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A Pastoral Message of the Bishops' Council of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) arising from an emergency meeting at the Church Headquarters in Numan, Adamawa State, on Monday 18th July 2018

To all clergy, leaders and members of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria and Friends; May God's Grace and Peace Be Multiplied to You in Christ Jesus, Amen.

We are deeply disturbed by the intractable violent attacks on our communities by heavily armed people identified as "Fulani Herdsmen." Our thoughts and prayers are with all those whose families, friends and neighbors have been murdered in these violent attacks. We pray God Almighty to grant eternal rest to those killed and comfort us all. We equally remember thousands who have been forced to leave their ancestral homes, now languishing in terrible situations many with little or no help from any quarters.

Unfortunately, the displaced people who are mostly farmers have been compelled to abandon their preoccupation because of the attacks and/or threats of attacks. We are truly pained by this ugly event in our land, which hitherto has been known to be peaceful and serene for all peoples of all religious affiliation, cultural leaning and political persuasions.

Most tragically, we sense these wicked activities as manifestation of seeds of hate and utter disregard for the sanctity of human life that has been sown in our nation. As believers in Christ Jesus, the Holy Bible teaches us that we share common humanity, created by God. In the book of Prophet Ezekiel chapter 18:4, God says, "Behold, every soul belongs to Me ..." Psalm 24:1 declares "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein."

Therefore, Violence and bloodshed against a fellow human being is nothing short of sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity, and a denial of the truth that life belongs to God only.

Our passionate call

We reiterate the church's passionate call to the government of Nigeria to put in place proactive measures and actions to intercept and bring to end the activities of these "Fulani herdsmen." The government is empowered and obligated by the constitution to protect citizens from any form of aggression, internal or external. It must not renege in carrying out these constitutional obligations. We further call on the government to make haste to provide relief materials to the internally displaced persons and work towards their safe resettlement to their ancestral homes. We call on all political office holders, religious leaders and traditional leaders to rise to end forthwith these senseless violent attacks. Shedding of blood on our land must not be tolerated. While praying for the security operatives, we call upon them to be non-partisan in the discharge of their duties of safeguarding lives, properties and territorial integrity of Nigeria.

As a church, we continue to pray for God's divine intervention on this horrible situation. **Hence all members are called upon to observe special prayers and fasting from July 23-25, 2018.** At the same time, we shall continue our active diaconal solidarity with those directly affected by the violent attacks. We salute all families and communities hosting and supporting those that have been displaced. We call on all to respect the sanctity of human life by restraining from any act that will desecrate human life. Let us continue to advocate for tolerance, peace and peaceful coexistence, while remaining watchful against enemies of humanity.

We pray God to visit, forgive and heal our land of the atrocities committed against innocent people, and that peace and love prevail against violence and hate, Amen.

Signed:

Most Rev. Musa Panti Filibus PhD
Archbishop/Chairman of Bishops' Council

Rt. Rev. Benjamin J. Fuduta
Secretary of Bishops' Council