

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁIL

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

Dé Céadaoin, 16 Nollaig 2015

Wednesday, 16 December 2015

The Joint Committee met at 11 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Eric Byrne,	Senator Mark Daly,
Deputy Seán Crowe,	Senator Michael Mullins,
Deputy Bernard J. Durkan,	Senator David Norris,
Deputy Olivia Mitchell,	Senator Jim Walsh.
Deputy Dan Neville,	
Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan,	
Deputy Ruairí Quinn,	
Deputy Brendan Smith,	

DEPUTY PAT BREEN IN THE CHAIR.

The joint committee met in private session until 11.45 a.m.

Boko Haram Insurgency: Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nigeria

Chairman: I am delighted to welcome Mr. Olusola Iginla, Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Nigeria, to the meeting. The committee has discussed the report provided by the Church in Chains. I also extend a warm welcome to the embassy official who has accompanied the chargé d’affaires and to those seated in the public Gallery.

Today’s meeting affords the members of the committee an opportunity to receive an update on certain matters which were addressed to the committee earlier this year, in particular the presentation by Church in Chains. The format of today’s meeting will involve an opening statement by the chargé d’affaires which will be followed by a question and answer session with members of the committee.

I remind members and those in the public Gallery to ensure that their mobile phones are completely switched off for the duration of the meeting as they do cause interference, even in silent mode, with the recording equipment in the committee room.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person or body outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if witnesses are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. Witnesses are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I welcome Mr. Iginla again and we are delighted to have him here. I call on him to make his opening statement.

Mr. Olusola Iginla: I thank the Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to express my profound appreciation to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade for the invitation extended to me to respond to the concerns raised by the Church in Chains on some of the security challenges confronting my country as it relates to the Boko Haram insurgency, the continued attacks on communities by Fulani herdsmen as well as the lingering issue of the abducted Chibok girls.

I wish to recall that the former ambassador and her predecessor had, at the committee’s invitation, on different occasions addressed this august body on the activities of Boko Haram and the counter-insurgency efforts by the Government of Nigeria under the previous administration

of former President Goodluck Jonathan. My presentation, therefore, will only focus on the specific questions addressed to the embassy *vis-à-vis* the Government's exertions to resolve the issue under the current Administration.

Distinguished parliamentarians, the activities of Boko Haram in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria, particularly in the Borno and Yobe States, have resulted in wanton destruction of the lives and properties of our citizens which brought about disruption of socio-economic activities in that region. Since assuming office last May, President Muhammadu Buhari has ordered the overhaul of the security services' rules of engagement. He has demanded an improved operational and legal mechanism to prosecute proven human rights violations by the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The President has also directed the relocation of the command and control centre on terrorism from Abuja to Maiduguri in Borno State, the main theatre of the operations against Boko Haram.

Similarly, the President has also ordered the review of the overall security architecture in the country so as to erect and maintain efficient and disciplined security personnel, in conformity with international standards. As a result of these efforts, the military is better equipped now and their operations are beginning to yield the desired results.

In a bid to incapacitate and further degrade the insurgents, the Nigerian military has continued to carry out sustained air strikes in Sambisa forest, the main enclave of the group. This approach by the military has no doubt scaled down the insurgents' operations. The only challenge confronting Nigeria at the moment is the isolated cases of suicide bombings on soft targets from time to time, which the government is striving to contain. There have been recent arrests of young children used by the insurgents as well as some key masterminds of suicide bombings.

Albeit there are successes in the arrest of some of the kingpins behind recruiting children in carrying out the suicide attacks, the suicide attacks still occasionally occur across the northern part of the country. It is, however, pertinent to note that the swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory captured by Boko Haram have now all been retrieved by the military and people are beginning to return to their towns and villages. The directive by the president to the military is that the operation against the insurgents should be completed by 31 December 2015.

As of today there are approximately 2 million displaced Nigerians as a result of the insurgency in the different internally displaced persons, IDP, camps in the affected region. To provide immediate relief as a palliative measure to the victims, the government has deployed resources to deradicalise and rehabilitate victims of Boko Haram and the services rendered in the IDP camps are being improved to cater for the people affected by this menace.

The Nigerian President mentioned in his inaugural speech that the Government cannot claim to have defeated Boko Haram without rescuing the Chibok girls and all other persons held hostage by the insurgents. He further said that he would do all in his power to rescue all the Chibok girls alive. At the moment, there are no intelligence reports to establish where the girls are currently being held hostage by the insurgents. However, it is hoped that the outcome of the current onslaught by the military in Sambisa forest, the main enclave of Boko Haram, may soon provide directions to the location of the Chibok girls.

As regards the threat posed by Boko Haram in the region, President Buhari on assumption of office, has continued to drum up support from our neighbours, namely Cameroon, Niger and Chad for a strengthened joint border patrol. Also, while participating at the last G7 Summit in June 2015 held in Schloss Elmau, in Germany and the Peace and Security Council meeting

in South Africa on 13 June, the president spoke about the operations of the Boko Haram terror group and its global dimension.

The president while briefing the G7, entreated for support to bolster the joint multinational task force, MNJTF, to enable its smooth operation. Members may be aware the joint multinational task force has about 8,700 contingents of military personnel drawn from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin Republic. Nigeria has pledged the sum of \$100 million for the operations of the joint multinational task force and the president has directed the release of \$21 million to the force. The African Union has also approved the sum of \$30 million for the force, while the US Government has pledged \$5 million and other incentives including training of personnel to boost the operations of the joint multinational task force against Boko Haram.

Boko Haram is not the only security issue bedevilling my country. The spate of clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers and the issue of cattle rustlers constitutes a major security challenge to Nigeria. However, the president has charged the military to address the challenges posed by these crises. On the part of government, the president endorsed the collaboration of the affected states comprising Plateau, Benue, Kaduna Kebbi and Zamfara with security agencies to constantly review the progress on the matter. Following the establishment of the platform, a number of arrests have been made and stolen items have been returned to the rightful owners. A military battalion has been stationed by government in Plateau State to maintain peace. There are however isolated cases of clashes mostly between the Fulanis and farmers. This occurs intermittently.

The threat of terrorism in some parts of Nigeria remains an issue of serious national security concern and Nigeria can only win the war with the support of friendly nations such as Ireland. The recent achievements by our security agencies in the fight to defeat terrorism is not unconnected with the government's efforts in overhauling the security architecture as well as the external support President Buhari has continued to receive.

Boko Haram insurgency has so far claimed more than 12,000 lives with more than 8,000 persons injured or maimed. Boko Haram has also displaced thousands of innocent Nigerians especially in the border communities and destroyed properties worth billions of naira. It is therefore obvious that the activity of this terror group has wreaked havoc on the economic and social life of Nigerians. It is obvious that the Boko Haram insurgency is certainly not a religious war as both Christians and Muslims have been killed and places of worship destroyed.

This briefing session organised by the joint committee is a clear demonstration of the concern and empathy of the Government and people of Ireland for the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria over the current security challenges facing my country. I also commend the Church in Chains on its work in reporting some of these conflicts around the world.

I thank the people of Ireland and the international community for the continued support and solidarity Nigeria is receiving to subvert terrorism not only in the country but also in the sub-region. I thank members for their kind attention.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Iginla for his contribution.

Deputy Brendan Smith: I welcome Mr. Iginla who in the course of his presentation referred to the "wanton destruction of lives", with the murder of 12,000 people and more than 8,000 injured, but that "as a result of these efforts, the military are better equipped now and their

operations are beginning to yield the desired results”. What are the desired results and what has been achieved to date? How optimistic is Mr. Iginla that the reign of terror can be brought to a successful end very rapidly? Obviously the displacement of 2 million people is a very serious issue for the families and their community.

Mr. Iginla states that with the support of friendly nations such as Ireland that Nigeria’s security operations can have a successful outcome. What type of assistance does Mr. Iginla envisage Ireland will give to Nigerian Government in support of its efforts to put an end to the terrorist regime?

Has the Nigerian Government any hope of rescuing the Chibok school girls? What is the up-to-date view of the unfortunate situation in which these young people find themselves?

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: On behalf of the Labour Party, I welcome the chargé d’affaires, Mr. Iginla. I thank him for being here. I cannot stop myself from expressing deep concern about his unique status as the only representative of the embassies we asked to send representatives who is present here today. I recognise, as set out in the briefing documentation that has been provided for us and in Mr. Iginla’s statements, that there is a complete separation of church and state in the Republic of Nigeria, which accommodates people of strongly held religious views of different persuasions. The reality, as Pope Francis has said, is that Christians are now the most persecuted group of religious believers in the world. The situation is getting worse, rather than better. I do not in any sense, having regard to Mr. Iginla’s paper, his speech and his comments, take any action or indictment against the authorities in Nigeria because it is clear that President Buhari, who was elected recently, is attempting to regain full sovereign control over all the territories of the Republic of Nigeria, to ensure the rule of law prevails and to minimise persecution, separation or inter-religious conflict, if possible, while seeking to bring such conflict to a conclusion.

Mr. Iginla will be aware that many Christian missionaries from Ireland have been active in Nigeria for over 100 years. This country, more than many others, has a personal or familial connection with that kind of activity. We want Nigerians of every belief to be secure in expressing and practising those beliefs. We do not think they should be subject to the sorts of things to which Mr. Iginla has referred. My concern is for this country, which has a big international reach in many respects, to try to raise with representatives of other countries that have embassies here its very serious concern about the continued persecution of people who express a variety - in terms of denomination - of Christian beliefs. In a sense, Mr. Iginla’s presence here provides some cover for the evasion by his diplomatic colleagues of their responsibility to come to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade in this Parliament to hear from representatives of both Houses about their concerns regarding the continuing, if not deteriorating, situations in their countries. We did not invite the embassy of Saudi Arabia to send a representative to this meeting because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has not signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nigeria ratified it in 1993. All the other countries that we invited to participate at this meeting, through their embassies, have signed up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are asking those countries to do nothing more than live up to the obligations and responsibilities they freely and voluntarily entered into when they signed that famous 1948 document.

I do not think there is a lot more I can say, other than to register my deep disappointment that the other embassies chose not to respond to this invitation. We gave them plenty of time to do so. I think they have done their countries a disservice. My personal opinion is that by ignoring the invitation to attend this meeting, or to send a representative from the embassy staff

if they could not be present because of other duties, the ambassadors have conferred a slight on the Parliament of this country. I understand that Mr. Iginla's ambassador is not available to be here, but he is attending instead on behalf of the Republic of Nigeria and I thank him for that. There is no reason the other countries we invited to send representatives, all of which have signed up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, could not have done this Republic and its democracy the courtesy of ensuring members of their diplomatic corps came before our Parliament to explain the present positions in those countries. It is self-evident that such officials are better informed than we could be. It is right that they should respond to some of the deep concerns of many Irish people about the persecution of people for their religious beliefs.

This island has a history of understanding the divisions caused by religious beliefs that are being experienced in certain countries at present, as well as the fall-out that can have for people who adhere fervently to one belief or another. It goes back 300 or 400 years on this island. In fact, the whole map of Europe was redrawn after the destruction of Christendom with the Reformation. This affected people in various locations whose belief systems preceded their national characteristics or identities. We are not saying that Europe is perfect in this regard. We have a history. We understand what people have gone through in Europe and continue to go through in some parts of Europe. We share a common planet together. I am speaking about many people whose sole crime in the eyes of others is to have a particular set of religious beliefs, or to have adopted a new set of religious beliefs that are different from those into which they were born. That is why I was anxious for us to have this meeting. I thank Mr. Iginla for coming and I condemn the other embassies that ignored our request and did not do the courtesy of giving us a proper explanation or sending a representative here to listen to our concerns.

Chairman: For the record, the Egyptian ambassador sent in some correspondence to explain why she was not coming here today. The Deputy can see that letter in the correspondence that has been furnished to members. In addition, the Iranian ambassador, the Pakistani chargé d'affaires and the Indian people acknowledged our request while saying they were not available to attend. I say that just for the record. I call Senator Crowe.

Deputy Seán Crowe: Okay.

Chairman: Sorry, I mean Deputy Crowe.

Deputy Seán Crowe: I could be a Senator one of these days.

Chairman: I was thinking of my good friend on the Deputy's right.

Deputy Seán Crowe: All right. We do look alike. I welcome Mr. Iginla to this meeting. I join my colleagues in recording my disappointment regarding the non-attendance of many of those who were invited to come to this meeting. I suppose their failure to turn up for various reasons - some of them decided not to make themselves available - means they have opted out of the whole idea of today, which is to try to focus on what is happening in certain countries. Mr. Iginla's presence means there is probably more of a focus on what is happening in Nigeria.

It is important for us to mention that Christians are not the only group who are being discriminated against around the world and that the countries who were invited to send representatives to this meeting are not the only countries where discrimination is happening. I suppose it is the nature of religion that some religions' belief that they have the chosen word will engender or lead to people being discriminated against. The section of our documentation setting out the persecution category definitions says that persecution includes the use of blasphemy laws,

apostasy laws, arrests, fines, imprisonment, torture, execution, persecution by society, abduction, murder, violent mob attack, including bombings, shootings and arson. I suppose that is what is actually happening to many minorities in many countries. As a starting point, we should look at what happened in our own country not so long ago. People were targeted supposedly because of their religious or political persuasions. Many innocent people were slaughtered because of their affiliations to particular churches.

I believe we all stand united in our opposition to Boko Haram and the fundamentalist jihadist element represented by Boko Haram. It is a threat to all right-thinking people, including Muslims, people of other religions and people of no religion. My colleague has given the figures for the number of deaths. I have seen figures to suggest that last year, Boko Haram was responsible for 6,644 deaths. That was the scale of the deaths in 2014 alone. I would be interested to hear Mr. Iginla expand on his president's plans to defeat Boko Haram. I hope the new approach that is to be taken will be inclusive. Reference has been made to the targeting of Sambisa Forest. What is the nature of that campaign? Does it involve the dropping of bombs in the forest? I am conscious that questions have been asked about the Chibok girls, who are still missing. Other children have been taken from other schools. I suppose the attacks on these compounds and the danger of these innocents being slaughtered are also a part of that campaign. What safeguards are in place? How does one set about the rescue and liberation of those children? Is there any update on these girls and other children and freeing them from their brutal captivity? What happens when children are rescued? How are they assimilated back into their families and communities? Are there societal pressures? Are they forced into marriages? What impact does this have? Could Mr. Iginla give us examples of how children were assimilated back into society?

There is a concern that the Government has been over-reliant on local militias to combat groups such as Boko Haram. The information coming back to us from NGOs on the ground is that these militias are also violating human rights. What is Mr. Iginla's reply to these accusations? Is it happening?

Senator Michael Mullins: I join with colleagues in welcoming our guest today. I also deplore the fact that other embassies chose not to provide participants to discuss this particularly pressing and urgent issue. It has been said and is well documented that Christians are among the most persecuted people in the world. Pope Francis recently said it also. It would have been appropriate for all the other countries that were asked to send representatives to do so.

Mr. Iginla paints a pretty grim picture of the situation that Nigeria is trying to recover from. How many people are currently officially missing or held hostage? Following on from Deputy Crowe's questions, what facilities are in place to help those who were captured recover from the appalling ordeal they have suffered?

Mr. Iginla spoke about the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. What do those clashes concern? Mr. Iginla said the president has charged the military with addressing the challenge of cattle rustling. How is it being addressed?

Senator Jim Walsh: Like other members, I welcome Mr. Iginla and thank him for attending. As has been said, others have not attended. In that regard, I acknowledge and compliment Deputy Quinn on the initiative he took, because it is on his initiative that Church in Chains produced this report. I join with him in being critical of those who have not attended, which is a pity. However, we should not be diverted from seeking their participation. We have not had responses from three of them and we should continue to afford them the opportunity to come

before the committee.

I note the letter from the Egyptian ambassador, with whom I had a long discussion on this issue and others, and welcome her statement that the cases of violations reflected in the report of Church in Chains have not been ignored or left unnoticed. She says that details on specific abduction cases would be appreciated and that the embassy has sent a copy of the report to Egypt and asked for a thorough investigation into those cases and a quick response, which will be communicated to the committee and the NGO concerned once received. We should pursue the matter and provide the additional information about the cases of the girls who were abducted, as has happened the Chibok girls who were put into sexual slavery by jihadists. This should be pursued and the examples given.

In her letter, the Egyptian ambassador quotes Article 3 of the Vienna convention. The suggestion is that she does not consider it appropriate to attend another Parliament's elected body to be accountable. Perhaps this is influencing some of the other countries. Iran implied that it was happy to meet the committee but that 16 December did not suit. We should explore the possibility of asking Iran to nominate an alternative date that would be suitable. We should ask the other three countries, in the event that they are not prepared to come before an open meeting of the committee, if they would informally meet the members of the committee. The issues are too important not to be pursued. This is a huge human rights issue.

In that regard, to what extent are external influences and the radicalisation of some Muslim groups part of the situation in northern Nigeria with Boko Haram? In particular, I note recent reports that Saudi Arabia has published another year's worth of public school textbooks that promote hateful ideas against various minorities. A Saudi imam whose public sermons have beseeched God to destroy Christian, Jews, Alawites and Shias is reportedly still employed as a Saudi education official and serves as a frequent guest on Saudi Arabia's State television channel. I have mentioned a number of times here that I view Saudi Arabia as a pariah state. I hope the committee at some stage will seek to interact with Saudi embassy officials to see how we might explore these issues. Is there influence from Saudi or other outside bodies that is leading to increasing the radicalisation and an increase in the threat of Boko Haram in Nigeria? I know there has been an alignment with Daesh recently. Will Mr. Iginla comment in that regard?

I note from his report and others that there has been some success with regard to the pushing back of Boko Haram on the part of the Nigerian military in recent times. This has given rise to transferring the problem into southern Chad and Cameroon. What political and military interaction and co-operation is taking place with the authorities in Chad and Cameroon in order to have a successful military and political initiative that would eliminate the threat of Boko Haram?

The 276 girls from the Chibok school who were abducted, of whom 219 are still in captivity, have already been mentioned. There was a great degree of expectation when the new president, President Buhari, was elected. He is a former military man and his pre-election statements were that there was really going to be a strong focus and targeting on resolving the issue and getting those girls released. There is now a lot of disappointment that there has been no development in that regard. Does Mr. Iginla see any hope that the abducted Chibok schoolgirls will be rescued? What, if anything, can be done to ensure the security of Christians and other minorities such as moderate Muslims? It is not only Christians who are targeted by Boko Haram. What can be done to ensure we can have greater control of that situation security-wise?

Chairman: There are many questions for the chargé d'affaires. Perhaps some of them are

overlapping, but do your very best.

Mr. Olusola Iginla: I thank the distinguished parliamentarians. I will take the questions one by one of course. What have the Nigerian Armed Forces and Government done and what desired results have been achieved so far? As I said in my statement, in the first instance the current Nigerian Administration made sophisticated military equipment available to the Nigerian Armed Forces. This has enabled them to operate. When these attacks started, Boko Haram operated by guerrilla warfare. Later, those involved became more confident following their military successes and they started to seize territory. That was happening before the current Government came to office. There were seizing territory and planting their flag on seized territories. Then, when the current administration came to power, it improved military hardware. This enabled the Nigerian military to push the Boko Haram terrorists out of the territories they had seized. As we speak, no swathe of Nigerian territory is under the control of Boko Haram insurgents. They have been pushed back. Now they have returned to guerrilla tactics. They seek soft targets. They go into villages, massacre people and run back. That is their strategy at the moment. This is one of the desired results. They have pushed Boko Haram terrorists out of the territories they had seized. They are now back using guerrilla warfare.

When the current president assumed office, we realised the Boko Haram terrorists were not only operating on Nigerian territory but operating from Chad and Cameroon as well. When the current president assumed office, he went to these countries to seek the support of their presidents and to co-ordinate efforts to ensure the terrorists could be defeated. This resulted in the establishment of the joint multinational task force. This now comprises personnel from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and the Republic of Benin. These are the countries that have contributed military personnel to the multinational task force. They now have approximately 8,700 soldiers operating under the task force. This has resulted in a further degrading of Boko Haram operations. As I have said, they have now returned to their initial guerrilla tactics.

Another question related to the support Ireland could give to Nigeria to aid all the efforts we are making to defeat Boko Haram. Condemning the acts and supporting all UN resolutions on Boko Haram are the ways by which Ireland can contribute to our efforts to defeat Boko Haram.

There was a question on whether the people arrested, the terrorists, were being prosecuted. This is definitely the case. After debriefing, they are charged in court and sentences are passed on them. We have seen this on a number of occasions. Some of them have been imprisoned. I hope that answers some of the questions raised by the honourable Deputy Quinn.

There was also a question on the type of facilities the Nigerian Government has in place to rehabilitate people who have been rescued from the Boko Haram terrorists. We have internally displaced person camps. Those who have been displaced as a result of the activities of Boko Haram are being kept in these camps. These camps are all over the place where there is conflict in the northern part of Nigeria. The camps consist mainly of women and children. When they are rescued, we take them to the IDP camps. There they are debriefed and asked about their original villages and their names. As a result of this information they are reconnected to their families. That is the way the process is being handled. Of course, when they are reconnected to their families, they will start the process of rehabilitation. Again, this is one of the achievements of the Nigerian Government in the fight against Boko Haram.

It was rightly noted by someone that their main enclave is in the Sambisa Forest. That is where they are mostly based. When those involved abducted the Chibok girls, that was the place they were taken to. At the time, through military assistance from the United States,

France and China, they located, through satellite imagery and so on, where the Chibok girls were being kept in the Sambisa Forest. If there had been an attempt to rescue the girls at the time, I imagine many of them would have been killed. There was no way a team could steadily go to where they were being kept and rescue them. The terrorists would definitely have known that a military team was on a mission to rescue the girls. Certainly, they would not have wanted that to happen. If a military team had reached the place, the kidnappers would have killed the girls and run away. Given the possibility of that happening, the Nigerian Government decided not to take that action at the time. Now, certainly, many of the Chibok girls have been forced into marriage with the terrorists. They are definitely not in one location anymore. They are scattered all over the place. I believe the Chibok girls can only be rescued if there is enough intelligence to show where some of them are, who they are with and where they are staying. That is the only way they can be rescued, in my own personal opinion. It has got to be a one-by-one rescue approach. When they look at one of them through intelligence, then they can plan how to go and rescue the girl from whomever she has been forced to marry. That is the way. They are definitely not in one location any more.

There was another question about the extent to which external influences are involved in radicalising Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria. The case in Nigeria is not so much about radicalisation. The Boko Haram terrorists are mainly youths that are not integrated into society through education. All of the youths are definitely Muslims, anyway, but it is not a question of radicalising them. It is just a question of recruitment. They just tell them that they are in this condition because the Government is not providing for them. They say they want to create an Islamic state where the youths are going to be themselves. That is why many of these youths are joining Boko Haram. They do not know the implications of their actions. They only feel that they have to create an Islamic state by fighting Nigerian soldiers.

The case of Boko Haram is not a case of radicalisation. It is just a case of the local discontent of these youths. The discontent is not caused by the Government but by the culture of that part of Nigeria. It does not encourage western education. It encourages Islamic education. As a result of that, because they did not go to school, many of them do not have jobs, they just hang around. They have practically nothing to do. That is why they are so easy to recruit into the ranks of Boko Haram. In the case of Nigeria, it is not radicalisation as such.

There was a question about political and military co-operation between Nigeria and our neighbours to eliminate Boko Haram. I referred to the joint multinational task force that comprises of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. The influence of that task force has helped a lot to degrade Boko Haram. It does not have the capacity any more to attack and seize territories. That is not going to happen again, I can assure the committee of that, because of the level to which it has been degraded.

The last question was about the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Let me give some background. The Fulanis are mostly from the north-western part of Nigeria. Right from the beginning of time they have been known for cattle rearing. Northern Nigeria consists mainly of desert, not so much rainforest or grasslands, but cattle have to grass - it is what they eat. Over the years these Fulani, because they are trained to rear cattle, drive their cattle down from the north to the south where we have the rainforest and a lot of grasses. The problem is that in doing this, they release their cattle onto farmlands and the farmers of those areas will definitely not be happy with that kind of situation. That is why we have these clashes. It has become intense now, I think, because of the terrorist activities of Boko Haram. We now have a lot of arms, greater availability of arms and things like that. Instead of the usual machetes, cutlasses

and bows and arrows that they used to attack people in the past, they are now using guns. That is why the problem has become more intense. I am talking about the Fulani, the cattle herders. They attack villages where the farmers have been known to oppose them. They go there in the dead of night and massacre people. As part of the efforts the Government is making, they have now established a kind of community rapport between the farmers and the Fulani herdsmen to try to resolve the problem.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Iginla, for your very comprehensive report. I also thank Deputy Quinn for raising the issue this afternoon. It was a very wide-ranging presentation and I think Mr. Iginla answered all questions very comprehensively indeed. I wish him and all the Nigerian embassy team in Dublin a very happy Christmas. I wish the same to all the members of the committee. I hope they have a peaceful and healthy Christmas and am sure we will all have a very busy new year. If there is a meeting in the new year I am sure we will arrange that before the members come back.

Senator Jim Walsh: Before we adjourn, I think we owe a debt of gratitude to Church in Chains for responding to Deputy Quinn's suggestion. They gave us a very good report and I do hope that as a committee, in whatever time we have in the new year, we will endeavour to pursue the other countries and try to advance what is a very worthy cause, the persecution of our fellow Christians.

Chairman: Okay, thank you.

The joint committee adjourned at 12.40 p.m. until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 20 January 2016.