

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

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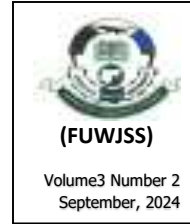
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Abstract

The problem of persistent violations of human rights in Nigeria has impeded the nation's effort at democracy. Numerous cases of unlawful arrest, detention, torture, rape, extortion, and extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian security forces, have eroded public trust in the government's commitment to human rights protection, spread social injustice, weaken the rule of law, create an atmosphere conducive to authoritarianism, and decrease citizen participation in democratic processes. The multitude of electoral violence, voter intimidation, and harassment have raised concerns about the integrity of Nigeria's democratic processes. Various reports of political thugs disrupting elections, attacking opposition supporters, and the suppression of freedom of expression which hinders the free flow of information have battered public confidence in Nigeria's electoral system. This paper explores the connection between violations of human rights and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Methodologically, the paper employs structural violence theory as its framework of analysis and depended on the documentary method of data collection by utilizing secondary sources. Data generated for the paper were analyzed through content analysis. It was found in this study that human rights violations in Nigeria create an environment of fear and intimidation, which make it difficult for people to participate in political processes, such as voting or protesting against the anti-democratic policy of the government. The paper recommended among other things, the protection and promotion of human rights in Nigeria to nurture an environment favorable for democratic consolidation, where citizens' rights and freedoms are appreciated, and democratic values are sustained.

Keywords: Democracy, human rights, violations, arbitrary, detention, extra-judicial killing

Introduction

Nigeria as a new nation-state, has been plagued with many challenges in its pursuit to consolidate democracy while protecting human rights. This is because Nigeria's journey toward democracy has been turbulent, marked by periods of military rule and authoritarianism. Thus, the transition to civilian rule in 1999 paved the way for democratic institutions and processes to take root. However, persistent violations of human rights have impeded the consolidation of democracy in the nation. Cases of extrajudicial killings by the Nigerian security forces, such as the Police Force and the military, have undermined public trust in the government's commitment to human rights. The Nigerian military's involvement in the suppression of the Boko Haram insurgency, for example, has been marred by allegations of human rights abuses, including unlawful detentions and torture (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Similarly, the multitude of election fierceness, voter fear, and pestering have raised concerns about the integrity of Nigeria's democratic processes. Reports of political thugs disrupting elections and attacking opposition supporters, have eroded public confidence in the country's electoral system (Amnesty International, 2019). The Nigerian State has a notoriety for suppression of freedom of expression by targeting journalists, bloggers, and activists critical of the government. Journalists have faced harassment, arbitrary arrests, and even physical attacks for reporting on sensitive issues, hindering the free flow of information (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2022).

Again, the establishment of legislation to regulate social media in Nigeria such as the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 (CAMA) which was signed into law by former President Muhammadu Buhari to compress civil liberty and place regulations on Civil Liberty Group has raised concerns about censorship and potential infringements on citizens' freedom of expression. Furthermore, the prohibition on Twitter operations in 2021 following the removal of a government tweet flickered international condemnation and highlighted the challenges faced in balancing free speech and national security concerns (Amnesty International, 2021). The tenacity of violations of citizens' rights by the Nigerian state is evidence that Nigeria lacks moral coherence to stimulate her citizens (Onubogu, 2020). Although the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was

ratified in 1948 is followed by different regional and global conventions and treaties such as the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ratified in 1993, UN Treaty against Torture, and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment that seek to forbid disregard to citizens' rights and to encourage human rights standard across the globe (Amnesty International, 2019). However, in War times, especially during the civil war, many citizens' rights are violated either by states or militarized non-state actors (Joseph, 2017). Therefore, a state is either intentionally involves in violations of human rights directly or indirectly due to the failure of such a state to forestall the infringement (Sanders, 2018). In light of this, a state is involved in violations of humans which can be violent in nature like police barbarism, or non-violence violation such as denial of a fair trial through state actors like public prosecutors, police, and judges. Similarly, a state also violates the fundamental rights of its citizens in terms of conflict between individuals or groups in a society and such a state fails to intervene and protect its assailable citizens (Sanders, 2018). Thus, according to the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2016), human rights are those rights implicit to man that specify the people's relation to state power structures by specifying a state power and requiring a state to guaranteeing such rights.

Accordingly, Umzurike (2007) sees human rights as the internally recognized rights that belong to mankind by the virtual of humanity. On the other hand, Consolidation of democracy refers to the process of preventing disruption of democracy, the building of a strong democratic institution, the degree of democracy, and the transition of democratic power (Omenma et al, 2017). Consolidation of democracy as a process is often associated with a representative regime that prevents all likely elements leading to a disruption of or getting rid of all danger that will probably result in the collapse of democracy. Tukura and Tukura (2020) describe the consolidation of democracy as a point in time in which democracy is perceived as the best form of government. What this means, therefore, is that consolidation of democracy advocates the survival and stability of democratic norms, sustainability, and tenaciousness of democracy. This perspective is connected to "democratic survival" or avoiding a change of state to non-democracy. However, the prevention of human

rights violations in any democratic system remained a challenging task for many Third World countries including Nigeria (Joseph, 2017). Therefore, this paper aims to explore the relationship between violations of human rights and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria between the periods under review, highlighting key incidents and their implications. By analyzing relevant events and providing empirically verifiable evidence, this paper sheds light on the complex interplay between human rights and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Origins of Fundamental Human Rights

Here, significant efforts are exhausted on different views on human rights which include the effort to explicate the origins or roots of fundamental human rights and hence leading to the growth of theories of human rights which include, idealist theory, legal rights theory, natural rights theory, and social welfare rights theory among others to explain the development of human rights (Tukura & Tukura, 2019). The natural rights theory submits that rights belong to man by nature; hence, the universe is the source of definite rights which have a general, coherent, permanent, and changeless attribute. Leading exponents of the natural theory such as Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke argued that natural rights are coherently inferential from human existence, and are generally applicable to all mankind regardless of the differences in time and space. John Locke (1960 cited in Tukura & Tukura, 2019) identified three categories of rights relating to natural rights which include rights to life, liberty, and rights to own property.

The legal rights theory otherwise known as the positive theory of rights perceives rights in the status of state power. Proponents of the legal rights theory such as Bentham and Austin quoted in (Hart, 1961) argue that human rights are relative and not ordained from creation as theorists of natural rights would want to make us believe. For them, rights are a creation of the legal instrument of the state, and therefore, the rights can only originate from the law of the state. Austin (in Hart, 1961) on his part, argues that right be they natural, legitimate, or moralistic, rest exclusively on a legal framework of the state which is a guarantor of rights (Tukura & Tukura, 2019). On the other hand, the idealist rights theory otherwise known as the theory of personality theory disagrees with the arguments of natural and legal rights theories on the sources and origins of human rights by asserting that

rights are neither ordained by nature nor the creation of the legal instrument of the state as argued by both the natural and legal rights theories. The idealist rights theory submits that human rights are those rights that are indispensable to support the substantial conditions which are necessary for the being and improvement of the human person (Tukura & Tukura, 2019). The idealist rights theory further argues that without rights, it will be difficult if not impossible for man to be self-actualized. The leading proponents of the idealist rights theory such as Krause and Hegel (cited in Johari, 2006) posited that human rights are not apparent in the legal instrument of the state but subsist in societal awareness. Therefore, to battle for the legal aspect of rights is tantamount to perfect or just rights. Krause and Hegel cited in (Tukura & Tukura, 2019) further perceive ideal and perfect rights as those rights which the citizens hold fundamental and are necessary for man's self-actualization because society gives its implicit support for such rights. Hegel cited in Johari (2006, p.238) argues that rights are an outer demonstration of human beings' inner desire to be free from all forms of pain. Wallace (quoted in Tukura & Tukura, 2019) sees legal and moral rights as two biased facets of a single fact which in the actual world, never completely separated; and one without the other is dangerous to society. The theory also sees rights as demands supported by the coherent will of man which is accepted by the social group and then translated into law by the state.

Human Rights Violations and Democratic Consolidation

As earlier stated, democratic consolidation refers to the process by which a newly established democratic system becomes deeply rooted, stable, and resilient. It involves the establishment of strong democratic institutions, the protection of individual rights and freedoms, and the fostering of a culture of democracy within society. Scholars and social Commentators have advanced propositions to explain the relationship between human rights violations and democratic consolidation. Scholars such as Voeten and Wibbels (2018) argued that human rights violations erode the legitimacy and trust in democratic institutions and hamper their effectiveness. This position is true because when citizens' rights are violated by the state or its actors such as the Police or Military, it fosters a perception of arbitrariness, corruption, and injustice. However, Voeten and Wibbels (2018) did not make an effort to explain how violations of human rights could engender suppression

of political participation. Svolik (2017) argues that human rights violations which often involve restrictions on political freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and association, hinder citizens' capability to express their opinions, engage in political discussions, and participate in decision-making processes. Svolik (2017) may not be far from the truth because nations such as Nigeria with high records of human rights abuses tend to witness poorer intensities of citizen political participation and commitment. But Svolik (2017) failed to establish a relationship between violations of human rights and the decline of legitimacy and trust in a democratic system. According to the report of the World Justice Project (2019), human rights violations are often accompanied by a weakening of the rule of law because, when state authorities violate human rights with impunity, it erodes the confidence of citizens and undermines the independence and impartiality of the judiciary. The report also stated that nations with high levels of human rights violations tend to score poorly on indicators of the rule of law. This position is correct in the sense that the absence of a robust rule of law hinders the establishment of a fair and accountable democratic system. Hafner-Burton et al. (2019) on their part submit that human rights violations could worsen existing social divisions and deepen polarization within society. For them, when particular groups or minorities face systemic human rights abuses, it creates anger, distrust, and further divisions. This is a plausible argument because violations of human rights can contribute to social fragmentation and hinder the formation of inclusive democratic cultures. Notwithstanding Hafner-Burton et al. (2019) excellent argument, they did not pay attention to explaining how human rights violations could weaken the rule of law and hinders the establishment of a fair and accountable democratic system.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2020) avers that violations of human rights can discourage citizen participation in democratic processes and weaken civil society activism. This position is right because when individuals or groups fear reprisals for expressing their opinions or engaging in peaceful protests, they are less likely to actively participate in civic activities. This hampers the democratic consolidation process, as citizen participation and vibrant civil society are essential for holding the government accountable and promoting democratic values. United Nations Human Rights Council (2021) posited that human rights

violations can undermine a nation's commitments to international obligations leading to its inability to access the resources and expertise required for democratic consolidation. This is true because Nigeria is a party to numerous international conventions and treaties on human rights, and violations of these rights could damage the country's image in the comity of nations. The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (2021) stated that violations of human rights weaken the checks and balances within a democratic system. This assertion is correct because when protectors of human rights such as the Civil Society Organizations, and other independent institutions are targeted, quieted, or condemned, it undermines their ability to hold those in power accountable for violating human rights. In Nigeria, this imbalance of power undermines the effectiveness of democratic institutions. The International Crisis Group (2021) argued that human rights violations create an atmosphere favorable to the rise of authoritarian tendencies. This is because, when individuals or groups are denied their basic rights and freedoms, it can lead to frustration and a desire for strongman leadership or autocratic rule. This poses a threat to democratic consolidation as it undermines the principles of accountability, transparency, and respect for human rights. Oxfam International (2020) emphasizes that human rights violations propagate social injustices and inequality, which could have long-term implications for democratic consolidation. Therefore, when groups or people are systematically marginalized and denied their basic rights, it widens the socioeconomic gap, hinders social mobility, and fosters anger and protests. This can lead to social unrest, political instability, and a breaking of the social fabric, all of which weaken the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

From the review of the extant literature on human rights violations and democratic consolidation in Nigeria, scholars such as Svolik (2017); Hafner-Burton et al. (2019); Voeten and Wibels (2018) among others have unanimously argued that human rights violations erode the legitimacy and trust in democratic institutions, weakens rule of law and worsen existing social divisions and deepen polarization within society. However, the extant literature reviewed did not adequately explain how violations of human rights by the Nigerian Security Forces undermine democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This, and other issues will constitute our point of departure and by so doing, contribute to knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs the structural violence theory developed by Johan Galtung in 1969 as its analytical framework to explain human rights violations in Nigeria and how it impacts democratic consolidation in the country. The theory was advanced and expanded by scholars such as Scheper-Hughes (1992) and Hanlon (2009) among others. Galtung (1969) sees structural violence as a form of violence that is built into the fabric of society and is caused by socioeconomic and political structures that consistently renounce basic rights of citizens such as rights to life, liberty, freedom of association, and expression. The structural violence theory assumes that act of violence such as brutality by security forces and violations of citizens' rights is caused by the social, economic, and political structures that create and uphold conditions of deprivation, marginalization, and inequality. The theory also argues that structural violence is not restricted to separated incidents or individual actions but rather is deeply deep-rooted in the way societies are structured and organized. Galtung emphasizes the dynamics of power in perpetuating structural violence arguing that the unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities within societies enables the existence of structural violence. For Galtung, those in positions of power and privilege benefit from the existing structures, while marginalized groups bear the brunt of the violence. Galtung further asserted that structural violence is not an integral or changeable attribute of societies, but it is a consequence of specific choices, policies, and systems that can be changed. To him, therefore, societies can change those structures that cause violence and create more equitable and just systems that minimize violence. The theory argues that structural violence lays the basis for direct and overt acts of violence. This is because, when people are subjected to systemic inequalities and injustices, it creates fertile ground for conflict, unrest, and violent responses. Therefore, addressing structural violence is important for preventing and reducing direct violence.

From the foregoing, the nexus between human rights violations and democratic consolidation in Nigeria is better explained in this paper through the lens of the structural violence theory. In line with the basic assumptions of the theory, preserving and protecting citizens' rights in weak and corrupt social, economic, and political structures such as Nigeria, is subverted and becomes the political equivalent of

citizen intimidation in a rather violent form. This is because violations of human rights in Nigeria are caused by the social, economic, and political structures that create and sustain environments of denial of such rights which consequently, weaken the country's democratic system. This explains why the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) underscores the importance of human rights protection to democratic values and the achievement of democratic consolidation.

Research Methodology

Methodologically, this paper depended on the documentary method of data collection by utilizing secondary sources of data such as textbooks, journal articles, official documents, reports, and internet materials. Data generated for this paper were analyzed using content analysis because it conforms to the three basic principles of the scientific method which include objectivity, systematization, and generalization.

Human Rights Violations in Nigeria

Nigeria as a nation is a party to various territorial and global treaties that forbid torture and another mistreatment of persons, including the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which was ratified in 1993, the United Nations Covenant against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) ratified in 2001, the Global Treaty for the Protection of Persons against Enforced Disappearance ratified in 2009, and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights that was ratified in 1983 (Amnesty International, 2020). Therefore, by these regional and international treaties, Nigeria as a party, is obligated to enforce and ensure compliance with the treaties (Amnesty International, 2018). However, despite all these legal frameworks, the situation of human rights in Nigeria is deteriorated which is evident in numerous cases of extrajudicial killings of persons, unlawful arrests and detentions of people, tormenting and maltreatment of the citizens, rape, sexual exploitation and abuse, denial of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly among others (Amnesty International, 2020).

Amnesty International has recorded several cases of violations and abuses of human rights in Nigeria perpetrated by both state and non-

state actors. However, the most serious cases of human rights violations in Nigeria between 2011 and early 2015 were carried out by Boko Haram terrorism (US Department of State, 2014). In the reaction to counter terrorism in Nigeria, the Nigerian security forces sometimes engaged in violations of human rights such as unlawful arrests and detentions of suspected Boko Haram members as well as extrajudicial killings (US Department of State, 2014). For instance, some illustrations of human rights violations in Nigeria between 2011 and 2014 include the coordinated attacks by Boko Haram terrorism across Nigeria communities killing over 250 people between 4th November and 7th December 2011 (US Department of State, 2014). Similarly, between 14th April and 25th June 2013, the Boko Haram terrorist in three separate attacks within the Abuja metropolis killed hundreds of people (US Department of State, 2014). The terrorist group also abducted and kidnapped about 276 Chibok School girls in Borno State, and there was the kidnapping of Chief Nitabai Inengite, a 70-year-old uncle of the then President Jonathan on February 23, 2014, in Bayelsa State by unknown gunmen (US Department of State, 2014). In the same vein, in 2013, the Nigerian security forces in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force, committed extrajudicial killings in a hybrid operation in Borno state.

Also, in September 2013, officers of the Nigerian Department of State Security extra-judicially killed about eight suspected Boko Haram members in an uncompleted building in Apo district Abuja arguing that they acted in self-defense; but the Nigerian government under GoodLuck Jonathan did not make an effort to bring those officers to book (US Department of State, 2014). Again, in August 2013 during a counter-attack on the Boko Haram group in the Northeast, the armies of the 7th division in a joint operation with the Nigerian police and other security forces, arbitrarily arrested and detained some suspected criminals without fair trial (US Department of State, 2014). In the same vein, under the GoodLuck Jonathan administration, various reports of the National Human Rights Commission, Civil Liberty group, and international human rights organizations indicated that officers of the Nigerian security forces were involved in sexual exploitation and abuse, rape, and other maltreatment of women in the northeast without adverse consequences. For instance, on March 26, 2014, an officer of the Nigerian police named Damudu Bzibu, raped a four-year-old girl in

Plateau State. However, the police officer was arrested but was later released and transferred out of Plateau state command to unknown command. On 5th August 2013, Amnesty International reported that on March 14 2013 the military and the Civilian-Joint Task Force extra-judicially executed about 622 people in a reprisal attack on Boko Haram terrorists' attacks on Giwa Barracks in Borno state (Amnesty International, 2013).

In another development, on the assumption of office on 29th May 2015, former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration has routinely and habitually disregarded lawfully and globally warranted citizens' rights, where in some cases, the Nigerian security forces use unlawful force to stop peaceful protests, and arbitrarily arrests, torture, and detente persons. For instance, on 3rd August 2019 Omole Sowore, a journalist and leader of the '#RevolutionNow' protest who discredited the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria that followed the re-election of President Muhammadu Buhari was unlawfully arrested and detained by the Nigerian State Security Service for alleged treason and fallacy. Sowore was later released following a court order but was rearrested, beaten, tortured, and injured by a police officer in Abuja during protests on January 1, 2021, and May 31, 2021, respectively. This act infringes on Sowore's rights to freedom of expression, movement, association, and peaceful gathering as guaranteed in Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended) and different territorial and global Pacts and Convention on citizens' rights to which Nigeria is a state party. Similarly, in October 2020, when the #EndSARS protesters embarked on peaceful demonstrations to end brutality, violence, and corruption by the disbanded unit of the Nigerian Police Force known as Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), were bullied, harassed, onslaught and even killed in many states of the federation such as the killing of 12 persons in Lekki, Lagos state (Olaniyan, 2020). Between December 2015 and October 2020, Amnesty International reported over 82 recorded instances of violations of human rights in Nigeria by the disbanded SARS operatives with no accountability. There is also the case of Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria who was arrested in December 2015 and has remained in detainment without fair public trial in complete disregard to court order on El-Zakzaky freedom and compensation (AI, 2016). Again, in February 2017, Miracle Onwe from Anambra State was accused of laptop theft and unlawfully

arrested and detained for Forty (40) days by officers of the disbanded SARS operatives but was later acquitted on 25 March 2017 for lack of merit when the matter was taken to Court (Amnesty International, 2017).

Furthermore, Sunday Bang an amateur boxer was accused of robbery and arbitrarily arrested and detained for five (5) weeks without trial. Other victims of human rights violations in Nigeria include Tim Elombah, Ogundipe Samuel, Adedigba Azeezat, and Mojeed Musikilu, all of whom are journalists with the Nigerian online newspaper better known as Premium Times (Amnesty International, 2019). There was also the case of Adetokunbo, a university student from Lagos state in May 2017, Samuel Eke, a trader from Onitsha, Anambra state in May 2018, and John Eze on 2 February 2020 in Onitsha, Anambra state (Amnesty International, 2020). Also on the list of victims of violations of citizens' rights under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration are Mr. Ugochukwu, a trader at Ogidi in Anambra State, and Collins Ezenwa, a 35-years old police officer from Imo state (Amnesty International, 2019). In the same vein, there were numerous instances of extra-judicial killings of persons under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration in the Southeastern part of Nigeria when the Nigerian armies opened fire on supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) during a peaceful protest by the group seeking for the creation of a Biafran state killing over 150 people between August 2015 and October 2016 (Amnesty International, 2018).

Amnesty International (2018) also recorded instances of extra-judicial killings of persons under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration when in May 2016, the Nigerian armies killed about 60 members of IPOB in the Southeastern part of Nigeria including the extra-judicial killings of twelve (12) supporters of IPOB from Abia state in September 2017 (Amnesty International, 2018). Similarly, in total violations of citizens' rights to freedom of movement, association, and peaceable gatherings, the Federal government of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari unlawfully banned the activities of IPOB and proscribed same as terrorist groups in 2017. In the same vein, in 2015, the Nigerian security forces during a peaceful procession by the religious group better known as the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), extra-judiciously killed over 45

supporters of the religious group in Zaria, Kaduna state (Amnesty International, 2017).

Challenges Bedeviling Democratic Consolidation and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria

Nigeria as a democratic nation has been bedeviled with serious challenges to democratic consolidation. One of these challenges is the pervasiveness of human rights violations which range from torture, unlawful arrest and detention of persons, extrajudicial and suppression of freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly committed by both state and non-state actors. This has undermined the fundamental principles of democracy and impacted Nigeria's ability to consolidate its democracy. This paper found out that human rights violations can undermine democratic consolidation due to loss of trust in government especially when people feel that the government is not committed to protecting their rights. This compels people to question the legitimacy of the government which can lead to a decline in voter turnout and a rise in support for anti-democratic movements. Similarly, human rights violations could create a climate of fear and intimidation which make it difficult for people to participate in political processes such as political parties' campaigns, voting, or protesting against anti-people's policies of the government. Again, when people feel their rights are not guaranteed and protected, they may resort to violent behavior such as violent protests to express their grievances which could create cycles of violence that can threaten a nation's stability and make it difficult for the nation to build a sustainable democracy.

In the case of Nigeria, human rights violations have been predominantly severe in the context of the nation's various conflicts which include the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the Niger Delta crisis in the South-South, the farmer-herder conflict in the North Central and the rural banditry in the North West. For instance, the Nigerian government's response to the Boko Haram insurgency has been marked by prevalent cases of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detentions of suspected persons. These violations have isolated the local population and made it more difficult to defeat the insurgency. In the same vein, the Niger Delta crisis, the farmer-herder conflict, and the ongoing rural banditry in North West Nigeria have also been marked by human

rights violations, which have further undermined the country's democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the widespread prevention of peaceful protests in Nigeria such as the #EndSARS protest by the Nigerian state under former President Mohammadu Buhari coupled with the signing into law of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA 2020) by former President Buhari to suppress civil action, and to enforce regulations on liberty group are indicators of human rights violations in Nigeria. Therefore, the violent response to the #EndSARS protest by the Nigerian Security Forces which resulted in the extra-judicial killings of at least 12 persons and injuring several others at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos as well as the suppression of freedom of expression and association, undermined the basic tenets of democracy and weakens Nigeria's effort at consolidating its democracy. This explains why the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) emphasizes that human rights are central to democratic values and the achievement of democratic consolidation.

The tables below illustrate several incidences and the nature of human rights violations in Nigeria.

Table 1: Showing cases of Human Right Violations in Nigeria between 2011 and 2014

S/N	No. of Victims	Nature of Violations	Actors(state/no n-state) actors	Location/State	Date
1	16 People	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Gombi, Adamawa	25/08/2011
2	23 People	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	UN Building Abuja	26/08/2011
3	7 People & 4 Policemen	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Misau, Bauchi	13/09/2011
4	150 People	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Damaturu/Potiskum, Yobe	4/11/2011
5	3Policemen & 1 civilian	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Geidam, Yobe	26/11/2011
6	80 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Oripaya District, Kaduna	7/12/2011
7	10 people & 30 injured	Extra-judial killing & Ill-treatment	Boko Haram	Military checkpoint Maiduguri, Borno	13/12/2011
8	20 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Maiduguri, Borno	22/12/2011
9	42, worshipers	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Madalla, Abuja	25/12/2011
10	25 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Mubi, Adamawa State	06/01/2012

11	32 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Jos, Plateau state	24/12/2012
12	622 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Military/Civilian JTF	Giwa, Borno State	14/03/2013
13	70 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Nyanya Motor Park Abuja	14/04/2013
14	21 people	Extra-judicial Killing	Boko Haram	Banex plaza Abuja	25/06/2013
15	8 people & 11 Injured	Extra-judicial killing & Ill-treatment	DSS officers	Apo, Abuja	Sept. 3013
16	4yrs-old Girl	Rape	Police Cpl Dadamu Bzibu	Jos, Plateau State	26/03/2014
17	276 Students	Kidnapping/enforced disappearance`	Boko Haram	Chibok School Borno State	14/4/2014
18	Afeez Mojeed	Unlawful arrest, Detention & Extortion	SARS Officers	Lagos	18 th -31 st October, 2014

Source: compiled by the author with data from US Dept. of State (2014)

The data from Table 1 above shows that human rights violations in Nigeria between 2011 and 2014 were mostly carried out by the Boko Haram terrorists in the North Eastern states of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, and Bauchi except Taraba State which has no case of extra-judicial killing by the terrorists. The table reveals that over 450 persons were extra-judicially killed by the terrorists and over 300 were kidnapped between August 2011 and April 2014 in Nigeria. The inability of the Nigerian Security Forces to protect lives and property in the states like Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, created a climate of fear among the civilian population which resulted in a decrease in political participation such as low voter turnout in the 2015 general elections in those states. This forceful disenfranchisement of the people weakens the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

Table 2: Showing some cases of Human Rights Violations in Nigeria between 2015 and 2021

S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	State	Nature of Abuse	Date
1	Miracle Onwe	23yrs	Student	Anambra	Unlawful arrest and detention	Feb 2017
2	Collings Ezenwa	35yrs	Ex-police officer	Imo	Extra-judicial killing	Jan 2018
3	Mr Adetokumbo	22yrs	Student	Lagos	Torture/ill-treatment	May 2017
4	Mr Ugochukwu	32yrs	Trader	Anambra	Extortion(#6million)	30 th April, 2018

5	Samuel Ogundipe	37yrs	Journalist	Ogun	Unlawful arrest and Detention	14 th August, 2018
6	About 45 IMN members	-	Religion group	Kaduna	Extra-judicial killing	December, 2015
7	Sunday Bang	24yrs	Boxer	FCT	Torture/ill-treatment	Oct 2018
8	Collins Ezenwa	35yrs	Ex-police officer	Imo	Extortion/confiscation of property	Jan 2018
9	Over 12 IPOB members	-	Secession group	Abia	Extra-judicial killing	Sept. 2017
10	Samuel Eke	25yrs	Trader	Anambra	Torture/ill-treatment	14 th may 2018
11	Kofi Bartels	34yrs	Journalist	Rivers	Unlawful arrest/detention	4th June 2019
12	John Eze	22yrs	Student	Anambra	Torture/ill-treatment	Feb 21,2020
13	Omole Sowore	50yrs	Activist/Journalist	Ondo	Unlawful, arrest, detention/torture	Aug. 2019, &May 2021

Source: compiled by the author with data generated from Amnesty International (2020)

From Table 2 above, the information provided indicates that human rights violations in Nigeria between December 2015 and May 2021 were mostly carried out by state actors like the Nigerian Security Forces with no accountability for such acts. Similarly, it can be observed that the nature of violations ranges from unlawful arrest, detention, torture, extortion, and suppression of freedom of expression and association. This infraction on the rights of Nigerian citizens and the kind of servitude meted on the citizenry does not only negate their beingness but has also eroded their confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of democratic processes in Nigeria. Consequently, this erosion of trust has led to disillusionment, apathy, and a loss of faith in the Nigerian democratic system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The consolidation of democracy in Nigeria faces significant challenges due to persistent violations of human rights such as extrajudicial killings, electoral violence, media suppression, and restrictions on freedom of expression among others, which impede the establishment of a democratic society rooted in respect for human rights. Addressing these issues requires the Nigerian government to take proactive measures to protect human rights, strengthen democratic institutions, and promote accountability. By so doing,

Nigeria can foster an environment that respects and upholds human rights, facilitating the consolidation of its democracy. This is important because violations of human rights have far-reaching and detrimental effects on the process of democratic consolidation. These undermine the legitimacy and trust in democratic institutions, suppress political participation, weaken the rule of law, deepen social divisions, and threaten human dignity and freedom. To achieve democratic consolidation, it is imperative to address human rights violations, ensure accountability for abuses, and promote a culture of respect for human rights within society. This is because one of the major criteria for adjudging a regime or administration as democratic is its human rights records. From the foregoing conclusion and on the strength of the findings, this paper recommended that Nigerian Security Forces should ensure strict adherence to the rules of engagement guiding their operations in terms of civil unrest or violence. There should be full enforcement of the revised version of October 3, 2019, Police Force Order 237 by the Nigerian Police to prohibit the use of lethal force on peaceful protesters and permit the same only to defend the citizens by global standards. The Federal government of Nigeria under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu should put on measures to criminalize the enforced disappearance of persons in agreement with the global best practices criminalizing the enforced disappearance of human persons. The Nigerian government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu should also ensure complete enforcement of the Anti-Torture Act that was signed into law on 29th December 2017 by former President Muhammadu Buhari. The Federal government of Nigeria should revisit and review the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020 (CAMA) which was signed into law by former President Muhammadu Buhari to compress civil liberty and place regulations on Civil Liberty Group. By so doing, the citizens' rights to freedom of movement, expression, association, and peaceable gathering will be guaranteed. Efforts should be made by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to strengthen the Nigerian judiciary and enhance its independence which is crucial for upholding human rights and consolidating democracy. Reforming the judiciary to ensure swift and impartial justice can help address impunity for human rights violations and foster public trust in the legal system.

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