

**Systemic...Violations of International Human Rights Law against Africans  
...by Law Enforcement Agencies- to contribute to accountability and redress**

Rather than Racial Discrimination and Racism, Ethnicity and Tribalism are more relevant in the Nigerian contest. Therefore , The 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 4 point Agenda Towards Transformative Change for *Racial* Justice and Equality i.e to "***pursue justice: end impunity and build trust***"; *although* not of racial perspective , resonates in relation to recent state of affairs in Nigeria which may be useful for the report, particularly pertaining to :

- a) Ensuring accountability of law enforcement officials for human rights violations and crimes , close trust deficit and strengthen institutional oversight
- b) Implementing reforms to restrict use of force and prohibit profiling, consistently and effectively bring to justice law enforcement officials for violations against Africans and people of African descent; and provide redress for victims and their families.

This submission is in the context of Violation of International Human Rights Law by Law Enforcement Officials and Redress for Victims and their families.

Following wide public outcry against alleged human rights abuse by officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) across the country (including excessive use of force), the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Office of the then Acting President, Vice President Yemi Osibanjo requested the National Human Rights Commission to constitute a Panel on the Reform of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on 15th August, 2018.

The allegations of human rights violations against officers of SARS led some Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to launch campaign and created a hash tag, **#EndSARS**, as the signature of the campaign. In collaboration with the NHRC, CSOs commenced public hearings on SARS to press for accountability for alleged human rights violations. The discussions and debates on the relevance and service-value of the SARS featured prominently on social media space.

The NHRC therefore inaugurated the panel with the mandate to investigate, make recommendations and advice government on the reform of SARS and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). The Panel had three months to accomplish its assignment.

Thus the constitution of the Presidential Panel on the Reform of SARS was designed at instituting measures for the police to regain the confidence of the people and effectively discharge their functions. The Panel was an avenue for citizens and residents in Nigeria with genuine complaints against the officers of the SARS and other outfits of the police to meet with the Panel to present their cases.

**The terms of reference of the Panel were:**

- i. Investigate the veracity of allegations of human rights abuses and abuse of power made against SARS within the last two (2) years
- ii. Independently review and render advice on any value added by SARS from a public safety and public security perspective
- iii. Make recommendations to government on:
  - a. The steps that may be taken to reform or restructure SARS
  - b. Measures to be taken in respect of operatives of SARS, if any, found in violation of human rights of citizens
  - c. Remedial steps that may enhance the professional conduct of SARS operatives and other members of the Nigeria Police;
  - d. Any other recommendations that may be considered appropriate

At the end of sittings, the panel made recommendations<sup>1</sup> and submitted same to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in June 2019<sup>2</sup>

However, the recommendations were not immediately implemented and the outcry, police brutality and impunity seemed to continue resulting in the nationwide violent ENDSARS protest ignited by a video which went viral on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020 showing SARS officers dragging two men from a hotel and allegedly shooting one of them outside<sup>3</sup>. A few days later, protests erupted across Nigeria.

In response, the Federal Government of Nigeria banned<sup>4</sup> the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) after days of violent destructive demonstration.

To contribute towards accountability and redress, government directed for constitution of Judicial Panel of Enquiry in each state of the country as well as the Independent Investigative Panel on EndSARS Protest coordinated by the National Human Rights Commission which resumed<sup>5</sup> sitting on Tuesday, March 1, 2021 after a break.

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<sup>1</sup> See Executive Summary of the Presidential Report available online at <https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/publications/101-executive-summary-report-of-the-presidential-panel-on-the-reform-of-the-police-special-anti-robbery-squad.html> accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

<sup>2</sup> See President Muhammadu Buhari Receives Report on SARS Reform available online at <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/president-muhammadu-buhari-receives-report-of-sars-reform/> accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

<sup>3</sup> See #ENDSARS Movement : From Twitter to Nigerian Streets available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/> accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

<sup>4</sup> See SARS ban : Nigeria abolishes loathed Federal Special Police unit available online at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54499497> accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

<sup>5</sup> See Independent Investigative Panel on ENDSARS Protest Resumes Sitting available online at <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/03/01/independent-investigative-panel-on-endsars-protest-resumes-sitting/> accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022

While Lagos State has released a report<sup>6</sup>, proceedings are ongoing in each of the states.

It is hoped that the ongoing process will improve accountability and redress in relation to law enforcement in Nigeria.

National Human Rights Commission , Nigeria.

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<sup>6</sup> See End SARS : Lagos releases full judicial panel of enquiry report online available online at <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/12/endsarslagos-releases-full-judicial-panel-of-inquiry-reports-online/>