

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which many countries are signatory including Nigeria, lays down standards to which countries of the world must comply. Every human being has a fundamental right to life; shelter; food; education; health care; safe water and the right to human dignity. Most of all, every human being has a right to feel “safe” within his/her environment.

In order to protect these fundamental human rights, nations have Constitutions which could either be written or unwritten. In the case of Nigeria, the military Institution which was a creation of the Colonial masters, intercepted Nigeria’s Political independence in 1966 and thereby, suspending Nigeria’s Constitution. By this intrusion by the military, the fundamental rights of Nigerians were eroded.

The military using civilians, have devised different strategies in their ultimate aim of corruptly enriching themselves, are destroying Nigeria and brutalising Nigerians in the process. Thus, since 1966, Nigerians have been subjected to naked brutality and undue force and constant threat of force.

Most damaging of these strategies is the introduction of the culture of “Power” and “wealth” and “wealth”. A culture which has seriously endangered Nigerians and Nigeria’s image both within Nigeria and outside Nigeria. This contamination of Nigeria’s traditional culture by military intrusion, has created a situation where “corruption” is perceived to be characteristic of “the Nigerian”. A stereotyping which is conveniently preventing the people of the world from seeing the pain which the average Nigerian bears.

Nigerians are constantly on the run from their brutal oppressors. Although they face such dangers in their homeland, they have great difficulty in securing the protection which they so desperately need.

The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, provides for the protection of human rights. Human Rights are Nigerians’ Rights.

It is an established fact that the military regime in Nigeria is one of the most brutal in Africa as various international agencies confirm. Therefore, the protection which should be available to refugees, should apply to Nigerians. As defined by the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,

“a person who has a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and who is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. (UN Convention on Refugees (1951) Extended in the 1967 Protocol to the Convention).

Because the Nigerian problem appears to have religious and ethnic flavouring, “nationality” in the UN definition can be interpreted to mean “ethnicity”. It is very difficult to convince a non-Nigerian that your fellow Nigerian is holding you hostage in your country on the basis of your ethnic group, or, that because you come from an area enriched with crude oil.

Therefore, also causing problems for Nigerians is the abundance of “crude oil” in their country. A commodity in which world Powers are also interested and indeed rely.

Whereas, the Nigerian Military turn Politicians, aided and abetted by civilians of opportunism engage with brutality in “Politics of self interest”, some world Powers engage in international Politics of “national economic interest” to the detriment of respect for basic human rights, hence the lack of Political Will to effectively defend the basic rights of Nigerians world wide.

VICTIMS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

Reports suggest a relationship between Political Power hence the “Military” and the increase in the “drug trade” to which Nigeria is linked. It can be argued, that Political Power ensures the “official drug trade is carried out under “Diplomatic cover” an immunity available only to Governments.

As economic strangulation tightens, it is highly probable for desperate Nigerians are recruited for the drug trade carried out under Diplomatic cover.

Although DAWN condemns vehemently those Nigerians who allow themselves to be used in this wicked manner, the fact remains that the Drug Barons remain at large and beyond the jurisdiction of the masses of Nigeria.

Some mothers are able to escape into foreign countries to escape the many dangers lurking in present day Nigeria. Many are into prostitution in their countries of escape. While some of those who are unable to escape, get killed in their endeavours to feed Nigeria’s children. Within Nigeria, mothers and children as young as 8 years of age go into prostitution.

Many mothers end up on the streets and under bridges with their children. Feeding themselves and children from waste grounds and begging for food. Many of the mothers and children fall victims to ritual killers and human part traffickers.

Nigerians are desperate to escape the “HELL” to which Nigeria has been converted. Foreign Embassies present in Nigeria will testify to this desperation.

The presence of Nigerians outside Nigeria and the various reports regarding the extent of the human rights abuse going on in Nigeria is conclusive of the underlying reason why the world is experiencing an influx of Nigerians their respective countries.

NIGERIANS ARE TRAPPED IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Traditionally, Nigerians are home lovers people who are unable to make foreign countries a place of abode “till death do them part”. Due to the destruction which Nigeria represents. Many Nigerians are trapped in what is commonly known as “other people’s country”. This is a great tragedy and a constant source of sadness for a great number of Nigerians abroad. Life is so precious that the only option available to Nigerians presently is to endure the pain of growing old and dying in their country of hiding.

Nigerians are a people in need of understanding and support. But who, due to the Institutionalisation of corruption and crime by the Nigerian military and their rogue civil Political associates, appear to have lost the confidence of the countries of their

escape. Instead, many Nigerians seeking asylum are held in refugee centres. Sometimes in jails like common criminals.

Nigeria is a “giant on her knees” without the understanding and assistance of the outside world, Nigeria and her people will perish.

It is against this background that Amnesty Nigeria is based.

AMNESTY NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

This is an agenda to redress the imbalance and what amounts to an injustice created by the Nigerian tragedy.

As various International reports confirm, Nigeria has an extremely repressive regime. A regime with one of the worse human rights records in Africa.

Although Nigeria dominated the agenda of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in Edinburgh in October 1997. CHOGM resolved to extend Nigeria’s suspension for one year to October 1st 1998, although it is clear that the transition on which the decision is based is fraud.

Democratic Alliance or women of Nigeria (DAWN) is in no position to force the Political hand of the Commonwealth Heads of Government or indeed the International Community as a whole, to decisively take on the maximum dictators of Nigeria and Western Africa. Although they continue to threaten the Political stability of the Western coast of Africa under the disguise of ECOMOG Peace keeping force, the therefore, the economic well being and development of Nigeria and the region.

Nigeria is at war, albeit a one sided one. Wars and abuses of human rights create refugee crisis. It follows that to allow a dictatorship to persist, is to acquiesce to the creation of refugee crisis. As such, justice demands that the responsibility of protecting those running away from the brutality of the dictatorship should fall on the rest of the world, until such time, when the country is made safe for its nationals.

The extension of the suspension of the Nigerian Military junta (albeit under the guise of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) from the Commonwealth of Nations should be accompanied by a corresponding period of general amnesty for Nigerians escaping from the brutality of the dictatorship.

The responsibility to prove the brutality of the Nigerian dictatorship should be removed from “the Nigerian”, in their countries of escape. “The Nigerian” need protection from the dictatorship that in terms of brutality can be compared with Ardof Hitler who needed the Second World War to secure the freedom of the Jews and peace in Europe.

The dismantlement of apartheid in Southern Africa needed efforts from the entire world. To some extent, South African blacks had an easier task proving their case against their oppressors, as there was a distinctive divide: it was “white” against “blacks”. In the case of Nigeria, it is “black” against “black”. It is a difficult task, proving that your fellow Nigerian is after your life in a your own country. Nigeria and Nigerians need efforts from the whole world to liberate them from their oppressors. Most importantly, Nigerians need urgent protection by the world.

AMNESTY NIGERIA CAMPAIGN

For this campaign, DAWN collected 300, 000 signatures from people who agreed that Nigerians in the United Kingdom deserved amnesty of a period equal to that granted the Military regime.

Many Nigerians refused to sign claiming they were not Nigerians. Such is the anger people feel against the rut that has become a country regarded as the giant of Africa.

The campaign was however over taken by the event of 8th June 1998. With gratitude to the Almighty God Allah for a life well spent.

HAPPY READING

AIM

To secure general amnesty and hence protection for all Nigerians outside Nigeria until Nigeria is liberated.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) Providing emotional support for Nigeria's asylum seekers in various detention centres in Britain and European Union States.
- (2) To continue support for Nigeria's refugees in Western Africa.

ACTIVITIES

PHASE ONE

(a) Produce leaflets and signature format

Secure one million signatures.

Lobby members of the European Parliament and the British Parliament for support campaign.

Appeal to Nigerians in business for assistance and participation

Compile list of detained asylum seekers

Support asylum seekers in centre.

Provide necessary assistance.

Seek assistance from International Refugee agencies. (UNHCR)

CAMPAIGN METHOD

Leaflets

Letters

Posters

Face to face
Telephone

PHASE TWO

Collect signature sheets

Record and maintain list of participated cultural associations; Faith communities;
Refugee organisations

Write letters of gratitude to all participants in signature collection

Duplicate signature sheets for respective appeals.

APPEAL FOR AMNESTY TO

The British Government/Home Office

The European Community through the European Parliament

COMMENCEMENT DATE 30th November 1997

END

PHASE THREE

Organise Protest matches

Implement Appeals

EVALUATION

The number of leaflets produced and distributed

Number of meetings attended, issues discussed and results achieved.

Number of signatures obtained.

Turnout for various matches

Number of asylum seekers who benefited from the campaign

BUDGET

Stationery

Posters

Transportation

Travels

Postage / Fax/ Telephone calls

Financial Assistance to asylum seekers and refugees

