



Self-defense in Nehemiah 4:12-23 as 'A new normal' in the face of insecurity escalation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Without any controversy, the challenge of insecurity is a great concern for religious, ethnic, and business persons in Nigerian today. It has come, and we have to curtail it better than how it is presently. Hence, this paper aimed to analytically offer 'self-defense approach in Nehemiah 4' as the new normal in solving the problem of insecurity in Nigerian. And also to allay the fear attached to the use of self-defense in Nigeria. The methodology employed for this study was descriptive survey. Nehemiah's self-defense approach goes beyond weapon bearing, it encompasses "good and timely security intelligence, organized security structure, weapon bearing, situational reports, adequate communication (with coded language), collective defense, and cooperation. The paper recommends that self-defense should be fully adopted by the government, religious settings and the communities. And that legislative arm of the government should review and enact self-defense in the Nigerian constitution with provisions to curb its excesses. It should be properly coordinates/moderated by local government.



Keywords: Self-Defense, New Normal, Insecurity, Escalation



Introduction

The fear of insecurity is real. Citizens now sleep with one eye closed while the other is opened. The height of killings, robbery, kidnapping is on the alarm string. The security agencies are trying, but their efforts seem insufficient. When on the road, at home, in the farm, no one feels safe. No one can tell where next to be bombed or attacked by the terrorist, bandits, armed robbers, or book haram members. Sequel to this predicament, self-defense has been suggested as a tool in curbing the menace of insecurity. But many are apprehensive about it. Therefore, the fear of self-defense is likewise real despite its prospect in solving the escalating insecurity in Nigeria. No doubt, insecurity issue in Nigeria presently is on the alarming rate. What is the way out? Upon this premise, this paper examines the nature of self-defense in Nehemiah 4:12-23 as the new normal in solving the problem of escalating insecurity in Nigeria. Between the necessity and fear of self-defense, this paper sees self-defense as the new normal in the light of Nehemiah self-defense approach.

Escalating Insecurity in Nigeria

The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. According to Beland (2005), insecurity is "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection." It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. Achumba et al (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune.

Owo Catholic Church massacre, Abuja-Kaduna railway killings, robbery and kidnapping are indications that the insecurity in Nigeria is escalating. Within a month, the Bandits attacked President's Brigade Guards twice. The attacks led to the death of some soldiers. They even made a threat to kidnap Mr President, Kaduna State Governor and some Senators. If the President is not safe, who then is safe? "The State of security is deteriorating nationwide by the day. Its deterioration is evident in the escalation of violent attacks and their collateral costs on human lives at large" (Addeh, 2022). On several occasions, farmers were attacked in the farms and killed. The kidnapers abduct people at wish to demand huge amount of money

for their release, to worsen the situation, in some instances, after collecting the ransom, they went ahead to kill their victims. Places of worship are not safe, farm is not safe, municipal is equally not safe. Due to escalating insecurity in Nigeria, no one feels secured.

Havocs Caused by Insecurity in Nigeria Frequent loss of Life

Thousands of people have been sent to early grave by kidnappers, Bandits, Terrorists, book haram, ISWAP, and armed robbers in Nigeria. Ochojila (2021) said, Ekwe, a Lawyer was of the opinion that in the present day Nigeria with her escalating insecurity, human beings are massacred with impunity and properties wasted almost on a daily basis. Family bread-winners, promising and talented youths, fathers, mothers, husbands, wives are killed innocently.

Food shortage

Due to the fear of being kidnapped or killed, many farmers have deserted their farm lands, many could not engage their land for food production thereby leading to shortage of food supply in the society. Consequently, the few food available becomes so expensive to the extent that many citizens cannot afford to buy enough that could feed them. No wonder, hospitals are filled with patients.

Insecurity Discourages Business Investment

The rising state of the insecurity in Nigeria is a discouraging factor for the investors. Both local and foreign investors see Nigerian soil as unpromising to invest their money. Consequently, the level of unemployment increases daily. Massive able bodied young men and women are unemployed or underemployed. Ujah and Eboh (2006) reported a study by World Bank that 36% of business operators in Nigeria claims that insecurity is the major threat to business in Nigeria. Nigeria is now considered as unsafe place to do business investment. So, it is a strong disincentive to business investment as it scares away potential investors. This is because such environments or economies are considered high risk zones due to the high level of uncertainty about the safety of investment and lives of the managers and their staff.

Insecurity Hampers Business Smooth Operations

Insecurity has halted business operations in Nigeria. The Nigeria insecurity situation can, and in many cases, actually halted business operations during the periods of violence and also caused the



outright closure of many enterprises especially in the areas or zones where incidences of insecurity is rife and are on daily occurrence, in a bid to protect lives of operators and business property. Generally, if there is no peace and security, it is extremely difficult for businesses to survive. Ordinary citizens having small and medium scale businesses cannot open shops for business transactions. Insecurity everywhere is a risk factor which business owners and managers dread and wish to avoid by relocating their businesses elsewhere. In the case of Nigeria, there is also evidence of some businessmen and manufacturing companies having to relocate particularly from the North in recent time, to other peaceful parts of the country (Nwagbosa 2012).

Financial Wastage

National funds going to combating insecurity is high and being embezzled. Money that supposed to go for development of infrastructural facilities for the benefits of the citizens is channeled to purchase of ammunitions.

Self-Defense as New normal to Curtail Insecurity Escalation in Nigeria A Call for Self defense

Several Nigerian leaders have suggested 'self-defense' as a way out of the insecurity in Nigeria. The Governors of Benue State, Katsina State, Zamfara State, Taraba State called for self-defense, after the security agencies failed to protect their states from the plundering militia who daily perpetrate the evils of killing innocents persons, kidnappings, armed robbery, assassinations, and other forms of criminality in the country (Ochojila, 2021). Jannamike (2022) said that 'A coalition of 52 Northern Groups (CNG) has said that the security agencies need the private sector to combat the problem of insecurity in the country.

Ejiohu etal (2022).Citing A security expert, Mr Paul Elimbi, characterized the directive of Matawalle to Zamfara people to defend themselves in this way:

When a governor makes such statement, it means he has lost faith in the system which constitutionally has the duty and function to protect the people. That means the system has failed. Secondly, it means the world of crime is having an upper hand. It shows that the government is bereft of creativity and initiative to deal with the situation.



Fear over Self Defense

On the other hand, we have other Nigerians who are apprehensive of the 'self-defense as a solution to the issue of insecurity in Nigeria. Madobi (2022) quoting the Chief of Defense Staff, Irabo claims that 'self-defense' is not the right way to go. That it will worsen the situation leading to great consequences. It could lead to anarchy-breeding lawless society. Criminality will definitely skyrocket to an unprecedented level. Ekwe said, to allow Citizen to take up arms in self-defense is to simply ask them to go on a killing spree through a mechanism which lacks the instrumentality of law. He further claimed that it is the primary function of the Government to provide adequate security for lives and property of the citizens (Ochojila, 2021). But Ekwe failed to unravel what should be the solutions when Government is rendered incapacitated to protect the lives and properties of the citizens in face of killings and destruction by fierce banditry, terrorism and book haram.

Madibo and Ekwe should think along the opinion of Ikhariale that one sure way to solve the problem of insecurity in Nigeria is to arm the victim population. This is important since arms are unfortunately and unconstitutionally getting into the hands of the terrorists who are probably citizens or illegal migrants. At least, there would arise some 'balance' as the criminals now know that their neighbours are also armed. Presently, the terrorists have unfair fighting advantage over their defenseless victims (Ikhariale, 2022).Iremeka (2022) postulated that

The government, to which the masses have surrendered their freedom and loyalty under The Social Contract, seems to be overwhelmed and unable to keep its part of the pact. Under the Social Contract theory, the masses consented, either explicitly or tacitly, to surrender some of their freedom and submit to the authority (the government) in exchange for the protection of their lives, properties and the remaining rights or maintenance of the social order. But where the government to which the citizenry submitted their freedom could not fulfill its own part of the bargain, self-help becomes inevitable under the natural law. Self-help involves people providing support and help for each other in an informal way, rather than relying on the government or the constituted authorities. Thus, the seeming inability of the Nigerian government to protect its citizens against widespread massacre by

terrorists necessitated calls for arms bearing by the people to protect themselves against the marauding criminal elements who have placed every Nigerian on death row.

Self-defense in Nehemiah 4:12-23 as “New Normal”

Neh 4:12-23

Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”¹³ Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. ¹⁴ After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people “Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work. ¹⁶ From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah ¹⁷ who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, ¹⁸ and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me. ¹⁹ Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. ²⁰ Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”²¹ So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. ²² At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and workmen by day.”²³ Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water (NIV)



The nature of self-defense in Nehemiah 4:12-23 goes beyond bearing weapons to defend self from attacks by the enemies. It is a process. The process includes: Good and timely security intelligence, organized security structure, weapon bearing, situational reports, adequate communication, collective defense, good leadership, and cooperation.

Good Intelligence

The foundation of self-defense in Nehemiah is good security intelligence. Verse 12 says "Then the Jews who lived near them (the attackers) came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us".

Organized Security Structure

Nehemiah's self-defense was well structured. Vs. 13 "Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows." A workable self-defense should be organized and structured. It should be by regions, community, state, and religion settings: (i.e. Amotekun)

Weapon Bearing

Weapon bearing in Nehemiah's Self Defense was strictly for defense not for attack. Vs. 16 - 18:

From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

Situational Report

In Nehemiah's self-defense approach, situational report was given to their nobles and officers (immediate/local government). Vs. 14 "after I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes. By implication, self-defense is not done in isolation by the citizens; it must be in



collaboration with the local/regional government. The regional government would be the moderator.

Adequate Communication and Communication Networking

Clear instruction and mission statement was given and followed. Do not attack, but defend yourself and brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes. Vs 14 "...Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." Communication Networking: "Vs 19-20 "...The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there..." Local communication channel is needed for self-defense. Here, trumpet was their means and all the indigenes understood it properly. The enemies could not properly understand their unique way of sounding it.

Cooperation/Collectivity

All the citizens perceived the insecurity and its perpetrators as common enemies. This is pivotal to self-defense. In fact, it is self-defense. No betrayal. See the principle placed down by Nehemiah in Vs. 22 "defend me, as am defending you". What a great love, unity and loyalty. Without this, we cannot overcome our current common enemies (bandits, terrorists, armed robbers, and book harams)

Trust in God

Self-defense and every form of human efforts can only yield result when God says yes to them. Nehemiah's self-defense approach was anchored on absolute trust in. Vs. 20 "... Our God will fight for us".

Conclusion and Recommendations

The escalating insecurity in Nigeria has made many Nigerians to become widows, widowers, childless, fatherless, and orphans. Some others have lost their businesses. Citizens live in anxiety every day. No one feels safe. The security agencies are trying their best to curtail this menace, but it is evident that their efforts need compliment. Therefore, it is expedient to imbibe self-defense to face out the disastrous enemies ravaging our land. For the persons who are skeptic about self-defense, Nehemiah's self-defense approach serves as a Template that could help Nigeria overcome her swing between the necessity and fear of self-defense. In the face of security challenges in Ancient Israel, Nehemiah's Self-defense approach was adopted and became 'new normal'. The tested and proved way to consciously



contain the threat of insecurity (deadly attacks) is building up of self-defense. The Maccabean Self Defense on Sabbaths saved Jews from extinction agenda of their enemies. The "Cold War" stopped the third world war between the West and Soviet Union.

Nehemiah self-defense approach was a coordinated self-defense powered with good security intelligence, cooperation, good communication and communication networking. Based on this conclusion, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- i. Using Nehemiah's self-defense approach as template, self-defense should be embraced at all quarters in the country as the new normal to curtail the menace of insecurity.
- ii. Churches, mosques and communities should serve as bedrock of inculcating high sense of active security intelligence to their members to facilitate a workable self-defense that could adequately tackle the problem insecurity.
- iii. A course should be taught on intelligence at all levels of education, most importantly, at tertiary institutions.
- iv. Government should operate a legal system that could compliment/consolidate self-defense as needed tools that could assist solving the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. The legislative arm of the government should review and enact self-defense in the Nigerian constitution with provisions to curb its excesses
- v. The Government policies that suspend the issuance of license to lawfully bear arms by the citizens should be revisited.
- vi. Religious organisations and local communities should derive unique and coded ways to communicate from time to time for security purpose.

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