

The Insanity of the Proposed Nigerian Grazing Bill: A Road Map to Fulani-Hausa Islamic Take Over of Southern Nigeria?

This year has witnessed an outrageous clash between Fulani cattle grazers (often referred to as “Fulani Herdsmen”) and farmers in Nigeria, specifically in the middle belt area and the south. Fulani herdsmen are the aggressors who boldly invade farmlands not belonging to them, and usually killing or maiming farmers and raping their women. Farmers from Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau, Enugu and Ekiti states have seen their crops deliberately destroyed by Fulani herdsmen cattle grazers and their colleagues killed. This poses a crisis that threatens continued existence of the country as a union. From the senate comes a bill that provides for the provision of grazing reserves and the establishment of a *National Grazing Reserve Commission* (NGRC). Will the bill prevent future clashes between the Fulani cattle grazers and farmers in the country, or will it make it worse? Who does this bill really cater for?

There is a fact in today’s world in Nigeria, the Sahara desert has encroached north and the fertile lands for grazing are in the south. So if a bill establishes grazing reserves and stipulates that the NGRC has power to acquire “any lands in respect of which it appears...that grazing in such land should be practiced” then it directly implies that the land that will be acquired will be the land of poor farmers in the south and middle belt regions. The bill states that compensation will be given to persons affected by forced land acquisition, no modality set or yardstick to measure the compensation and make sure it is adequately compensated for, following the fact that it could be the sole source of income of the deprived person.

In all the sections of the bill it doesn’t address the problem that led to the frequent clashes, it only insights future clashes. It should be noted that cattle grazing is done by one ethnic group in an entire country of 250 ethnic groups and it is the Fulani ethnic group. To propose a bill that takes care of the well being of only one ethnic group, in order they keep up with an outdated practice that has spanned centuries is blatantly absurd and insane. This protection cannot be more expressed than its section 10; it says “No Court of law shall carry out execution of its judgment or attachment of court process issued against the Commission (NGRC) in any action or suit without obtaining the prior consent of the Attorney General of the Federation.” This has gone an extra mile by pecking the rights of citizens to seek legal redress to consent from the Attorney General of the federation; if this isn’t an infringement of fundamental human rights then I’ll be damned!

The vagueness of this bill can only lead to a catastrophe; what is the definition of a ‘cattle rearer’? For whose use are the grazing reserves and stock routes being acquired? Why should a tax payer’s income go in for acquiring land so others make money from it? The bill is fundamentally flawed. In a country with a rapidly growing population, it will be ten times more costly for the entire society to maintain a practice that guarantees no progress. A decent suggestion would be to encourage ranching and not outdated practices.

References:

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