

Numbers 35:9-15: A Reading in the Context of Insurgency and Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

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Abstract

Numbers 35:9-15 unequivocally mandated the designation of six cities of refuge for the vulnerable inadvertent murderer. Beyond the case of the unintentional killer, the text could find meaning in the light of the plight of victims of unexpected circumstances in contemporary societies. Currently, Nigeria faces a heavy burden of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The prevailing situation of insurgency and other factors have led to an overwhelming increase in the number of IDPs in the country. The aim of this study is to read Numbers 35:9-15 in the context of the plight of IDPs with a view to engineering a biblical theoretical base for policy formulation and implementation for the rehabilitation of IDPs in Nigeria. The work adopts inculturation hermeneutics and socio-historical method in interpreting the text while relying on comparative method in contextualizing the biblical cities of refuge in the light of contemporary IDPs camps. The work finds that Numbers 35:9-15 has a social, religious and legal relevance on the issue of IDPs. It also finds that IDPs are victims of unfortunate circumstances as was the case of those who sought safety at the cities of refuge in Bible days. The paper concludes that even though Numbers 35:9-15 does not directly address the contemporary issues of internal displacement, it could serve as a moral conduit for policies in favour IDPs. The paper therefore recommends among other things that recognized settlements for victims of unforeseen circumstances like insurgency and natural disasters should be mapped out from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria as cities of refuge and they should be strategically chosen from the safest areas in each state.

Keywords: Cities of Refuge, IDPs, Insurgency, Internal Displacement.

Introduction

The story of God's people in the Bible is replete with accounts of movements. In the Bible, people sought sanctuary in places other than their homes for variety of reasons. Perhaps the most famous refugee in the Bible was Jesus who himself, is typologically conceived as the 'city of refuge'. Jesus and his family were forced to flee to Egypt to avoid the infant massacre carried out by King Herod. Cain was also forced to move after killing his brother, Abel. Jeroboam

fled Israel when King Solomon sought to kill him and took refuge in Egypt under the reign of King Shishak (I Kings 11:40; 12:2). While some people willfully chose to move to follow Yahweh's instruction, many others were moved involuntarily as a result of war, famine, or some other massive inescapable problems in their home country. Numbers 35:9-15 however presents a special case different from the above; it reads:

and the Lord said unto Moses, “say to the people of Israel, when you cross the Jordan into the Land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the Manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment. And the cities which you give shall be your six cities of refuge. These six cities shall be refuge for the people of Israel, for the stranger and for the sojourner among them that anyone who kills any person without intent may flee there (*Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, 1989).

As seen in the text, Yahweh told Moses and further re-affirmed to Joshua when the Israelites entered the Promised Land to provide six cities of refuge into which those who had slain someone inadvertently and now targets of possible attack from the avengers could flee for refuge until a trial could ascertain the facts and render a verdict properly (Maryono, 1989). Ultimately, safety from harm is implied in the text.

Displacement has become a prevalent problem in many countries of the world today. The problem is a result of many complex and often intertwining triggers ranging from natural and non-natural factors. Irrespective of the cause of displacement, the phenomenon always leaves negative effects on victims. According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

(IDMC), no fewer than 4.4 million internal displacement of persons resulted from various conflicts and violence between 2008 and 2021 in Nigeria. The report also shows that as of the end of 2021, Nigeria was shouldering the burden of about 3.2 million IDPs with the larger percentage of the figure resulting from insurgent activities across the nation (IDMC, 2021). Insurgency is unarguably the major driver of displacement of persons in Nigeria.

Aluaigba (2015) rightly observes that the most popular insurgent group in the nation is the Boko Haram, and they have expressed their violent character in abductions, outright massive attacks and bombings in strategic places, leaving their victims in despair, homeless and displaced. Victims of insurgency are made to acquire the status of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), a name most unfortunate for compatriots. Tugin and Sushil (2016) reflect in their work that these internally displaced persons are forced by the circumstance to flee to any available place of accommodation like temporary tents and camps outside their home lands. This of course, has been the stark reality in Nigeria amidst heavy insurgency.

This contemporary issue could be addressed from a biblical and historic event recorded in Numbers 35:9-15. The text points out how displaced persons from the act of murder, and similar circumstances were treated. It further

narrates how these victims were forced by these circumstances to flee from their homes in a bid to avoid harm and death to a structured abode called cities of refuge. For us, there is a sense of connection between the biblical cities of refuge and the contemporary issues of IDPs camps which are direct result of insurgency and displacement of persons. The essence of this study is to give a broader theological meaning to the text in an expansionary manner in favour of IDPs in Nigeria. The contending questions here are: are there laws pertaining to the rights of IDPs in terms of rehabilitation and resettlement? Is the current IDPs camp system an adequate arrangement or solution to the problem of internal displacement? On the whole, the work would answer these questions from the perspective of the relevance of the concept of the cities of refuge in Numbers 35:9-15. The paper recognizes the inadequacy of policies and programmes geared towards rehabilitating IDPs in the country; especially in the face of increasing number of IDPs and continuing insurgency and multiplicity insurgent groups in the nation.

The paper deploys the interpretative models of inculturation and socio-historical reading of biblical texts. Over the past few decades, inculturation hermeneutics has been especially popularised in Africa and in Nigeria particularly by the likes of D.T Adamo, and J. Ukpong who

have stressed the need for a robust African reading of the Bible. Simply put according to Adamo, inculturation or African cultural hermeneutics is an approach to biblical interpretation that makes African social cultural context a subject of interpretation (Adamo, 2005). The business of inculturation hermeneutics both as a method of biblical interpretation and as a theoretical framework of biblical study has been clearly defined by Ukpong and it aptly summarises the preoccupation of this paper thus:

in inculturation hermeneutics, the meaning of a text is seen as a function of the interaction between the text studies in its socio-historical context on the one hand, and the socio-cultural context of the readers on the other hand. The purpose of interpretation is to appropriate a text's meaning in a contemporary socio-cultural context. Biblical texts are seen as rooted in their historical contexts yet as... capable of speaking to different situation and contexts across time and space (Ukpong, 2002, p. 17).

Similarly, socio-historical method as used here tilts towards analyzing social and cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context. Although the paper utilizes some conclusions of historical critical school, it pays no particular attention to the issues of source and form of the text.

Conceptual Framework

Insurgency and internal displacement are explained. Contrary to popular perceptions, insurgency is not a contemporary phenomenon, but a constant feature of human history. For thousands of years, groups united around political grievances and ideas have always emerged to challenge the established ruling order, after harnessing feelings of exclusion, discrimination, impotency, deceit, corruption and insecurity (Arij, 2013). According to the US Department of Defense, an insurgency is a rebellion against authority, when those taking part in the rebellion are recognized as belligerent. It is an organized rebellion aimed at overthrowing a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict (US Defense Department, 1978; Wordnet, 2006). Hostility and aggression are the main characters of a belligerent group.

In the view of Merriam Webster (2003), an insurgency may be based on ethnic or religious identity or its roots may be basically political or economic, since insurgencies are rarely strong enough to face a national army head-on, they tend to use such tactics as bombing, kidnapping, hostage taking and hijacking. As it is the case in Nigeria, insurgencies are basically motivated by ethnic, religious and political subjects. Most times victims of insurgencies are innocent citizens and masses as these ones become their

means or tool in communicating to the required audience, which could be the government, another ethnic group or religious group, another country and so on. Displacement of persons is thus, one of the consequent effects of insurgency.

The American Heritage Dictionary (2016) defines Internally Displaced Persons as people who have been driven from their homes or place of residence by war, internal upheaval or natural disaster. Francis (1998) also notes:

These are persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or place of habitual residence in particular as a result or in order to avoid the effect of armed conflicts, situation of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (p. 36)

The above definition stresses two important elements of internal displacement, which are coercion and the domestic or internal movement. The term should not be confused with “displaced persons” as this may include both internally displaced persons and refugees from outside the legally defined territory of the state. An internally displaced person remains within his or her country’s borders and according to Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) they are often referred to as refugee. At the end of 2018, it was estimated in (IDMC that there were 28 million new

displacements in some 148 countries with Africa contributing significantly to the world burden with over a population of 10 million (IDMC, 2018).

A Synopsis of the Book of Numbers

McDermott and John (2002) in their book, *Reading the Pentateuch*, note that the book of Numbers draws its name from the account of the census that happened two times among the congregation of Israel in Numbers 1-4 and Numbers 26. The Greek title *Arithmoi* was used and retained as the book title even though there is really no connection with numberings. The original Hebrew title *Bamidhbar* which means “in the wilderness” seems much more accurate because the book of Numbers is really an account of events that happened during the period of wandering in the wilderness and not necessarily a book about figures and statistics (Hills and Walton, 2010).

Most commentators like Stubbs and David, cited in Hill and Walton, divide Numbers into three sections based on geographical emphasis, Mount Sinai, Kadesh-Barnea and the Plains of Moab, linked by two travel sections. It could also be seen alternatively as structured around two generations of those condemned to die in the wilderness and the new generation who will enter Canaan (Hills and Walton, 2010). As noted by Clines (1978), the book of Numbers makes a

theological distinction of a disobedient first generation as against the obedient second generation. The theme of descendants marks the first event in Numbers, the census of Israel’s fighting men: the huge number which results (over 600,000) demonstrates the fulfilment of Yahweh’s promise to Abraham of innumerable descendants as well as serving as Yahweh’s guarantee of victory in Canaan.

As chapter 1-10 progresses, the theme of God’s presence with Israel comes to fore: these chapters describes how Israel is to be organized around the sanctuary of God’s dwelling in their midst, under the charge of the Levites and priests, in preparation for the conquest of the land. The last chapters are exclusively concerned with the land. This includes: instructions for the extermination of the Canaanites, the demarcations of the boundaries of the land, how the land is to be divided, the holy cities for the Levites, cities of refuge, the problem of pollution of the land by blood and regulations for inheritance when a male heir is lacking (David, 1978).

Numbers 35:9-15 Cities of Refuge in History and Tradition

In Numbers 35:9-15, God commands the people to choose cities of refuge in the Promised Land. The notion behind the cities of refuge, where one could claim asylum or sanctuary is a construct

that has found itself reinterpreted throughout the ages. In the biblical text, the cities of refuge act as a sanctuary for one who had committed murder but had done so unintentionally. The issue of blood vengeance is paramount here. Numbers 35:16-21 explains that a person who commits murder should be put to death as murder violates the sixth commandment. Furthermore, a member of the family of one who was murdered has the right to act as the executioner. The Kinsman carrying out this duty is called the blood avenger (Jastrov and John, nd). However, if the murder happened by accident, then the murderer is allowed a trial, and the assembly shall decide whether or not the manslayer should die. If the assembly finds favor in such a person, he shall live in one of the cities of refuge until the high priest dies. At this point the manslayer is free to return to his home and his people and his former life, but if he sets foot outside the city before then, he opens himself up to the retribution exacted by the blood avenger (Tucker and James, 1974).

Jewish Rabbinic tradition is rich in subject of the cities of refuge. Of particular concern to them was how a person running from the blood avenger would be able to find one of the cities with ease and on time. In Deuteronomy 19:2-3, God told Moses to prepare a way as means of direction to the cities. Alvin (2004) states clearly that in every mile along the way, there would be

a station with a person pointing towards the city of refuge. In case this was not enough the roads leading to these cities should be extra wide, its cubits not the regular 4 cubits.

The concept of the cities of refuge may have influenced other biblical traditions in Israel's history down to the Christian era. During the Middle Ages, the church was used as a place of asylum. This practice may have been rooted in biblical texts and also in Greco-Roman influence. The Bible suggests that grabbing the horns of the altar kept a person safe from harm because the altar was sacred and shedding blood in a holy place would desecrate it (Plout, 2005). This was also the case in Greece, according to Garroway (nd), where temples, altars and other sacred spaces became places where slaves and criminals fled for asylum. Throughout the course of the Middle Ages, laws regulating the practice of asylum within churches, as well as the rights of the fugitive and the pursuer became well developed.

Since the seventeenth century CE, the place of asylum has moved away from sacred space into the political realm, now, states create places of asylum that protect a person from the reach of another sovereign state or circumstance leading to further harm. This practice is perhaps the underlying idea behind the creation of embassies within foreign countries, camps, tents and refuge

homes in and around countries (Tucker and James, 1974).

For some biblical laws such as those governing slaves and indentured servants, goring oxen or vows, we may simply say “that was then and this is now” or we try to draw out spiritual or allegorical meanings. But for the cities of refuge, however, the situation is different. While the function of the cities may have changed throughout time, the intention behind them has remained similar even up till this day and that is, to protect those who need protection, give shelter to those in need of it, help and hope to the hopeless and helpless, who are victims of excruciating circumstances beyond their control. It is on the basis of this age-long intent of the cities of refuge, this paper considers the relevance of Numbers 35:9-15 to the contemporary issue of internal displacement of persons resulting from insurgency in Nigeria. The undeniable fact remains that IDPs are victims of unfortunate circumstances as was the case of those who sought safety at the cities of refuge in Bible days.

Displacement of Persons as a Problem in Nigeria

The issue of displacement of persons continues in the history of man till contemporary times. It has become a global problem following its constant increase and management problems.

Internal displacement of persons in Nigeria is currently a huge challenge. It cuts across the six geo-political zones as the siege laid by the Boko Haram extremist and insurgent group and other militia groups continues to fester. As Adeluaigba (2015) rightly observed, the Arewa Youths in the North, the Militants in Niger-Delta, the Ododuwa Community of the West and the Indigenous People of Biafra in the East are major groups that contribute to the increasing population of IDPs in Nigeria. In recent times, the emergence of the Fulani herdsmen and armed bandits’ activities especially in the Northern part of the country, have exacerbated the issue.

Olagunju (2006) in his work, *Management of IDPs in Nigeria*, pointed out that the emergence of IDPs in Nigeria can be traced to violent communal clash in mid 1960s. However, modern trend of large-scale displacement is associated with the return of democracy in 1999. Since the return of civil rule in 1999, it is on record that thousands of people have been killed through clashes and violent crises, leading to large waves of internal displacement of persons. For instance, in 2009, thousands of people were displaced in a clash between government forces and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and additional 2 million was displaced by flood in 2012 and in 2014. From 2016 to date, escalating violence caused by the

Boko Haram, herdsmen and bandits' insurgency has led to an untold number of IDPs across Nigeria (Oduwale and Fadeyi, 2013).

A.S. Osawe (personal communication, December 20, 2019) commented that the issue of internal displacement of persons in Nigeria is a real challenge that leaves victims vulnerable. Reflecting on over 15 years' experience of living in military barracks, she adds that the situation of IDPs in Nigeria has assumed a humanitarian one which requires urgent and drastic attention. According to her, barracks serve as the first option of shelter for victims of violent crises and most times, she had been baffled at the number of people who come in to the barracks for safety during these crises. This further exposes the urgent need to address the issue and curb the possible causes of internal displacement which has now become a plague in the country.

These displaced persons experience further traumas even in settlements and camps they find themselves. These include insecurity, danger and vulnerability to further harm, the impossible duty of protecting themselves. The human rights of internally displaced persons are sometimes denied and even violated especially women and children. We see cases of rape, child abuse and even child neglect (A.S. Osawe, personal communication, December 20, 2019). IDPs are camped and cramped in congested shelters, in isolated, sometimes inaccessible and

inhospitable areas. The elderly, sick, physically challenged, children, and pregnant women and their special needs and privacy are hardly attended to, due to fragmented and uncoordinated humanitarian response to the needs. There is also the problem of short supplies of basic needs and relief materials like food, water, mattresses, clothing, among others. Tugin and Sushil (2016) lamented that the camp in Maiduguri, is partly flooded, making the already poor sanitary condition at the camp even worse.

IDPs are mostly denied of their economic, social, cultural, civil and even sometimes, political rights. They face many cases of injustices, which may come in form of human rights violations such as discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, sexual violence and deprivation of means of livelihood (Tugin and Sushil, 2016). However, many IDPs have found unexpected and unconventional ways to cope with their predicament. For instance, Adewola (2016) notes that many IDPs now sell their relief materials, and this allowed some of them develop some kind of economic activities. He further observed that there are stores in camps where people, especially women, sell petty things to be able to survive.

Insurgency as a Major Cause of Displacement of Persons in Nigeria

It is incontestable that the number of IDPs in Nigeria has increased considerably since the Boko Haram insurgent group started their violent operations in the North-eastern part of Nigeria in 2009. Apart from other natural factors contributing to displacement of persons in Nigeria; the Boko Haram group constitutes more profound challenge to peace in especially North-Eastern region of the country. In the past decade, the nation has witnessed innumerable acts of criminality and instability through mindless attacks by the group (Akpan, Ekanem and Olofu-Adeoye, 2014). In a UN report, it had been estimated that through the end of 2020, the insurgent activities in the North-eastern Nigeria had resulted in nearly 350,000 deaths, with 314,000 of those deaths resulting from indirect causes (Sanni, 2021). The report also shows that a staggering 35,000 people have lost their lives directly from insurgents' conflicts in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states since the emergence of Boko Haram in the region especially since 2009 (Sanni, 2021). According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR, 2021), over 2.9 million people have been displaced in North-eastern Nigeria alone due mainly to the increasing insurgent activities of Boko Haram. In a similar document, UNICEF has also lamented that the activities of Boko Haram had risen significantly in the North-eastern region of Nigerian and neighbouring countries in recent times; leading to the

displacement of over 1.4 million children (UN News Centre, 2021).

The ugly trend of mass displacement of people has continued unabated since the North-eastern Nigeria became the theatre of violence. Other insurgent groups exacerbating the security challenges of the country and contributing significantly to displacement of persons include: Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Fulani herdsmen, and the infamous Bandits. These insurgent groups have collectively heightened the security situation in the country with mindless killings and kidnappings for ransom. These groups have also sacked whole communities and rendered inhabitants homeless in their bid to taking over the government of the country.

Apart from the insurgents in the northern part of Nigeria, other conflicts also contribute to displacement of people in the country. Akpan (2017) reports that the insurgent clashes between civilian and soldiers of Nigeria and Cameroon over the petrol, natural gas and oil rich Bakassi Peninsula stands out as the most serious crisis of all the border disputes leaving some thousands of persons displaced. The recent separatist demonstrations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) over Nigeria's unity, in the South-East and the government's hard-line stance, including the defensive response of the military in the operation Python dance according

to a report also left hundreds of people displaced and a few others killed (Obasi, 2017). In a bid to curbing insurgency, the government also contributes to displacement of persons. The case of the military evicting people from their homes in the fight against insurgent groups and in execution of other government projects buttresses this fact (Jolaosho, 2017). Although it is true that several other factors contribute to the heightened state of internal displacement in Nigeria, insurgency is the main culprit and therefore any mechanism aimed at addressing the situation of internal displacement of persons in the country must pay adequate attention at solving the problem of insurgency in the nation.

Conceptualizing the Cities of Refuge in the Context of IDPs in Nigeria

The cities of refuge were six Levitical towns in the Land of Israel in which the perpetrators of manslaughter could claim the right of asylum. They were established to serve as a shelter or a place providing safety and protection for the unintentional manslayer from the blood avenger to prevent further shed of innocent blood and a multiplicity of blood guilt in the land (Moris, nd). As seen in Numbers 35:9-15, Yahweh told Moses and further re-affirmed it to Joshua that when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the cities of refuge were to protect those in the circumstance of slaying someone until a trial could ascertain the facts and render a verdict

properly. Three of the refuge cities were on the West side of the Jordan River and three were east of it.

Those on the west were *Kadesh* (in the land of Naphtha) meaning “holy place”, *Shechem* (in the western part of Manasseh’s inheritance) meaning “strong shoulder”, and *Hebron* (in the land of Judah) meaning “fellowship”. Those on the east of the Jordan River were *Golan* (in the land of Bashan) meaning “enclosure”, *Ramoth-Gilead* (in the eastern part of Manasseh’s inheritance) meaning “high place” and *Bezer* (in the land of Reuben) meaning “strong hiding place” (Maryono, 1989). These cities were strategically chosen so that anyone living in Israel, including strangers (Joshua 20:9), could flee to them in a day or less. It could also be seen that the meaning of the names of these selected cities foreshadowed their application.

Essentially therefore, IDPs camps are supposed to be specifically dedicated settlements in safe area, serving as a form of accommodation which should go beyond the temporary arrangement of tents in school fields, religious buildings and other temporary structures. These Levitical cities served as havens from further danger and possible death. According to the law, blood vengeance was allowed by the avengers of death but once the perpetrator flees into one of these Levitical cities, further harm was no longer allowed to come to him (Tucker and James,

1974). In the same way, IDPs' camps are to be guaranteed shelter from further harm or danger from the original causes of displacement.

The Inadvertent manslayer in the Law of Moses was a victim of circumstances as well as IDPs. In the context of the text, the cause of displacement was unintentional manslaughter, leading to an impromptu flight of the perpetrator who is left with no choice but to flee to the nearest city of refuge in order to escape death (Gaines, 2015). For contemporary displacement, caused by insurgency, surviving victims in most cases are also left with no choice but to flee their homes to the nearest IDPs settlements.

Gaines (2015) states that no harm was allowed to come to the perpetrator once the Jewish High Priest in office at that time dies at which point the perpetrator was free to leave the city without fear. In the light of this, IDPs are not supposed to stay in the camp or established settlements forever. Policies and programmes must be put in place for their proper rehabilitation and reintegration to the society. Interestingly, as Garroway (2017) suggested, individuals within the household of the high priest may have been responsible for the initial care of the perpetrator who sought such refuge, so that these individuals would not wish for the death of the high priest, as that would form atonement for their sin of manslaughter. In a similar manner, IDPs, having lost their means of livelihood,

become dependent, relying only on spirited individuals, governmental efforts and other organizational contributions for relief. Garroway (2017) further notes that, everybody was welcomed in these cities, even non-Jews who were not permanent residents of the land, the same justice provision and atoning grace were free to all. By implication, there should also be ready and open settlement for all displaced persons, irrespective of tribal, ethnic or regional affiliations.

Relevance of Numbers 35:9-15 to IDPs Situation in Nigeria

It is our position in this paper that the concept of the cities of refuge is quintessential to the IDPs narrative in Nigeria. Numbers 35:9-15 was a proactive legal provision for Israelites as they matched to the Promise Land. Contemporarily, such proactive stance on a critical situation like displacement of persons is as equally vital. A proper legal framework is necessary for dealing with the situation of displacement of persons. The prevalent half hazard and fire brigade approach often adopted by government at the peak of violent crises cannot address the issue. As shown in the foregoing, Yahweh appointed credible men and leaders to see to the establishment of these cities of refuge, when they entered the Promised Land. They obediently established six Levitical cities at

appropriate places with well-defined laws in place to guide these cities and dwellers.

Again, in the creation of IDPs settlement, the whole concept of the sacredness of human life must be brought to the fore. IDPs are humans and must be so treated. The conditions of some IDPs camps in Nigeria fall short of what should ordinarily be human experience. The poor sanitary conditions couple with inadequate health care has led to the untimely deaths of some IDPs (A.S. Osawe, personal communication, December 20, 2019). For us, this is a further shedding of blood resulting from lack of safety in some of the camps. As reflected in the Bible, Yahweh considers human life sacred. For those who unintentionally killed someone; Yahweh lovingly provided the cities of refuge to prevent further innocent bloodshed so the people would not suffer blood guilt. Yahweh's attribute of mercy and fairness was displayed in the protection of the unintentional manslayer and further promoted respect for life. Contemporary IDPs camps should also serve to promote respect for life, preventing the further shedding of innocent blood.

Numbers 35:9-15 is also significant for its socio-cultural orientation. There are common complains that IDPs add to the security challenges of host communities and the society at large as crime rates, such as theft, murder and other social vices surges in host communities.

Apparently other social problems such as prostitution, alcoholism, are also claimed to rise in the IDPs host areas (A.S. Osawe, personal communication, December 20, 2019). As should be expected, poverty and idleness within displaced persons camps may cause or escalate such tendencies particularly if there are groups of young people not meaningfully occupied. The guiding principle of the cities of refuge guaranteed that the victim could resume his normal life once he has entered the city. The perpetrators were placed under watch and surveillance with rules and laws guiding them. Life in the cities of refuge would have included working as a farmer or herder to earn a living and also to contribute their quota in improving the cities in general. The restriction of their social lives would have further impressed upon them the need not be careless or indifferent about human life (Moris, nd). Unarguably, if proper policy framework exists in the management of IDPs in Nigeria, the complaints above would be nonexistent. Of course, this policy would go beyond cramping people together unhealthy camps to include mechanism that can gainfully engage the IDPs. To prevent excesses among IDPs they must be made to retain their sense of belonging that they are citizens of the country and that they have equal rights, privileges and possible punishment as those that have not been displaced. Such policy

must of a necessity include access to education and other forms of learning.

Conclusion

One major aftershock of the activities of insurgency is the displacement of people from their homes to places they consider safer, but the apparent helplessness of government in providing succor and meeting IDPs social, economic needs is one of great concern. The absence of a proper legal and institutional framework in Nigeria for handling internal displacement has been identified in this work as one of the main reasons for lack of a systematic and coordinated support for IDPs. However, Number 35:9-15 presents what we have conceptually understood as a theoretical base and mechanism that could ensure the protection of victims of circumstances like the IDPs in Nigeria.

A careful reading of Number 35:9-15 reveals that more than the immediate incidence of the inadvertent manslayer, for which the Levitical cities of refuge were created, the concept of the cities of refuge could still be relevant in addressing contemporary situations involving victims of circumstances. Thus, a reading of Number 35:9-15 in this paper has shown that the text could be relevant in developing policies and strategies that could help in the rehabilitation and resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the work, the following recommendations could have positive effects in the management of IDPs in Nigeria.

- i. The biblical cities of refuge were six Levitical towns in the kingdom of Israel and Judea. It is not out of place to suggest that organized settlements for victims of unforeseen circumstances like insurgency should be mapped out in form of mini refuge cities from each state in Nigeria's six geo-political zones. They should be strategically chosen so that victims of insurgency and other mishaps could flee to them with ease. The cities should have fairly decent accommodations, social amenities, schools and special facilities for the physically challenged.
- ii. Government must move away from reactive measures like setting up emergency camps for victims of insurgencies and become decisive in handling the problem of insurgency in the nation. Appropriate measures should be taken towards the prevention of insurgent demonstrations leading to possible displacements. These preventive measures could include: heeding the public call for the restructuring of the nation, engaging in an economic reform that will lead to the

diversification of the economy and creation of jobs for the teeming youths in the country. A serious attention to the Agricultural sector is a viable option in this regard.

- iii. Post insurgency efforts and long-term actions should be taken towards the rehabilitation and resettlements of displaced persons. Extreme measures must be taken to deal with insurgency to prevent perennial recurrence of mass displacement of people from their homes. Government

should engage in restoration of destroyed infrastructure and critical rehabilitation of the natural ecosystems and original homes of IDPs.

- iv. Religious bodies, media, well-meaning individuals and other non-governmental organizations should put all hands-on-deck and contribute their quota in ameliorating the plight of IDPs in the country by provided specialized support in coordinating and financing IDPs' projects and programmes.

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