

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRACTICE OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

Anetoh, Bonaventure Chike, PhD

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya Anambra State, Nigeria
Email: anetohbonaventure@yahoo.com

&

Petermary O. Nwoha

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Tansian University, Umunya Anambra State, Nigeria
Email: pito4us@gmail.com

Abstract

This article focuses on the examination of the practice of fundamental human rights in Nigeria. Human beings are different from other beings. Rationality and consciousness are among the basic factors that distinguish human beings from other beings. There are certain rights that are accorded to human beings. These rights are universal and inalienable. The basic questions are: What are the fundamental human rights? How do Nigerians conceive fundamental human rights? What actually is the practice of the fundamental human rights in Nigeria? Are the fundamental human rights abused or regarded in Nigeria? Is there any relationship between the abuse of fundamental human rights and under-development in Nigeria? These and other related issues are the major focus of this article. Employing analytical and phenomenological methods of philosophical enquiry, this article examines the concept and practice of fundamental human rights in Nigeria. The study discovers that the concept of fundamental human rights seems to be misconceived by many Nigerians. The study also discovers that the fundamental human rights are abused and disregarded in Nigeria, and such have significant relationship with under-development in Nigeria. This article maintains and recommends that the fundamental human rights of every human being should be respected in Nigeria irrespective of sex, tribe, socio-economic status, religion etc. Such will enable every Nigerian to feel belonged, and thus contribute his or her own quota to the development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Human, Rights, Nigeria and Abuse

Inroduction

There are certain rights that every human being possesses by virtue of one's nature as human being. These rights are popularly known as fundamental human rights. They are rooted in human nature, and as such uphold the dignity of human beings.

There are certain norms that are enshrined in the human rights. These norms form the bases for the treatment of people by the government, and at same time form the bases for the relationship between different people in the society. Fundamental human rights are based on moral principles, which are incorporated into both international and national legal systems. According to Marks (2016), “these norms specify the mechanisms and procedures to hold the duty-bearers accountable and provide redress for alleged victims of human rights violations” (p.2). Fundamental human rights are universal and inalienable. They ought to be enjoyed by every human being. This stems from the fact that fundamental human rights are rooted in human nature.

Unfortunately, some of the fundamental human rights are disregarded and abused in Nigeria to the extent that one questions if such concept actually exists in Nigeria. It is very fashionable for the political office holders in Nigeria and some wealthy citizens of Nigeria to think that they are more human than others, and as such are above the law. Some of them maltreat other citizens, denying them their fundamental rights. The basic questions that are scholarly very imperative in this article are: What actually are the fundamental human rights? Are Nigerians actually aware of the fundamental human rights? To what extent are the fundamental human rights practiced in Nigeria? Are the principles of fundamental human rights maintained in Nigeria? Are the fundamental human rights abused or regarded in Nigeria? Are there distinctions on accounts of ethnicity, religion, sex and socio-economic status in the application of the principles of human rights in Nigeria? Are there some cultural practices that violate human rights in Nigeria? Is there any relationship between the abuse of fundamental human rights and under-development in Nigeria? These and other related issues are to be given scholarly and detailed attention in this article. Employing basically analytical and phenomenological methods of philosophical enquiry, this article examines the practice of fundamental human rights in Nigeria, and observes that the state of affairs with regard to the practice of human rights in Nigeria leaves much to be desired.

This article is partitioned into five main sections. The first section clarifies the concept of fundamental human rights. The second section examines the practice of fundamental human rights in Nigeria, bringing out very clearly human rights abuses in Nigeria. The third section unravels some cultural practices that violate human rights in Nigeria. The fourth section examines the relationship between the abuse of fundamental human rights and under-development in Nigeria. The fifth section is the evaluation as well as the conclusion of the article.

Fundamental Human Rights: Conceptual Clarification

Clarification of concept is very necessary in every philosophical study. Certainly, the discourse can be better understood if the basic concept is properly clarified and analyzed. Fundamental human rights are the entitlements that one deserves and possesses by virtue of being a human being. Such rights ought to be inseparable from human nature. They are binding on all human beings and have the protection of international law. Kanu, Ejikeme and Anetoh (2017) notes that human rights “are applicable everywhere and at every time in the sense of being universal, and they are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone.” (p.12) This demonstrates the fact that the applicability of human rights does not admit any distinction. Hence, the distinctions among human beings on accounts of sex, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status etc are completely disregarded when human rights are at stake. The generality of human rights portrays the common nature of all human beings. All human beings share one essence. Kanu, Ejikeme and Anetoh (2017) further states:

The principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law. This principle, as first emphasized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, has been reiterated in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions.(p.13).

Human rights laws are binding on every human beings, and should be implemented by the political leaders of all the countries in the world. It ought to be noted that human rights are based on principles of morality and are deeply rooted in natural law, and at the same time are manifestations of it. This implies that any violation of human rights is a violation of principles of morality.

Bantekas and Oette (2016) as cited by Nweke (2020) described human rights in a loose or general sense. According to them:

A lot of people and groups use human rights in a loose way to mean rights available to every person because they are human. As loosely as that understanding might be, it actually reflects on a basic level, the essence of the two words that came together to form the term. Human refers to everyone on earth irrespective of their age, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, orientation, sex or creed. Rights refer to privileges that one compulsorily deserves irrespective of his or her age, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, orientation, sex or creed. Rights are usually legally enforceable in character and application. (p.2)

The above quotation reiterates the fact that human rights are quite general to every human being irrespective of sex, age, place of origin etc. Thus, they belong essentially to all human beings. This automatically implies that one possesses such rights by virtue of being human. They inhere in human nature, and are irrespective of all characteristics that divide human race.

Human beings are rational as well as conscious beings, and as such are quite distinct from other beings. They are the only beings capable of reasoned discourse. In fact, human beings are dignified beings. It becomes very necessary that certain rights should be accorded to human beings to enable them function effectively in the society. The essence of human rights is basically for the protection of human dignity. Hence, UNICEF (2015) states that: “Human rights are standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings”. Obviously, without the preservation and enforcement of fundamental human rights, human dignity will be degraded and devalued. This demonstrates the necessity of human rights in the life of every human being.

There are many fundamental human rights. Marks (2016) listed the fundamental human rights, and some of them include: right to life, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom from arbitrary arrest/detention, freedom of expression, right to humane treatment, freedom of movement and residence, freedom of thought and religious belief etc (p.10). These rights are very necessary for decent living, and every human being possesses them. It could be said that these rights accord due regard to human nature.

United Nations developed mechanisms as well as procedures for the promotion and protection of these rights. This stems from United Nations’ determination to protect human dignity. The Article 4 of the African Charter on Human Rights as cited by Nweke (2020) states that every human being is entitled to respect for his or her life as well as the integrity of his or her person, and no one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right (p.2). Life is very fundamental in everything that pertains to human beings, and so it must be protected. In fact, respect for life seems to be the most important. This is as a result of the fact that without life, one is practically nothing. It is only the living that can seek for other basic rights.

It ought to be noted that human rights are basically entitlements which are rooted on moral principles, and they are to be enforced legally. Hence, human rights could be said to be essential part of legal rights, and they have moral background. It is a global practice that human rights are incorporated in international laws and relations. In the words of Kanu, Ejikeme and Anetoh (2017) “The doctrine of human rights has been highly influential within international law, global, and

regional institutions.” (p.13) Based on this, any violation of human right is quite illegal. It is noteworthy that the emphasis on the preservation of human rights could be traced to the end of the Second World War.

United Nations classified human rights into civil and political rights as well as cultural and socio-economic rights. These classifications highlight different dimensions of human rights. Civil and Political Rights refer to the individual’s ability to participate without discrimination or prejudice in the civil as well as political life of the state or society. Elaborating on the civil and political rights, Kanu, Ejikeme and Anetoh (2017) state:

The civil and political rights form the bedrock of the first Generation Rights. These rights are libertarian in character as they relate to the sanctity of the individual and his rights within the socio-political milieu in which he is located. The rights seek to protect and safeguard the individuals, whether alone or as a group, against the abuse of power, especially by political authority. (p.16)

Every citizen of any state possesses these rights. One possesses these rights simply by virtue of being a citizen of a particular state. Such rights as articulated by the United Nations include: freedom of association as well as peaceful assembly, equality before the law, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, freedom of participation in public affairs etc. These rights are very necessary as they guarantee one the freedom to participate actively in the civil life of the state. Hence, they protect one from maltreatments, slavery as well as unnecessary detention.

The other classifications of human rights are the Cultural and Socio-economic rights. Some of the cultural and socio-economic rights as listed by Marks (2016) include: Right to gain a living by freely chosen work, right to form and join trade unions, right to strike etc. (p.10) These rights are very necessary as they enable one to operate and function effectively in the society. They grant one the freedom to participate in the social life of his or her people and to work freely in order to attain good standard of life.

Basic Characteristics Of Human Rights

Human rights have certain characteristics or features that distinguish them from other rights. Human rights pertain essentially to human nature. Certainly, human rights regulate on the nature of relationship between people in the society as well

as peoples' obligations towards the state. On the other hand, human rights also regulate on the state's obligation towards the people. This entails that laws pertaining to human rights should guide the governments on what they ought to do and ought not to do. This demonstrates the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the state and her citizens. Below are the basic characteristics of human rights.

Firstly, human rights are universal. The concept of universality entails generality. The universality of human rights implies that they apply to every human being irrespective of all distinctions that exist among human beings. No human being is excluded with regard to human rights. The common fact of humanity grants every human being such rights.

Secondly, human rights are inalienable. Inalienability has to do with something which cannot be taken away from someone. The inalienability of human rights entails that they cannot be taken away or violated by the government or any person because the rights belong inseparably to every human being. Hence, it is not permissible to violate the human rights of any individual.

Thirdly, human rights are indissoluble. The concept of indissolubility entails something which cannot be ended. The indissolubility of human rights entails that human rights cannot be separated from any person no matter the social status, sex, nationality, race, religion, etc. of the person so far as the person in question is still alive. This stems from the fact that human rights are rooted in the dignity of human nature, and thus are inseparable from human nature. The human rights of any person cannot be stopped at any time in the course of the person's life. Basically, all human beings are entitled to human rights as a result of the common nature of all human beings.

Fourthly, human rights are inter-connected. This means that different human rights are related in one way or the other to one another. They are inter-connected such that they depend on one another. Hence, the violation of one human right may affect another human right. What this implies is that the violation of one human right may lead to the violation of another one. This is due to the fact that one human right is in one way or the other connected to another one. Elaborating on the inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of human rights, UNICEF (2015) states: "The realization of one right often depends, wholly or in part, upon the realization of others. For instance, the realization of the right to health may depend on the realization of the right to education or of the right to information". The implication of this is that one human right may not be partly or wholly be

separated from the other one. The reason for this is not far-fetched because all human rights are rooted in common human nature and dignity.

Another essential characteristic of human rights is equitability. Once equitability is mentioned, what quickly comes to mind is ‘treating everybody in an equal manner’. Fundamental human rights emphasize the equality of all human beings stemming from our common nature. Hence, all human beings irrespective of all distinctions are equal by virtue of common human dignity shared by all human beings. Hence, every human being is entitled to the human rights no matter how poor or how small the person is. Human rights do not admit of any distinction on accounts of sex, nationality, socio-economic status, religion, race, tribe, colour, position etc in their applicability.

The other characteristics of human rights revolve around ‘participation’ and ‘inclusion’. The participations in human rights are all-inclusive. No human being is excluded from human rights. Hence, UNICEF (2015) states: “Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural development, through which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized.” This demonstrates the all-inclusive nature of human rights.

Examining The Practice Of Human Rights In Nigeria

The previous section of this article clarifies the concept of human rights, bringing out very clearly the characteristics of human rights. This section focuses on examining the practice of human rights in Nigeria in order to ascertain how far the fundamental human rights are observed in Nigeria. It is very easy to observe that the fundamental human rights are abused and violated in Nigeria. This stems from the fact that many citizens of Nigeria have been denied of their basic rights. Attesting to this, Kanu, Ejikeme and Anetoh (2017) states:

It is a notorious fact that many people have suffered or continued to suffer human rights infractions. Regrettably, they are unable to seek redress either because they are indigent or ignorant. Although the Constitution makes provision requiring the National Assembly to make law for rendering of financial assistance to any indigent citizen where his right has been infringed to enable him engage the services of a lawyer to prosecute his claim, this provision has remained dead letters. The National Assembly has not made any meaningful provision in this regard as the Legal Aid Programme in existence is not only weak but ineffective. (pp.28-29)

The history of abuse or violation of human rights in Nigeria could be traced to the pre-colonial era. Hence, there were human rights abuses in the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial and contemporary eras. However, our discussion in this section of the article focuses on human rights abuses in post-colonial era and contemporary era. This section also examines some cultural practices in Nigeria that abuse or violate human rights.

Nigeria got her independence as a country in 1960. It is unfortunate that Nigeria has continued to witness several cases of human rights violations. The rate and degree of human rights violation in Nigeria after independence in the post-colonial era is so high that one doubts whether the concept of human rights is well understood in Nigeria. Many citizens of Nigeria have suffered terribly as a result of human rights violations.

After independence in 1960, Nigeria has experienced different types of government such as British Parliamentary or Cabinet system of government, western presidential system of government, military government as well as democratic government at different periods. Regrettably, in all these types of government, there were cases of human rights abuses in Nigeria. It ought to be noted that governance in Nigeria has not been smooth since after independence in 1960. There were many military interventions and coups in Nigeria, and such interventions were accompanied with human rights abuses. It ought to be noted that this study does not intend to give an exhaustive or complete account of the military interventions, but rather to cite some instances of such in order to illustrate the point under consideration. Among which was a coup against the military government of General Aguiyi Ironsi which brought General Yakubu Gowon to power in July 1966. In the process, many innocent citizens were maltreated, and peoples' rights were grossly violated and abused. Unfortunately, Gowon's administration was terminated forcefully. He was overthrown by another coup that brought General Obasanjo to power in July 1975. Obasanjo's administration seemed not to be better than that of his predecessor with regard to the maintenance of human rights. Also, Shagari's administration, which started in 1979, ended in 1983 as a result of military intervention with the coup that enthroned General Mohammed Buhari in 1983, who was later overthrown by General Ibrahim Babangida. (Nwachukwu., Austin., and Nwaneri ,2014, p.5) In all these military regimes, human rights were relegated to the background. Human life was not accorded due respect and was destroyed recklessly.

A remarkable case of human rights violation in Nigeria was the intentional and malicious denial of the sovereign mandate given willingly by Nigerians to Moshod

Abiola in June 12th 1993 presidential election. This elicited a lot of controversial reactions because it was very clear to Nigerians that Abiola won the election in 1993, but his right to govern Nigeria was totally denied. It became obviously clear that the Nigerian government at that point in time did not have any regard for the fundamental human rights.

Among Nigerian military administrators that are very remarkable in the violation of fundamental human rights is General Sanni Abacha. During his administration, there were many cases of maltreatment of people and destruction of human lives. Many citizens of Nigeria were not accorded the dignity due to them as human beings. In fact, the basic point to be noted is that fundamental human rights were completely disregarded by most Nigerian political leaders.

In the contemporary era, it is not an over-statement to assert that human rights as well as human dignity have been reduced to ashes. Destruction of human lives became so common such that one wonders if human life has any worth or value for some Nigerians. Kidnapping is one of the current crimes in Nigeria today. According to Ejesi (2013), “Kidnapping, generally, could be said to be a term which denotes the taking away of a person’s free control over his/her movements, by illegal means, normally with force, threats and sometimes deception.” (p.403) Many citizens of Nigeria have suffered severe denial of their basic rights by kidnappers. Some people were kept in some secluded places, especially in the bush for days. Such people were injured very seriously and denied of their freedom of movement. Many have lost their lives in the process. Some kidnappers slaughtered human beings as if they were slaughtering cows and goats. *Amnesty International Logo Mark* (2021) notes that more than 5,300 people, including the foreigners working on quarry sites, were kidnapped for ransom by bandits and gunmen. Also, more than 95 people were killed by gunmen who attacked Kadawa village, Zurmi Local Government Area, Zamfara state. (p.1). All these are clear demonstrations of total disregard for human rights and dignity.

In Nigeria today, people are kept inside prison for many years without trial in law court and declared guilty. As a result of this, many innocent people die in the prison without trial in law court. This practice is very common in contemporary Nigeria. Some citizens of Nigeria have suffered terribly for offences they did not commit. Those who occupy positions of power in Nigeria maltreat the poor masses, treating them as if they were not human beings. The judiciary, which ought to be the last hope of the common man, is not helping issues in this regard. This stems from the fact that they can easily be bought over by those in authority or wealthy people to turn justice upside down in order to maltreat the poor

masses. In fact, it is not an over statement to assert that the judiciary in Nigeria has been turned by the executive arm of government into an instrument or a tool for violation of the basic rights of the citizens. Promulgation and execution of unjust laws and policies have become a very common practice in Nigeria. It is now very fashionable to think that the common man can no longer get justice in the law court.

Furthermore, armed forces and other security agents have committed heinous crimes, and seriously violated peoples' rights in many parts of Nigeria. It is very surprising and unfortunate that armed forces in Nigeria have maltreated many citizens for no just cause. Some of them have handled people as if they were not human beings, and some even killed innocent citizens carelessly in the name of accidental discharge. The law enforcement agents in Nigeria have not helped issues in the maintenance of human rights in Nigeria. They seem to be at the helm of affairs in the violation of human rights. Law enforcement agents used excessive force on the citizens of Nigeria and do not allow the people to exercise their freedom. The violation of human rights in Nigeria seems to have reached its peak. According to Amnesty International Logo Mark (2021:2):

Throughout the year, the Borno state governor carried out forced resettlements of internally displaced people (IDPs) and closures of IDP camps. More than 3,494 people died in inter-communal violence and bandit attacks, and more than 5,290 people were abducted for ransom by bandits and other gunmen. The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and association were routinely violated. Journalists and activists were arrested or questioned for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Also, the basic right to good medical care which promotes healthy living has always been violated by Nigerian governments. Their refusal to pay health workers as well as their inability to meet up with their just demands, has led to incessant strike actions by Nigerian health workers. At times, these strike actions are very prolonged such that many citizens of Nigeria that needed serious medical attention are left unattended to. Such have led to the careless and unfortunate death of many Nigerians

Certainly, it ought to be noted that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country. There are more than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and tribes in Nigeria. These tribes speak different languages, and do not understand one another. Due to one reason or the other, there are always cases of inter- tribal as well inter-community conflicts and wars, during which human rights of the people are completely

violated. In a similar way, there are always many cases of inter-religious conflicts which have led to violation of human rights of the people. In this contemporary era in Nigeria, there are cases of conflicts and wars between farmers and herdsmen. Many local farmers have lost their lives in such conflicts. In all these, basic human rights are completely disregarded and abused to the extent that one wonders if the concept of fundamental human rights is properly understood by these illegal destroyers of human life.

In this contemporary era, there are many terrorist groups that champion the abuse of human rights of the citizens in Nigeria. At this juncture, the notable Boko Haram terrorist group comes to mind. This group has disrupted educational activities in Nigeria, denying the citizens their right to education. The abduction of Chibok girls is a remarkable example of the disruption of educational activities as well as violation of human rights in Nigeria. One wonders whether the kidnappers are aware of the fact that those Chibok girls have their fundamental human rights. The unfortunate and painful thing is that some of the kidnapped school girls were incessantly raped by the abductors and some even died in the hands of their abductors. The state of affairs with regard to the practice and preservation of human rights in Nigeria is very unfortunate. Also, educational institutions have been attacked by gunmen, leading to the closures of many schools in the northern part of Nigeria. According to Amnesty International Logomark (2021), armed groups, such as Boko Haram continued to commit crimes in North East Nigeria, killing and abducting innocent citizens, committing rape and other sexual violence against women and girls. (p.2).

The disregard for human rights seems to be increasing on daily basis in Nigeria. This stems from the fact that both our political leaders and the citizens of Nigeria are not interested in the preservation of human rights. It is now a very common practice to maltreat human beings in Nigeria.

Some Cultural Practices That Violate Human Rights In Some Communities In Nigeria

As already noted in this article, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country. The various ethnic groups in Nigeria have their unique and distinctive cultural practices. There are several cultural practices in most communities in Nigeria that seriously violate the principles of fundamental human rights. Culture is popularly known as the total way of life of any particular group of people. Each cultural group has some practices which are unique to the particular group. Every ethnic group hold tenaciously their cultural practices such that any defaulter is severely punished.

Some of the cultural practices are inhuman and as such violate human rights remarkably.

In some communities among the Igbo people of Nigeria, women are completely excluded from the traditional leadership of such communities. Most activities that involve decision-taking are the prerogative of the men in such communities. Women are given inferior position in such communities, and their views or opinions do not matter. In some communities in Igbo land, women are completely excluded from participating in the election of the traditional rulers of the communities concerned. This is a serious violation of human rights because women are human beings just like men. Such discrimination on account of sex leaves much to be desired.

Among the cultural practices that violate human rights is early child marriage. This is a situation whereby a child who is below the constitutional marital age is forced to marry a man against her will. Marriage is something that one should freely and willingly engage in, and as such one should not be forced to do so, worse still at a pre-mature age. The child in question is helpless because in most cases she is not allowed to decide for herself. In fact, her wish does not count in any way. Such forcefully arranged marriage is, more often than not, propelled and motivated by poverty. In most cases, the child in question may not even be allowed to finish her primary education. Such practice is common among the Hausa people of Nigeria. This is a serious violation of the fundamental human right to freedom of choice and self-expression. Such cultural practice should be discouraged and discontinued.

In some communities in Igbo land, married women are forced to drink the dirty water that was used to bathe the corpse of their dead husbands to prove their innocence and as well demonstrate that they are not instrumental to the death of their husbands. The unfortunate and surprising thing is that married men are not forced to do so at the death of their wives. Such practice is inhuman and it violates the fundamental human rights of women. Besides, it has a lot of health implications. It exposes the women to some infections and psychological trauma.

Another cultural practice that totally violates human rights in most communities in Nigeria is female genital mutilation (FGM). This is a very old cultural practice. Female genital mutilation is an act involving the partial or total removal of a female genital part deliberately for no medical reason. According to Coram International Logo (2017), “The reasons why FGM is performed vary between contexts. However, its existence as a social convention and a way of ensuring premarital virginity and female modesty are often cited as common reasons” (p.2).

In most cases, the consent of the girl child in question is not in any way considered. It is a gross violation of human right, and it demonstrates gender inequality as well as discrimination against females in the community. Besides, the health implications of female genital mutilation are quite devastating. It exposes the girl in question to the risks of infections, complications during child bearing, and in some cases, it exposes the girl to infertility. Attesting to this, Coram International Logo (2017) states:

Painful and debilitating infections are often contracted due to the use of implements such as scissors or razor blades in non-sterile settings. Infertility and the increased chance of complications during childbirth are two long-term impacts, along with the psychological trauma that women who have to undergo FGM are subjected to both at the time and during later life. (pp.2-3)

‘Scarification’ is another cultural practice in some communities in Nigeria that is very harmful and at the same time violates human rights. It is a customary practice of creating an incision on one’s skin using knife, stone, or piece of glass for the sole purpose of identity (Coram International Logo, 2017). This has spiritual implication for some communities in Nigeria. However, the point to be noted is that ‘scarification’ is inhuman and it is a harmful cultural practice that grossly violates peoples’ rights. What worsens the whole situation is that most often those involved are not given the freedom to choose whether they want it or not. Elaborating on this, Coram International Logo (2017) states: “the cultural implications of this act is the fact that the majority of children who undergo scarification are not given a choice on whether to undertake the process or not, the practice exposes the victims to the high risk of dangerous infections and there can also be other severe medical implications”. (p.3) There are other cultural practices in Nigeria that violate human rights. However, the ones the researchers identified above seems to be enough to illustrate the point under consideration.

The Relationship Between Human Rights Abuses And Under-Development In Nigeria

At this point of our discussion in this article, it is evidently clear that the principles of human rights are violated and disregarded in Nigeria. It is also very evident in this article that that there are some cultural practices in Nigeria that disregard and abuse human rights in Nigeria. The implication of this is that human beings are not accorded the dignity proper to them. Violation of human rights is now very common and has become the order of the day in Nigeria. It is quite clear that that the incessant abuse of peoples’ fundamental human rights is of no benefit both to

the abused and the abusers. Certainly, it has many adverse effects and negative implications. Among such adverse effects is the issue of under-development. Hence, this section of the article examines the relationship between human rights abuses and under-development in Nigeria.

Nigeria is very rich in both human and natural resources, but still remains under-developed. A lot of factors are responsible for the problem of under-development in Nigeria. The most remarkable factor is the issue of bad leadership. It is the argument of this article that there is a serious relationship between human rights abuses and under-development in Nigeria. One can argue that the devastating state of affairs in Nigeria and some other African countries are partly due to the abuse and violations of fundamental human rights. As a result of incessant disregard and abuse of human beings in Nigeria, many citizens of Nigeria are no longer interested in contributing their own quota towards the development of Nigeria in different sectors of life. In fact, it is not an over-statement to assert that many citizens of Nigeria are completely tired of Nigeria. This stems from the fact that human beings are not accorded their due dignity. Many citizens of Nigeria prefer to travel to western countries where life is better organized. This explains why the issue of brain drain is increasing rapidly in Nigeria. Nigerians in different western countries contribute heavily to the development of their host countries, while Nigeria remains under-developed.

It seems to the researchers that Nigeria can develop faster if the human rights of the citizens are respected. It is only when one is regarded and appreciated that the person in question brings out his or her best. Many citizens of Nigeria are no longer interested in Nigerian affairs. There is need to restore the dignity of human beings in Nigeria. The restoration of human dignity should be uppermost in the minds of the political leaders and entire citizens of Nigeria.

Evaluation

This study has made scholarly effort to examine the practice of fundamental human rights in Nigeria. It is obvious from the discourse in this article that the principles of human rights in Nigeria are neglected. It seems to the researchers that the values that are mostly regarded in Nigeria are: ethnicity, political power and socio-economic status. Hence, the fundamental human rights of the poor masses are relegated to the background. The unfortunate thing is that the abusers of human rights in Nigeria are more often than not left unpunished, especially when they are in one or the other related to the political leaders. This explains why terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cultism etc are increasing rapidly in Nigeria. What worsens the whole situation is that our political leaders who should be

directly involved in the maintenance of human rights in Nigeria seem to be at the helm of affairs in the violation of the human rights of the citizens. The judiciary that should be the last hope of the common man is not helping issues in this regard. The judiciary can easily be bribed to maltreat the common and poor people, denying them their basic rights as human beings. The poor citizens of Nigeria are quite very helpless.

The violation of Human rights in Nigeria reduces the dignity of human beings and robs them of what properly belongs to them as humans. Besides, it affects the attitude of Nigerians and their responsiveness to the affairs of the country. Generally, the abuse of human rights in Nigeria makes Nigeria a laughing stock before the international body, and brings about under-development in different sectors of life. There is great need to restore the dignity of human person by maintaining the principles of human rights in Nigeria.

This article recommends that our political leaders should take the lead in the preservation of human rights of the citizens of Nigeria. Such ought to be their priority as they pilot the affairs of the country. Every human being deserves certain dignity by virtue of being human, and such should be respected irrespective of the person's sex, socio-economic status, religion, tribe etc. Our political leaders must ensure that any person that abuses the human rights of others is properly punished according to law. Government must ensure that all armed forces, instead of launching attacks indiscriminately on targeted civilians and their properties, should rather defend and protect their lives. Our political leaders must necessarily ensure gender equality in Nigeria and eschew discriminations against women in some communities since women are full human beings. Hence, there is need to combat at all levels in Nigeria all sorts of gender-based violence. Furthermore, sincere effort must be made by the government towards eradicating inhuman cultural practices of some communities that grossly violate the rights of the people especially women and girls by institutionalizing and taking proper legal actions against any community that violates the principles of human rights. Nigerian citizens should be accorded their proper dignity as human beings.

Conclusion

It is an obvious fact that the principles of human rights should be respected everywhere in the world in order to accord human beings the dignity that is proper to them. Every human being deserves certain rights which enable him or her to function effectively in the society. The discourse in this article demonstrates that the basic human rights are incessantly abused and violated in Nigeria. The fundamental human rights are inseparable from human nature. Hence, any abuse

of human right is an abuse of human nature. Violation of human rights degrades and devalues human nature. Besides, the violations of human rights have adverse effects on the development of Nigeria as a country as demonstrated in this article. For Nigeria to experience progress in all sectors of her life, the basic human rights of the citizens must be regarded. Our political leaders should ensure that human rights are maintained just as it is obtainable in well-organized countries of the world.

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Department of Philosophy, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

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