

**Terrorism and Incursion Into Homes : A Study of Selected Poems In Razaq Malik's *No Home In This Land***

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8321165>

**ABSTRACT**

In recent years, the world has witnessed an alarming surge in acts of terrorism and incursions targeting private residences. This act of aggression not only pose a grave threat to adults but also children. Women and children are victimized, subjecting them to various forms of dehumanization such as rape, force marriage, abduction and captivity. Terrorist activities disproportionately affect women and results into loss of tranquility and security a home should offer. This paper sets out to investigate the experiences of the victims and the aftermath effects it has on them, especially women and children as they are displaced and maltreated. Terrorist activities lead to bloodshed, homelessness, hunger, loss of lives and property, and wide spread diseases. This paper adopts a qualitative method. All information is drawn from the selected chapbook, articles, journals and the internet. The paper concludes that failure of the government to deal decisively with the menace is an indicator of poor political leadership and absence of good governance. It then recommends that the government should adopt a comprehensive policy to take immediate step(s) to strengthen and expand measures to protect women and children. A synergy should be formed with members of the international community in tackling insecurity and insurgency in Nigeria.

**Keywords: Abduction, Incursion of homes, Homelessness, Terrorist attacks, Victims**

## Introduction

Terrorism has emerged as critical global challenge in the contemporary world, profoundly impacting societies, governments, and international relations. The scourge of terrorism and the alarming rise of incursion into homes have had a profound impact on societies around the world. While acts of terrorism affect individuals from all walks of life, it is crucial to recognize the distinct vulnerabilities faced by mothers and children in these contexts. The violation of homes not only disrupts the fabric of communities but also inflicts unique physical, psychological, and social burdens on women and children, necessitating a specialized focus on understanding and addressing their experiences.

In conflicts, war and acts of terrorism, women and children are disproportionately affected, becoming victims of violence, forced displacement, sexual exploitation, and psychological trauma. The sanctity of the home, once considered a refuge, is shattered, leaving lasting scars on the lives of those who reside within. This study investigates the persistent terrorist attacks in Nigeria as depicted in Rasaq Malik's chapbook, *No Home In This Land*.

Some Nigerian Christian scholars and leaders have alleged that Islamic fundamentalists orchestrate the terrorism in the northern regions. They assert that the atrocities of the Islamic fundamentalists are attempts to Islamize Nigeria. Nonetheless, the study contends that women and children are the most affected by the violence. Apart from physical dissociates, the poet reveals that the terrorists' atrocities include religious disruption, forced migration, wanton death, sexual abuse, displacement amongst others. To further ascertain that homes are invaded restlessly, on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2021, armed bandits in their numbers invaded a community (called Igangan) in the dead of the night to unleash mayhem unexpectedly into civilian homes and claiming lives of women, children. This and many more had been experienced in the northern part of Nigeria.

## Statement of the problem

For terrorists to attract necessary publicity and to generate widespread fear, their locations are carefully selected for their shock value. These locations include schools, places of worship, shopping centers and the likes. It is, however, regrettable that the terrorists activities recently have so much developed such that homes are also targeted. This research then seeks to investigate the experiences of common man who is being invaded in their own homes as portrayed by Razaq Malik in his poems.

## Terrorism and Violence, a Twin Evil

FBI defines terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance

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of political or social objectives. Imhonopi and Urim (2016) stated that the African Union (AU) defined terrorism as any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any member or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage. Trosper (2009) defined terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. The United States Department of Defense defines it as the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.

Terrorism is an ancient ‘enemy’ with roots in many cultures and followers in many creeds. A war against such an enemy is unlikely to be quickly brought to a successful conclusion. Certainly, terrorism has been waged by a variety of individuals or groups. It has been a favourite tactic of national and religious groups, and internationalist movements. At times, it has been an instrument of last resort for movements of national liberation whose political attempts to change the system have failed. States have sponsored terrorism outside their own frontiers and have used terrorism as a weapon against their own citizens. Terrorism has become paradoxically, both an instrument designed to force radical social and political changes and an instrument of oppression in seeking to prevent certain changes (Combs, 2003, p.8). Terrorism is also ineluctably about power, the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change. Terrorism is thus violence or equally important, the threat of violence, used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim. Historically, the word “terrorism” was first popularized during French Revolution. In contrast to its contemporary usage, at that time, terrorism had a decidedly positive connotation. There is no consensus on the exact definition of terrorism. For many, terrorism is a form of political violence, which probably approximates to insurrection and rebellion leading to anarchy and political protest (Ukaogo, 2004, p. 96). For others, terrorism is simply a strategy and a process comprising several phases.

Several scholarly works have addressed the intricate relationship between violence and terrorism, offering diverse perspectives and analytical frameworks. Notable contributions include the research conducted by Hoffman (2006), who emphasizes the political objectives and strategic rationale that terrorists seek to achieve through acts of violence.

### **Causes of Violence and Terrorism in Nigeria**

The causes of terrorism has been discussed by many scholars. Khan (2012) has identified six factors which are central to the display of terrorism in a society as thus:

Firstly, when a person or a group is aggrieved, they could resort to terrorize the nation or another group to achieve their nationalist goals. Ethnic conflict may erupt from a complex combination of class, inequality, political opportunity, mobilization resources and "ethnic strength".

Secondly, poverty and economic disadvantage can be another major cause. A symmetry in the distribution of scarce resources and benefits within the state can push vulnerable groups to take up arms and unleash terror on a pathetic and complacent population. Also, many terrorist groups also have arisen out of the links they share with international terrorist organizations. Next is the absence of democracy. Democracy, in its truest form is expected to be a representative of the people's wishes and interests. Where this is not experienced, terrorism can arise. Another cause could be a reaction from disaffected intelligentsia. When rigid social stratification shatters hopes for social transformation, then the ingredient is present for a start or rise in terrorist activities in an attempt to reconnect with the masses who they claim to represent and aspire to lead. In addition, certain people are made to think that they are being dehumanized or marginalized. Such people are easily indoctrinated and swayed into believing that they need to fight to be recognized and treated as equal human beings in the society.

Lastly, terrorism has been seen as a vital instrument that can be used to spread a particular religious belief. They coerce other people to belief in their faith and most often, to secure territories. These factors could be applied to Nigerian situation.

### **A Review of Selected Poems in Rasaan Malik's *No Home In This Land***

Where is the home in this land? Perhaps to elucidate the plights of a common man in the northern part of the country, Rasaan Malik describes the predicaments of people in the north, in his Chapbook, *No Home in this Land*.

Four poems from the book shall be considered. These are:

“Leaving Home”(10)

“Counting Her Losses”(14)

“In this Village where every Dawn Begins With A funeral”(17)

“How To Mourn”(31)

Civilians have a lot of ugly experiences they have to share. Boko Haram insurgency has been a menace especially as homes are being targeted and making women and children vulnerable. In “Leaving Home”, the personae explicates the agony of a family who is bereaved as a result of the unprecedented experience of fatality the terrorists have left them with as a family. In the poem,

Malik describes home as a place of unrest, untimely death and a doomed location. People live in fear and cannot have a peaceful rest in their places of abode. This is evident in the poem's first stanza. He wrote:

... Like the remains of those who found  
No peace in their homelands;  
People fell like trees trapped by a gale, people who died in their sleep,  
Their hearts laden with fear, their mouths full  
of strange languages...(1.8)

In the second stanza, the poet describes how houses have become funeral parlours. He pointed:  
People who pray... as they remember the houses that became morgues.(1.21)

In line 1, stanza 2, the poet further laments the struggle of children for survival:

In the streets are orphans who scout for meals  
In the bellies of bins, children who search for love(p.10)  
The intractable menace of Boko Haram insurgency has defiled the peace of the land, resulting to the loss of millions of lives, properties and fear to nurse children

In "Counting Her Losses", the poet reveals that women and children suffer mostly during war or attack by the terrorists. Many children turn orphans while women become widows. Many women are also abducted. Apart from the fact that some die, those who claim to be alive are homeless, living like strangers in the land of their birth. The poet laments the anguish in stanza 1 and 2 thus:

My mother begins with the night we fled home  
Amid gunshots, the night we escaped the bokoharams  
To hide in an uncompleted building in Gamboru,...

My mother begins with the night we waited for a bus to ferry us  
to the refugee camp, the number of children orphaned by  
war, their mothers widowed by the blast, the people abandoned  
to carry the agony of homelessness like a cross...(Stanza 2)  
My mother begins with the soft bones of infants  
Crushed to death, the tender bodies of children splintered  
By missiles, the bullets on the roof of houses(14)

"In this Village where every Dawn Begins With A funeral" is another example where the inhumane nature of terrorists manifests as they attack children in their homes. He states that :

...The earth widens beneath feet,  
as people trace the footprints of lost beloved

with lanterns and returns to their huts to meet the mangled bodies of their children.(p17).

‘‘How To Mourn’’(p 31) also addresses emotional distress which individuals face when they lose loved ones and fear of their own death. The poet states:

How to mourn ...

begins with people buried underground , people shivering in beds as bullets rattle their windows, people watching as a boy’s breath fades in the smoke...(31).

According to Akinyele (2010), there is the need to bring the discussion of war and terrorism to the table and to the literary scene. Rasaan Malik uses his creative tool to spell out what war looks like and what it leaves behind in different homes in his debut *No Home In This Land*. Several other themes were raised by the poet which all affect the day-to-day life of the people in northern Nigeria.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the acts of terrorism and incursions into homes have far-reaching and devastating effects, particularly on children. These heinous acts create an environment of fear, instability, and violence, leaving a lasting impact on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the young ones. Children who experience or witness terrorist attacks often suffer from trauma, anxiety, and other mental health issues. The disruption of education due to attacks on schools deprives children of their fundamental right to learn and grow, hindering their personal development and future opportunities. Moreover, physical injuries and the loss of loved ones further compound the emotional toll on children, leading to feelings of grief, anger, and abandonment.

The displacement of families as a result of terrorism disrupts family life, forcing children into precarious situations as refugees or internally displaced persons. This displacement exposes them to overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions, lacking access to basic necessities and support networks. Additionally, terrorist groups may exploit vulnerable children, recruiting them into their ranks and perpetuating a cycle of violence and radicalization. Children affected by terrorism also face stigmatization and discrimination, further marginalizing them and impeding their social integration. It is imperative that comprehensive efforts are made to address the specific needs of these children, including providing psychosocial support, trauma counseling, education, and protection services. Creating safe environments where children can heal, rebuild, and regain a sense of normalcy is crucial.

## Recommendations

In combating terrorism and incursions into homes, the following recommendations are made:

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- (a) The government should work with communities and international organizations so as to know the root causes of violence and terrorist acts.
- (b) The government should promote peace building initiatives, and ensure security and stability.
- (c) the government should make sure there is access to justice and ensure accountability for all abuses and violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, regardless of the position or rank of the perpetrator.
- (d) there should be adequate and systematic collection of information on missing and deceased persons, including the development of a database.

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