NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://www.ncronline.org)

Nigerian archbishop, others question plan to dialogue with Boko Haram

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Lagos, Nigeria

A Nigerian archbishop joined others in his country in questioning the wisdom of a plan that the Nigerian government dialogue with the Boko Haram Islamic sect, responsible for the deaths of thousands of people in the past several years.

Critics, including Archbishop Felix Job of Ibadan, urged Nigerian authorities to be cautious of negotiating with an extremist "faceless group" that had been involved in maiming and killing of innocent Nigerians.

Job also criticized a Boko Haram suggestion that among its delegates to the negotiations in Saudi Arabia would be former Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, the country's military ruler from 1983 to 1985 and a presidential candidate in 2003, 2007 and 2011.

Job told Catholic News Service by telephone: "Is it not funny that the Boko Haram group, a faceless group, has a spokesman" and is seeking "dialogue with the Nigerian government as a means of resolving the insecurity?"

"Nigerians have not been told who are the sponsors of the faceless sectarian group that had been maiming and killing innocent Nigerians over time," he said. He said he wondered if the general's nomination might be "translated into meaning that he is indirectly one of the financiers of the sect."

Bishop M. John Goltok of Bauchi wondered why Saudi Arabia was chosen as the venue for the dialogue.

"There are a lot of complications involved in the issue," he said.

Among Boko Haram's targets have been Christian churches. One of the most recent attacks occurred Oct. 28 in the city of Kaduna, when a car bomb slammed into St. Rita's Catholic Church, killing at least eight people and injuring 135 -- many of them children.

Source URL (retrieved on *2016-05-31 13:29*): http://www.ncronline.org/news/global/nigerian-archbishop-others-question-plan-dialogue-boko-haram