that pose potential threats to national security of the greater society. The concept ‘military’ can, therefore, be used interchangeably with armed forces but they convey the same meaning. Armed forces in this sense are to be distinguished from police. The armed forces are legally established services of a country’s military force which are charged with the responsibility of defending it both internally and externally against any form of aggression, consequently, it is expected to act within the confines of law and not as if it were a band of ethnic militia.¹³ John W.T. Gbor conceives that the military is a profession that not only requires many important virtues but also enforces values on all members of the profession through its legal system and its day-to-day routine.¹⁴

However, when the military go against their primary roles and resorts to invading the very people they are supposed to protect, it paves way to the emergence of very serious negative consequences. When the military invade an individual or a group, they can unleash brutal destruction, suppression, oppression, injury, damage, and a lot more on the visited.¹⁵ The consequences of these are mostly felt by women and children who are the weaker groups.

Understanding Zaki-Biam and the Adjoining Areas

Zaki-Biam is a town situated about Forty-Five kilometers from the Taraba-Benue border. Zaki-Biam is located on latitude 70 300 North and on longitude 90 370 East.¹⁶ According to an informant, Ugbem Dugwer, Zaki-biam is named after a famous Tor-Agbande Biam Alla who became the first District Head in Tivland in 1907.¹⁷ After the subjugation of Tiv people, the British created administrative networks necessary for economic exploitation of the Tiv area. Chieftaincy institutions were created and chiefs were also appointed, and roads were also constructed to link up with the

markets situated in chief's compounds after their names, markets like Zaki-Biam, Adikpo, Anyiin, and Ihugh, among other markets.¹⁸

John W.T. Gbor, shares a similar view with the above, he explains that, Zaki-Biam, a town of 21,380 people, gets its name from an individual called Biam.¹⁹ Biam was an Ukum man of the Sherev minimal lineage of the Ngenev sub-lineage. At the time of the British arrival in the area in 1907, the sub-lineages of Ukum had a total of 21 sub-clans or unilineal descent groups. Each of the sub-clans had a Tor or Chief. The unilineal descent group of each sub-lineage met occasionally to discuss issues relating to the well-being of the people. Biam was the Tor of Sherev by 1907 when the British arrived.

In the process of the reorganization of the Tiv for effective colonial administration, all of the Ukum sub-lineages were grouped together into one district. These are Tsav, Rumbuv, Mbaterem, Torov, and Ngenev. The elders of Ukum unanimously appointed Tor Biam as their District Head when the British administration ask them to elect someone for the post. Due to the influence of Hausa settlers and traders, Tor Biam acquired the title of "Zaki", a Hausa word meaning chief. Tor Biam died in 1913 after exhibiting fair rulership of the Ukum people, who have continued to maintain unity among the different sub-lineages of the clan.²⁰

The village of Zaki-Biam was favourably connected by roads from Wukari to the east, Katsina-Ala, Gboko, and Makurdi to the west. The distance between Katsina-Ala and Zaki-Biam is 30 miles. Situated on a flat land of Ukum, it was accessible to the entire surrounding Ukum lineages and their immediate neighbours, such as the Ugondo, Tongov, Gambe-Ya and Gambe-Tiev. The village attracted foreign settlers and traders such as Hausa and Ibo.²¹

In 1911, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) made its first entry into Tivland at Sai in Gambe-Ya. By about 1915, the Mission established a station at Zaki-biam and established a market, a primary school and a dispensary which has been converted to a hospital. The DRCM which has been renamed Nongo u Kristu u Sudan hen Tiv (NKST) is now in full control of the mission station. Apart from the Hospital, the NKST also operated a secondary school in the town. Zaki-Biam also had a privately owned secondary school and a Government Teacher's College.²²

When the DRCM established a Christian station in Zaki-Biam, they also set up a market in the town. The market operated on Saturdays only in order that it would not conflict with Sunday church worship. The market was known as Ortese which literally means teacher but refers to the Protestant Mission among the Tiv. Although the market has since the colonial period changed its name from Ortese to Zaki-Biam, it is still a seven day market.²³

Zaki-Biam has a lot of neighbouring or the adjoining areas. Their soil fertility is same. Their political divisions in terms of the senatorial zone and local government area are the same. In terms of conflicts

that affect Zaki-Biam, these adjoining or neighbouring areas also bear the brunt. These adjoining areas are legion, but for the purposes of this study, attention would be giving to only those that were affected during the 2001 military invasion of Zaki-Biam. Some of these areas are located in Taraba State while others are situated in Benue State. For detail of these adjoining areas, see the succeeding table.

Table 3: Towns and Villages Destroyed by Soldiers during the 2001 Military Invasion of Zaki-Biam and the Adjoining Areas

S/NO	TOWN	STATE	DATE DESTROYED
1	Abako	Taraba	8/02/2001
2	Dooshima I	Taraba	8/02/2001
3	Dooshima II	Taraba	9/02/2001
4	Dan Anacha	Taraba	9/02/2001
5	Peva	Benue	9/02/2001
6	Kyado	Benue	22/10/2001
7	Gbeji	Benue	22/10/2001
8	Chembe	Benue	22/10/2001
9	Ifer	Benue	22/10/2001
10	Jootar-Shitile	Benue	22/10/2001
11	Abeda-Shitile	Benue	22/10/2001
12	Mchia-Shitile	Benue	22/10/2001
13	Iorja-Shitile	Benue	23/10/2001
14	Vase-Shitile	Benue	23/10/2001
15	Zaki-Biam	Benue	23/10/2001
16	Tse-Adoor	Benue	23/10/2001
17	Sankera	Benue	24/10/2001
18	Anyiin	Benue	24/10/2001
19	Ayilamo	Benue	24/10/2001
20	Abaji	Benue	24/10/2001

Source: Report of the ASUU – BSU Committee on the Jukun/Tiv Communal Crises Set up on 6th November, 2001, P.6

Causes of the Military Invasion of Zaki-Biam and the Adjoining Areas

Several developments continually brought the Tiv and Jukun into conflict. The causes of Tiv and Jukun crisis can be seen in the poor-existing relationship between the groups. However, both remote and immediate misunderstandings became pronounced in activities that led to the Tiv-Jukun crisis and subsequent military invasion of Tivland in 2001. Such issues included the settler/indigene problem, political contestations and domination, Tiv and Jukun/Fulani ethnic crisis in Taraba and

alleged killing of military officers. All these activities led to the military penetration and annihilation of Tiv settlements in 2001.

The challenge of settler/indigene argument has manifested in the relationship between Tiv and Jukun since the colonial period. But Ter-Rumun Avav argues that, “the facts of history emphatically remain that both the Jukun and the Tiv came to what is now Wukari area through the incidence of migration.”²⁴ Nevertheless, the claim of indigeneship and settler ship arose in the area with the advent of British colonial activities. The decision of the colonial government to establish political structures on the existing political recognition in the area through indirect rule system favoured Jukun domination of the Tiv. The Aku Uka was given a political reorganization and leadership over other ethnic groups including the Tiv in Wukari Division because of his status as paramount ruler of the Jukun chieftaincy. The era marked the beginning of over lordship and subordination hostilities between the Tiv and Jukun. The Tiv felt they could be administered through their own paramount rulership which was contrary to the British perception that they lacked a central political authority. Accordingly, this development led to division of Tiv clans without political positions. By 1933 the Tiv Division was created and Katsina-Ala District was placed under the Tiv Native Authority in Gboko with some segments of Tiv clans left in Wukari Division under the Aku Uka of Wukari Division.²⁵ With this dissection, the boundary instituted artificial demarcation between identical family members in both Tiv and Wukari Divisions. The families in Wukari, who never left their settlements but were administratively fused in Wukari, now became settlers, by Jukun’s interpretation.

This development created problems which were escalated by the Tiv population explosion and acquisition of substantial portions of land for agricultural activities. This was followed up with political contestations which created suspicion between the two groups. Elective positions since 1945 have remained a tussle between the groups. The election of a Tiv Hon. T. Gaza in the Federal House of Representative against a Jukun candidate, Hon. Ibrahim Sangari in 1959 increased the suspicion.²⁶ Subsequent elections saw people like S.J Awua, D.T. Mtuem, Gba Aondo, Gwa Kyaa, Simon Musa and Orbee Uchir holding different elective and appointed political positions in Wukari against the Jukun’s wish. The general argument is that the 2001 crises which started in Taraba State escalated because of the existing discord that have thrived in Tiv/ Jukun relationship since the colonial period. Because of settler/indigene syndrome, land ownership dispute, political contestations and mutual suspicion, the disagreement between a Fulani herdsman and Tiv farmer in June 2001 over land in Taraba state became an opportunity for the Jukun to attack Tiv people in villages in Taraba and Benue State. An attempt by the military to quell the crisis led to the abduction and killing of alleged soldiers and the subsequent military invasion and attacks on Tiv towns in Benue State.

Explicitly, the 2001 crises began in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State where Mr. Iortimin Umande was killed by a Fulani herdsman when he attempted to protect his farm from destruction by cattle.²⁷ The reprisal attack by the Tiv because of delay in the involvement of the

police led to the killing of two Fulani. The Jukun people joined the Fulani and attacked Tiv villages in Taraba State. There were various attacks on the Tiv in Ayu, Ibi community, Gassol Local Government, Tella and Dan-Anacha where the Tiv had established economic and political strongholds. These attacks which continued unabated were alleged to involve coordinated plots by the Jukun's well-armed militia alongside with looting and burning of Tiv's Houses, farms and destruction of economic trees. Hagher gave a chronicle of Tiv attacks and shows that between May 2001 and November 2001, several attacks on the Tiv in Taraba and Benue States led to Tiv massacres and destruction of crops, lives and much property.²⁸ The attacks in Taraba spilled over to Benue State villages because the Jukun claimed that, neighbouring Tiv youths in Benue state substantially provide assistance to Tiv warriors in Wukari.

There were claims that Jukun militia dressed in military uniforms attacked Jootar, Tse-kigh, Abako and were headed for kyado. Their attack on Sai with men suspected to be Nigerian soldiers took a different dimension when the Tiv militia mobilized to resist the invasion. According to the Tiv as observed by Iornumbe Tseku, the Jukun militia had already executed brutal attacks on Tiv communities with their appearance in mobile police and army uniforms.²⁹ The Tiv militia attacked the alleged military men because of their experience. With the Jukun Militia's appearance under Nigerian soldier's guise. The exchange of gun fire between the Tiv and alleged Nigerian armed uniform soldiers led to the abduction of 23 men of whom 19 were later discovered to be men of the Nigerian army. The killing of these soldiers in Zaki-Biam led to reprisal attacks on the Tiv. The reprisal attacks culminated to the massacre of over 150 people in Gbeji whose corpses were burnt.³⁰

In explaining this scenario vividly, Human Rights Watch Organisation shows that, the soldiers first arrived in Gbeji on October 19. They asked residents on which day the market was usually held, then went away. They returned on October 22. They gathered the residents of the town, asking as many people as possible to assemble for a meeting. They told them they had come on a peace mission and wanted to discuss ways of restoring peace in the area. The residents gathered, believing it was a genuine initiative. Once a sufficient number of people had come together, the soldiers separated the men from the women and children. They then opened fire on the unarmed men, shooting indiscriminately. After shooting them, they poured petrol over them and set them alight. Some of the victims died from the shooting, others from being burnt alive. The soldiers then went on a rampage, destroying houses and other buildings.³¹ a twenty-eight-year-old man who was hospitalised with serious injuries described the sequence of events:

On Saturday, at about 2pm, soldiers came and gathered us together. They asked us to dismantle the roadblocks and said we should make peace and settle. We agreed to make peace. They asked us when is market day. We said Thursday. But they came back on Monday instead. On Monday, they gathered people in the market. They said they didn't want to see women or children. The women and children went away. About thirty minutes later, they started killing people. There were more than three

hundred people gathered. They were all men, apart from two women. The soldiers said we had killed soldiers, that was why they were killing us. They started shooting from the main road. At first they were shooting and moving around, from 1pm to 4pm. About three vehicles went to another village. They said no one should move. We lay down. They came and checked to see if people were still alive. If you started shaking, they would shoot you. They put fuel over us. I have burns on my knees. I was the last person to be shot. They burned me before shooting me, but most others were shot before they were burnt. As we were trying to escape, vehicles came after us. I was taken into the bush, then I was in the clinic for three days, then I came here to the hospital.³²

Even though, women and children were separated in their first incidence of military invasion, they were still victims. An account by Shima Ayati shows that between 150 and 160 people were killed in Gbeji including at least four women and eighteen children, some as young as twelve years old. Among those mentioned were children as young as five and seven. Some of the victims' bodies were reportedly badly burnt that they could not be identified.³³

The Nigerian army proceeded to Iorja, Chembe and Tse-Adendem killing people and burning down Tiv houses. Various attacks continued in Jootar, Anyiin, Zaki-Biam, Sankera, Tine Nune, Kyado, and Malu Adoor village in Katsina-Ala. The soldiers later retreated and stationed between Katsina-Ala and Zaki-Biam destroyed houses, petrol filling stations, and commercial centers and engaged in extortion, rape and looting of the Tiv who fled their homes.³⁴

Even with these historical facts, the Tiv are still tagged settlers in Taraba state and have not been allowed to have fair representation and to enjoy infrastructural facilities in Tiv dominated areas of areas of Taraba State.³⁵ This situation remains a constant source of conflict between Tiv and Jukun, and has remain the reason for the invasion of Tiv villages and towns including Zaki-Biam in Benue State, in October 2001, with its negative implications on the lives of Tiv people and society and most especially on women and children.

Implications of the 2001 Military Invasion of Zaki-Biam and the Adjoining Areas: Women and Children's Perspectives

Women and children are the weaker groups in any society the word over. In times of crises they suffer more than their men counterparts. During the 2001 military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the neighbouring areas, women and children also passed through a lot of challenges and discussed in subsequent discourse. In the discussion of the negative implications of the Zaki-Biam massacre and invasion of some Tiv villages in Benue State and Taraba by the military had affected the psychological and social status of rural children such as stress, personality disorders and insecurity driven situations women and children caught up in violent conflicts in Tivland are highly violated.

The children trapped in the Zaki-Biem massacre were not only open to danger, attack and torture. Most children were left with lifelong personality crisis. They remain withdrawn and highly traumatized.³⁶ T. Ajasu, reports on the nasty experience by a female school child who survived the Zaki-Biam massacre and thus, states:

Nothing in her wildest dreams foretold of the horror she saw that fateful day, October 23, March 2001, Mercy Anbu Wendee, 14, a student of Padopas Harmony Secondary School, Makurdi; tagged along with her father Wende Anbu, to school. It was to be her first day in board a commercial bus that was to take them to Katsina-Ala. Midway to Zaki-Biam Yam market; they were intercepted by a group of soldiers who were armed to teeth. Father and child and all the occupants of the fully loaded 18 seated bus were ordered out and separated, men on one side, and women and children on the other side. It was mercy's last touch and sight with her father –Wende. Like other men in the bus, Wende died when the soldiers opened fire, killing all in cold blood. It was a gruesome sight.³⁷

This trauma and phobic disposition experience by Mercy Wende and other children in that bus sometimes make the children go mental, while many suffer psychological trauma. Similarly, Tiddy Mker and James Toryila state; “hundreds of people mostly children were shot in the legs by the army. Some later died because of lack of proper care”.³⁸ Most of the children trapped in this conflict were displaced alongside their parents- exposed to danger and situations of despair, depression, psychological and social maladjustment. It was also revealed that in most of the refugee's and /or internally displaced person's camp, where the children were camped with their parents, there was physical absence of basic human facilities such as schools, water food, quality health care, et cetera. Consequently, women and children were not only malnourished, and some either died and /or lost their parents in the process and were made orphans. Another implication is that, because the conflict was violent, and schools within conflicting areas were shut down, the children were denied access to school enrolment within the period.³⁹

Contributing on internal displacement during the military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the neighbouring areas, Terwase T. Dzeka brings to the fore that “people ran and left their children, wives as well as aged members of their families whose fates are not known till today. People trekked and slept in the bush for many days without water to drink nor food to eat”.⁴⁰ Similarly, an oral informant, Dekera Gena noted that a woman left Dan-Anacha with her husband and children on their way to Zaki-Biam by trekking and one of their children had a snake bite and became intoxicated with the venom. He could not walk on his own again, there was no hospital facility nearby to attend to the boy and the parents could not assist because of fear of delay and as such, the boy was abandoned.⁴¹

The internal displacements prompted the emergence of temporally Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) Camps in Benue and Taraba States. Some of these camps were in school premises like NKST

Primary School, Zaki-Biam, LGEA Primary School, Sankera and RCM Primary School, Sankera, among others. This is an implication that children of school age were no more going to school as a result of the chaos that engulfed the area under review.⁴² Apart from these schools, some church premises and other places also served as IDPs Camps like NKST Central Zaki-Biam and some uncompleted buildings were also adapted as IDPs Camps. However, for the purposes of a graphic analysis of IDPs Camps, see the table below:

Table 2: Composition of Children, Women & Men in Selected Conflict Areas

Source: Benue State Crisis Management and Relief Agency: Report on Conflicts in Tivland, July, 2002, P. 50.

Name of Camps	Location	Total No. of Internally Displayed People	Children	Men	Women
Chito	LGEA Primary School Chito, Ukum	19,755	5,360	8,105	11,650
Sankera	LGEA Primary School Sankera, Ukum	10,180	3,780	4,500	5,680
Tordonga	LGEA Primary School Tordonga, K/Ala	3,117	1,017	1,153	1,964
Abeda	LGEA Primary School Abeda, Logo	2,115	731	1,114	1,001
Daudu	LGEA Primary School Daudu, Guma	23,000	7,180	11,230	13,120
Agasha	LGEA Primary School Agasha, Guma	19,000	5,614	6,110	7,990
Ukpiam	Ukpiam camp, Guma LGA	11,500	3,000	1,500	7,000
Umenger	Umenger Area	2,500	400	600	1,500
Torkula	Torkula Area	12,100	2,200	3,800	6,100
TOTAL		10,3267	29,282	56,005	38,11

The displaced women and children as shown in the table above, faced the challenge of escaping the danger of gun shut; in the course of running for the safety of their lives and property, some even encountered accident and severely injured.

The Tiv people like other ethnic groups in Africa often sought refuge and protection in strong extended family safety circles. This strong family bond was severed as several members were either killed or separated. In this process, orphans and widows found themselves in difficult situations. In some cases, the children had to assume new roles as bread winners and heads of families. The extended family system which provided care, support and relief was no more. Some female orphans along with other widows took to prostitution with other children in a similar condition becoming destitute, drug addicts and hardened criminals.⁴³ The World Organization Against Torture (WOAT) reported that deaths recorded in the Zaki-Biam massacre and the invaded villages and towns in Tivland by the Jukun militia, affected all age groups with the children and women bearing most of the brunt.⁴⁴

Besides, women suffered the challenge of rapes. In the aftermath of the killings and destruction of October 22 to 24, Human Rights Watch received reports of other human rights violations by soldiers stationed in the area, including several cases of rape of women and young girls, and persistent ill-treatment, harassment, extortion, and looting.⁴⁵ Many of these abuses appeared to be carried out with the sole purpose of humiliating and intimidating the victims, as well as the broader population of the area. Victims and witnesses reported that while carrying out these abuses, soldiers would often insult them on the basis of their ethnicity.

At the end of October and in November, it is alleged that, soldiers committed a number of rapes of women and young girls that were reported to Human Rights Watch. While many of the victims were too afraid to report the rapes to the police, particularly while the soldiers were still in the area, a number of cases were independently confirmed by a variety of local sources. For example two sisters, aged sixteen and thirteen, were raped by soldiers on the night of November 9. At about 2 am, soldiers burst into their house in Katsina-Ala. The two girls were sleeping in the same room. Two of the soldiers went inside, while the others stood guard outside, singing. The soldiers threatened to kill the girls if they refused to have sex with them. They told the girls that they had killed "Mama Tiv" (referring to Victor Malu's elderly aunt), therefore they could easily also kill them or any other Tive woman. One of the two soldiers took the younger sister out of the house and dragged her to a market nearby. There he tried to rape her; she begged him not to and offered him the little money she had on her. The soldier took the money and raped her anyway. Meanwhile, the other soldier had stayed in the house with the older sister. He told her to remove her clothes. When she tried to resist, he slapped her and kicked her, then raped her inside the house. A brother who was in the next room tried to intervene; the soldier made him lie down on the floor with his wife, kicked him and hit him with his gun, injuring him on his arm and chest. The soldiers left after about forty-five minutes.⁴⁶

Several local sources reported that a young woman, aged about twenty, was raped by seven soldiers in Katsina-Ala, on November 3. The woman was travelling on a motorcycle. The soldiers stopped the motorcycle, told the driver to leave, and took the woman away to a building near a roadblock, where seven of them raped her. They then pleaded with her not to report the rape and reportedly even offered her money. Local residents reported that in November, some soldiers who were stopping

people at checkpoints around Katsina-Ala had told some of the men to leave and had abducted the women traveling with them and sexually abused them. There were allegations that some of them were being kept by the soldiers in their camps.⁴⁷

Aside, women and children just like their men counterparts were killed during this conflict. A woman with a seven-month-old child was shot in Gbeji. They removed the child before killing her. They also killed my brother; he was twenty-five. He was burnt in front of me, I saw it. The same day, my uncle, who is about ninety years old, was shot dead in his house in the village of Tse Sanmo, near Gbeji; they also burned his house. In another house across the road, they killed about eleven adult men. This happened around the same time as they gathered us in the market. My own house was among those burnt.⁴⁸ Also, a fifteen-year-old boy watched as his father was shot. He was also injured, but survived; the boy shared his experience as excerpts below:

When they opened fire, I saw my father hit at the forehead, then a bullet hit me. I thought I was dead, then I saw them pour petrol on the people. The petrol finished near me and they went to refill. It was when they went for refilling of the petrol that I ran away. I lost my father, uncle, and four cousins.⁴⁹

A boy aged about nine was also among those injured in Gbeji. His arm had been blown off and he was also injured on his leg and side. He told Human Rights Watch:

The soldiers came on Monday. They gathered people and sent the women and children away. One soldier called me and caught me. They made me join the men. I was shot here (pointing to his amputated arm, his leg and side). I was going with the women but the soldier said I should come with the men. About four children were injured and brought on the hospital. Others died during the incident. I was shot in the market place. Someone fell on top of me. The soldiers checked to see if I was dead, then shot me three times. Then they were burning people. I got up and ran into the bush. A soldier saw me and shot at me. I stayed in the bush as if I was dead. The soldiers came and saw me. They kicked me three times on the leg and foot to check if I was still alive. I pretended I was dead. My oldest brother died. He is about forty years old. He was shot in the chest and in the head, together with others in the meeting.⁵⁰

Having assessed the implications of the military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the adjoining areas on women and children the critical question to ask at this junction is what needs to be done to prevent such occurrences future?

What needs to be done?

In order to prevent the future occurrences of killings of Tiv and other Nigerians a lot need to be done. First, it's important that the Federal Government should provide an aggregated platform through which the various people of Nigeria can come together to articulate a common vision for a well-integrated polity. This will provide the need political environment for the various social groups within the country to work towards tolerance and accommodation.

When the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) plays its constitutional role of giving the various ethnic groups the sense of belonging and feeling of security in its Federal structure, the cases of inter-ethnic conflict will be drastically reduced; and even when such conflicts occur their escalation would be better checked and managed without military intervention.

The mass media should join in promoting inclusive attitudes and perceptions among Nigerians as members of one political community by promoting ideas of citizenship based on equality and devoid of discrimination. Their features and other works should focus on a national orientation and attitudinal change, which should complement constitutional provisions geared towards the evolution of a Nigeria that would ensure equal rights for everyone. The media should continually educate key stakeholders and the general public in the process in order for Nigerians to have a positive outlook as well as show enough commitment towards addressing the problems of citizen's rights.

The National Assembly should make laws that will give full residential rights for Nigerians where they reside provided such Nigerians area made to fulfill minimum residential requirements. People could then use as their state of origin wherever they have spent a certain number of year, rather than where their parents and grandparents are natives; or which ethnic group first arrived the area in the case of Tiv-Jukun relations as seen where both groups made attempts to reconstruct their hostilities just to lay claim to the land.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted a discussion on the 2001 military invasion of Zaki-Biam and the adjoining areas. It is worthwhile emphasizing here that, conflicts generally, have their own rhythm, the end of one paves way for the other, in not well tacked. The case of military invasion of the area under consideration too came as a result of the protracted problems between Tiv-Jkun inter-ethnic relations. Remembering the Zaki-Biam experience of conflict in 2001 is not always pleasant for those affected particularly as many are still scratching their wounds of destruction. The destruction was done to both Tiv and Jukun in all spheres of life. However, for the sake of this paper attention has been focused exclusively on the challenges of women and children.

It brought into focus the causes of the invasion of the study areas the challenges women and children underwent as well as the policy options need to revive the Tiv-Jukun relation as well as keep Nigeria as one and peaceful country. In the final analysis, it is fundamental to emphasized that even though

the military gave impetus to the crisis in under review, their role to the area cannot be wished away. The military for a long period of time secured the lives and property of the victims of the conflict before and even after the crisis. Both the Tiv and Jukun still live with each other in Benue and Taraba State, and the contentions for land resources still persist.

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