

UNDERSTANDING GENOCIDE, SELF-DETERMINATION AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS: NIGERIA'S UNITY IN QUESTION

By

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Abstract

The threat of disintegration has become more imminent in Nigeria than ever before in her chequered history. The threat was arguably more pronounced in the democratic government of Mohamadu Buhari as Nigeria's President. Many reasons have been adduced by this work as being responsible for the ugly turn of events. These are namely – nepotism, tribalism, ethnicism, religious intolerance, marginalisation, lopsided appointments and uneven distribution of sensitive/critical national offices in favour of a particular ethnic group against others, and a host of other untoward practices capable of disuniting the country. These incidents have been identified as being responsible for human rights denials, violations, abuses, and impunity, with the growing likelihood of consequential genocide, rising agitation for self-determination and separatist struggles by various indigenous groups in the country. The overall aim of this paper is to critically examine the forgoing issues as they relate to - "Understanding Genocide, Self Determination and Indigenous Peoples Rights: Nigeria's Unity in Question". Whereas, some of its objectives included identifying Nigeria's relative stand on human rights issues and to suggest an improvement going forward, having regards to her multiple ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic structure. This article adopts the doctrinal research method, thereby using both primary and secondary sources of information for knowledge-based conclusions. They include legislation, textbooks, journal articles, online resources and a host of other reference materials. The author makes some findings and exclusively discloses that man was created with an embodiment of rights, however, on his own volition, traded and exchanged some of these rights in his quest for State's citizenship under the concepts of social contract and modern statehood. Thus, today, man supported by multilateral institutions and democratic tenets is demanding his lost rights from the state, in the face of abuses, violations, denials and ambivalence. The author indicates that Nigeria and Nigerians of certain ethnic groups have come under such rights violations more than ever. The paper concluded sadly that the natural consequence of such heightening state impunity, selective and partial human rights observance, particularly against some ethnic groups would lead to her eventual disintegration. Finally, the author made far-reaching recommendations which if implemented by the Nigerian authorities would be able to stem the tide of separatist agitations and reverse the impending danger of disintegration.

Keywords: Genocide, Indigenous People, Nigeria's Unity, Rights and Self-Determination

1.0 Introduction

The concept of human rights is as old as creation. Our Creator created man with innate rights, which in most cases are inalienable, indivisible, inter-dependent, inseparable, interrelated and universal to all men. Regrettably, man lost part of these rights having signed in to, and contracted to be part of a social contract system encapsulated in the concept of modern State for benefits, arguably beyond those he could provide or secure for himself acting independently and living in solitary isolation.

Social contract is an implicit agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits, for example by sacrificing some individual freedoms and rights for state protection. The theory became popular between the 16th and 18th Centuries. It is a means of explaining the origin of government and the obligations of subjects.¹

Social contract theory says that people live together in society in accordance with an agreement that establishes moral and political rules of behaviours.² Some people believe that if we live according to social contract, we can live morally by our own choices and not because a divine being requires it. The theory was introduced by early modern thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke - the most well-known among them. It marked the beginning of the historical origin of sovereign power and the moral origin of the principle that makes sovereign power just and/or legitimate³.

This contractual relationship between the State and modern man no doubt whittled his rights as bequeathed upon him by his Creator. Thus, the rights of man became a subject of debate - whether to be availed to man or not; and to what extent he should be allowed to enjoy his rights. From thence, the rights of man became a political subject purely determined by the State, and possibly given to him by the State as a gift. Generally, rights became gifts to citizens by the State in exchange for certain duties and obligations under the Citizenship Law and vice versa.

Citizenship is the state of being vested with rights, privileges and duties to a citizen. Hence, it was said that "The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight"⁴. Such duties and responsibilities include obeying the law, paying taxes, voting and being voted for during elections, and so on. Thus, it was also said that:

Our citizens - naturalised or native born must seek to refresh and improve their knowledge of how our government operates under the Constitutions and how they can participate in them. Only in this way can they assume the full responsibilities of citizenship and make our government more truly of, by, and for the people.⁵

In a more civilised setting, the government to which the citizens are more likely to subscribe to, is a democratic one, and largely founded upon a constitutional order - that guarantees the rights of the citizens. Thus, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)⁶, provided for the Fundamental Human Rights of the citizens. The question however remains whether these rights are fully enforceable or are mere paper tigers. It is obvious that Nigerians are on daily basis slapped with

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¹ Definitions from Oxford Language Dictionary.

² Social Contract Theory <https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu> accessed 13th December 2022.

³ *Ibid*

⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, 26th US President www.civics.Ks.gov/Kansa.ci accessed 12th December, 2022

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ CFRN 1999 (as amended), Ss. 33-46.

more denials of their rights than the Constitution envisaged. The Fundamental Human Rights of Nigeria have witnessed more serial abuses by the government and others.

These abuses have regrettably led to agitations for self-determination particularly by indigenous groups, separatist groups and in most cases tending towards ethnic cleansing or genocide as the case may be. The state of Nigeria is a colonial creation from amalgamation in 1914 to independence in 1960. Shortly after independence, Nigeria witnessed a deadly civil war. During the two and half years of the war about 100,000 deaths or more were recorded. Between 500,000 and 2 million Biafrans suffered from severe starvation⁷ caused by the Federal Government blockade of sea routes and road transportation to Biafra lands.

A United States-based Nigeria-American singer, Kal Afrorock says over five million Biafrans (Nigerians from the defunct Republic of Biafra) died in the nearly three-year Nigerian civil war which ended in 1970⁸. Robert Egbe of the Nation's Newspaper reports that available evidence suggests that the singer exaggerated the southeast war casualty by possibly up to three million deaths. Factually speaking, the genocide resulting from the civil war could be up to three million deaths.

All after the war, the conditions which however preceded it, are still very rife and latent in the administration of the country today namely injustice, nepotism, tribalism, ethnicism, religious intolerance, political undermining, group marginalisation, impunity, and so on. The results as being witnessed include another likely civil war, agitations by indigenous peoples for self-determination, and a most serious threat to the unity or otherwise of the Nigerian state. Going forward, some keywords in the thematic topic would be given clearer meanings through conceptual framework.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Genocide

Genocide is a systematic and widespread killing of a given group mostly minor and indigenous in nature by another imposing and likely major group. Extensively speaking, Genocide is an internationally recognised crime where acts are committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.⁹ These acts fall into the following 5 categories:

- a. Killing members of the group.
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.¹⁰

⁷ Nigerian Civil War Casualties <<https://www.pbs.org>> uncover-history, 2022: Nigerian Civil War Record/Dairy, accessed 12th December

⁸ Kal Afrorock Singer <<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=535763174613314&set=a.224410589081909>> accessed 12th May, 2022

⁹ What –is- Genocide <<https://www.ushmm.org>> accessed 13th December, 2022

¹⁰ Article 2, Genocide Convention (1948).

An international crime involving acts causing serious physical and mental harm with intent to destroy, partially or entirely, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.¹¹ There are a number of other serious violent crimes that do not fall under the specific definition of genocide. They include crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and mass killing.¹²

Raphael Lemkin coined the term “Genocide” in 1944. Thus, the word genocide never existed prior to 1944. Raphael Lemkin, a Polish - Jewish Lawyer (1900-1959), sought to describe Nazi policies of systematic murder during the Holocaust, including the destruction of European Jews. He formed the word by combining “Geno” from the Greek word for race or tribe: “Cide” from the Latin word for killing.¹³

On 9 December 1948, the UN approved a written international agreement known as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide¹⁴. This Convention established genocide as an international crime, which signatory nations “undertake to prevent and punish”.¹⁵ However, preventing genocide as an obligation in the Convention remains a challenge to humanity.

2.1.2 Self Determination

On the other hand, self-determination is a process by which a group of people usually possessing a certain degree of national consciousness form their own state and choose their own government¹⁶. As a political principle, the idea of self-determination evolved at first as a by-product of the doctrine of nationalism to which early expressions were given by the French and American revolutions.

In World War I, the Allies accepted self-determination as a peace aim¹⁷. Thus, then US President Woodrow Wilson listed self-determination as an important peace objective for the postwar world. The result was the fragmentation of the old Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and Russia’s former Baltic territories into a number of new states.

After World War II, the promotion of self-determination among subject peoples became one of the chief goals of the UN. Though the League of Nations recognised the principle of self-determination, the idea received its clearest statement and affirmation under the UN¹⁸.

The UN Charter clarifies two meanings of self-determination.

First, a state is said to have the right of self in the sense of having the right to choose freely its political, economic, social and cultural systems. Second, the right to self-determination is defined as the right of

¹¹ AB Garner, Black’s Dictionary (9th edn. 2009) 755.

¹² (n 9); United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ (n 9); United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

¹⁶ Self-determination <encyclopedia.britannica.com> accessed 13 December, 2022

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

a people to constitute itself into a state, or otherwise freely choose the form of association with an existing state¹⁹.

Self-determination is an indigenous group right, but it was intended as the path to de-colonisation from European powers. It was first articulated in 1960²⁰. The declaration also championed the indigenous peoples' rights but equally made very restricting provisions,²¹ qualifying circumstances in which the right to self-determination may be invoked by indigenous peoples; and citing 'national unity and the territorial integrity of a country'.

2.1.3 Indigenous Peoples Rights

Here the questions that readily pop up are, who are the indigenous peoples, and what exactly constitutes their rights? For some attempts, indigenous peoples are culturally distinct ethnic groups whose members are directly descended from the earliest known inhabitants of a particular geographic region or territory and to some extent maintain their language, culture and ways of life of the original peoples – that is, the aborigines.

Defined narrowly, aboriginal peoples are persons of "First Nation" (North American Indian), the Métis or Inuk (Inuit) - the Eskimos.²² Indigenous peoples are among the most vulnerable people on earth, yet States are ambivalent about recognising their rights.²³ Indigenous peoples have been denied legal personality since the 15th Century because of cultural, political and economic differences between the indigenous peoples and the Europeans and their colonisation strategy.

Secondly, the liberal individualism of the contemporary human rights regime - fails to protect and promote the group rights of indigenous peoples to existence and self-determination²⁴. While indigenous peoples see these rights as inextricably linked, States regard self-determination for indigenous peoples as an unacceptable challenge to external sovereignty and internal stability.

Very clearly, the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues estimates that there are about 350-370 million indigenous peoples spread across 90 States as at 2008.²⁵ The rights of indigenous peoples include the following:

- a. The right to existence.
- b. The right to self-determination.
- c. Individual rights.

These rights are categorically broad, interrelated and interdependent.²⁶ The right to existence is inferred from the Genocide Convention 1948 (and came into force in 1951). The right to self-determination is

¹⁹ UN Charter Article 1 paragraphs 2; Article 55 Paragraph 1.

²⁰ UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

²¹ *Ibid*; Paragraphs 1 & 2, 6 & 7 respectively.

²² Canadian Constitution Act 1982, s.35(2).

²³ W. Igwe, Human Right Lecture Series (PhD, Law Faculty, Rivers State University); Paul Havemann, Indigenous Peoples.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

also a group right expressed in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with emphasis on self-government, participatory development as well as free, prior and informed consent²⁷.

Individual rights developed from a series of international laws within the UN framework from 1945, through a host of Conventions and Declarations. These rights are encapsulated in the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and have recently expanded to include right to development, healthy and sustainable environment²⁸. In the 1993 Vienna Declaration, the UN declared these rights to be “universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.”²⁹

By the way, Nigeria has three major ethnic indigenous groups and several other minor nationalities. The questions of these rights – rights of existence, right of self-determination and individual rights have remained latently pertinent in our daily lives amongst the major indigenous groups and minor ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The results of the lack of these rights have always led to attempts at agitations, separations, ethnic cleansing and killings, genocides, denial of rights of self-determination, and even civil war.

2.1.4 National Unity

National unity means a nation united by a common purpose, with its different parts coexisting as a single unit. It may have different administrative units but is fused by an organic constitution. It is a condition of being one.

2.1.5 Question

Relating to that which raises a contentious disposition, questionable circumstance or disposition; and state of being doubtful.

The framework of this paper has been made elaborate and expansive in order to reduce the scope of the study subsequently. Thus, the next segment of this paper would address the scope.

3.1.1 Historical Cases of Genocide against Indigenous Peoples and their Rights to Self Determination

At some point in time, genocide has occurred at every continent of the world namely Asia, North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Antarctica, Oceania/Australia.³⁰ The degree and magnitude of genocide and its causes, however, would vary as briefly shown in the selected cases below:

a. Armenia

Between the spring of 1915 and the autumn of 1916, the Ottoman Empire arrested, deported, conducted mass killings and created conditions intended to cause widespread death among the country’s Armenian Christian citizens, most of whom were living in the territory of modern-day Turkey. Between 664,000

²⁷ W. Igwe, Human Right Lecture Series (PhD, Law Faculty, Rivers State University); Paul Havemann, Indigenous Peoples.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Nations Online Project <https://www.nationaonline.org> accessed 14th December, 2022

and 1.2 million Armenian men, women and children died in the genocide³¹. Today, Turkey has a badly depopulated Christian folks as against an overwhelming Muslims population - a contradiction of what used to be prior to the early 20th Century.

b. Bosnia and Herzegovina

An estimated 100,000 people were killed during the conflict in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, including July 1995 genocide of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims from Srebrenica,³² in what was termed an ethnic cleansing operation. Similarly, the Myanmar genocide committed against Burma's Muslim Rohingya minority groups in 2017, including other religious communities forcing them to concentration refugee camps in Bangladesh.

c. Cambodia

Between 1975 and 1979, Cambodia's Khmer Rouge subjected the country's citizens to forced labour, persecution and executions in the name of the regime's ruthless agrarian ideology. Almost 2 million people - approximately one-third of the country's population died in the "Killing Fields."³³ Despite decades of the massacre of citizens in Cambodia, justice has not been served.

d. China

The Chinese government is systematically persecuting the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities on the basis of their religion and ethnicity³⁴. That is, the Chinese government may be committing genocide against the Uyghurs. There is also reasonable ground to believe that the government of China is committing crimes against humanity.³⁵

e. Ethiopia

A civil war that started in November 2020 in Ethiopia's Tigray region has devolved into a brutal conflict that threatens the wellbeing of millions. The conflict includes multiple armed actors, several of whom are alleged to be committing mass atrocities. From the beginning of the war, witnesses reported the intentional targeting of civilians, often along ethnic lines. In March 2021, US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken publicly stated that ethnic cleansing was being committed in Western Tigray.³⁶ Fortunately, Nigeria's former President - Olusegun Obasanjo in November 2022, led a team of AU leaders brokered peace between the warring parties in Ethiopia.

f. Iraq

In 2014, the self-proclaimed Islamic State conducted a violent campaign against civilians in Northern Iraq, targeting ethnic and religious minorities thereby committing genocide against the Yazidi people. The violence displaced more than 800,000 people including the death of thousands of civilians.³⁷

³¹ (n 9); United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Genocide-country case studies.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (n 9).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

g. Rwanda

In 1994, between 500,000 and one million Rwandans were massacred in a genocide when a Hutu extremist-led government launched a plan to wipe out the country's entire minority Tutsi and others who opposed their policies.³⁸ Regrettably, the international community could not prevent that genocide.

h. Sudan

Since the 1950s, the Arab-dominated government of Sudan has tried to impose its control over populations from the nation's more culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse regions outside the capital. More than 2.5 million civilians have been killed in a succession of brutal conflicts across many regions - including genocide in Darfur against the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit ethnic groups between 2003 and 2005.³⁹

Regrettably, Nigeria has lot of resemblance and fault lines similar to those of the countries discussed above. Including an increasingly early warning signals and threats to public peace and her unity. From North to South and from East to West, genocide looms precariously large along ethnic and religious lines.

3.1.2 Picture of Nigeria's Current Threats Situation against Unity

The threats to Nigeria's unity stem directly from both remote and proximate angles. The remote causes to her likely disunity include:

- A spurious claim that Nigeria is an estate belonging to Othman Dan Fodio, who the Fulanis purportedly claim bequeathed it to his great grant children of Fulani extractions. Regrettably, obvious steps are been taken to actualise this spurious claim.
Othman Dan Fodio was a Fulani scholar who launches a religious war (Jihad) in northern Nigeria in 1804 that lasted for 6 years. The goal was to revive and purify Islam, and to encourage less devout Muslims to return to orthodox Islam⁴⁰
- Colonial masters' administrative distortions along ethnic and religious lines to achieve their divide and rule governance style.

Whereas the proximate causes are:

- Nepotistic and despotistic leadership resulting in the distribution of national offices and appointments in favour of one ethnic/religious groups over others.
- The issues of genocide, self-determination, and indigenous peoples' rights are deeply intertwined with the political corruption that plagues Nigeria. By manipulating electoral processes, the corrupt politicians can maintain a *status quo* that keeps indigenous communities powerless and prevents them from exercising their rights to determine their own future.
- Agitations and evolutions for balance of power by undermined ethnic nationalities.

Thus, such agitations could be seen in the following instances:

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (n 9)

⁴⁰ Othman-Dan-Fodio-Jihad (1804) <<https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu>> accessed 15th December 2022.

- a. **South East:** Persistent struggle for an independent republic of Biafra led by the IPOB along with its armed wing called the Eastern Security Network. Including criminal groups and gangs such as the “unknown gun men”; crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, ritual killings and so on. A sit-at-home order is observed in the region every Monday, thereby paralysing the economy of that region to the detriment of its people.
- b. **South West:** Agitations for an Oduduwa nation led by one Sunday Igboho. Other criminalities in the region include herdsmen clashes with farmers, kidnapping, ritual killings, and so on.
- c. **North:** Comprising the North West, North East and North Central. In this general region-banditry, insurgency, terrorism, mass kidnappings for ransom, and child marriage, are rampant. These are perpetuated by bandits, Boko Haram sects and ISWAP terrorists.
- d. **South-South:** This region is experiencing militancy, kidnappings, ritual killings pipeline vandalism, heavy environmental pollution, armed robbery, and so on.

Remediably, these agitation groups for self-determination and the other criminal elements have unleashed mass killings and genocide against civilian populace, military and paramilitary security personnel, including displacement of many. Howbeit, military actions alone cannot bring about the desired peace and security in the country. A multidimensional remedial approach would be helpful.

3.1.3 Legal, Political and Institutional Remedies

Nigeria needs to take deliberate actions to forestall an eventual disintegration. Such deliberate action includes:

- a. **Legal:** Consisting of fairness, equity and justice in treating all its citizens without being preferential or discriminatory due to birth, sex, or religious circumstances.
- b. **Political:** Show political maturity that is devoid of ethnic/religious biases, observance of democracy and democratic norms point to the right direction.
- c. **Institutional:** Strong institutions are preferred to strong individuals. Strong individuals readily corrupt the systems, which eventually would lead to its failure.

Notably, the “Ohanaeze Indigbo” and its Yoruba counterpart – “Afenifere” have been vocal about a Nigeria run on basis of democratic norms, justice, fairness and equity to secure her continual coexistence. Lately, the Afenifere lashed out at the Governor of Ondo State Mr. Oluwarotimi Akerodolu, when he condemned the activities of a Yoruba nation separatist agitators alongside their South/East counterpart - the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB). In the words of the leadership of Afenifere – a pan Yoruba political and socio-cultural organization stated as follows:

We have problem with the governor playing to the gallery, as a glorified Chief Security Officer, urging that security forces to clamp down on any person or group whose activities he interpreted as capable of disintegrating the Nigerian State because we are no less patriotic and committed to its continuing corporate existence⁴¹

⁴¹ President of South East Extraction - solution to Agitations, not “Emi lo Kan” philosophy phoenix News (Lagos: Sunday 25 December 2022)

We are also in the same boat with him that ‘this country is very important to some of us and the recognition that agitation and protests are rights protected in a democratic society.

Our worry however is that Akeredolu, even as the Chairman of the Southern Governors Forum would not in deference to that high pedestal, wean himself from petty politicking which sacrifices equity needed for national peace and cohesion in preference of crass opportunism.

In short, his vituperation was most disastrously bereft of statesmanship and national conciliation⁴².

... So let Akeredolu not boast of any capacity to dictate the method by the Yoruba agitators or seek to set the rest of Nigeria against his Indigbo colleagues or the entire South East in his unhidden separatist agenda of securing undue advantage for his party and region...

We state for the umpteenth time that the true and real recipe for peace and continued corporate existence of Nigeria is an arrangement that will guarantee regional equity and not an “emi lo kan” philosophy in the mode of King Louis’s L’état c’est moi (I am the State and the State is mine).

Incidentally, those who fought the civil war and truly shed their youthful blood and have seen all about Nigeria, are now in the vanguard of the national movement not only for Southern but in the quest for the requisite equity, are in the queue for the Nigerian president of South East extraction⁴³.

There lies the solution to separatist agitations and not self-serving sanctimonious pontification⁴⁴.

Unfortunately, the problem of the unity of this country indeed lies with the elites who continually shift the goal posts of justices, equity, fairness and good conscience for their personal or regional groups’ interests. Evidently, the country would continue to slide into disintegration.

The truth is far from us!

4.0 Conclusion

Hitherto, and indeed from creation, man enjoyed an absolutism of rights endowed on him by his Creator. And in fact, these rights were inalienable, indivisible, inseparable, universal, inter-related and interdependent. However, man, in a twist of faith, sought a social relationship couched under a social contract, in concert with the evolution of modern State exchanged part of his rights for the citizenship

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ President of South East Extraction - solution to Agitations, not “Emi lo Kan” philosophy phoenix News (Lagos: Sunday 25 December 2022)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

status of the state. Man, therefore lost though partly, some of his rights. Since the exchange, the rights of man became a subject of regulation, jurisdiction, definition, extent, discrimination, limitation, negotiation, and so on. Thus, man indeed lost the absolutism which nature ascribed to him for full enjoyment of his rights, with subsequent denials, violations, abuses, ambivalence, and so on.

Furthermore, and regrettably so, all the indices leading up to genocide as revealed in the course of this work, are prevalent in Nigeria including recurring incidents of struggles and agitations for self-determination by marginalised indigenous groups. The unsavory and gloomy state of affairs in Nigeria makes her a time bomb awaiting calamitous detonation and explosion.

However, a stitch in time can still save nine. The study revealed that Nigeria shares similar cracks signs with countries where genocides, ethnic cleansing and mass killings of indigenous peoples had occurred and are still occurring. It is on this ground that the paper took a bird's eye view over the outcomes of the Ohanaeze Indigbo, Afenifere and others about the state of the Nigerian nation and demanded power rebalancing if the country would not disintegrate along ethnic lines.

Finally, the paper concluded that measures if duly taken would stave off any form of disintegration of Nigeria. Indeed, a stitch in time still saves nine, and wisdom is profitable in all ramifications.

5.0 Recommendations

This paper recommends as follows:

1. That the government of Nigeria, its agencies and organisations should show more respect to and ensure the total observance of human rights. This could be achieved by people-oriented restructuring of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 (as amended) to bring it in line with those of civilised nations of the world - pursuant to established democratic norms, ethics and principles.
2. That the CFRN 1999 should be comprehensively restructured and deliberately amended to grant more powers to the Federating Units, States and Regions, while reducing the powers of the government at the Centre in order to avoid what looks like a unitary system, to curb the growing tendency towards unitary government.
3. That every act of government that is capable of presenting nepotism, ethnic undertone, should be overtly condemned through an established independent judicial panel after due investigation and the perpetrator(s) are punished adequately as well as stripped of all official/public positions.
4. That a truth and reconciliation commission should be convened in Nigeria to promote her unitary peace, friendship, and progress.
5. Governments in Nigeria should endeavour to respect the Federal Character Principle enshrined in the CFRN 1999 for an inclusive country.
6. Governments in Nigeria should also strive to respect the position and wisdom of elders, recognised groups, NGOs, religious leaders, international opinion about Nigeria, and so on, regarding national issues that aim to foster Nigeria's unity, growth and development.