

Faith-Based Humanitarian Intervention: The Catholic Church and the Biafran Refugee Crisis during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970

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Abstract : The Nigerian civil war was one of the foremost postcolonial conflicts in West Africa that attracted a serious humanitarian problem due to an unprecedented refugee crisis that affected the Biafran region. Due to its geographical location, the Nigerian government used blockades and starvation as a weapon of war against the Biafran. Faced with strong opposition from the Nigerian government, most humanitarian organizations withdrew their support from Biafra, whose death toll was rapidly growing daily due to starvation, malnutrition, and chronic ailment. Thus, the Catholic Church, a major Christian denomination in Biafra, had to see it as its religious obligation to support the humanitarian needs of the Biafrans. Thus, applying oral history methods with archival research, this paper examines the humanitarian activities of the Catholic Church in the Nigerian civil war. It contends that the Catholic Church was a key player in the humanitarian aspect of the Nigerian civil war. The paper concludes that faith-based humanitarian intervention in the Biafran refugee crisis was essential for the survival of the Biafran war-stricken women and children.

Keywords : refugee crisis, humanitarian intervention, Caritas International, blockades, airlifts, starvation

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