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# **A Study of Violence-Related Deaths in Mopa-Muro & Igalamela-Odolu Local Government Areas of Kogi State and Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State (2006-2014)**

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# Olusegun Stephen TITUS

<http://www.ifra-nigeria.org/IMG/pdf/violence-deaths-kogi-nasarawa-nigeria.pdf>

A Study of Violence-Related Deaths  
in Mopa-Muro & Igalamela-Odolu  
Local Government Areas of Kogi  
State and Toto Local Government  
Area of Nasarawa State (2006-2014)



### ***The 'Invisible Violence' Project***

*Based in the premises of the French Institute for Research in Africa on the campus of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria Watch is a database project that has monitored fatal incidents and human security in Nigeria since 1 June 2006. The database compiles violent deaths on a daily basis, including fatalities resulting from accidents. It relies on a thorough reading of the Nigerian press (15 dailies & weeklies) and reports from human rights organisations. The two main objectives are to identify dangerous areas and assess the evolution of violence in the country.*

*However, violence is not always reported by the media, especially in remote rural areas that are difficult to access. Hence, in the last 8 years, Nigeria Watch has not recorded any reports of fatal incidents in some of the 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the Nigerian Federation. There are two possibilities: either these places were very peaceful, or they were not covered by the media. This series of surveys thus investigates 'invisible' violence.*

*By 1 November 2014, there were still 23 LGAs with no report of fatal incidents in the Nigeria Watch database: Udung Uko and Urue-Offong/Oruko (Akwa Ibom); Kwaya Kusar (Borno); Nafada (Gombe); Auyo, Gagarawa, Kaugama, and Yankwashi (Jigawa); Ingawa and Matazu (Katsina); Sakaba (Kebbi); Bassa, Igalamela-Odolu, and Mopa-Muro (Kogi); Toto (Nassarawa); Ifedayo (Osun); Gudu and Gwadabaw (Sokoto); Ussa (Taraba); and Karasuwa, Machina, Nguru, and Yunusari (Yobe).*

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Olusegun Stephen TITUS<sup>1\*</sup>

**A Study of Violence-Related Deaths in Mopa-Muro & Igalamela-Odolu Local Government Areas of Kogi State, and Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State (2006–2014)**

*Executive Summary*

This paper highlights the outcome of a study on fatal incidents in three local government areas (LGAs) of north-central Nigeria: Mopa-Muro and Igalamela-Odolu in Kogi State, and Toto in Nasarawa State. Data obtained from 138 questionnaires out of 160 show that between 2006 and 2014, Toto LGA recorded the highest number of fatalities (68) and violent incidents, followed by Igalamela-Odolu LGA (48) and Mopa-Muro (41). For the period under review, the most frequent causes of fatal incidents were cattle grazing, followed by land disputes, crime, political clashes, sorcery, and accidents. Finally, the study demonstrates that just as in the urban centres of Kogi and Nasarawa states, there are many fatal incidents in rural areas; however, these are not reported by the media. Some explanations for this omission are discussed in relation to poor road infrastructure and lack of accessibility.

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## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The modern world faces a wide variety of violence, and security is a primary value because everything else is meaningless unless one can be assured of one's physical safety (Zabadi 2001, Nwolise 2012, 2013). One of the concerns of the Nigeria Watch project is thus to analyse local government areas (LGAs) where fatal incidents appear to have fallen outside the radar of press coverage. The issue is to discover whether this omission results from a dearth of media reports or from an authentic absence of lethal violence. Bearing this framework in mind, the current study investigates 'invisible' fatal incidents in Mopa-Muro and Igalamela-Odolu LGAs in Kogi State, and in Toto LGA in Nasarawa State.

Northern Nigeria now offers the general impression of an entire region in crisis. However, some analytical nuance is required to distinguish areas that are indeed rife with violence from those largely undisturbed. The north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria includes a mix of states such as Kwara, Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa, and Niger states. In this regard, the situation in Mopa-Muro, Igalamela-Odolu, and Toto LGAs does not seem to be very different from other regions where insecurity is a serious challenge and where social norms, along with economic and cultural factors, contribute to high incidences of fatal violence.

To fine-tune our focus on selected LGAs in Kogi and Nasarawa, two main questions were asked. First, what is the general character of fatal incidents in Mopa-Muro, Igalamela-Odolu, and Toto? Second, what factors explain the poor media coverage of violence in the LGAs under review? The paper responds to these questions by beginning with a brief background of the socio-political and economic local context. With empirical content, it then discusses the nature of lethal violence in the selected LGAs. In the next section, it sheds light on the factors identified as responsible for the shortcomings of reports and records of fatal incidents, while the final part of the

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paper concludes with remarks on the overall research findings.

In regard to methodology, a total of 160 questionnaires were circulated across a broad spectrum of residents in the three LGAs. Although not all respondents completed every aspect of the questionnaire, a total of 141 returned sufficient data to generate a matrix complete with figures and percentages. Questionnaires not containing key indices for analyses (causes and descriptions of violent incidents, numbers of fatalities) were separated to generate another set of tables in relation to the three LGAs. Therefore, the total number of respondents recorded in Table 1 does not necessarily match the total number of questionnaires distributed. It also does not provide a complete picture of the sample; however, it suggests that there was a much lower response rate from females than from males. This is not in any way a consequence of fewer women in the LGAs under review.

*Table 1: Demographics of respondents in Mopa-Muro, Igalamela-Odolu, and Toto LGAs*

<b>LGA</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Male</b>	<b>% Female</b>
Mopa-Muro	30	15	45	66.5%	33.5%
Igalamela-Odolu	28	18	46	60%	40%
Toto	30	20	50	66.5%	33.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>62.5%</b>	<b>37.5%</b>

Source: Fieldwork, August 2014 and June 2015.

Another challenge encountered in the study was that some questionnaires appeared to duplicate fatal incidents. When respondents presented nearly the same set of data, they also tended to give different fatality figures: such cases were addressed by taking the average of the fatalities recorded, since all other variables remained constant. Furthermore, there were instances where certain questionnaires presented different causes

for a single violent incident. Finally, the limitations of human memory limited the generation of data regarding the dates of violent occurrences during the period under review (from June 2006 to May 2014). Consequently, the tables presented for each of the three LGAs reflect only the year of incidents, not the days and months. In all, this study establishes that the overarching pattern of lethal violence in Kogi and Nasarawa has been generally underestimated in terms of its occurrence rate in rural areas and of the frequency of fatalities.

#### MOPA-MURO, IGALAMELA-ODOLU AND TOTO LGAS: AN OVERVIEW

Mopa-Muro and Igalamela-Odolu are among the 23 LGAs in Kogi State. Figures published by the National Population Commission (NPC) indicate that Mopa-Muro had 44,037 inhabitants at the 2006 census. The local government is part of the Okun-Yoruba people in the northern Yoruba region. With an area of 901 km<sup>2</sup> and its headquarters in Mopa, it has boundaries with Ijumu LGA in the south, Yagba-East in the west, and Kabba-Bunu in the north-east. For reasons that help to explain why violent incidents have received minimal attention from the media, it is important to note that Mopa-Muro LGA is situated in a remote part of the western senatorial district of Kogi State. Mopa-Muro has ten political wards: Okedagun/Okeguru, Adigbe, Ileteju, Ikeji Ijagbe, Ilai/Okagi/Ilemo, Amuro, Otafun, Orokere, Aiyeteju, and Aiyede. Mopa-Muro is also noted to have played an important role in regional politics. Thus, the late Chief Sunday Awoniyi hails from this LGA: he was a chairman of the Arewa consultative forum of northern elders and his son is the current Deputy Governor of the State.

As for Igalamela-Odolu Local Government Area, it is bordered by the Niger River in the west and Enugu State in the east. Its headquarters is in the town of Ajaka in the north. With an area of 2,175 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 148,020 inhabitants at the 2006 census, it has ten

wards: Avrugo, Ekwuloko, Odolu, Oji-Aji, Anpanya, Ajaka I, Ajaka II, Ubele, Oforachi I, and Oforachi II.

Like most LGAs in Kogi, Mopa-Muro and Igalamela-Odolu have their economies based on agriculture, particularly subsistence farming. Although attempts have been made by a number of state government authorities to stimulate mechanized agriculture, both LGAs exhibit a high level of relative and absolute poverty. Several crops are cultivated. The main ones include yam, maize, guinea corn, and cassava. Cattle grazing is not originally part of the local agriculture, except for the influx of Fulani pastors who, today, cause many conflicts in the study areas.

In terms of religion, Mopa-Muro is predominantly Christian and its inhabitants speak Yagba-Yoruba, while Igalamela-Odolu is predominantly Muslim, with Igala as their common language. The political landscape in Mopa-Muro, Igalamela-Odolu, and Toto has been quite competitive over the years. Besides conflicts related to cattle grazing, a considerable number of fatal incidents identified in the aforementioned LGAs are attributable to contestation between the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the four defunct parties that later merged to form the All Progressives Congress (APC): the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Another group involved in violence was the Democratic People's Party (DPP).

In Nasarawa State, Toto LGA lies far from the capital city and it is perceived by the media as unimportant. With headquarters in the town of Toto and an area of 2,903 km<sup>2</sup>, it had a population of 119,077 at the 2006 census. Most of its inhabitants are Muslims, while a minority adheres to Christianity or traditional religions. Politically, Toto LGA has 11 wards: Toto, Shafan-Kwoto, Shafan-Abakpa, Ujya, Kenyehu, Katakpa, Shege, Dausu,

Umasha, Karmo-Buga, and Kwaragwa. Subsistence farming and livestock production are widely practised in the area. However, the remote communities of the LGA are severely challenged by problems of accessibility, especially by car during the rainy season. Lack of road infrastructure hampers the possibility for farmers to market their harvests and explains the tendency for violent incidents to go unnoticed by the media and local authorities.

### VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN MOPA-MURO, IGALAMELA-ODOLU, AND TOTO LGAS

*Table 2: Fatal incidents in Mopa-Muro LGA*

S/N	Date	Community	Cause	Description	Fatalities
1	2006	Imela	Cattle grazing, Land issue	Fulani pastors vs Imela Farmers	4
2	2006	Amuro	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Amuro farmers	3
3	2006	Ilai	Cattle grazing, Land issue	Fulani pastors vs Ilai farmers	2
4	2007	Okagi	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Okagi farmers	3
5	2007	Mopa	Motor accident	Okada rider dies owing to bad road	1
6	2007	Ijagbe	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ijagbe farmers	2
7	2007	Otafun	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Otafun farmers	1
8	2007	Ogbom	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ogbom farmers	2

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9	2008	Mopa	Politics	Fight within a party	1
10	2008	Ijagbe	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ijagbe farmers	2
11	2008	Ogbom	Crime	Fulani pastors vs okada riders	2
12	2009	Okagi	Crime	Fulani armed robbers	2
13	2010	Mopa	Crime	Youth gangs drink and fight	2
14	2011	Mopa	Politics	Conflict between parties	2
15	2011	Mopa (Odde-Ileteju)	Politics	Conflict between parties	1
16	2012	Ijagbe	Crime	Fulani armed gang vs okada riders	2
17	2012	Imela	Crime	Fulani armed gang vs okada riders	2
18	2013	Ijagbe	Sorcery	Murder within the community	1
19	2014	Mopa	Sorcery	Murder within the community	1
20	2014	Mopa	Sorcery, Politics	Murder of LGA political appointee	1
21	2014	Ogbom	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ogbom farmers	2
22	2014	Mopa	Sorcery	Murder within the community	2

Source: Fieldwork, August 2014 and June 2015

Based on the data presented, there were at least 22 violent incidents that occurred in Mopa-Muro LGA between 2006 and 2014, resulting in a total number of 41

fatalities. These unreported incidents affected almost all the ten wards and communities within the LGA. The top three causes of violence were cattle grazing (21 fatalities), crime (8), and sorcery (6). Others were related to political conflicts (4) and motor accidents (2). Fulani cattle grazing also caused the greatest number of incidents in the study area.

*Table 3: Fatal incidents in Igalamela-Odolu LGA*

S/N	Date	Community	Cause	Description	Fatalities
1	2006	Ajaka	Cattle grazing, Land issue	Fulani pastors vs Ajaka farmers	3
2	2006	Avrugo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Avrugo farmers	3
3	2006	Ekwuloko	Sorcery	Cult societies	4
4	2007	Ubele	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ubele farmers	3
5	2007	Oforochi	Motor accident	Okada rider dies owing to bad road	1
6	2007	Ajaka	Political issue	n.d.	1
7	2007	Akpanya	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Akpanya farmers	1
8	2007	Ubele	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ubene farmers	2
9	2008	Odolu	Political issue	n.d.	1
10	2008	Akpanya	Cattle grazing	Akpanya vs Fulani	2
11	2008	Odolu	Crime	Fulani armed gang vs villagers	2
12	2009	Ollah	Crime	Fulani armed gang vs villagers	2

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13	2010	Ogugu	Political issue	Conflict between parties	2
14	2011	Okenya	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Okenya farmers	2
15	2011	Ugwogwo	Political issue	Within a party	1
16	2011	Abutu	Crime	Armed robbers vs Abutu villagers	2
17	2012	Ojegbe	Crime	Armed gangs vs Ojegbe villagers	2
18	2012	Umuchina	Sorcery	Murder	2
19	2012	Akolo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Akolo farmers	1
20	2012	Ejugwu	Sorcery, Political issue	Killing of a political appointee	1
21	2012	Okenya	Political issue	PDP vs ACN	2
22	2012	Ugwogwo	Political issue	PDP vs ACN	1
23	2013	Abutu	Crime	Armed robbers vs Abutu villagers	2
24	2013	Ojegbe	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ojegbe farmers	1
25	2013	Umuchina	Sorcery	Murder	1
26	2014	Akolo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Akolo farmers	1
27	2014	Ejugwu	Political issue	PDP vs ACN	1

28	2014	Ojegbe	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ojegbe farmers	1
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Source: Fieldwork, August 2014 and April 2015.

Based on the data presented, there were at least 28 violent incidents that occurred between 2006 and 2014, resulting in a total number of 48 fatalities. These unreported incidents affected almost all the ten wards and communities within Igalamela-Odolu LGA. The top three causes of violence were cattle grazing (20 fatalities), political conflicts (10), and crime (10). Others were sorcery (8) and motor accidents (1). Fulani cattle grazing also caused the greatest number of incidents in the study area.

*Table 4: Fatal incidents in Toto LGA*

S/N	Date	Community	Cause	Description	Fatalities
1	2006	Shafan	Land dispute	Intra-ethnic conflict between Kenyehu and Shafan	7
2	2006	Ujya	Land dispute	Intra-ethnic conflict	8
3	2006	Toto	Political issue	One female commissioner was killed as a result of conflict between parties	1
4	2006	Umasha	Land dispute	Fulani pastors vs Ujya farmers	3
5	2006	Nyomowo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Tiv farmers	3
6	2007	Toto	Land dispute	Fulani pastors vs Ebira farmers	3
7	2008	Ujya	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Ujya	4

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				farmers	
8	2008	Uttu	Political issue	Political parties conflict	2
9	2008	Kargama	Political issue	Within a party	2
10	2009	Umasha	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Nupe farmers	1
11	2009	Yelwa	Crime	Fulani vs Gbari	2
12	2009	Katakpa	Crime	Fulani vs Katakpa	3
13	2009	Jagaguke	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Katakpa farmers	2
14	2010	Lokogoma	Motor accident	Because of bad road	4
15	2010	Gbolokwo	Land grazing	Fulani vs Gbolokwo farmer	4
16	2010	Toto	Crime	Fulani armed gang vs okada riders	2
17	2011	Madeki	Crime	Fulani armed gang vs okada riders	2
18	2011	Kakoto	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Kakoto farmers	3
19	2011	Umafia	Cattle grazing	Within the community	1
20	2011	Adado	Land issue	Fulani pastors vs Adado farmers	3
21	2012	Karmo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Nupe farmers	2
22	2013	Dakete	Crime	Fulani vs Gbari	1

23	2013	Adado	Religious issue	A pastor was killed	1
24	2014	Nyomowo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Tiv farmers	1
25	2014	Umasha	Political issue	PDP vs APC	1
26	2014	Karmo	Cattle grazing	Fulani pastors vs Karmo farmers	1
27	2014	Adado	Political issue	PDP vs APC	1

Source: Fieldwork, August 2014 and April 2015.

Based on the data presented, there were at least 27 violent incidents that occurred in Toto LGA between 2006 and 2014, resulting in a total number of 68 fatalities. These unreported incidents affected almost all 11 wards and communities within the LGA. The top three causes of violence were land dispute (27 fatalities), cattle grazing (22), and crime (9). Others were political conflicts (7), ethnic clashes (1), motor accidents (4), and religious issues (1). Land disputes also caused the greatest number of incidents in the study area.

#### EXPLAINING REASONS FOR THE UNREPORTED VIOLENCE IN MOPA-MURO, IGALAMELA-ODOLU AND TOTO LGAS

Accounting for unreported violence in the three LGAs requires an understanding of a number of factors. First is the problem of access. Mopa-Muro, Igalamela-Odolu, and Toto LGAs of Kogi and Nasarawa states have been neglected in terms of infrastructure such as roads. For instance, the federal road leading from Aiyetoro through Mopa is in a terrible condition despite various pledges by the authorities to fix the problem and allocate billions of naira for repair. In Mopa-Muro and Igalamela-Odolu, findings thus show a complete absence of car accidents because of the lack of good tarred roads: only commercial motorbikes can pass to reach the most far-flung geographical communities of these places.

Moreover, both Mopa-Muro and Igalamela-Odolu are situated far from the capital city of Kogi State.

In this regard, another factor in the lack of reporting of cases of fatal violence is the perceived insensitivity of local government officials and the poor representation of rural communities in the political sphere. As they often prefer to migrate in search of economic opportunities in more cosmopolitan and industrial locations in the South, the people of these LGAs are not held in high regard by those accountable to them at the political level. This is reflected in the attitude of the media, who are not willing to spend money, time, and energy in reporting from such rural regions. According to informants, poor remuneration also hinders the capacity of journalists to go to places like Igalamela-Odolu and Mopa-Muro.

#### CONCLUSION

The data analysed for each of the three LGAs under review clearly shows a variety of factors accounting for fatal violence, including cattle grazing, political crisis, crime, and land disputes. Toto LGA in Nasarawa State recorded the highest number of fatalities (68), followed by Igalamela-Odolu (48), and Mopa-Muro (41). Worthy of note is that the overall data draws attention to an alarming level of lethal violence in oft-neglected rural areas. In light of the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in Borno, Kogi and Nasarawa states usually appear to be rather peaceful and stable, but the phenomenon of unreported fatal incidents remains a challenge to realistically assessing the situation.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABREVIATION

ACN	Action Congress of Nigeria
APC	All Progressives Congress
LGA	Local Government Area
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NPC	National Population Commission
PDP	People's Democratic Party