



HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AND POLICE BRUTALITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Human rights violations are prevalent in Nigeria. Such human rights abuses include torture, kidnappings, rape, extra-judicial killings, and other dehumanizing treatments. This study explores the human right abuse by Nigerian police Force. This paper makes use of both primary and secondary sources. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) constitute the primary sources, while information from books, journals, Newspapers and the internet constitutes the secondary sources. The paper uses descriptive analysis to drive home its point that it is long overdue for the Nigerian state to curb human rights abuses. Findings show that in Nigeria, the police, especially the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit, has been involved in degrading treatment of citizens, particularly the youths. This led to the #EndSARS protest of October 2020. This paper highlights that the demands made by #EndSARS protesters resonated with the everyday experience of ordinary Nigerians at the hands of the police. Additional findings also show that beyond the call for the reformation of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which has not been adequately achieved till now, the need for socio-economic transformation and good governance in the country remains an uncompromising priority. The paper argues that any sane civic space accommodates protest and sees it as an opportunity to footnote and address the concerns of the masses. Thus, the paper views the attack on protesters as outlandish. To this effect, the paper argues that when impunity adorns itself as the rule of law and human rights become a mockery of unimaginable dimension, then we can be assured that perpetrators of torture as well as killings will go unpunished.

Keywords: Human rights, Police, #EndSARS, Brutality, Good governance

Introduction

Human rights abuses in Nigeria have a long history. This sad reality has remained a recurring decimal both during the military regime as well as the democratic era. The purveyors of human rights abuses include the security agencies who are supposed to be protecting the citizens. In Nigeria, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has been accused of these incessant human rights abuses, which range from arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention and torture, extrajudicial killings, to crass extortion of Nigerian citizens (Malumfashi, 2020). These abuses are largely responsible for the unimpressive human rights record that Nigeria has. No segment of the Nigerian population has been spared from police brutality and human rights abuse.

However, it is arguable that the youth are the worst-hit victims of human rights abuses from the SARS unit of the Nigeria police force. According to Ekwunife *et al.* (2021), contrary to the fiat setting up



its *modus operandi*, SARS officers have been alleged to profile young Nigerians, mostly males, based on dressing, wearing tattoos on their bodies, and putting on hairstyles that may not appear normal for males, especially young boys. Reporting on this, Maradun *et al.* (2021, p. 70) note that “the Nigerian youth commenced on a peaceful protest on October 3rd 2020 captioned #EndSARS to demand the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), as well as other reforms in the Nigerian Police Force (NPF).” The youth used the hashtag to voice out their experiences of violence and assault perpetrated by the SARS unit.

The protest was caused by a video of police officers, thought to be members of the SARS unit, allegedly killing a young man in Delta State in early October. This ignited widespread protests and caused the #endSARS hashtag to go viral on social media, creating global attention to a long-standing problem. Aicher (2010, p. 1) laments that “people are dying at the hands of police officers. Torture routinely takes the place of proper investigation, and rape seems to be commonplace when the police arrest vulnerable women. Overall, the police in Nigeria are more likely to commit crimes than to prevent them.”

The EndSARS movement reverberated with a lot of Nigerians because SARS represented everything they were disgruntled with about the state of governance in the country (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020). Prompted by this dissatisfaction, Nigerian youths trooped to Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms, calling on the Federal Government to ensure police reform with the hashtags #EndSARS, #End police brutality, # Buhari must resign, #End bad governance, and many more (Maradun *et al.*, 2021). The demonstration that started peacefully by the youth deteriorated into anarchy.

There is emerging polemics as to whether the EndSARS event was a protest or a demonstration. For instance, participants at a focus group discussion in the Maitama axis of Abuja debated along dividing lines as to whether the protest was indeed a demonstration or not. However, it is observed that this sort of argument can better be settled by critically examining the concepts. Regarding demonstration and protest, Silva (2015) argues that such a splitting polemic is unnecessary and at best diversionary. Thus, he concludes that “both demonstration and protest are probabilities of advocating for effecting positive outcomes” (p.30). In a related development, Casquete (2006, p. 46) argues that “a widely agreed assumption in the sociology of collective action, fostering a sustained commitment among participants in a social movement appears to be an unavoidable precondition for it to form, develop, and eventually enjoy some impact.” And this is what exactly demonstration or protest seeks to achieve.

Casquete (2006) opines that together with strikes, civil disobedience, and petitions, demonstrations are the major protest forms that social movements have at their disposal nowadays to make themselves known to society. According to Tilly (1995, p. 373), “demonstration is a specific and autonomous form of action that was first born in Great Britain after 1815.” A few years later, precisely during the 1830s, demonstration made its entrance into France, although in this latter case it only turned out to be a regular way of making public claims with the independent wave of 1848. Kymlicka (2002, p. 56) describes protest as “a political expressible, collective gathering in a public place.” For #EndSARS protest in Nigeria, the displeasure remains the human rights abuses, especially of the youth.



The protesters made the following five demands on the 11th of October 2020: (a) The immediate release of all arrested protesters in Nigeria (b) Justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and compensation to their families (c) Setting up an independent panel of inquiry within 10 days that would oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct in Nigeria (d) In line with the Police Act, psychological evaluation and retraining of all disbanded SARS officers before they can be redeployed (e) And finally, increase police salary so that they are adequately compensated for protecting lives and property of the citizens (Vanguard News, 2020). An analysis of the demands reveals that the protesters had a broader view of socio-economic empowerment of the police than the hashtag could convey. However, was this understood properly and interpreted by the Nigerian government? This question is what the next section will attempt to answer.

Human Rights, Protest and Social Protest: A Brief Conceptual Overview

The definition of human rights is a contentious issue. It is against this background that Nwagbara (2015, p. 66) says that “there is considerable disagreement about what is precisely meant by the term human right.” This notwithstanding, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016, p. 19) says that “human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. They define relationships between individuals and power structures, especially the State. Human rights delimit State power and, at the same time, require States to take positive measures ensuring an environment that enables all people to enjoy their human rights.”

The concept of human rights is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on December 10th, 1948, and is based on the idea of human dignity and worth inherent in the person, and the principle that the human person is the central subject of human rights and fundamental freedoms (Edwin and Claire de, 2011). The Declaration proclaimed that inherent and inalienable rights are not the privilege of a few but belong to all, irrespective of race, sex, culture, language, religion, or belief. Isaac (2005, p. 2) opines that human rights “also include civil rights (such as the right to life, and freedom from torture), basic political rights (freedom of expression and association) and economic and social rights (rights to work and to education). Therefore, the question of what human rights are emerged.”

Henry David Thoreau is one of the first philosophers known to use the term human rights, and did so in his treatise, *Civil Disobedience*. Isaac (2005) says that this work has been extremely influential on individuals as different as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King. Horrifying experiences during the Second World War, especially the holocaust, led Western countries and many developing nations to emphasize human rights in the postwar period. It needs to be emphasized that human rights are inalienable rights. Such rights include right to life, education, protection, shelter, protest among others.

However, the right to protest came under attack during the EndSARS protest. Suffice to ask at this juncture, what is protest? Literature is replete with definitions of the term protest. However, for this paper, protest is understood as mass action targeted at bringing about social change. Globally, protests are now a new phenomenon. This is because protests date back to antiquity. Commenting on global protests, Schiffin and Kircher-Allen (2012) say that it happened in 1830–1848, in 1917–1924, in the 1960s, and it is happening again today. This shows that it is not new that the world is shaken by protests. It is probably against this background that Colm (1931, p. 358) asserts “the action of the mass is an alarm bell of history.”



Nigeria has experienced almost three decades of military rule from 1970 to 1999. During this period, there were different protests and riots. For instance, the economic riots of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) era of the 1980s and 1990s (Shettima, 1993). According to Archibong *et al.* (2022), the poor economic conditions sparked several university student- and labor union-led protests.

According to Chenoweth *et al.* (2022), protests—and government responsiveness to them—are often seen as a critical part of a healthy democracy (p.1). Chenoweth *et al.* (2022) further explain that protests can highlight opinions that are reasonably aligned with mainstream views but are overlooked because they are pertinent to small or specific groups. Alternatively, protests can be a way for citizens to express views that are misaligned with the mainstream; indeed, protesters are often characterized as extremists with fringe views.

Protests are geared towards a purpose that a single individual will not be able to achieve. Thus, Clement (2016) observes:

The actions and intentions of a large group of people who find themselves resisting the normal atmosphere of compliance with the rules and methods set by society's ruling institutions are important because it is a collective statement. It comes out of people's interdependence—their reliance on each other's support in stressful situations of extreme injustice and blatant disrespect (p.2-3).

The fact that protests are mass actions, it therefore underscores that protests are social in nature. Explaining further, Hari (2014, p. 33) says that:

Social protest in the form of general strikes and mass demonstrations has always been employed by activist and union leaders to press home their demands and grievances in protest against social malaise such as high cost of living, poverty, unemployment, corruption and repressive military rule in Nigeria since independence from Britain.

Social protest is not a perpetuated crowd, since a crowd does not possess organizational and motivational mechanisms capable of sustaining membership through periods of inaction and waiting, which are typical characteristics of social movements.

Smelser *et al.* (2020) observe that all definitions of social movement reflect the notion that social movements are intrinsically related to social change. They do not encompass the activities of people as members of stable social groups with established, unquestioned structures, norms, and values. The behaviour of members of social movements does not reflect the assumption that the social order will continue essentially as it is. It reflects, instead, the faith that people collectively can bring about or prevent social change if they will dedicate themselves to the pursuit of a goal. Uncommitted observers may regard these goals as illusions, but to the members they are hopes that are quite capable of realization.

Ephemeral Antiquity of Socio-Political Protests in Nigeria

The history of socio-political protests predates the birth of Nigeria. According to Maradun *et al.*, (2021, p. 69), “social protest in Nigeria is dated back to the pro-independence movement of the colonial period. The movements later transformed into early political parties and their leaders in the new post-independence political elites.” The implication is that socio-political protests were tools that Africans used in bargaining for independence and good governance. Affirming this, Hari (2014, p.



34) notes “the tradition of social protest in Nigeria is rooted in the pro-independent movement of the colonial era. It is these movements that have later metamorphosed into early political parties, and their leaders transformed into the new post-independence political elites.”

Reinforcing the above view, Mochizuki (2009, p. 208) avers that:

The youth movements of the African colonies emerged and grew within the era of nationalism. Starting from the early resistance and protest movements directed against colonial authorities, nationalist thought and activity developed throughout the twentieth century and up to the independence era...

They focused on mobilizing racial awareness and national consciousness, especially in the cities. The youth were the most vibrant agents in colonial politics. Mochizuki (2009) explains that in many West African countries, youth action led the independence movement. Such movements included students and scholars; both groups uphold social change and development.

In recent times, socio-political protests have taken a new approach. The novel tactic is the use of social media, as experienced during two major protests witnessed since Nigeria returned to multi-party democracy in 1999. The protests in question are Occupy Nigeria of 2012 and the EndSARS of 2020. In all the protests, the reaction of the Nigerian state has been that of using the police against the protesters, which often leads to abuse of human rights.

A civil rights activist and scholar, Aborishade (2012), explains that the approaches used by the Nigerian state in suppressing social protests are characterized by brutality. According to him:

Policing of protests by the state in Nigeria is done largely by relying on physical and non-physical violent control strategies. The former strategy involves using direct physical force on protesters, including the employment of poisonous tear-gas, harassment, arrest, detention, torture and all kinds of inhuman treatment. The non-physical strategy involves the use of draconian laws, rules and regulations which hinder the free exercise of universally recognized fundamental rights of assembly and action (p. 4).

The response of the Nigerian state to these protests is characterized by violent suppression (HRW, 1995) and police cruelty, which often lead to the deaths of protesters and the incarceration of the leaders of the protest. This is not different from what occurred during the military junta era where protest leaders were arbitrarily detained and tortured. In order to suppress protests, pressure groups such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), were proscribed.

Brief Synopsis of Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad, popularly christened as SARS, was a specialized unit of the NPF set up in 1992 in Lagos. Iwuoha and Anieche (2021) explain that the main objective of SARS was “to fight all forms of violent crimes, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry” among other forms of crime and criminalities. Buttressing the above, Amnesty International (2002, p.15) says that “the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) is an elite group within the police force created during the time of military government mainly to combat armed robbery and deployed in the main cities of Nigeria. The group is part of the Nigeria Police Force under the command of the Inspector General of the Police.”

The establishment of SARS became inevitable considering the growing number of robberies and theft, which constituted the largest category of crimes in the early 1990s. For instance, crime data



increased from 244,354 in 1991 to 289,156 in 1993 (Amnesty International, 2002). More encouraging is the revelation from the research conducted by Cleen 2019; Cleen, 2003, which is cited in UK Essays (2018) that validates the contribution of SARS to crime reduction. For instance, the research by Cleen shows that the formation of the SARS in 1992 contributed to significant crime reduction in the period from 289,156 in 1993 to 241,091 in 1994, and 167,492 in 1999.

However, Iwuoha and Anichie (2021) observe that over time, SARS began to go outside the limits of its duties by arresting those who are suspected to be involved in non-violent crimes such as financial and economic fraud, which is under the domain of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). Commenting on the excesses of SARS, Amnesty International (2002, p. 15) laments that “allegations of extrajudicial executions in the stations of SARS all over Nigeria have sharply increased in 2001 and 2002.”

In June 2020 report by Amnesty International, it noted that people in SARS custody were ‘subjected to a variety of methods of torture including hanging, mock execution, beating, punching and kicking, burning with cigarettes, waterboarding, near-asphyxiation with plastic bags, forcing detainees to assume stressful bodily positions and sexual violence’ (Amnesty International, 2020, n.p. 7).

The Police and Human Rights Abuse in the Political Evolution of Nigeria

Police brutality and vicious abuse of human rights are a sad badge of continued colonial legacies in Nigeria. A brief exposé of Nigeria's political evolution will unearth this sad reality. A concise history of Nigeria reveals that before the advent of colonial rule, Nigeria existed as a conglomeration of hundreds of ethnic nationalities. When the British arrived for what a school of thought refers to as ‘the most humane and worst exploitative engagement’, they used the police and brutally forced the varying ethnic nationalities into two political blocks: the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. The two blocks were later amalgamated as a single political unit in 1914 (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000).

The control of each of the constituent nationalities witnessed the formation of a police force or constabulary for the territory. This practice of local and multiple local police forces continued throughout the colonial period. This explains why Alemika and Chukwuma (2000, p. 15) are of the view that “the colonial police were a general utility force”. By 1900, there were regional police forces, repressing dissent and ‘providing’ security. Due to significant political events, the need for a national police force was inevitable; thus, the Nigeria Police Force was instituted. It is the same Nigeria Police Force that has remained since the country’s independence on 1st October 1960.

It is important to observe that, whether at the local, regional, or national levels, the police force has been viewed by many as a tool of oppression, suppression, and subjugation. These views are predicated on the varying roles of the police. Lamenting this, Tamuno (1970) says that the British colonial government instituted police forces in the territory and organised them as constabulary and paramilitary forces. The Forces were employed in different colonial wars and punitive missions. They were also used in sustaining the exploitation and suppression of labour. Furthermore, Tamuno (1970) discloses that “in some of these cases, the police used batons, rifles and revolvers to suppress, maim and kill persons who opposed colonial rule and policies” (p. 220).

Evidence abounds and is indicative of the fact that the regular use of police to break strikes led to the slaughtering of twenty-one miners and fifty wounded workers during the Enugu colliery strike in 1949. In a related development, the military and police were deployed to suppress the women’s riot



(December 1929 - January 1930) in the Eastern parts of the territory by the Colonial Government, leading to the death of fifty-five women and serious injury to more than fifty women (Tamuno, 1970).

Stating further, Tamuno (1970, p. 238) hints that “the police action to quell the Tiv riot of 1960, by official estimate, led to the killing of 19 civilians, while 83 were injured”. These instances point to the fact that the police forces in colonial Nigeria used violence in the upholding of colonial operation and domination. In the words of Alemika (1988, p. 165) “colonial police forces [in Nigeria] were organised and oriented to behave as occupation forces - ruthless, brutal, corrupt, dishonest and prone to brutalising the colonised peoples and vandalising their properties”. Thus, police violence was prevalent and entrenched during colonial rule. This, according to Alemika and Chukwuma (2000, p. 19), “is because colonialism rests on political and economic violence. Generally, police violence thrives under dictatorial political systems and exploitative economic relations. Colonialism is an embodiment of both, hence the pervasive incidence of police violence in colonial Nigeria”.

Police violence did not end with Nigeria’s independence. Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) affirm that Nigeria currently has a centralised police force- the Nigeria Police Force, established in 1930. This was as a result of the dissolution of local police forces in 1966. The 1979 and 1999 constitutions explicitly prohibited the establishment of police forces other than the Nigeria Police Force. Section 214(1) stipulates that “there shall be a Police Force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other police.

The functions of the Nigeria Police Force are the maintenance of law and order in society. However, human rights violations by the police is worrisome. In Nigeria, there is the Police Act for the management of the Nigeria Police Force. The Act stipulates that the Police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are charged (FRN Police Act 1990: Section 4). However, in carrying out these functions, the police sometimes resort to violence and brutality. The most common forms of abuse meted out by the police to detainees in police custody include: beatings with metal rods, sticks, planks, and horsewhip (*koboko*). The police also engage in the tying of arms and legs of detainees, spraying of tear gas on the faces of victims, electric shock, the use of death threats, shooting of victims in the leg or foot, and other acts meant to inflict utmost pain on their victims (Amusan and Saka, 2018, p.110). This runs contrary to the international instruments that Nigeria is a signatory to. The Nigerian Constitution protects human dignity and scowls at torture and other cruel treatments (FRN 1999).

Alderson (1979, xi) advocates that:

The police should contribute towards liberty, equality and fraternity... help reconcile freedom with security and to uphold the rule of law... facilitate human dignity through upholding and protecting human rights and pursuit of happiness... provide leadership and participation in dispelling crimogenic social conditions... contribute towards the creation or reinforcement of trust in communities... strengthen the security of persons and property and the feeling of security of persons... investigate, detect and activate the prosecution of offences, within the rule of law... facilitate free passage and movement on highways and roads and on streets and avenues open to public passage ... curb public disorder... deal with major and minor crises and to help and advise those in distress, where necessary activating other agencies.

While other scholars point out that the aforementioned roles of the police are at best utopian, others insist that the roles underpin the fabric of social harmony and peace.



However, there is palpable dissatisfaction with the existential role of the police in Nigeria. For instance, some feel the police serve the interests of those in authority, and do this often to the detriment of the masses. It is against this background that the Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crises (1982, p. 12) observes that “the main function of the police has been to protect the property and wellbeing of those who benefit most from an economy based on the extraction of private profit. The police were created primarily in response to rioting and disorder directed against oppressive working and living conditions”. Put in another way, Brodgen (1982, p. 203) says that “police forces are structured, organizationally and ideologically to act against the marginal strata”.

The foregoing resonates with the social conflict theorists, who focus on the oppressive aspects of police work in a society characterized by class conflict, underlined by unequal economic and power relations among groups in society. Alemika and Chukwuma (2000, p.12) point out that the social conflict theorists’ views explain why the poor and the powerless are more likely to be victims of police violence than the elite are. But police must understand that their role is not limited to repression. They further noted that no government governs by repression alone, precisely because this renders governance unstable, expensive and unacceptable.

From an existential perspective, Alemika (1993, p. 59) argues that;

Police work embodies ironies. Police are an instrument of oppression and exploitation in totalitarian and unjust social systems. Yet they are essential to the preservation of justice and democracy... The police are guardians of social order. As an institution, the police force helps to preserve, fortify and reproduce the prevailing social order, and is hardly a catalyst for its change. Thus, when a social order is oppressive, exploitative and unjust, the police preserve it by suppressing and defusing demand for democracy and elimination of oppression and injustices. Similarly, in a democratic, just and equitable society, police have greater chances of serving as vanguard for social democracy, human rights and socio-economic justice.

However, the preservation of human rights and social justice is not the case in Nigeria. For instance, at the Lekki toll gate, which was the epicenter of the EndSARS protest, human rights were under siege and eventually this snowballed into a massacre when many protesters were shot dead. The Nigerian army and police killed 12 peaceful protesters in Lagos on 20 October 2020 (Ekwunife *et al.*, 2021). Following the events of the EndSARS protest, Lakemfa (2015, p. 10) noted that “the Nigerian people were angry, and they showed it; they demonstrated that sovereignty belongs to the people from whom all power flows, they reasserted it; they displayed that the country belongs to the people and not to the government in power” or their police and military. Even to this day, police brutality has not ended.

Response by the Nigerian Government to the EndSARS Protest: Proactive or Reactive?

Within a few days of renewed protest, on October 11, 2020, the Nigerian Police Force announced that it was disbanding the unit instantly. The action was widely received as a victory of the demonstrators (Al Jazeera 2020). In some cities across the country, a curfew was imposed to calm the violent nature of an initially peaceful protest. It is still debatable whether the violent nature that the protest took was not a manipulation by the political elites to sabotage the demonstration.

SARS was known to mount unlawful roadblocks, carry out unnecessary stop-and-search, arrest and detain without warrant or trial, rape women, and extort young male Nigerians for driving exotic cars and using laptops and costly phones such as iPhones (Kazeem 2020). In reaction to the protest, SARS



was disbanded, though without punishment meted out to anyone, even in instances where culpability was very obvious.

Part of the government's response was the setting up of judicial panels of inquiry to investigate the alleged atrocities of SARS. Vanguard (2021) reports that as of December, 28 states, comprising Abia, Adamawa, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Ondo, Osun, Plateau and Rivers, have submitted their reports on the EndSARS protest. Punch (2021) reveals that Oyo, Ogun and Taraba states were yet to submit their reports. Meanwhile, there were no panels of Inquiry set up in Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states. Meanwhile, even in places where the reports of the panels are submitted, there is a general outcry of delay compensation of victims, no admission of culpability by the police and thus, the hope for accountability is bleak.

The panic or reactionary actions of the Nigerian government must have been learned from the experiences of other countries regarding social media-based mobilization of protest. For instance, the happenings in Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and Yemen are quite provocative or fascinating as to how social media technology users are a catalyst for mass mobilization Maradun *et al.*, 2021, p. 72). Social media was also effective in its usage in ejecting President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines and Jose Maria Aznar, the former Prime Minister of Spain (Maradun *et al.*, 2021, p. 72).

Looking at the role of social media in the Arab world, popularly known as the Arab Spring, Khamis and Vaughn (2011), cited in Maradun *et al.* (2021, p. 71), observed "that most of user-generated news is spread using social media like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. These media facilitate peer-to-peer communication among users who use them to publish ideas to other people". They also noted that the internet is one of the most prominent ways by which public opinions can be shaped, as it defies all boundaries and governmental media censorship. The conveners of the EndSARS protest were not in any way doubtful about the power of social media and therefore deployed it effectively. The protesters were proactive in using social media, while the government, on the other hand, was reactive.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following are recommended.

- 1) There is a need to overhaul the operational mandate of any police unit set up to replace SARS.
- 2) There is a need to emphasize the difference between policing and bullying during the training of the police.
- 3) Good governance should be entrenched in Nigeria as a matter of urgency.
- 4) Human rights are inalienable and therefore should not be subjected to any repression. Anybody found wanting should face the law.
- 5) The recommendations of the different panels that have investigated the EndSARS protest should be implemented. Culprits should be punished, which will also serve as deterrent.
- 6) The Nigerian state has signed international treaties and conventions that are meant to protect the rights and civil liberties of the people. Therefore, onus is on the state implement.

Conclusion

Nigeria Police Force is charged with the protection of the citizens and maintenance of law and order in the country. However, the police are responsible for many human rights abuses in the country. In Nigeria, human rights abuses by the police range from arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention and degrading treatment of alleged criminals and extrajudicial executions of Nigerian citizens. These



inhuman treatments were largely carried out by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) branch of the Nigeria Police Force. SARS was established to investigate and prosecute people involved in violent crimes. Most times rather than carrying out their duties as stipulated, they started targeting mainly the youth, extorting money from them and sometimes detaining them illegally and subjecting them to dehumanizing treatment.

This led to complaints and anger among the populace, culminating in recent protests carried out in Nigeria known as #EndSARS and police brutality. The youths also requested good governance in Nigeria. Good governance has been a panacea to uprising. Good governance has remained largely a mirage in Nigeria. It is obvious that protest has always been a weapon and a tool for demanding liberation and social justice. Unlike in the past, the use of social media platforms for galvanizing support is not only gaining currency but also adding a new dimension to protests. The right to self-expression is fundamental. Thus, citizens shall continue to make use of this right whenever their welfare and well-being are no longer guaranteed. The #EndSARS protest is over three years old now. However, the concerns that gave birth to the protest persist in different dimensions. This is not good for citizens' wellbeing and welfare. It is also an aberration to democratic tenets.

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