



# Human Rights Violations and Accountability: A Case Study of the EndSARS Movement

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## ABSTRACT

*The EndSARS protests in Nigeria that broke out in October 2020 brought to the fore the issues of police brutality and systemic abuse by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Through this paper, an attempt is made to investigate accountability and justice mechanisms put in place post-protests through governmental investigations, international reactions, litigation against perpetrators, and the challenges often associated with the realization of justice. Some of such governmental responses have been the setting up of the judicial panels of inquiry in many states—one of the most fastidious being the extensive hearings and testimonies at the Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry. Effectiveness has been mixed, despite such efforts, due to interference by political interests, lack of cooperation by law enforcement agencies, and issues around transparency. International human rights organizations and foreign governments have provided an important role in galvanizing the abundance of abuses internationally and impressing the Nigerian government with pressure for active policing. Legal actions against perpetrators have been slow, with serious obstacles like witness intimidation and systemic bias in judiciaries. Civil society organizations have also been involved in documenting abuses, providing legal representation to victims, and calling for broader accountability from other stakeholders. However, the involvement of civil society has been pushed to the fringes by intimidation and harassment from the government. Further, the broader implications of the EndSARS movement on human rights in Nigeria demand the call for a security sector that should be undergoing comprehensive reforms with expansive accountability mechanisms in place. The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening these judicial panels, reforms, civil society support, and international collaboration to ensure that justice and human rights obtain in Nigeria. These will lead Nigeria into the future with human rights respected and accountability being the norm with justice served to all citizens.*

**Keywords:** Human Rights, Justice, Police Brutality.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The #EndSARS movement that took place was only a tremendous social and a political event in Nigeria due to public backlashing against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a unit of the Nigerian Police Force. The SARS unit was founded in 1992 in order to curb armed robbery and other high-scale crimes. This unit over time has become notorious for human rights abuses such as extrajudicial killings, torture, and extortion (Agbashi, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020).

Public criticisms of the police unit had been festering for years, but the public movement only gained real ground in October 2020 after a series of high-profile incidents on police brutality. There were video clips of the killing of a young man in Delta State that went viral on all social media platforms. That incident, among many others at the time, somewhat galvanized public estimates into the resurgence of the #EndSARS movement (Aljazeera; 2020).

It is apparent that social media played a major role in organizing this social movement. Such calls for change gained their top positions among current trends worldwide by the hashtags #EndSARS and #EndPoliceBrutality, the help of international influential people, and drew the global attention. According to CNN (2020), immediately following the protest, it broke out and spread in major cities in Nigeria, calling for the disbandment of SARS and at the same time seeking an end to police brutality.

Beyond being peaceful, the protest was ground-based with placards, chants, and even sit-ins, showing a great readiness to sacrifice their interest for the good of the country. All that led the way to violent clampdowns on the protest action by the security forces, viewing all this in light of the initial assurances coming from the Nigerian government of taking some steps towards the disbandment of SARS. Key figures and organisations, such as the Feminist Coalition, played key and giant roles in the organisation of the protests and supporting the protesters. A most topical incident was the Lekki Toll Gate shooting on the 20th of October 2020, in which security forces aimed and shot at protestors gathering at the grounds, leading to the deaths of scores (Amnesty International, 2021).

The #EndSARS protest shook the country like never before, bringing the question of police brutality to the forefront of international discourse. Indeed, the second-minute protests showed the power of social media in mobilization at the grass-roots level, thus holding authorities accountable. Further, it reignited the debate around governance, human rights, and how dire relations can be for systemic reform in Nigeria.

Abimbade et al (2021) cited that one big issue about the #EndSARS campaign is the huge involvement of youths and civil society in Nigeria. They saw the youth make up a great percentage of the country's population, taking the front row of leadership. They used digital tools and sites used in social networking for organizing among themselves, sharing information, and mobilizing support. This digital activism served not only to magnify the visuals of protests but also got the countries' movement international eyes.

The civil society organizations served as an underpinning support to the movement. Since the onset of the protests, groups such as Feminist Coalition have offered protesters financial and logistics aid, including first aid, legal aid, and food supply. In their making records of police brutality apparent, the groups have always sought to call for support for the protesters, supposed on the premise that underlies people's working together and standing in solidarity for the fight for human rights and justice (The Guardian, 2020).

The initial reaction of the Nigerian government to these #EndSARS protests was that of concession and pronouncements for the disbanding of SARS. These, however, were received with great skepticism by the people, as the government time and time again has been analogical to such declarations without real action. But with the continuity of the protests, the response changed, became one of government suppression, and led to a violent encounter at the Lekki Toll Gate deal.

For many, the government's response to the protests, and more specifically toward the event at the Lekki Toll Gate, was the condemnation of the decade—perspectives from national and international views. Undoubtedly, it became an eye-opener for an even more critically needed thing in Nigeria: a reform of policies and accountability from the police. That also engulfed a more general discussion on governance, corruption, and what role the state is playing in protecting the rights of its citizens (BBC News, 2020).

The #EndSARS movement is something that has greatly hit and still has far-reaching implications, not only for this country but even beyond these borders. It brought the issue of brutality by the police into the national and global discussion that called for a complete reformation of the police in Nigeria. Other similar protests mimic the movement across the planet, testifying to the struggle for human rights and justice as global in its nature and connection to one another (CNN, 2020).

The situation in Nigeria remains at the center of various international organs and human rights groups, which stake their claims in demanding accountability and justice for the victims of police brutality. Finally, it has also shown the strength of social media and digital activism in moving societies forward, where the grassroots, through technology, can have their voices become louder and actually be able to realize their interest.

The paper, therefore, looks into the violations of human rights during the #EndSARS protests and, subsequently, the pursuit of justice and accountability. Consequently, this study seeks to provide sustainable insight into what occurred, what unfolded afterward as responses from the various stakeholders, and what this possibly means for the human rights enterprise in Nigeria.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

A serious problem with human rights violations in Nigeria can be attested to, albeit partially documented, with the reports of abuses by both state and non-state actors. The Nigerian police and military have been involved in numerous cases of extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detention. Most of those violations are carried out with impunity, since most perpetrators are not made accountable for their actions. SARS stands for Special Anti-Robbery Squad and is one of the purportedly nursed-unwarranted-units in the Nigerian Police Force. It was established in 1992 to fight cases of armed robbery and other serious crimes in Nigeria. However, the unit became known, almost immediately, for the use of extreme cruelty during their operations. Widespread reports and allegations for years have claimed that SARS officers have been involved in anything from bribery to torture and murder (Human Right Watch, 2020). Such instances have incited public outcry and given rise to the #EndSARS campaign. As much as police brutality remains an ever-present threat, Nigeria has also experienced a struggle with the right to freedom of expression and assembly. Its government has been many times seen cracking down on peaceful protests and dissenting voices. In October of the year 2020, for instance, the security forces resorted to the use of unnecessary force against protesters in the #EndSARS demonstrations, leading to numbers of injuries and deaths (BBC News, 2020). These have, in many ways, caused concerns about the human rights status in Nigeria and the need for comprehensive reforms. Social movements have been central towards calling for accountability and human rights in Nigeria. Such movements are seen too much as they direct attention towards a certain form of systemic injustice and drive social and political change. The #EndSARS movement best exemplifies how public support, which began from grassroots activism, can lead to consistent pressure on the concerned authorities to bring in the issues of human rights (Abimbade et al, 2021). The #EndSARS movement came to light on social media, where activists shared information, organized protests, and brought the international community into the conversation. With hashtags such as #EndSARS and #EndPoliceBrutality trending on Twitter, the uprising saw its voices escalate and draw followers from everyone in and out of the country, including people of influence (Al Jazeera, 2020). This kind of digital activism has shown the strong features of social media in mobilizing grassroots and pressuring the authorities to demand accountability. Equally, the fact that the movement had gained grounds in showing cases of police brutality and making governments everywhere respond was testament to the potential for meaningful social movements to alter the outcome. The #EndSARS movement also represented huge challenges, such as violent crackdowns by security forces and smear campaigns to discredit protesters. Whereas the #EndSARS movement has had several limitations, such as violent clampdowns by security forces and smear campaigns to discredit protesters, it has also provoked changes in the spatial set-up of human rights and accountability in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2020).

Research on the #EndSARS movement and other social movements similar in nature is a study in the mechanics of bottom-up activism and dynamic fighting for accountability. A number of studies have delved into the origins, strategy, and outcome of the #EndSARS protests, recently overviewed here in the role of digital activism and the challenges that the movement faces.

For instance, Akinbobola (2021) writes concerning the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria which outlines how social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Instagram, were utilized in conjunction with others to garner support in preparation and organization during the protests. The article argues that this kind of live chat and rapid dissemination of information via social media was the fuel for the continuity of the movement. More importantly, the investigation demonstrates just how influential the role of influencers and celebrities can be in amplifying the voice of the protesters and, in particular, drawing international attention.

Another relevant article, by Ekeke (2023), investigates how the #EndSARS movement impacted police reform in Nigeria. The research is based on an analysis of the government's responses through constituting judicial panels of inquiry into the numerous accusations of police brutality. It is concluded that although the movement had been able to

bring the issue of police brutality into the public domain, there is still a lot left to be achieved in the path toward meaningful reforms and the holding of perpetrators to account.

Comparative studies with similar movements of other countries make the understanding of the #EndSARS movement more sensible. For instance, in the United States, studies have revealed that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is very similar in the use of social media, involving civil society organizations, and difficult changes in the system (Taylor, 2016). In effect, these studies make the clear point that struggles for human rights are global, and that the role of solidarity and collective action is ineluctable in the fight against systemic injustice.

### ***Theoretical Framework: Human Rights and Accountability***

It is presented in the framework of a theoretical model under the concepts of human rights and accountability. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights are the rights and freedoms entitled to an individual. It insists on the right to life, liberty, and security of person, freedom from torture, and arbitrary detention (United Nations, 1948).

Onwuegbuchulam (2021) opined that accountability is the structures and processes set in place to ensure that people and institutions are responsible for any actions taken with respect to human rights. This interpretation encompasses the legal and judicial mechanisms, though it will also outline social and political measures that ensure accountability by epitomizing transparency and justice. Accountability is a pivotal term in the framework of preventing abuses of human rights and ensuring that there are no future abuses (Koopmans, 2004; Punch, 2010).

The #EndSARS movement can be framed in terms of human rights and accountability, where the struggles are about systematic abuse by the Nigeria police forces and demands for justice for such victims. In essence, the emphases laid on documentation of abuses, mobilization of public support, and the demands for accountability in the #EndSARS movement have been in line with the principles of human rights. Moreover, civil society organizations' involvement and other forms of digital activism underscore the power of collective action and solidarity in emphasizing accountability.

This theoretical framework informs the dynamics of this movement and the consequent implications it bears on human rights practices in the country. This paper locates the #EndSARS movement from this perspective toward making a contribution to the broader discourse on human rights and accountability commitment to the march toward justice amid systemic abuse.

## **3. ANALYSIS**

### **Key Events Leading to the Protests**

The #EndSARS movement further gained ground after several high-profile incidents concerning SARS officers committing acts of brutality came into the light. The most prominent of these incidents followed in early October 2020, with a video surfacing on social media in the killing of a young man in Delta State by SARS officers. The video went viral instantly on social media, leading to public ire and galvanizing many in opposition to the unit.

This was not an isolated incident. Even before that, numerous reports showed how SARS officers had engaged in various illegal activities, including the extrajudicial killing of Kolade Johnson in Lagos in 2019 and the torture of Chima Ikwunado in Rivers State in 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In addition to structural abuses accumulating over time, the incidents over the years had thrown up manifold incidents pointing at systemic abuses by SARS, feeding into that increasingly insistent demand for accountability and reform.

The tipping point came in October 2020 when protests erupt across Nigeria. Stirred by the viral video of the killing in Delta State was increasing into a movement happened for the dismantling of SARS and an end to police brutality. The protests were mostly peaceful, with demonstrators holding placards, chanting, and conducting sit-ins. The clashes took a violent turn with the killing of several protesters on October 20, 2020, at the Lekki Toll Gate, where security forces were alleged to have opened fire on peaceful protesters. Amnesty International (2020).

### ***Social Media and Mobilization of the Movement***

Social media played a very key role in mobilizing and coordinating the #EndSARS protest. Akerele (2020) cited that people were made aware of SARS abuses through Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and it was also a means to garner support for protests. The hashtags #EndSARS and #EndPoliceBrutality trended globally, as the issue garnered support both at home and in the diaspora. Social media enabled activists to provide real-time reports of happenings, organize protests, and coordinate logistics arrangements. It also served as a documentation stream for all incidents of police brutality and helped in amplifying the voices of the protesters. The same social media platforms that enabled the activists were also the channels through which the message could achieve great amplification thanks to call-to-action creation by influential figures, celebrities, and social media influencers. Other supports trickled in via social media, where these action calls were echoed by civil society. For instance, the Feminist Coalition played a huge role in the funding of logistical assistance to the protesters, including but not limited to medical care, bail, nourishment, and food supplies (Nairametrics, 2021). Organizations like these raised money on social media, coordinated resources, and documented abuses of human rights. This points to the role and significance of collective action and solidarity in the fight for justice. The Guardian (2020) reported that Social media made the #EndSARS campaign assume an international character; therefore, it became an action that turned out to provoke interest and responses in governments, international organizations, and human rights groups. This international support meant more pressure from the outside on the Nigerian government to respond to the protesters and take meaningful steps towards police force reform.

### ***Human Rights Abuses During the #EndSARS Protests***

Documenting human rights abuses during the #EndSARS protests entailed using eyewitness accounts, posts on social media, and reports from human rights organizations. Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook were some of the first sites for real-time documentation of incidents as they happened. Protesters and witnesses shared videos, photos, and testimonies of incidents as they occurred on these platforms. Trending hashtags like #EndSARS and #LekkiMassacre went viral around the world, bringing the events into the international limelight. The human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, therefore, began serious investigations of these reports by interviewing victims, witnesses, and medical personnel, and cross-checking their accounts with available video and photographic records. For example, Amnesty International documented the killing of at least 56 persons in different parts of Nigeria during the protests, attributing most of these to excessive use of force by security forces.

Local civil society organizations and independent journalists also played their role in abuses documentation by providing on-the-ground reporting and amplifying the voices of victims. For instance, the Feminist Coalition has been one such active civil society organization in providing protesters with food and other resources, while documenting police brutality incidents and offering legal representation to detained protesters.

### ***Cases of Violence and Extrajudicial Killings***

The Lekki Toll Gate shooting on October 20, 2020, is one of the single most important events and highly publicized #EndSARS protest. During the sit-in, it is said that security forces launched live rounds of ammunition on peaceful protesters. According to Amnesty International, at least 12 protesters were killed, while a host of other protesters were injured. Eyewitness accounts reveal that the army and police shot live ammunition without any warning, which led to chaos and a large number of casualties. Another notable incident took place in Ogbomosho, Oyo State, where police reportedly shot and killed a young man named Jimoh Isiaka during a protest. This fueled further outrage and increased the protests in the region. Similar incidents of violence and extrajudicial killings are reported in other parts of the country, including the capital, Abuja, like in Port Harcourt, where security forces introduce extreme force against protesters. "Bloody-minded" Live ammunition, tear gas, and water cannons had previously been used by the security forces in Nigeria against protesting civilians. There have been reports of many injuries and death due to these reasons, revealing just how ferocious the response of the Nigerian government was against the peaceful demonstrations. The written complaints of excessive use of force by security forces were highly commented upon internationally by human rights organizations and governments. REF Amnesty International, 2021.

### ***Impact on Protesters, Journalists, and Civilians***

The #EndSARS protests really had a psychological and emotional effect on protesters, journalists, and even passersby. The protesters were at risk of physical violence, arrest, and even intimidation. Many were hurt or killed because security forces used excessive force. It also brought psychological trauma for those who survived and many others who witnessed it, leaving many terrified of further reprisals (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Victims of the violence included journalists, who were working to cover the protests. Many reporters were harassed, detained, and sometimes attacked by security forces as they struggled to cover events. Suppression of freedom of expression was a concern in Nigeria, as it barred the flow of information. For example, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that during the protests, many cases where journalists were targeted included the arrest of a journalist from Premium Times who was covering the shooting at the Lekki Toll Gate. Those who were mere civilians not directly involved in the protests also suffered. The violent crackdowns and general atmosphere of unrest created a climate of fear and insecurity. Businesses were disrupted, and daily life significantly affected in towns and cities where the protests were most passionate. Besides worsening the challenges ordinary Nigerians face, the economic impact the protests had due to the government response was alarming.

### ***Government and Police Responses to the Protests***

The Nigerian government responded to the protest with a mixture of repression and an attempt to appease it. The government, reacting to the mass protest, announced the disbandment of SARS on October 11, 2020. This, however, was not accepted in good faith, as such promises had been made before without any radical changes. The incident at the Lekki Toll Gate was expected to push the government into a frenzy of action because of unabated pressure by both domestic and international communities to rein in the abuses of rights. President Muhammadu Buhari appealed for calm and promised police reforms in his address, but this was criticized for lack of empathy and failing to acknowledge the deaths of the protesters. Indeed, the government had put in place judicial panels of inquiry across different states to look at the allegations of police brutality and make recommendations for reform. Despite these measures, the government was widely considered to have responded to the crisis inadequately. Many protesters and human rights groups have condemned panels of inquiry for moving at a very slow pace and with a lack of transparency. There continued to be reports of harassment and intimidation of protesters and activists even after the official disbanding of SARS. The police response towards the protests was characterized by an excessive use of force and violations of human rights. Security forces used live ammunition, tear gas, and water cannons against crowds, leaving many injured and some dead. The lack of accountability for such actions further eroded public confidence in the police and the government alike.

### ***Accountability and Justice Post EndSARS Protests***

After the EndSARS protests in Nigeria, the government set up a series of panels of inquiry into the allegations of police brutality and extrajudicial killings by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). These settings were put in place in different states, with the Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry being one of the most prominent. Chaired by retired Justice Doris Okuwobi, the Lagos panel held daily hearings featuring testimonies taken from victims, witnesses, and police officers (Amnesty International, 2021). What the panels pursued was an exhaustive survey of the incidents, including the recommendations for action to prevent the repeat of such incidents. Their job was to investigate what happened, find the individuals culpable of any wrongdoing, and ensure justice for the victims. Despite this, the results for these panels have been mixed; while some have reported success, others have been dogged by incendiary adjournments, delays, and a lack of cooperation with police officers limited by transparency (BBC, 2021).

The protests during the EndSARS campaign caught the attention of people across the world. The management of the protest by the current government caught the temptation and invited several human rights organizations and foreign governments to express their fears. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were very vocal, conducting independent investigations and publishing reports on the human rights abuses committed during the protests. Amnesty International documented cases of excessive force resorted to by the security forces, including the infamous Lekki Toll Gate shooting, where military men reportedly opened fire on peaceful protesters. These organizations called for accountability and justice for the victims, thus requiring the Nigerian government to take concrete actions against those responsible for the abuses. Other international reactions involved diplomatic pressure and sanctions. For instance, the international relations sphere saw calls by the United States and the European Union for the Nigerian

government to act on the reports of the judicial panels and bring the perpetrators to justice (U.S. Department of State, 2021; Vanguard, 2024). This kind of global scrutiny and pressure really kept the situation at top of mind with respect to the human rights community's continued work in the pursuit of reforms.

Legal actions against perpetrators of violence and misconduct during the EndSARS protests have been a critical aspect of ensuring justice. As a result, the Nigerian Government had promised to prosecute those responsible for the abuses whereas the Police Service Commission had promised to take disciplinary actions against indicted officers. However, the progress in that direction has been slow and with controversies. One of the major legal breakthroughs was the indictment of a number of police officers by the judicial panels. Such indictments were based on the testimonies and evidence both on record and extrajudicially available before the panels. However, many victims and their families continue to be frustrated by the slow course of justice and what they perceive to be a lack of political will to ensure that high-ranking officers are held accountable (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

### ***Challenges to Achieving Justice***

Justice post-EndSARS protests has not been easy to achieve due to many obstacles. First, political interference is a major hindrance to justice because the government may shy away from prosecuting law enforcement officers or other officials who were implicated due to a desire to maintain its authority or avoid public outcry.

Other challenges include lack of evidence and intimidation of witnesses. In most instances, it is hard to obtain enough evidence for prosecution, for the scene of protest may be chaotic. Witnesses may fail to come forward because of fear of retaliation hence making the process more complex in terms of legality.

Systemic biases in the criminal law system may be one more barrier to seeking justice. This may be further expressed by discriminatory measures, inequitable treatment of victims, or even leniency with regard to perpetrators. These ills need comprehensive reform measures to ensure mechanisms for accountability are indeed effective and impartial.

Nevertheless, with all these obstacles, what the EndSARS movement's momentum achieved was to create awareness on police brutalities in Nigeria and initiate broader conversations on human rights and accountability. How the interplay between government action, international pressure, and the legal process carves out the contours of the difficult problem that is presented is precisely where the rub lies. All of these are possible, if only stakeholders, such as governments, civil societies, and the international community, come together.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### ***Analysis of the Effectiveness of Accountability Measures***

There was so much concern about the level of effectiveness of such accountability measures after the protests. The establishment of judicial panels of inquiry across the states to treat the allegations of police brutality and extrajudicial killings was, indeed a landmark one. These involve the Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry set up to probe, identify perpetrators and recommend the proper state action needed into the incidents (Amnesty International, 2021). However, the success of these panels was mixed, with some making big progress while others are delayed, others with a lack of cooperation by authorities, and some being not transparent enough (BBC, 2021).

One of the crucial challenges that have undermined the implementation of such measures is political interference. Many times, the government's lack of will or desire to litigate such high-profile leaders and rogue officers has totally derailed the efforts of such commissions { \textendash} { \textendash} (Amnesty International, 2021). In addition, the frustration among the victims and their relatives due to courts' procrastination in delivering related cases led them to prefer that "justice delayed is justice denied" (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Some positive outcomes from these panels have been made, though many challenges were equally there. The attention drawn to the issue of police brutality and the platform it gave individual victims to share their stories are among them. The recommendations of these panels, if acted upon, will bring effective police reforms on the part of Nigerians and in terms of accountability mechanisms for this police force. This is stated by the National Human Rights Commission in 2021.

***The Role of Civil Society in the Quest for Justice***

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have been on the fore to ensure that justice is served for the victims of the EndSARS protests. They document human rights abuses, extend legal support to the victims, and advocate for accountability and reforms. For example, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both carried out independent investigations and published reports on abuses committed during the protests (Amnesty International, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021). CSOs have also engaged in mobilizing public opinion for support in the international arena around the EndSARS movement. They have organized campaigns, protests, and advocacy programs around the issue to make sure that it stays at the top of the global agenda until the Nigerian government finds a solution to it. Securing participation by CSOs in the processes was important to guarantee that voices of victims are not suppressed or undermined in their quest for justice (Kew & Kwaja, 2018). However, not without challenge to the role of civil society in Nigeria, under the present administration, there has pinned down space for activities of activists and their organizations besides their being subjected to sackful reports of harassment, intimidation, and restrictions (Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). But notwithstanding all that, CSOs have continued to be a force for vital interests relevant to the enthronement of justice and accountability in Nigeria.

***Implications for Human Rights in Nigeria***

In fact, it goes an extra mile further to expose the human rights excesses of the EndSARS protests and post-account measures in Nigeria. The protests exposed many of the systemic problems in the Nigerian police force: widespread brutality, corruption, and lack of accountability. These are the core issues at the center of human rights concerns within the country. This can be grounded in the fact, for instance, that, as pointed out by Amnesty International in 2021, these protests bring out the endemic police brutality and corruption and wanton abuse of power in Nigeria (vanguard, 2024).

There is also the angle that the international spotlight on the EndSARS protest has put so much pressure on the Nigerian government to live up to its responsibilities. Diplomatic pressure and sanctions from foreign governments and international organizations have underscored the importance of accountability and justice for human rights abuses (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

More so, the EndSARS movement has sparked a broader discourse on human rights and governance in Nigeria. This will have shown the total overhaul that has to be done in the security sector, prompted more openness as well as responsibility in government, and assured the full and uninterrupted operationalization of the combined set of rights on civil liberties and human rights. This movement has further emboldened individuals to demand accountability against leaders for their rights, establishing more democratic governance within Nigeria.

**5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The EndSARS protests in Nigeria marked a watershed moment in time where a constellation of adverse ills, exacerbated by police brutality and systemic abuses by SARS forces, came to a head. The aftermath of the protests has seen various government responses, one of which is setting up judicial panels of inquiry to address these issues and provide justice for the victims. However, their effectiveness has been mixed, with some making notable progress and others facing significant challenges, such as political interference, lack of cooperation from law enforcement, and limited transparency (Amnesty International, 2021; BBC, 2021).

International outcry and the mobilization of human rights groups have helped to place the abuses in the international spotlight and push for accountability by the Nigerian government. However, the road to justice is filled with delays in the legal process, intimidation of witnesses, and other biases endemic within the judiciary.

***Recommendations for Future Measures and Research***

The recommendations below would ensure meaningful progress on the issues thrown up by the EndSARS protests:

1. The Strengthening of Judicial Panels: The panels should be given more independence and allocated resources sufficient to conduct thorough investigations. Transparency and accountability in their operations are important ways to restore public trust in them.



2. Implementing Reforms: The government of Nigeria should now make sure that most of the recommendations from these judicial panels are put into place. This would include the prosecution of perpetrators of abuses, compensation for victims, and wide-ranging reforms of the police to forestall any such incidents in the future. This is according to the National Human Rights Commission, 2021.

3. Supporting Civil Society: Civil society organizations are agents for advocacy on human rights and accountability. The government should provide an enabling environment for such organizations to operate without harassment or intimidation—supporting civil society "and mldr".

4. International Collaboration: The world must not let up, with increased pressure and collaboration, on the Nigerian government. Diplomacy and the application of sanctions could generate sufficient leverage to compel the government to keep to its promises. Source.

5. More research: Academic and policy research should mainly document a long-term impact assessment of the EndSARS movement and the matching effectiveness of the responses that followed. Such research can be expected to draw important lessons for the future from the evolution of approaches to human rights protection in Nigeria (Kew & Kwaja, 2018).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The EndSARS protests awakened dialogue on human rights in Nigeria and the challenges systemic in the law enforcement institutions of Nigeria. Much is still yet to be done, but the movement has helped raise larger issues beyond itself in Nigeria. It is this type of effort toward justice and accountability that should be shared by the government, civil society, and the international community. It is a long and challenging road to important reforms and rendering justice. With their resilience and determination for sustained advocacy, together with international support, the Nigerian people can be on course to making this world a better and just one.

The lessons from the EndSARS movement should catalyze action toward the respect of human rights, while ensuring that the voices of the victims are heard and their cries for justice are attended to. That is, the country is set on a journey to address root causes of police brutality and effect complete police reforms. It shall ensure that another future is possible, in which human rights are honored and accountability is the order of the day rather than the exception. The EndSARS movement is proof that this is possible, but it does take consistency and an active collectivity to make this have any lasting impact.

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