

Mainstreaming Human Rights in Emergency Management: Views from the COVID-19 Pandemic Management in Nigeria

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Abstract

Globally periods of emergencies, disasters and crises require desperate responses from the state no matter the type of government. However, the most widely accepted democratic order has in it, some inalienable rights and principles no matter the prevailing situation. Whilst advanced democracies the world over have made concerted efforts to ensure the protection of the rights of the entire citizenry in the course the management of the current rampaging Covid 19 pandemic, the same can't be said about such transitional democracies like Nigeria. The preponderance of gory images of arrant brutality by security personnel in India, Nigeria etc. speaks volumes. The paper therefore seeks to provide a useful and working paradigm to ensure that the inalienable rights of citizens during the management of global pandemics such as the current Covid 19 must be respected and guaranteed as the hallmark of modern society.

Key Words: Mainstreaming, Pandemic, Emergency, Nigeria, Human Rights

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1. INTRODUCTION

States and governments all over the world have responded in diverse ways across the globe to the current rampaging COVID 19 pandemic ravaging the world. More often than not, these emergency responses have impacted negatively on civil rights and liberties the world over. This trend has a pattern in realistic terms bearing in mind that the extent of human rights infractions varies from country to country. More so, it is conjectural to determine the duration of this pandemic fully and, by extension, the length, and extent of the pandemic-induced emergency response and the accompanying negative on global human rights records in times of emergency. This trying period in human history has generated plausible excuses for a litany of human rights abuses in several ways ranging from the invasion of privacy as part of tracing contacts and infection patterns to massive restrictions of movements for weeks and even months on end.

Within the first two weeks of the outbreak in Nigeria and the follow-up lockdown, Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2020) had documented over 100 grave human rights violations in the country. These range from severe police brutality to barbaric extrajudicial killings. This trend has continued unabated until now. As part of an asphyxiated Nigerian state, the gulf between the government of the day and the citizens keep widening to levels that agents of the country see citizens as competitor and indeed enemies whose real and imagined resistance must be brutally crushed. The much-touted return to transitional democracy is yet to erode the deep-seated militaristic sub-culture that dominated Nigeria's political landscape. Proponents of the democratization progress of the country appear to have lost sight of the nature and character of the postcolonial Nigerian state. This work will, therefore, evaluate the quality and integrity of the Nigerian state in its response in tackling the COVID 19 pandemic vis- a- vis the rights of Nigerian citizens. It has been established that Human rights violations do not affect only Nigeria's elite political classes and those involved in protests against military rule. Nigerian citizens with no political involvement are subjected to arbitrary and brutal actions of the Nigerian government in various forms daily. Police and soldiers are better known for extortion, torture, and summary executions than for keeping law and order (Human Rights Watch, 1996).

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to provide evaluative answers to the following research questions:

- a. To what extent has COVID 19 impacted on the world?
- b. How has COVID 19 impacted on the state's capacity to handle emergency public health crisis?
- c. What is the nature of the Nigerian state?
- d. How has the nature of the Nigerian state influenced the protection or otherwise of the rights of Nigerian citizens during the current management of COVID 19 pandemic?
- e. How can Nigeria tackle issues of human rights abuses during this COVID 19 pandemic?

3. METHODOLOGY

The study design is historical, which is qualitative, explorative, and explanatory. This means that the instrument used for the sourcing of data in the study is the secondary source. Secondary sources of data are research materials that initially not from the researcher but already existing literature. It implies that secondary data consist mainly of information obtained from textbooks, magazines, journals, newspapers, government publications, and internet materials.

COVID-19 and the Global Pandemic

A detailed review of the origin or rather the clinical review of the vicious Covid-19 pandemic is necessary for this study since the study focal point is to unveil the implications of the cultivation and spread of the Virus, which its viciousness was first recorded in Wuhan in December 2019. Razu (2020) argued that the outbreak of the vicious Covid-19 that first recorded its viciousness in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province in the Peoples' Republic of China (P.R.C.) in 2019, and subsequently ravaging virtually all parts of the world including Europe, U.S.A., and Africa, has no doubt changed the contours or structures of globalization. As a consequence, the usual unregulated market economies, free movement of labor and goods across national borders, as well as the general economic formula, all of which are the hallmark of globalization, have been distorted since the outbreak of COVID-19. Undeniably, firms, businesses, and domestic affairs of the most affected states of the global system have been deceived in the outbreak of the pandemic. In short, national governments and their citizens are now struggling to familiarise themselves with the lockdown predicated by the outbreak of the epidemic. These factors made a lot of observers speculate that globalization is on edge and that the W.H.O., on the other hand, is now marginalized.

The Wuhan coronavirus infection occurs in a straightforward manner, which is through close contact with already infected persons. It merely occurs in a neural way (involving nervous system) through the par- psychological, psychic phenomena, psi (or power) fields of an individual with the same level of brain development. Laboratory investigations revealed that the incubation period of the Covid-19 Virus lasts for a maximum of 10 to 14 days, after which its viciousness diminishes or dies off. During its incubation period, the symptom is often not noticeable until the Virus develops ultimately. When contacted, it is capable of being transmitted from one person to another, making it very difficult to control (Shkrudnev, 2020; Heather, 2020). By implication, taming the outbreak of the Virus is not the responsibility of the Peoples' Republic of China alone, neither is it that of the United States, but for the entire world. Without a doubt, the Virus has spread far and fast, an unfortunate circumstance that requires immediate response from all the nations in the global system.

With limited medical literature about the Covid-19 Virus at the initial outbreak, the name "Corona" was named as such under an electroscope, which shows a strain radiated from an aura only seen during a total solar eclipse. In other words, the probable cause of the character is phosphorus molecules in the Virus. This is what turned everyone's attention to the *Wet Markets of Wuhan*, a Seafood hub. There was no evidence that Sea fishes and crustaceans are responsible for Coronavirus pandemic; unfortunately, also, no one knows who the *Patient Zero* is or what happened up to date (Doyle, 2020). On November 17, 2019, a 55-year-old man from Hubei Province in the Republic of China was discovered to have been infected with a new strain of Influenza. He was hospitalized as a patient with the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) until December 1, 2019, when a team of medical researchers discovered that he was infected with a strange disease that was later named Coronavirus. On December 31, the *Patient Zero* was officially declared to be infected with Coronavirus, a situation that attracted a lot of criticisms.

Following several types of research conducted privately and independently by institutions, national governments, and private individuals, to mention but a few, Madagascar became the first nation to declare that they have a cure. On April 20 this year, President Andry Rajoelina, in a press conference, announced a breakthrough in the fight against Covid-19. He urges school children and the entire citizens to take daily. To prove the safety of the herbal tea remedy labeled

COVID-Organics, he picked up a bottle placed on the table and took a sip from it. Despite its demonstrated effects in the country, W.H.O has declared that there is no specific cure for the Covid-19 yet (Baker, 2020; Salem, 2020). It was revealed that a German biotechnology company, BioTech, has the vaccine for Covid-19 and will be ready in a year. A recent development reported that the authorities had approved the first human test of the vaccine on volunteers (Simsek, 2020). Until such a discovery, health experts all over the world have been treating patients with the Virus with anti-malaria drugs, including hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, both of which have shown positive results.

The World on its Knees

The problem confronting the global system in recent times is not because the world for the first time is experiencing the outbreak of an epidemic or the first of its kind with the explosion of COVID-19. Still, the manners at which the disease was managed in the first instances, was the major problem. Beijing, U.S.A., and the W.H.O have been asked by national governments and international agencies to accept responsibilities and blame for the spread of the virus Covid-19. Washington and Beijing's unnecessary display of *Realpolitik* and *Realecononik* (i.e., power politics and economic politics) have been linked to the reasons why Covid-19 was cultivated in China. It was, however, alleged that the Virus was intentionally developed in a Chinese laboratory by the *Communist Party in China* to get back at Beijing's major enemy and rival, *the United States*, in its ambitions in South Asia and the rest of the world.

This standpoint was supported by Razu (2020) when he argued that the seemingly effortless spread of the Wuhan Covid-19 virus is nothing but the consequence of the rivalry between Washington and Beijing. He opines that Washington's suspicion and distrust towards everything Chinese are now deeply entrenched in modern American political thought, the consequence of which is the plague, *Coronavirus*, that is not only unleashing mayhems and impairs economic activities in the U.S.A. and China, but to the rest of the world. Furthermore, the rivalry between Washington and Beijing was demonstrated by President Donald Trump of the U.S.A. while responding to the outbreak of the Virus at Wuhan, a capital city of Hubei Province in the Republic of China at first. International observers and critics alike have argued that President Trump's response at first was unnecessarily slow, immature, and shambolic. His negligence and lack of leadership both at the U.S. national front and in global affairs has left the entire world in this terrible mess occasioned by the spread of the vicious Virus. Rather than confronting the challenges envisaged by the outbreak of the Wuhan outbreak, he referred to it as the *Chinese Virus* (Razu, 2020).

In recent time, the pandemic has not only crippled U.S. economy but also that of the global system, and at the same time complicating the already weak global economy occasioned by a drastic drop in crude oil price at the international market, the consequence of which is another regime of the *worldwide recession*. Virtually all human endeavors, including businesses, colleges, and institutions of higher learning, as well as social events, including sports activities, etc., have been paralyzed globally since the outbreak of the Virus. Unarguably, virtually all the countries experiencing the outbreak of the Virus Covid-19 are now familiarizing themselves with economic self-distancing and individuals' social distancing that has changed our world as we know it. This problem has been complicated by the inability of some national governments, especially those of Africa, Nigerian Central Government, to be precise, to provide palliatives before and after the total lockdown that lasted for over a month and a couple of weeks. Rather than giving palliatives to the most vulnerable in Nigerian towns and villages to cushion the hardship entrenched by the

immediate and unexpected event, government officials enriched themselves with the available resources.

Most observers have argued that in states like Nigeria, hunger and starvation confronting the masses or populace is worse than the spread of the pandemic. The enforcement of the government orders is also a perturbing issue of concern in some parts of the world, particularly in Africa where there are instances of extrajudicial killings, violations of human rights and abuses by security personnel, including the police and the army. Our major challenge today is the recalcitrant posture of Xi Jinping's and his *Communist Party* ambition towards the rest of the world. Most pathetic is Beijing's attempt to conceal the detailed source of the Virus. This follows several unlawful arrests and illegal detention of innocent citizens alleged to have committed dissident acts against the Chinese state in recent times. However, they are only concerned about the Virus that began in Wuhan, *the ground zero* of COVID-19 pandemic.

Other instances abound in the death of Dr. Li Wenliang, an ophthalmologist, and another Wuhan Covid-19 whistleblower. He was said to have been killed by the Virus at the age of 34. Before his death, he was accused by the Chinese authority of spreading false rumors and for telling the truth, arrested and detained by the police in Wuhan. He was later compelled by the body to sign a document that he gave false information about the Virus online (Meitto, 2020). There is also the case of Chen Qiushi, a citizen journalist who reported from Wuhan. He was alleged to have been missing since February this year. Before his disappearance in February he was quoted to have expressed his worries precisely on January 30 when he said:

I'm scared; I have the Virus in front of me and behind me China's law enforcement. But I will keep my spirits up, as long as I'm alive and in this city, I will continue my reports. I'm not afraid of dying. Why should I be frightened of your Communist Party?

These and several other incidences revealed Beijing's resilience and hidden agenda following the outbreak of the Virus that was never expected to have dealt with the Chinese economy. The perturbing question in everyone's lips and that needs an urgent answer or to be unraveled is that *what is Beijing's intention for cultivating the Virus?* Another evident and perturbing issue here is the alleged politicization of the pandemic scenarios that have been noticed domestically and internationally. There have been instances in some countries like Nigeria, etc., that the pandemic situation has been hijacked by some *government officials, politicians, and gluttonous bourgeoisies*. According to Arogbonlo (2020), the Kogi state Governor, Mr. Yahaya Bello, alleged that there was an attempt to declare fake Covid-19 cases in his state by officials of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) that visited the country. What informed the saga is the refusal of NCDC officials on the insistence of Governor Bello to observe protocols in line with the containment of the Virus and subject themselves for a test under the supervision of officers of the state before the commencement of duties in the country that is yet to record a single case.

In another development, the Commissioner for Health in the state, Dr. Saka Haruna Audu, alleged that Governor Bello administration is under immense pressure to announce novel coronavirus cases in the country (Egbas, 2020). The Speaker of Kogi State House of Assembly, Mr. Matthew Kolawole, in an interaction session with journalists in Lokoja, the State capital, called on the Federal Government to end the lockdown imposed to control Covid-19. Aligning himself with the position of the Governor on the pandemic, he argued that, "the Covid-19 saga is more political than reality because the symptoms of Covid-19 such as fever, catarrh, and pneumonia which we are all familiar with and which we have our way of treating them" (Gbenga, 2020). This simply means that the Federal Government is not sincere in its campaign against the spread and

containment of the Virus in the country, hence creating suspicion in addition to what has been inferred by the conspiracy theorist and apocalyptic thought. The apparent ignorance and weak infrastructural base in Africa is also a perturbing problem. Indisputably, this has put Africans preparedness to contain the spread of the Virus in doubts.

All of these issues, no doubt, have bedeviled the global collective fight against the containment of the Virus. This study, therefore, is posed to ascertain the extent to which these factors, notably: realpolitik, arrogance, ignorance, behavioral decadence, and infrastructural decay, contributed to the spread of Covid-19 Virus across the world. It, therefore, becomes imperative to ascertain the extent to which the war of microbes of the World War II (WWII) replicates itself in the outbreak of Coronavirus, the extent to which global intelligence failure, Europe's complacency, and American arrogance contributed to the spread of the Virus.

COVID-19 and the Vulnerable in Nigeria

This global scourge has negatively impacted a large portion of the worldwide population. These are also people already battling the challenges of bare survival –toiling to eat daily. This segment of the world's vulnerable population is put at about 2.2 billion. While this figure is too conservative, experts put it at over 3billion in realistic terms with a lot of linkages therein. This vulnerable group would rather risk getting food at all costs. It would be impervious to the much-touted basic hygiene of hand washing and social distancing in line with Maslow's proposition. In Nigeria, close to a hundred million people fall within this socio-economic bracket. They have no food to eat, no proper shelter, no access to Medicare, and the necessities of life in a country that is rated as one of the poverty capitals of the world.

In addition to the preceding, the poor and vulnerable in Nigeria are not only at exponential risk but are also at the severe receiving end of government's emergency efforts to contain the spread of the disease in the country. The very vulnerable, i.e., the old, women, and children, are mostly caught up in this deadly pandemic web within a vicious poverty circle and heavily prone to all manner of human rights abuses. The axiom that the government has genuine intentions to protect citizens does not preclude the myriads of negative fallouts of joblessness, frustrations, poverty, and, indeed, harassment from security personnel in Nigeria. It is therefore instructive that given this social reality, further subjection to the repressive nature of the Nigerian state is a burden magnified on her citizens.

Marx and the Allegory of Postcolonial Nigerian State

Proponents of Marxism and dependence theories in their analyses of postcolonial states were superfluously entrapped in the different variants of Marxian analogies from the 1960s before they became irrelevant in the 80s. The lacuna created by this academic void prompted neo-Marxists to attempt to re-introduce the state back in their treatise of political economy (Evans, Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985). This new attempt touched on the role of the military and other security branches in the character and formation of the modern state as part and parcel of the country. Though it appears Marx didn't quite capture this in his original essays on the state, the likes of Louis Bonaparte had made conscious effort to elucidate what could be regarded as an appropriate situation of the relevance of the security sector within a state. He had built an analysis of militarism into his multi-layered and far from the deterministic account of the country: including the growth of an immense (or in more recent parlance overdeveloped) state machine "clogging the pores" of civil society; the state's relative autonomy from class determination; and the paradoxical way that as "long as the rule of the bourgeois class had not been organized.

Literature is replete with the fact that postcolonial Nigerian state since independence has developed into a socio-political society that supports and sustains liberal democratic ideas comparable to those of the advanced democracies of the world. The bulk of these countries were the imperial and colonial powers at a time all over the world. The colonial penetration impacted and altered the entire social fabric of the lives of the colonized people, including Nigeria, massively. Politics, economy, religion, and indeed the whole of the social lives of the colonized and post colonized were held together (into the modern state). Hitherto cooperative relationships became competitive, and the level of social cohesion crumbled under the new wave of individualism and alien colonial culture. (Nzimiro, 1999, Mere, 1987).

The colonial experience engraved in our psyche the desire to sustain the survival of the state through force and repression. Part of it was to ensure the unhindered flow of resources from the peripheral colonial enclaves and to ensure that the entire economy was monopolized by the metropolitan institutions controlled by the conquering capitalist class of the mother country.

The driving forces of two political control to ensure a hold on the economy became a cardinal objective in the colonial enclaves. Economic sustenance of metropolitan Europe was at the root of the colonial enterprise, and unfettered capitalist expansion was rooted in the continuous creation of the social surplus and entrenching a materialistic society that must be stable with the use of apparent force. The politicians that fought the British wanted to assume political power as a means of controlling the economy. (Nzimiro, 1999). Subsequent political scenarios in Nigeria provided the state as a juicy one. Politics became lucrative, and access to political power translated to access to the overdeveloped state in Africa and indeed Nigeria (Alavi, 1974; Ihonbvere, 1991). Political patronage became a passport to state power. It remained a veritable means to appropriate the social surplus generated by oil, which has emerged as the prominent pivot of the economy.

Misappropriation of public funds by public offices became rife. Cohen noted that where finance on any scale was available to Nigerian, it was closely linked to the capture of political power by the elite group. State corporations were indeed run as an extension of political parties. In contrast, unreserved access to political power, particularly at the regional level, was used as a means to finance private investments or, more usually, private consumption (Cohen, 1974). The "Juicy Nigerian State, which has created a lot of money bags, military adventures, and the epileptic political transition in Nigeria so far, has institutionalized corruption and accentuated conflicts between the different classes, subclasses, and regions. All the struggles in the various regions of the nation inherent in the dialectical relationships are based on the scramble to appropriate the surplus generated by oil. The net effect of this scramble is an extremely violent socio-political culture in Nigeria (Nte, 2001.) The series of military coups and counter coups, electoral fraud, and institutionalized corruption succeeded in stamping a violent culture on our national psyche and also legitimize the axiom that "Might is right." The long period of about three decades of military rule out of our forty-five years of existence as a nation caused the unconscious internalization of military ethos and excesses. The military mentality has, therefore, perverted all areas of society. The total disorganization of the power structure in our polity, strong command - and - obey attitude decapitated the social fabric. The glorification of violence, sadistic belief in power albeit intimidation through violence, belief that grass materialism is a blessing, all combine to reinforce and sustain the replication of security brutality in our body polity (Nzimiro, 1999.) Security brutality and unbridled assaults on human rights in Nigeria can conveniently be attributed to the inherently violent nature of our society caused by the glorification of materialism and the

unfettered pursuit of social surplus in the country. In the same vein, the corrupt nature of the Nigerian State has drained the economy through institutionalized corruption, leaving the country economically decapitalized and life hellish for the poor and vulnerable in the country.

Militarism, State Repression, and Human Rights Abuse in Nigeria

Postcolonial Africa was entangled in the paranoia of losing power to competitors, and this ultimately made politicians rely extensively on their military and other security apparatuses. This produced a rather dialectical scenario of a weakened state sustained by over-reliance on the instruments of fear (Army, Police and Intelligence Agencies). In reality, the over-reliance on suppressive security forces in postcolonial Africa eventually became unsustainable as mere despotic reliance on brute force was not sufficient in the face of lack of technical, infrastructural, and financial resources needed to retain state power. This created room for the coups and counter-coups and the emergency of 'warlordism' in some countries like Renamo in Mozambique, the L.R.A. in Uganda, and UNITA in Angola.

Researchers have asserted that the accumulation and the Material Foundations of Military Force Historical studies of precolonial Africa document showcases an orderly presentation of an arrangement between modes of production and methods of destruction or domination (Goody 1971; Bazin and Terray 1982). The bulk of precolonial states relied on the use of the military to extract the social surplus, which is, in turn, invested in weapons and expansion of the army and other security agencies of the state. Yet the latter at the same time tended to interfere with the further creation of wealth: both by removing surpluses from the hands of those who could make productive use of them and through the constant devastation of warfare. "Seen in this light, the underdevelopment of productive forces was a consequence of those destructive ones required by the predatory accumulation" (Reyna 1990).

In Tilly's presentation, historical facts showed that European states started as what he referred to as "protection rackets" based on the forcible extraction of surpluses in exchange for the (sometimes crafty) benefits of protection. These arrangements changed when there was a capitalist accumulation created surplus wealth that could be invested in the industrialization of war and b) when rulers learned that their ability to extract wealth and invest it in the means of war required that they should not overtax its creators. Ultimately it was "the very changes that permitted states to wage war on a previously unimaginable scale and to extend their conquests throughout the world" that created "armies subordinate to the holders of land and capital. Within limits, large-scale war civilianized Western states" (Tilly 1985, 75).

Yet, at the same time, imperialism and military conquest extended predatory accumulation to fields of the empire to far-flung regions: including Africa, where colonial authorities used extra-economic manipulation to extract labor and resources from unwilling natives and to bring the latter in reach of the compulsions of the market (Lonsdale 1989; Mbembe 1990). In present-day advanced industrial states, military spending at home and the use of military force abroad have become complexly linked to capital accumulation-although economists differ between those contending that such spending motors economic expansion, especially during recession or crisis, and those arguing that it diverts technology and resources from more productive uses, thus depressing economic growth over the longer term. In Africa, both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence highlight the latter, that is, the contribution of military spending to budget and foreign exchange imbalances and the squeezing of investment and social welfare. However, the issue is far broader than the inputs absorbed by military and security establishments. It is how African rulers have appropriated the letters' output of organized force to re-institutionalize

predatory accumulation, with governments deploying their military establishment to establish their grip on power for economic benefits.

What the Law Says

Legally, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria makes a provision for the power of the President to declare an emergency, where there is imminent danger or disaster or natural calamity affecting a community, or any other public danger constituting a threat to the country. The rampaging Corona Virus and the devastating public health crises caused by it is by no means a global emergency and disaster that warrants prompt attention and action. A Declaration of an emergency, in this case, would require the passing of a resolution by the National Assembly after the President's proclamation. Otherwise, such a declaration would expire in 10 days.

However, the President chose a different vehicle to impose restrictions. Instead of passing a proclamation of emergency, which would have required the input of the National Assembly, he issued regulations under the Quarantine Act. This 1926 law allows the President to declare a place within the country an "infected local area." The President is empowered based on such a declaration to make relevant regulations.

Under the COVID-19 Regulations, 2020, the President required two states – Lagos and the Ogun States - and the Federal Capital Area to be locked down, and prohibited mass gatherings throughout the country. By the Quarantine Act, states can only make regulations where the President fails to do so (Onyemelukwe, 2020).

It must be noted. However, quarantine and labor are "exclusive matters" under the Constitution, and only the Federal Government has the authority to make laws relating to them. The implications, therefore, are that in effect, states could not make regulations where the President had done so. If states had already passed laws, they ceased to have any validity (Onyemelukwe, 2020). In reality, this was tested and found to be ineffectual as some states like Rivers state went further to implement deeper and draconic measures to ensure the lockdown. In some of these cases, however, there an overt clash of interests between the federal and some states government with regards to the national interest, security, and safety versus political and other primordial undertones that played out.

Compliance with the lockdown was cautiously substantial as citizens keyed into this global reality of public safety. Unfortunately, the aggressive and draconic enforcement of the restriction of movements manifested in gross human rights abuses across the country. Scores of Nigerians have been killed; extrajudicial incarcerations have been copious and, in some cases, outright imperial demolition of buildings. In the north, alma-jiris were brazenly deported from one state to another under the most savage and divisive manner without adequate child rights protection safeguards.

All over the country, the truth remains that killings, detentions, and all forms of brutality pervade the national landscape. More so, notorious cases of extortion by security personnel are rife. Security agents of the Nigerian state wilfully extort money from citizens without recourse to safety measures put in place by the federal government. This accentuates the risk factors of the spread of the pandemic. In some other cases, vulnerable citizens who brace the risk to go out to eke a living and can't settle the security personnel are usually the ones brutalized and dehumanized in disgraceful showmanship of COVID 19 lockdown enforcement. The litany of the

abuse of human rights during the current pandemic management is endless and a reinforcement of the brutal nature of the Nigerian State,

4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Framing bad state practice as a health emergency response presents a new type of challenge for activists and advocates. Invoking the mantra of "public health" and "public safety" to curtail human freedoms allows State actors to secure quick buy-ins and approving nods from large swathes of the population, making it difficult for civil society advocacy against them to gain traction. Again, courts and judicial bodies—in compliance with the lockdown directives—have remained shut, equally obstructing attempts by activists and legal professionals to use the instrumentality of the law to challenge overreaching state conduct. The civil society itself derives legitimacy from the constituencies it serves and, as such, does not want to be seen as "enemies of progress," frustrating official efforts to contain the pandemic. [Source: [https://www.justsecurity.org/70226/covid-19-and-the-shrinking-civic-space-in-nigeria/.](https://www.justsecurity.org/70226/covid-19-and-the-shrinking-civic-space-in-nigeria/)]

To becoming Fearful from backlash and reputation harm, civil society responses to executive misbehavior have been overly measured and, sometimes, inconsistent.

The apparent challenges of flagrant human rights abuses that characterized the management of COVID 19 in Nigeria following the enforcement the restriction of movement, social distancing rules and the wearing of face masks /washing and sanitizing of hands in public arena calls for concerted efforts by the National Assembly to swing to sustainable action to provide an enduring legal framework and sound foundations. The ongoing legislative move to pass into law the Health Emergency Bill should consolidate Nigeria's Public Health Institute, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, and other allied health and disaster management institutions in ways that the rights and welfare of the Nigerian citizenry are not unnecessarily compromised.

The government should learn from this pandemic and refocus on ending poverty, redistribution of income, and enlarge social safety nets to ensure social inclusion. This will improve human rights abuses and empower the vulnerable populace to be fully integrated into a more inclusive and sustainable national development template for the country.

Mitigate the rapacious impacts of the COVID 19 crisis on women and girls, with particular focus on their access to sexual and reproductive health/rights, and insulate them from all forms of oppressive domestic and gender-based violence devoid of inherent patriarchal predispositions in the country in ways that their full and equal representations in decision making are guaranteed. (Source: <https://unsdg.un.org/download/2094/30683>). In times of emergency, people are expected to comply with the rather harsh and extraordinary rules, most times severely restricting their human rights. (Source: <https://unsdg.un.org/download/2094/30683>) Worldwide, people have shown a substantial willingness to cooperate, despite the positive consequences these measures are having on their lives. Cooperation may become harder to maintain if the Virus continues to spread unabated, and bills need to be extended in time and scope. [Source: <https://unsdg.un.org/download/2094/30683>]

It is, therefore, incumbent on the government to operate an open and transparent engagement of people in the process of decision making. Clear and unambiguous information on the nature and scope of the threat of the pandemic should be communicated to citizens. The keyword is building trust between the government and the citizens. Securing compliance depends on building trust, and trust depends on transparency and participation.

It is needful for the Nigerian state to respect and protect the freedom of expression, freedom of information, association, and assembly. At the same time, anti-democratic measures such as cracking down dissenting voices, repression of the press, arrests, and detention of political opponents, journalists, medical personnel, activists should be discouraged.

Indeed the threat is the Virus and not the citizens of the country. At this time of national emergency, all citizens must work collectively to ensure that there is an adequate promotion of public safety to provide the containment of this deadly Virus ravaging humanity with the framework of international democratic best practices on human rights protection during an emergency. Nigeria cannot be an exception.

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