



The Enforcement of Human Rights in Conflict Zones in Nigeria

Obot, Afia-ama Udofia¹, Obot, Iberedem Udofia^{2*}

¹ Lecturer, Department of Paralegal Studies, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Akwa-Ibom State, E-mail: afyobot@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-2441-2336

² Consultant, AML / CFT Nigeria Limited, Abuja, Nigeria, E-mail: ibcruize@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Enforcing human rights in conflict zones is crucial, especially in nations like Nigeria, embroiled in several long-standing conflicts. This article investigates the challenges and procedures of upholding human rights in Nigeria's conflict zones, with an emphasis on the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, militancy in the Niger Delta, and herder-farmer conflict in the Middle Belt. It discusses the historical backdrop of these disputes, the development of human rights law, and the responsibilities of international and national human rights organizations. The article outlines major constraints, such as political and military impediments, legal and jurisdictional concerns, logistical and operational difficulties, and cultural and social limitations.

Furthermore, it investigates alternative enforcement techniques and strategies, including international legal frameworks, national institutional initiatives, and humanitarian interventions. Finally, it recommends improving human rights protection and enforcement in Nigeria's conflict zones. The findings emphasize the necessity of a collaborative, diverse strategy that includes international agencies, national institutions, the local populace, and technological advancements in effectively addressing human rights breaches in conflict zones.

Keywords: Human Rights, Conflict Zones,

INTRODUCTION

A conflict zone refers to conflict or political instability that interrupts vital services such as housing, transportation, communication, sanitation, water, and health care, necessitating the reaction of those outside the community impacted.¹ Often, this leads to serious abuses of human rights.² Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is embroiled in many conflicts, mainly in the Northeast with the Boko Haram insurgency, the Niger Delta militancy, and herder-farmer violence in the Middle Belt³. This article examines the obstacles and processes for enforcing human rights law in Nigeria's conflict zones, highlighting international and national initiatives to resolve these concerns.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has 120 million inhabitants divided between Christians and Muslims from more than 250 ethnolinguistic groups.⁴ A sizeable portion of the population also practices traditional African religion.⁵ The conflict between the nation's many peoples has been fueled by several historical circumstances, amidst others, particularly in modern times.⁶ The most significant conflicts in Nigeria's history include:

¹ Schwarz ED, Perry BD. The post-traumatic response in children and adolescents. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*. 1994; 17:311–326.

² Ibid

³ Amnesty International, Nigeria: Accountability for Human Rights Violations Remains Elusive. Amnesty International: Submission to the 45th Session of The UPR Working Group, January-February 2024 Summary P3

⁴ The New Humanitarian, Nigeria: A History of Conflicts. 3 March 2003 <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2003/04/01>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

1. *The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)*: The Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, was a conflict between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra⁷. Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960⁸. After that, political upheaval, including coups and counter-coups, dominated the years after.⁹ The 1966 coup, conducted mostly by Igbo officers, and the ensuing counter-revolution by northern officers worsened ethnic tensions.¹⁰ In 1966, massacres against the Igbo people in the north of the area culminated in the death of hundreds of Igbo citizens, causing a severe refugee crisis as many Igbos fled to the Eastern area.¹¹ This event increased calls for independence in the Eastern Region.¹² Consequently, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the Eastern Region an independent state known as Biafra on May 30, 1967.¹³ This proclamation was in reaction to the Nigerian government's perceived inability to safeguard the Igbo people and address their concerns.¹⁴ The Nigerian government, commanded by General Yakubu Gowon, opposed Biafra's secession.¹⁵ The battle formally began on July 6, 1967, when Nigerian soldiers invaded Biafran territory.¹⁶ Early conflicts included the capturing of Nsukka and the crucial Midwestern Region.¹⁷ The war resulted in significant loss of life and widespread suffering, particularly due to famine in Biafra.¹⁸ By late 1969, Biafra had been badly weakened by military losses, economic blockades, and internal conflict. On January 12, 1970, Ojukwu escaped to the Ivory Coast, while Biafran troops surrendered to the Nigerian government three days later, on January 15, 1970.¹⁹ The conflict had a long-term impact on Nigeria, with estimates of one to three million deaths, largely from famine and illness.²⁰ To foster peace and the beginning of the reintegration and reconstruction process, the Nigerian government launched the "No Victor, No Vanquished" policy.²¹
2. *Ethnic/religious Conflicts (1980s-Present) and Farmers-Herders Clashes (2010s-Present)*: Nigeria has a long history of ethnoreligious conflict, especially in the Middle Belt area also referred to as North Central Nigeria including the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where battles between different ethnic groups and religious communities (mostly Christians and Muslims) have been common.²² The struggle for resources, territory, and political power fuels the conflicts.²³ Tensions between farmers and herders have increased unrest in the North Central zone over recent years.²⁴ The battle is multifaceted and intricate. The dispute between farming households and nomadic cattle-herding groups is for land access. As North Central Nigeria's population grows, so does the quantity of land utilized for farming, frequently in regions previously used for cow grazing.²⁵ Simultaneously, climate change and the Boko Haram conflict restrict the quality of grazing pasture in North East Nigeria, pushing herding tribes to spread their routes into progressively southern locations.²⁶ Herders from the Fulani ethnic group, who are predominantly Muslim, face rivalry for land and resources, which is further exacerbated by religion and ethnicity.²⁷ Farmer-herder disputes may involve assaults by one group and reprisal by the other

⁷ Falola, Toyin "The History of Nigeria." Greenwood Press, 1999

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Siollun, Max *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup Culture (1966-1976)*. Algora Publishing, 2009.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Forsyth, Frederick. *The Biafra Story*. Pen and Sword Books, 2007

¹² ibid

¹³ Nwaubani, Ebere "The Politics of Biafra and the Future of Nigeria." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2000, pp. 175-177.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Stremmlau, John J. *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. Princeton University Press, 1977.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ De St. Jorre, John. *The Nigerian Civil War*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1972.

¹⁹ Achebe, Chinua. *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*. Penguin Books, 2012.

²⁰ Uwechue, Ralph. *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War: Facing the Future*. Africana Publishing Company, 1971.

²¹ Ibid

²² Paden, John N. "Religion and Political Culture in Kano." University of California Press, 1973

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Abul Azad, EMILY CRAWFORD, HEIDI KAILA, Conflict and Violence in Nigeria Results from the North East, North Central, and South-South zones. Poverty And Equity Global Practice 2018

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

community.²⁸ Despite rising attention to this issue, little reaction has been aimed at impacted parties, and few resources have been committed to reconciliation and conflict prevention.²⁹

3. *Niger Delta Conflict (1990s-Present)*: Oil extraction has led to violence in the Niger Delta area,³⁰ also known as the South-South of Nigeria is made up of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States.³¹ This region is well-known for its oil wealth and is largely regarded as the main economic force in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the majority of these states' populations have not benefited economically from their resource richness.³² Instead, the region suffers from environmental deterioration because of oil spills, high rates of young unemployment, and widespread inequality between locals and oil company personnel.³³ These concerns are aggravated by ethnic and political conflicts in the region. In particular, ethnic minority groups have repeatedly battled in the quest for oil wealth, and political tensions in this region are strong.³⁴ Local militias and militant organizations, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), have carried out violent acts to seek a larger share of oil income and to oppose environmental destruction caused by oil development.³⁵ For decades, militant and pirate organizations have operated in the region, attacking oil businesses, pipelines, and individual citizens³⁶. Violence, including killings, abductions, and robberies, has forced many people to flee their homes and towns³⁷.
4. *Boko Haram Insurgency (2009-Present)*: The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in 2009, is an ongoing struggle between the militant Islamist organization Boko Haram and Nigeria's government³⁸. This conflict has caused bloodshed, displacement, and humanitarian catastrophes³⁹. Here's a summary:

The group Boko Haram, officially known as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād, was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria⁴⁰. The group's name translates to "Western education is forbidden," reflecting its opposition to Western influences and secular education in Nigeria⁴¹.

The insurgency began in earnest in July 2009, after a deadly fight between Boko Haram members and Nigerian security personnel.⁴² Mohammed Yusuf was killed in police custody as a result of the raid, prompting the group's actions to become increasingly extremist and violent.⁴³ After Yusuf's death, Abubakar Shekau became the head of Boko Haram.⁴⁴ Under his leadership, the gang became more aggressive, carrying out several attacks on security personnel, government facilities, and civilians.⁴⁵ The Boko Haram insurgency is still a complicated and growing warfare with serious consequences for

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰Watts, Michael. "Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity." In *Violent Environments*, edited by Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, Cornell University Press, 2001

³¹ Abul Azad, *Supra* 23

³² *Ibid*

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ *Ibid*

³⁵ Watts, *supra* 29

³⁶ Abul Azad, *Supra* 23

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ John Campbell, "Boko Haram: Origins, Challenges and Responses." Brookings Institution. 2014

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² Efehi Raymond Okoro, *Terrorism and governance crisis: The Boko Haram experience in Nigeria*

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ Comolli, Virginia. *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*. Hurst, 2015.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region.⁴⁶ Efforts to defeat the gang continue, but the underlying socioeconomic and political difficulties remain difficult⁴⁷.

The Development of Human Rights Law

Human rights law is an evolving discipline that has expanded significantly over centuries, influenced by historical events, intellectual ideas, and international cooperation⁴⁸. Human rights principles can be traced back to ancient cultures⁴⁹. The Cyrus Cylinder (539 B.C.) from Persia is often regarded as one of the first human rights treaties, establishing the right to freedom and equality for Babylon's subjugated peoples.⁵⁰ In ancient Greece, the idea of natural law, notably as represented by Aristotle, formed the framework for subsequent human rights doctrines.⁵¹

The concept of natural rights which holds that people have inherent rights independent of laws or governments was first put forth by philosophers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau during the Enlightenment era of the 17th and 18th centuries.⁵² Locke's views on life, liberty, and property influenced both the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) and the American Declaration of Independence (1776), both are foundational documents in the history of human rights.⁵³

Slavery was abolished in the nineteenth century, and labor, women's, and other social groups became prominent. The International Committee of the Red Cross was established in 1863, and the subsequent Geneva Conventions marked the beginning of contemporary humanitarian law.⁵⁴ Following World War I, the League of Nations was established, to promote peace and security, but its⁵⁵.

The tragedies of World War II highlighted the critical need for a robust international human rights framework⁵⁶.

The United Nations (UN) was created in 1945 to promote global peace and security.⁵⁷

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly published the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which specified fundamental human rights that should be universally protected⁵⁸. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has inspired several international and state constitutions although, it is not legally enforceable⁵⁹.

Following the UDHR, many legally enforceable international treaties were drafted, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which were both approved in 1966⁶⁰.

These treaties, with their optional protocols, constitute the International Bill of Human Rights. Regional human rights frameworks have also evolved, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)⁶¹.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ United Nations, Global Issues Human Rights. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ British Museum. (n.d.). The Cyrus Cylinder. Retrieved from [British Museum](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/SM-1845-06-10-01)

⁵¹ Aristotle. (n.d.). Nicomachean Ethics.

⁵² Locke, J. (1689) Two Treatises of Government.

⁵³ Armitage, D. (2004) The Declaration of Independence: A Global History. Harvard University Press.

⁵⁴ Forsythe, D. P. (2005) The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross. Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁵ Mazower, M. (2013) Governing the World: The History of an Idea. Penguin Books.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ United Nations. (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ United Nations. (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

⁶¹ European Court of Human Rights. (1950). European Convention on Human Rights; Organization of American States. (1969). American Convention on Human Rights; African Union. (1981). African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

In recent decades, human rights law has extended to include the following gender equality, indigenous peoples' rights, and refugee protection. The formation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002 was a crucial step toward holding individuals responsible for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity⁶².

Current concerns include ensuring conformity with human rights norms as well as tackling emerging issues like digital privacy and the influence of climate change on human rights⁶³.

The evolution of human rights legislation is a continuous process that reflects the dynamic and changing character of global society. As new issues arise, the human rights framework adapts to defend the dignity and rights of the people.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CONFLICT ZONES IN NIGERIA

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria contains a comprehensive framework for the protection of human rights. The relevant provisions are primarily found in Chapter IV, titled "Fundamental Rights".⁶⁴ However, Human rights breaches in Nigeria's conflict zones have continued to be a source of concern, owing especially to persistent violence and insurgency in the country's northeast⁶⁵. The situation is complicated, with several parties involved, including government forces, insurgency organizations like Boko Haram and its breakaway faction ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province), and local vigilante groups.

1. Violence Against Civilians: Boko Haram and ISWAP have carried out numerous attacks on civilians, including mass murders, abductions, and forced relocation⁶⁶. These organizations have targeted communities, schools, marketplaces, and places of worship, inciting widespread terror and disrupting daily life⁶⁷. The kidnapping of the Chibok girls in 2014 is one of the most notorious incidents, with over 270 schoolgirls taken and many still missing⁶⁸.
2. Sexual violence and gender-based abuse have disproportionately affected women and girls in conflict zones. Boko Haram has repeatedly utilized sexual violence as a weapon of war, including forced marriages and rape⁶⁹. Survivors frequently experience stigma and lack access to required psychological and medical care⁷⁰.
3. Child Soldiers: Both Boko Haram and ISWAP have recruited and employed children as soldiers, spies, and suicide bombers, which has catastrophic consequences for the children involved, depriving them of their childhood and exposing them to horrific violence⁷¹.
4. Extrajudicial executions and Torture: Nigerian security forces, including the military and police, have been charged with extrajudicial executions, torture, and other types of cruel treatment⁷². According to reports, these troops frequently target suspected Boko Haram fighters and civilians in north-eastern Nigeria, resulting in multiple killings and human rights violations⁷³.
5. Arbitrary incarceration: There have been reports of arbitrary imprisonment, in which people, including women and children, have been imprisoned without trial on suspicion of being affiliated with Boko Haram. Many detainees are detained in appalling circumstances, with no access to legal counsel or family members⁷⁴.

⁶² International Criminal Court. (2002). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

⁶³ United Nations *supra* 52

⁶⁴ The 1999 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria

⁶⁵ Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Security Forces and Boko Haram Committing Crimes under International Law in North East," 2020.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Those Terrible Weeks in Their Camp: Boko Haram Violence against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria," 2014.

⁶⁹ UNICEF, "Silent Shame: Bringing Out the Voices of Children Caught in the Lake Chad Crisis," 2018.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Nigeria: Humanitarian Response Plan," 2021.

⁷² Human Rights Watch, "Spiralling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria," 2014.

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ Amnesty International, "Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands. War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military," 2015.

6. Displacement and Humanitarian Crisis: Military operations against militants have led to widespread displacement⁷⁵. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps frequently lack basic supplies such as food, clean water, and medical care, aggravating the humanitarian crisis⁷⁶.
7. The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a local vigilante organization, has played an important role in combatting Boko Haram. However, they have also been linked to human rights violations, such as summary killings and arbitrary arrests⁷⁷.
8. Inter-communal Violence: Aside from Boko Haram, other types of violence, such as farmer-herder confrontations in central Nigeria, have resulted in serious human rights violations⁷⁸. These conflicts frequently cause huge deaths, property loss, and community displacement⁷⁹.

ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS THE VIOLATIONS

1. Government and International Responses:

The Nigerian government, along with foreign groups, has attempted to rectify these human rights infractions⁸⁰. Military reforms, abuse probes, and more humanitarian relief funding are among the initiatives being pursued⁸¹. However, implementation and accountability remain a challenge⁸².

2. Civil Society and Advocacy: Nigerian civil society organizations and international human rights organizations have been outspoken in their support for the rights of individuals impacted by war⁸³. They have advocated for stronger civilian protection, accountability for abusers, and assistance for victims⁸⁴.

INTERNATIONAL AND NIGERIAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES

International and state human rights groups play an important role in conflict zones by monitoring, reporting, and responding to human rights violations⁸⁵. In Nigeria, international and national institutions are actively involved in reducing the impact of war on human rights.

International Human Rights Bodies

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The United Nations Human Rights Council is an important international body in charge of promoting and preserving human rights across the world⁸⁶. It conducts periodic evaluations of all UN member states' human rights records using the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and has the authority to form commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions to probe human rights violations in war zones⁸⁷.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The OHCHR assists countries in implementing human rights norms by offering technical knowledge and capacity-building⁸⁸. It frequently works with other UN organizations to monitor human rights situations and report abuses⁸⁹.

⁷⁵ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), "Nigeria: Multiple Displacement Crises Overshadowed by Boko Haram," 2019.

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Amnesty International, "They Betrayed Us: Women Who Survived Boko Haram Raped, Starved and Detained in Nigeria," 2018.

⁷⁸ International Crisis Group, "Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence," 2018.

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region," 2019.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Authorities must investigate rise in killings of civilians by Boko Haram and security forces," 2021.

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ United Nations Human Rights Council. (n.d.). Universal Periodic Review. Retrieved from UNHRC

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). Our Work. Retrieved from OHCHR

⁸⁹ Ibid

The International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a neutral and impartial organization that protects and assists victims of armed conflict and other forms of violence. It works in Nigeria, primarily delivering humanitarian relief, advocating for international humanitarian law, and participating in conversations with armed groups⁹⁰.

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) is a regional body established by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights⁹¹. It monitors compliance with the Charter, conducts investigations, and makes recommendations to member states. The ACHPR has addressed human rights violations in Nigeria, particularly during the Boko Haram insurgency⁹².

Nigerian National Human Rights Bodies

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

The National Human Rights Commission is Nigeria's leading national institution for promoting and protecting human rights. Established by the National Human Rights Commission Act of 1995, it investigates human rights breaches, supervises government compliance with international human rights responsibilities, and compensates victims⁹³. In crisis zones, the NHRC has been active in recording violations committed by both state and non-state actors, including military and insurgent groups⁹⁴.

Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Human Rights Institute

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Human Rights Institute promotes human rights and the rule of law in Nigeria through legal assistance, education, and advocacy for vulnerable populations⁹⁵. In conflict zones, the institute provides legal support to displaced persons and victims of violence⁹⁶.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Numerous Nigerian CSOs play an important role in protecting human rights in conflict areas⁹⁷. Organizations such as the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Human Rights Watch (HRW) Nigeria, and Amnesty International Nigeria conduct independent investigations, provide humanitarian aid, and advocate for policy changes to address human rights abuses⁹⁸. These CSOs often collaborate with international bodies to amplify their impact⁹⁹.

To address violations of human rights in war zones, cooperation between national and international human rights organizations is crucial¹⁰⁰. These organizations collaborate in Nigeria to record contraventions, aid victims, and promote lasting dispute resolution.

THE CHALLENGES IN ENFORCING HUMAN RIGHTS LAW IN NIGERIAN CONFLICT ZONES

Enforcing human rights law in Nigerian conflict zones poses a complicated set of issues that are firmly founded in political, social, and economic considerations¹⁰¹. This article will highlight some of the main challenges:

⁹⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross. (n.d.). ICRC in Nigeria. Retrieved from ICRC

⁹¹ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. (n.d.). About ACHPR. Retrieved from ACHPR

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria. (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved from NHRC

⁹⁴ Amnesty International. (2020). Nigeria: Security forces torture and kill hundreds of people in northeast camps. Retrieved from Amnesty

⁹⁵ Nigerian Bar Association. (n.d.). NBA Human Rights Institute. Retrieved from [NBA](#)

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Civil Liberties Organization. (n.d.). Our Work. Retrieved from [CLO](#)

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Amnesty International. (2020). Nigeria: Human Rights in a Context of Conflict. Retrieved from [amnesty.org](#).

1. Weak Legal Framework and Institutions: The Nigerian legal system faces challenges in enforcing its laws due to weak institutions and political will¹⁰². The judiciary is regularly compromised by corruption, which impedes the execution of human rights provisions.¹⁰³ Furthermore, deficiencies in the legislative framework impede comprehensive human rights enforcement.¹⁰⁴ For example, According to Section 12 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, for a treaty to have the force of law within the country, it must be enacted into law by the National Assembly¹⁰⁵. This process is known as domestication¹⁰⁶. Consequently, several international human rights treaties approved by Nigeria have not been completely incorporated into national law, restricting their effectiveness in local courts.¹⁰⁷
2. Security Concerns: Nigerian conflict zones, like the Northeastern region impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency, are notoriously unstable.¹⁰⁸ The continuous violence makes it challenging for government agencies and human rights organizations to conduct their business safely and efficiently.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, security forces are frequently involved in violations of human rights, which exacerbates the difficulties in defending civilians and holding offenders accountable¹¹⁰.
3. Displacement and Refugee Issues: Conflicts have resulted in internal displacement, leaving millions of Nigerians living in terrible conditions in camps or informal settlements.¹¹¹ These communities are more vulnerable to human rights violations, such as a lack of access to essential services, sexual assault, and exploitation.¹¹² The displacement issue strains existing infrastructure and resources, making it impossible to enforce human rights standards¹¹³.
4. Accountability and International Involvement: The international community's reaction to human rights breaches in Nigeria's war zones is sometimes hampered by geopolitical and diplomatic interests.¹¹⁴ There is a need for a stronger international accountability system that promotes human rights enforcement.¹¹⁵ International criminal justice institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, confront difficulties obtaining assistance from Nigerian authorities¹¹⁶.
5. Humanitarian Access and Aid: The existence of armed groups and a precarious security situation limit access to humanitarian aid, which is vital for aiding vulnerable communities¹¹⁷. Humanitarian workers suffer substantial dangers, including kidnapping and violence, which hinder their capacity to provide essential services and monitor human rights violations¹¹⁸. Restricted access worsens the humanitarian crisis while hampering attempts to address human rights issues holistically¹¹⁹.

¹⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰³ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁵ The 1999 Nigeria Constitution

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch. (2021). "World Report 2021: Nigeria." Retrieved from [hrw.org](https://www.hrw.org).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2021). "Nigeria: Country Information." Retrieved from [internal-displacement.org](https://www.internal-displacement.org).

¹¹² *Ibid*

¹¹³ *Ibid*

¹¹⁴ International Criminal Court. (2021). "Nigeria: Situation in Nigeria." Retrieved from [icc-cpi.int](https://www.icc-cpi.int).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹⁷ International Crisis Group. (2020). "Facing the Challenge of Humanitarian Aid in Nigeria's Conflict Zones." Retrieved from [crisisgroup.org](https://www.crisisgroup.org).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

6. Cultural and Social Barriers: Cultural and social barriers might collide with human rights standards, particularly gender equality and children's rights.¹²⁰ Cultural obstacles can make it difficult to enforce human rights rules in conflict zones where traditional authority systems may hold substantial power¹²¹. Efforts to advance human rights must carefully traverse these deeply embedded societal norms¹²².
7. Media and Information Flow: Transparency and timely information are crucial for effective human rights enforcement¹²³. However, combat zones frequently have limited media availability and a lack of credible information.¹²⁴ This not only impedes the documenting and reporting of human rights violations but also undermines advocacy and policy-making attempts to address these issues¹²⁵.
8. Resource Constraints: Financial and logistical constraints significantly hinder the ability of both governmental and non-governmental organizations to enforce human rights laws¹²⁶. Limited resources mean inadequate personnel, insufficient training, and a lack of vital infrastructure to support human rights initiatives¹²⁷. These constraints are exacerbated in conflict zones where the demand for intervention is highest¹²⁸.

Addressing these issues necessitates a multidimensional approach that involves building legal institutions, increasing security, ensuring humanitarian access, and fostering international collaboration¹²⁹. The successful enforcement of human rights legislation in Nigerian conflict zones requires extensive and coordinated measures¹³⁰.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

1. Strengthening Nigeria's legal and institutional frameworks is crucial for effective human rights enforcement efforts¹³¹. This entails completely integrating international human rights treaties into national law, strengthening the judiciary, and combating corruption within legal institutions¹³².
2. Improving Security and Accountability: Security personnel should be professional and accountable on duty. This may be accomplished by providing improved training in human rights norms, establishing strong supervision procedures, and holding those responsible for violations accountable¹³³.
3. Ensuring secure and unimpeded access for humanitarian groups is essential¹³⁴. The government should collaborate with foreign partners to create secure corridors and engage with opposing groups to facilitate relief delivery¹³⁵. Additionally, protecting humanitarian workers should be prioritized¹³⁶.

¹²⁰United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2020). "Nigeria Humanitarian Situation Report." Retrieved from [unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org).

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Reporters Without Borders. (2020). "Press Freedom in Nigeria." Retrieved from [rsf.org](https://www.rsf.org).

¹²⁴ Ibid

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2020). "Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview." Retrieved from [unocha.org](https://www.unocha.org).

¹²⁷ Ibid

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Amnesty International. (2020). Nigeria: Human Rights in a Context of Conflict. Retrieved from [amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org).

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Human Rights Watch. (2021). "World Report 2021: Nigeria." Retrieved from [hrw.org](https://www.hrw.org).

¹³⁴ International Crisis Group. (2020). "Facing the Challenge of Humanitarian Aid in Nigeria's Conflict Zones." Retrieved from [crisisgroup.org](https://www.crisisgroup.org).

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Ibid

4. Effective support for internally displaced people (IDPs) is crucial¹³⁷. This involves providing enough shelter, healthcare, education, and safety measures¹³⁸. The government should create and execute policies to meet the unique needs of displaced people and facilitate their safe and voluntary return or resettlement¹³⁹.
5. To overcome cultural and social barriers, it's important to educate and raise knowledge of human rights among traditional and community leaders¹⁴⁰. Collaborative initiatives can help align traditional practices with human rights principles and develop a community-based enforcement strategy¹⁴¹.
6. Improving International collaboration: Increasing international partnership and assistance is crucial¹⁴². Nigeria should seek support from international organizations like the United Nations and the African Union to strengthen its human rights enforcement mechanisms¹⁴³. Furthermore, collaboration with international criminal justice systems should be strengthened to guarantee responsibility for major human rights violations¹⁴⁴.
7. Providing enough financial and logistical support for human rights activities is vital. The government, with the assistance of international donors, should devote resources to training staff, constructing infrastructure, and conducting comprehensive human rights initiatives in conflict zones¹⁴⁵.
8. Improving Media Freedom and Information Flow: Effective human rights enforcement requires promoting media freedom and providing access to credible information¹⁴⁶. Efforts should be taken to safeguard journalists, increase openness, and enable the free flow of information to document and report human rights violations¹⁴⁷.

Conclusion

Enforcing human rights legislation in Nigeria's conflict zones is a multidimensional task that requires a comprehensive solution¹⁴⁸. Strengthening legal frameworks, increasing security, providing humanitarian access, and assisting displaced people are all key measures toward successful enforcement¹⁴⁹. Addressing cultural hurdles, strengthening international collaboration, guaranteeing enough resources, and fostering media freedom are all equally crucial. By implementing these suggestions, Nigeria may make considerable progress in preserving human rights and securing justice for victims of conflict-related crimes¹⁵⁰. A collaborative effort including government agencies, foreign partners, and the local populations is required to develop a sustainable and human rights-compliant environment in Nigeria's conflict-affected areas¹⁵¹.

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