

DANGERS OF KIDNAPPING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN NATION: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

Asogwa, Emmanuel Chukwujindu

Department of Philosophy, Religion and Cultural Studies
Alex Ekwueme Federal University
Ndufu – Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State
jindusemman@gmail.com
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Abstract

The significant impact of kidnapping and other associated crimes is becoming worrisome and problematic not only to Nigerians but also to the international community. This has generated fear on the foreigners to invest in the country and have dwindled the economic growth or development in the country. The grave negative impacts on the Nigerian are many as foreign companies are closed down and these have resulted to unemployment and displacement of workers in the affected areas. Another implication is on the political and religious aspect of the nation's life which has been unabated. Currently, it is not only politicians, foreigners, businessmen are being abducted but recently the catholic priests are inclusive as many of them are being abducted on regular basis. This study indicated that the current wave of kidnapping has increased the rate of unemployment, also effects in no small measure the labour market and has made unfriendly environment for business to thrive. This paper through analytical, objective as well as phenomenological approach beams its searchlight on various challenges of kidnapping on Nigeria. It is the position of this paper that government should authorize the law enforcement agencies to punish anybody caught in the act and also the church should play its role in order to reduce the rate of kidnapping for ransom.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Poverty, Unemployment, Church, Nigeria

Introduction

Kidnapping with its concomitant vices, has proved to be one of the most lethal activities that threaten human peaceful co-existence with no peculiarity to any country. It has contributed adversely in no small measure to global development. There is no legitimate government that will support kidnapping due to the fact that it is illegal. Many successive governments have enacted one law or the other in order to curb kidnapping but instead of bringing it to an end, it's on the increase these days. Many Nigerians have suggested capital punishment (death penalty) as a punitive measure that will put to an end to kidnapping but all to no avail.

Kidnapping is not new to Nigeria. It dates back to pre-colonial and colonial days, as we had war captives, slaves, etc. During the regime of Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, the then military president of Nigeria, he was abducted on Friday 29, 1966 at the government house, Ibadan and then tortured and killed (Njoku and Lawal 2016). Also, the defunct regime of General Mohammed Buhari in 1984 plotted the kidnap of Umaru Dikko, the transport minister during President Shehu Shagari's regime. On the hind sight, it is observed that the former Governor of Anambra State Chris Ngige was kidnapped on July 10, 2003 by his fellow political party members who were opposing him (Emewu and Anyanwu, 2009). He was later dethroned as the governor of Anambra State. Moreover, a popular kidnapper that his name always rings a bell to Nigerians is Chukwudubem Onwuamadike popularly known as Evans. He did not only terrorize the South East but also Lagos and its environs. He terrorized the East with criminal contemporaries like late Ngwu ekere omu, Vampire, Osisikanku and others (Nnadozie and Okolie, 2017). He later shifted his base to Lagos where he carried out several high profiles kidnapping operation in and outside the state before he was caught with his gang. A bounty of ₦30 million was placed on him by the police detective and during his arrest, a gold ring worth of \$75 dollars was recovered from his mansion at Magodo phase 2, Lagos (Olowookere, 2015).

However, many Catholic Priests have been kidnapped in Enugu State. Some are kidnapped and after some times are released while some are kidnapped and killed. It is now becoming a new trend in Enugu State to kidnap catholic priests. Barely two months after two catholic priests of Enugu Diocese were kidnapped and killed another Priest, Rev. Fr. Arinze Madu, a Vice Rector at the Queen of Apostle Spiritual Year Seminary; Imezi-Owa in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State was kidnapped. On another related development, on November 27, 2019, another catholic priest from Nsukka Catholic Diocese, Rev. Fr. Malachy Asadu was also kidnapped along Imilike - Nsukka Road. The kidnap of Father Asadu brings to nine catholic priests kidnapped in Enugu State in Eight months. It's on record that Rev. Fr. Theophilus Ndule was kidnapped on November 16 and rescued three days after some undisclosed ransom was paid to his abductors (Ede, 2019).

Kidnapping has become endemic in the Nigerian society. It is fast becoming a lucrative business and an alternative to armed robbery. The gravity of kidnapping is so intense that it has virtually affected most persons in our society. The current dimension of kidnapping became alarming in Niger Delta region when militants on 26 February 2006 abducted some oil workers, ostensibly to draw global attention to the dire situation in the oil rich Niger Delta of the country; the victims were mostly foreigners. Since then the social

problem of kidnapping has spread like wide-fire in most parts of the country, especially in the South-eastern region of the country. The targets are no longer foreigners alone; practically every Nigerian is now a target.

Kidnapping is not actually new these days, but the current lucrative ransom demanding strategy has become a serious social problem for government and people of Nigeria. Apart from the above observable evidences, many more problems which are associated with kidnapping will be unraveled during the cause of this work. This study further intends to examine the role of the church in combating kidnapping in Nigeria. This is necessary because despite measures meant to curb it, kidnapping still prevails and it is on the increase in recent times.

Concept of Kidnapping

Kidnapping could be defined as the act of taking a person away illegally to an unknown destination, keeping such as a prisoner while demanding or attaching some conditions to the release of such individual especially monetary which is known as ransom. Asuquo (2009) noted that the term “kidnapping” is difficult to define with precision because it varies from state to state and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It is the forcible seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common law offence and the key part is that, it is a restriction of someone else liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from.

Abraham (2010) defined kidnapping as an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud. However, it includes snatching and seizing of a person in order to collect a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreement among people. It is also noted that, kidnapping varies from country to country; therefore the term is uncertain and devoid of any straight jacket definition. That is, it depends on who is defining it and from what perspective and for what purpose. They viewed kidnapping as unlawful seizure and detention of a person by force against their will. Also, an act of seizing a person and taking him/her to another country for involuntary servitude or the impressments of males into military or naval service by force or fraud. A crime of seizing, confirming abducting or carrying away of persons by force or fraud often subject him or her to involuntary servitude in an attempt to demand a ransom or in furtherance of another crime. (Thomas and Nta 2009) defined kidnapping as:

Robbery of the highest rank. According to them, it is an organized and systematic robbery which is not as deadly as armed robbery, but more

profitable than the former. The profitability has encouraged those that indulged in it to carry on with the act although there is a law prohibiting it.

Kidnapping is the forceful seizure of people by gunmen in order to demand for ransom to be paid before releasing the person.

Types of Kidnapping

Kidnapping may occur in the following forms:

Bride Abduction: This is when two lovers want to marry each other but the parents refuse to give their consent or blessing to them. The groom will abduct the bride and when this happens, the bride's family loses the bride price until reconciliation takes place. This type of kidnapping is still common in traditional nomadic societies of central Asia and Africa where women's right to marriage is still questionable.

Express Kidnapping: This is a situation in which the kidnapers demand a certain ransom which the families, company or government can pay. This is usually executed by amateur kidnapers who engage in the act of sheer poverty. An example of this is reported in Business Day Newspaper of Monday 13th June 2011 where a lady travelling to Port Harcourt was kidnapped at Upper Iweka, Onitsha, Anambra State and was released on the payment of hundred of Naira. This type originated from Latin America.

Tiger Kidnapping: This is the taking of a hostage to make a loved one or associate of the victim do something for instance, a bank manager is taking hostage to force him open the safe. The term originates from the usually long preceding observation like a tiger does on the prowl.

Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Many reasons are given as probable causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Inyang, (2009) linked the problem of unemployment as:

One of such reasons of kidnapping in Nigeria, is youth unemployment. He used the widely acknowledged adage which says that "an idle man is the devil's workshop" to present the situation of unemployment in Nigeria. He noted that there are uncountable able-bodied men and women in Nigeria roaming the streets in search of non existing jobs. Out of frustration together with mounting responsibilities to tackle many idle young persons have ventured into criminal activity of which kidnapping is not an exemption.

Inyang further acknowledged that, a graduate who is unable to secure a job, is psychologically bereft of other means of survival

To buttress the point and to further prove that unemployment is a major cause of kidnapping in Nigeria. According to a report from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) number of unemployed Nigerians rose by 3.3million to 20.9 million in the third quarter of 2018 (Nnorom and Adegbesan, 2018). This is an indication that unemployment is on a high increase and it leads some youths who have lost faith in life to take to kidnapping. Nnamani (2015) agrees that youth unemployment is one of the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Many able bodied men and women, some of them with good certificates, waiting for non existing jobs join kidnapping due to inability to solve mounting responsibilities that lead to frustration.

Furthermore, Inyang (2009) also believed that, the proliferation of arms as a result of political patronage of miscreant who were dumped after elections may have indirectly encouraged and enhanced kidnapping. Inyang linked today's kidnapping situation to the scourge of arm robbery in the early eighties where many young able bodied men who fought during the Nigerian civil war were discharged and there were no jobs to engage them and keep them busy, many of them consequently took to armed robbery, since as ex-soldiers they were with weapons, having acquired the skills and guns during the war. The story is almost the same today as politicians employ most idle youths as political thugs and later dump them after elections. Therefore, the youths (thugs) who have been abandoned by their masters after winning elections are now busy kidnapping innocent persons and relatives of those persons they consider wealthy.

Another factor that has fuelled kidnapping in Nigeria is greed and the quest to make quick money syndrome. Ogbuehi, (2018:5) believes that "in a country where the rich receive the uninterrupted accolade for doing something as usual as a "handshake" - unscrupulous persons will scramble to join the league regardless of the means, after all no one is interested in the means as much as the end".

The inconsistency between economic transparency and accountability in the running of normal government affairs and the desire to amass wealth among public office holders at different levels of government often also contribute to the leverage to kidnapping. Kidnappers believed that, when those in government loot government treasury openly without fear, kidnappers also take laws into their hands by abducting people for ransom.

Also, many people today who are desperate for economic and social needs are often the ones who commit kidnapping. So where the gap between the rich and the poor is constantly widening and where the possibilities to earn money in an honest way are often difficult to attain, kidnapping turns out to be a lucrative means of livelihood to them. Nworah (2009) noted that, in a situation where government officials, especially ranking persons in civil service who are custodian of government resources spend recklessly or loot, could automatically encourage few of the dissatisfied persons to rent their anger on them and their relatives.

Also, all over the world, poverty is said to be a motivating condition for criminal activities. Any person who lives below \$1.25 a day is living below the poverty line. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2019, the National Poverty rate currently stands at 40.09 percent, representing 82.9 million persons. As youths are the perpetrators of this heinous crime called kidnapping. A poor youth is considered as one with certificate but underemployed, or no job at all, no handwork or business or has no money to start it or frustrated and no hope to help himself or cater for his family who has no money. Poverty can propel people towards kidnapping or crime as a way to make ends meet. Also, the Niger Delta Area is suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling infrastructures, and services, high unemployment, social deprivations, abject poverty, filthy squalor and endemic conflict. Most of these kidnapers are lured by poverty; this can frustrate them into harsh and uncivilized thoughts and actions.

The Northeast the hotbed of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kaduna State was in a big mess in 2019 following the high rate of kidnapping. This aptly describes the raging insecurity in this state, where kidnapping and banditry have become big businesses. The last four years have been horrendous. Daily, scores of helpless people are kidnapped for ransom in communities across the state (This Day 2019). This incidence led to the protest of Rigasa, in Igabi Local Government Areas of the state on the high rate of abductions. However, from 2013 to 2018, according to the United Nation Children Fund (UNICEF), no fewer than one thousand children including 276 Chibok girls have been abducted by Boko Haram in the Northeast (Jannamike 2018). Northeast has been a danger zone for Nigerian citizens. In 2018, notorious armed bandit operating along Abuja Kaduna express way intercepted travelers and kidnapping 87 passengers. The kidnaper accessed their physical appearances and selected their victims (Ogbuchi 2018).

In another incidence, Gunmen abducted 44 passengers along the Birnin-Gwari-Kaduna highway in Kaduna State. The victims were kidnapped on two

different occasions - Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning. The female victims were stripped naked before taken inside the bush (Independence, 2018). In the Wednesday incident, 21 people traveling in three Golf vehicles were abducted while on Tuesday, a Sharon bus conveying 17 passengers and six other people in a trailer and a tanker were abducted on the highway.

However, across the country, the once forgotten menace of kidnapping has resurged with victims ranging from children to the elderly, while some end up being killed, just as demands for ransom continue to rise (Ezeobi 2020). To buttress this point, a dreaded kidnappers of Juji community in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State kidnapped one Mrs. Ataga and two children demanding ₦150 million ransom for their release. The negotiations will still on before they killed the matriarch and subsequently demanded ₦20 million for the release of her children (This Day, 2020). A related incident also happened in Adamawa State where Boko Haram insurgents abducted and killed Lawan Andimi, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). He was abducted early January when the insurgents attacked Michika. The insurgents had rejected the ₦50 million ransom offered them (Shiklam 2020). He was later killed. This and other incidence triggered the protest of Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, the priests and their congregations, all dressed in black. They proceeded on a peaceful march from the Ecumenical centre to the Our Lady Queen of Nigeria in Area 3, praying and seeking God's divine intervention (Olokor, 2020).

However the president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Archbishop Akubeze said:

Today we the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria with significant support of priests, consecrated persons and our beloved lay faithful embark on a peaceful protest against the high level of insecurity in every part of Nigeria. We are on this peaceful protest on behalf of the over 22 million Catholics and over 100 million Christians in Nigeria. We are protesting against the brutal killings of innocent Nigerians by Boko Haram, and terrorist herdsmen. We are gathered here to register our protest against the kidnapping for ransom in every part of Nigeria. We are gathered to mourn the women, children, babies, and men who have been killed by the terrorists.

They challenged the President Buhari that they are tired of hearing that Boko Haram has been "technically defeated", even when they still attack with purity.

Moreover, another disheartening incident that took place on January 9, 2020 was the abduction of 4 seminarians who are students of the Catholic Good Shepherd Major Seminary Kaku in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, by heavily armed men in military uniforms (Isenyo, 2020). Three of them were later released while one was killed.

The consequences of kidnapping on the Nigerian Nation

The consequences of this dread crime are numerous. It affects almost everybody in general. Insecurity kills national development, confidence, and it drives investors and good money away.

Uwugiarne (2011) has it that while insecurity disrupts socio-economic and political activities in the country, it also slows down the pace of economic growth and development. Many investors continue to flee the country. Diara (2010) opines that one of the direct effects of this anti-social development is that:

Nigeria is no longer conducive for foreign investors who would like to set up their industries, such foreigner will not do so as nobody likes to establish his business in a society where lives and property are not secured and even those who have already established will be forced to relocate to another countries where their security and investment will be secured.

No investment thrives in an atmosphere of insecurity and this contributes to unemployment which leads to economic meltdown. The economic effects of kidnapping include direct and indirect costs. At the individual level, the costs include the economic value of money that may be lost to kidnappers, while the indirect-economic cost of kidnapping include expenditure on preventive measures, such as the employment of private security personnel. At the government level, the economic effects of kidnapping involve the expenditure on security and security agencies. The federal government budget for 2009 for police formation and command was ₦195 billion. The Lagos state government was also reported to have spent three billion naira in two years on security alone (Soyombo 2009). Much money has been spent on ransom payments. The former Inspector General, Sir Mike Okiro, disclosed that 15 billion have been paid as ransom to kidnappers between 2006 and 2009 (Kyrian 2009). The large sum of money spent as ransom payment could affect the state economy drastically, as it could have been used for meaningful economic development.

Also, the nation loses a lot of revenue when expatriates working on the multinational oil companies were attacked. Out of fear, people tend to stay

clear from the working environment and the adverse effect is always on the economy. Dode (2007) noted that:

In 2006, when kidnappers abducted six foreign expatriates from shell oil company premises the company was forced to close down and this led to the loss of millions of standard cubic feet per day of gas production.

Many people are kidnapped often, and a lot of money is given out as ransom. This situation affects both the state and household economy. Some people usually go as far as borrowing to bail their relatives out from the hands of hoodlums. In many instances, it is often the bread winner of families that are usually targeted, the implication is always felt particularly within the family, whereby members of such families will have to feed themselves and adjust to their normal daily activities, until they secure the release of the victim. The victim's work-place will also be affected adversely. If the victim is a businessman or woman, the business will suffer some setbacks pending his or her return. In a formal organization, the challenges are enormous as the absence of the victim will cause problem within the system and the output will automatically be affected as well.

Kidnapping affect the social life and social relations of many people who are held hostages in their homes from dusk to dawn, for the fear of being kidnapped. As a result of kidnapping, travelling in the day time is as risky as travelling in the night. Furthermore, many people have been forced out of their newly completed houses by kidnappers. Many people are afraid to buy or use new motors vehicles for the fear of kidnappers. It was reported that rich people in Rivers State have resorted to ridding in taxi cabs and commercial motorcycles popularly called Okada to market, school and social outings as a means to check hostage takers (Soyombo 2009).

In regard to inter-personal relationship, kidnapping has also contributed to a relatively high level of mistrust among people. Few people still extend the traditional African hospitality to strangers. Some people do not acknowledge or return greetings by strangers nor stop to assist people nowadays barricade themselves in their homes. Most devastatingly, it has been noticed that, it is the fear of kidnapping that has contributed to the current, high demand for police escort by diverse public officials in the country, thereby further depleting the inadequate police personnel that could have been deployed to the street for crime control (Soyombo 2009). To this end, the direct negative effects of this development on Nigeria's prospects of development cannot be over emphasized.

The National Association of Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) one time expressed regret over the serious security problems in the South East region and neighboring south-south zone of Nigeria. Though most recently, Northern part of the country more especially Kaduna State has taken a lead. This State is known to be dangerous mostly in the day time. It is said that the security challenges had worsened the already bad and unfriendly business environment that is negatively affecting the growth of business and socio-economic activities in the area (Nzeomiwu, 2010). Onovo (2010). Lamented that the high wave of crime in the country, especially in the South-East and South-South is fundamentally due to materialism and loss of societal values, noting that people were ready to do anything to get rich and be celebrated in the society. If industries are closing shops and investors are not forthcoming because of insecurity and other attendant problems faced by businesses then the future particularly that of the children should agitate the mind of everybody.

However, apart from being a deterrent to potential investors in Nigeria's economy, kidnapping has negatively impacted on night life and tourism. A number of companies have closed shops for fear of having their personnel kidnapped and additional challenge of introducing risk allowances into their welfare policies, especially when they are located in areas with high number of occurrences of kidnapping (Chinedu 2012)

On the implications on social system is not functioning well. This is due to the mismanagement that occurs within the political sector. The dysfunction within the system causes high level of poverty, unemployment, deprivation as well as marginalization. The result is visualized in the high crime rate of which kidnapping is at the fore front

The Role of the Church in Combating Kidnapping

The church has the obligation to fight for the society that will enable humans to live with dignity and integrity, and to work for the eradication of exploitation and kidnapping. It helps to curb kidnapping by shaping man's behaviour in uniformity with societal norms and values which seek societal co-existence, brotherliness, stability and enhance progress in human development. Ononogbu (2005) asserts that:

The role of the church should be expanded in terms of re-establishing its moral leadership and spiritual authority in society. The church must strike a balance between undue theological radicalism that places material salvation at the core of its mission and a theological rigidity that decries the necessity of constructive engagement with political power. It would be wrong theology to insist that politics is outside

God's consuming interest and concern, therefore, Christians have to be involved in politics as Christian, just as the church has to be concerned about the state because the church is God's representative institution on earth.

However, it is the duty of the church to promote human development which inculcate the essential values of humanity which enhance unity, orderliness, being our brother's keeper protection of the less privilege people, peace and happiness, justice and equity. It was in line with these, that the Nigerian Bishops organized a protest against the brutal killings of the innocent Nigerians by the kidnappers, Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen terrorizing the whole country (Olokor, 2020). Moreso, the Catholic Church in Enugu State bottled anger over incessant Fulani herdsmen attack in the state as the faithful in Enugu, Awgu and Nsukka diocese held processions and prayer sessions simultaneously in the three zones. According to (Nnadi, Obi and Chris, 2016) Bishop Onaga who read a joint statement on behalf of colleagues in Awgu and Nsukka said:

Over the years, there have been frequent disagreements between the herdsmen and the local population, but such were mostly minor and tolerable inconveniences that one should expect in order to make accommodation for another within the same space. In the past few years, however, this relationship has become increasingly problematic as the herdsmen turned aggressive in their activities. More recently, this gathering storm has led to conflicts characterized by kidnappings and robberies, the loss of lives, limbs and property, the rape of women and girls, and the utter destruction of farms and farmlands. The most recent and widely reported incident at Nimbo, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, in which several of our farmers and fellow citizens were savagely butchered to death in their own homes, was the culmination of a growing culture of impunity among the herdsmen, some of whom have become increasingly lawless.

Also, in another related incidence of the role of the church in combating kidnapping through peaceful demonstration was what took place in Imo State. The Catholic Bishops of Owerri Ecclesiastical province, which includes Orlu, Okigwe, Umuahia, Aba, Ahiara and Owerri dioceses, appeared in black attire with physically challenged citizens for ransom by armed hoodlums (Nkwopara, 2010).

However, the church has the capacity of creating jobs and empowering youths as a means of tackling kidnapping in Nigeria. This will go a long way in reducing poverty and idle youths thereby curbing the scourge of kidnapping

in the country. The church should continually condemn the attitude of corrupt politicians who are bent in embezzlement of public fund and also condemn any bad policy of the government.

Recommendation

1. There is need for the church to monitor the policies of the government that affect the common masses.
2. The church should continually expose the corrupt politicians through the media, peaceful demonstration, excommunication and ostracize.
3. It will yield positive results if all the Christians within the country organize peaceful procession to Aso Rock, National Assemblies and Government Houses and register their grievances against kidnapping, terrorism, Fulani herdsmen etc, than allowing Catholic Church to do it alone.
4. Government at all level should try to empower the youths through learning skills that will be useful for them and the society and also give them a reasonable amount of money to establish it.
5. Government should look into the security network and go back to the drawing board for more effective results.
6. The church should do more in the area of job creation and empowerment in other to checkmate crimes in the society.

Conclusion

Nigerians are suffering economic woes as a result of kidnappers, terrorists and Fulani herdsmen, it has hampered in no small measure development and people moving freely from one place to another. It has also led to untimely death of many citizens in the country. The government should use their prerogative powers to see that the culprit face the full wrath of the law. The church with the above mentioned contributions and more can curb kidnapping and other related crimes in the country.

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