

**CHRISTIAN ETHICAL EVALUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS  
BY SPECIAL ANTI-ROBBERY SQUAD (SARS)  
IN ANAMBRA STATE: THE WAY FORWARD**

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**Abstract**

*The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) is an elite group within the police force created during the regime of the military government mainly to combat armed robbery; and deployed to the major cities of Nigeria. The group is part of the Nigeria Police Force under the command of the Inspector General of the Police. The squad has become notorious over the recent years in the context of the violation of human rights in the course of discharging their duties especially in Anambra State. Despite the provisions made in the constitution for the police not to be implicit in the unlawful use of force against citizens; human rights violations by SARS is still on the rise which eventually perpetuated the END-SARS protest in Nigeria in the year 2020. This work critically evaluates the human rights violations by the SARS in discharging their work of policing in Anambra state between 2015 and 2021 in view of Christian Ethical injunctions. This work employed both the primary and secondary means of data collections; while the qualitative mode of data analysis was effected in this work. Adopting the theory of Broken Windows, conflict theory and the Frustration-Aggression theory; it was discovered that the SARS exhibit acute disregard for, and sadistic undermining of the basic fundamental human rights in discharging their duties hence, crimes like extrajudicial killings, rape, torture or degrading punishment and confiscation of people's belongings especially the youth characterises their mode of operation: The dilemma of this crisis is that they were never held accountable for these crimes since they were neither investigated nor brought to justice for prosecution by the state authorities. This work thus proffers suggestions on the way forward to ensure that these atrocities committed by SARS are arrested and the police force in Anambra state sanitised for the establishment of peace and tranquility in the state. The gathered data in this work were all analysed through phenomenological approach.*

**Keywords:**

*Human, Rights, Brutalities, Violation, Abuse, Violence, Evaluation, Christian, Ethics, Police*

## **Introduction**

It is a common saying that, the policeman is your friend. But in a country like Nigeria, the opposite is the case. It is evident that ordinary citizens believe the policemen are anything but positive and protective, and not a friend as Omilana (2019), attested. The police all over the world are state authorities vested with the responsibility of law enforcement and maintenance of order in the society. In carrying out their responsibilities, the police may be authorized to use reasonable force when the need arises. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Police Act, international conventions, professional ethics and other statutes regulate and as well constrain the use of force by police in discharging their statutory functions. This was equally streamlined in the law on police use of force worldwide; the Nigerian section, by the Supreme Court decision held in 2007.

Despite these regulations, the police in many societies resort to using extreme force beyond the limits permitted by law in discharging their duties, and in the process, grossly disregard the rule of law and resort to extra-judicial killings, torture and subjecting civilians or citizens to all sorts of inhumane and ill-treatment, thereby abusing people's fundamental human rights. Unfortunately, these are the same citizens they have sworn to protect as Segun (2016), expressed. Unlawful or extrajudicial killings, as underscored, refer to killing outside the dictates of the law. Thus contemporary upsurge in the menace, torture, degrading and inhuman treatment of citizens in the society by the officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) especially in Anambra state, provokes the essence of this study. Police brutalities, use of torture as an interrogative technique and other forms of violence which entails the abuse of human rights remain some of the major weaknesses of the Nigeria police Force which have attracted public scrutiny and condemnation to the Force as Ogunode Ofunode (2015) exclaimed.

Constanzo and Gerrity (2009), Makwerere, Tafadzwa, and Musorowegomo (2012) and the Justice project Pakistan (2014), in their expositions concurred that "Torture" described as one of the most extreme forms of violence, resulting to both psychological and physical consequences is sometimes considered as an indispensable interrogation mechanism for gathering strategic intelligence by various security departments. Empirical studies have shown that torture and other forms of violence can produce psychological negative effects and trauma on both survivors and perpetrators: And is more often than not ineffective for obtaining reliable information in interrogation as Egede (2007) and Constanzo and Gerrity (2009), explicated. The activities of the police as an institution are meant to be guided at the national and international level by conventions, standards and treaties (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966). In spite of state prohibitions against torture and custodial misconduct by the police, torture has been reported as being commonly used in police custodies across Nigeria, especially in Anambra state; which is a major reason behind deaths in custody as recorded by the Amnesty International (2014).

According to the Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN) as Nzor (2022), recorded; personnel of the Nigeria Police routinely carry out summary executions of persons accused or suspected of crime, rely on torture as a principal means of investigation, commit rape of all genders, and engage in extortion at every given

opportunity. Violent treatment of accused persons by the police or other law enforcement officers is strongly against Article 55 of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, resolution 34/169 of 17 December 1979: No law enforcement official may inflict, instigate or perpetuate any act of torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, nor may any law enforcement official invoke superior orders or exceptional circumstances such as a state of war or a threat of war, a threat to national security, internal political instability or any other public emergency as a justification of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. A former Inspector-General of Police, Ibrahim Coomasi once accused the Nigeria Police Force of barbaric treatment of Nigerians in custody as reported by Punch and Gilmour (2016). For instance, there were reports from some female ex-detainees of sexual abuse by police officers, including being raped and having pepper sprayed on their genitals. However, in a swift response to the Amnesty International report, the Nigeria Police Force rejected the report in which the SARS were accused of torturing detainees and demanding bribes to free them as reported by Premium Times (2016).

The Police described the report in its entirety as misleading, a clear misrepresentation of facts, unverified accounts and absolute distortion of the current situation in Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) throughout the country. The police, in a statement on Thursday 25th July 2019 by its then spokesperson, Don Awunah, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, said the report was evidently the characteristic mind-set and pattern of Amnesty International to deride and castigate public institutors especially in developing countries like Nigeria. This therefore underscores empirical studies directed at finding out facts about the treatment of arrestees in police custody across the country. Constant and consistent reports are received from lawyers, human rights activists, social analysts, and journalists about police regularly demanding bribes, stealing, extorting money and engaging in different forms of brutality and abuse of human rights as lamented by Amnesty International (2014) and Aborisade and Obileye (2018).

The truth remains that there still abounds evidences of the Police especially SARS brutal treatment of people in and outside custody. This study will posit various empirical evidence of such in Anambra state. It will then posit solutions in the way forward in order to nip this atrocious acts on the bud and rid Anambra state of such inhumanities. This work will utilize both the primary and secondary means of data collection. It will analyse the data via the qualitative format. The gathered data will then be presented via phenomenological approach. The theory of Broken, Windows, conflict theory and Frustration-Aggression Theory were adopted for this work in order to understand what propels SARS in indulging in this indecent act and also to understudy the personal crisis that may be propelling these form of aggressive acts from the SARS: As well as proffering better mode of operation to the Nigerian Police Force. The violation of the Fundamental Human Rights of citizens of Anambra state by the officers of SARS police department will be critically evaluated from the Christian ethical stance.

### **The Meaning of Christian Ethics**

The definition of Ethics is required in order to understand the meaning of Christian Ethics. This work will posit all these in details. Omoregbe (2003), defined

Ethics in various forms thus: “the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions; or as the branch of philosophy which studies the norms of human behavior” (pp.3-4). He equally pointed out that it can also be defined as “the systematic study of the fundamental principles of the moral laws; or as the normative science of human conduct” (p.4). He insisted that ethics is a normative science hence it sets out to establish the way things ought to be. Ethics as he explained further, deals with norms or standards of human behavior: It states the way men ought to behave. Thus Ethics is concerned with “values”, “virtues” and what should and ought to be”. Omoregbe explicated that ethics deals with the norms of right conduct.

Going further in his expositions on Ethics, Omoregbe (2003), drew a connection between ethics and morality. He declared:

The relationship between ethics and morality is similar to the relationship between theology and religion, or the relationship between logic and thinking. In each of these cases, the latter is the basis of the former. Ever before we started studying ethics, we already have a sense of morality and we already make moral judgments even without reflecting explicitly on the principles underlying our moral judgments. Ethics presupposes that we already have a sense of morality, and it is the systematic study of the fundamental principles underlying our morality. Hence morality is the basis of ethics, the latter is the explicit reflection on, and the systematic study of the former. (pp. 4-5).

Thus Ethics declares what is right and should be done in various situations of life without the elements of doubt, deceit nor pretence. This work adopts the definition of Ethics as espoused by Omoregbe.

Christian Ethics on the other hand according to Peschke (2004), is the same as moral theology. He defined it thus, “Christian ethics or moral theology is commonly defined as that part of theology which studies the guidelines a person must follow to attain his or her final goal in the light of Christian faith or reason” (p.3). He stressed that besides the right and good actions it is primarily concerned with the type of person a human being and a Christian ought to be. It takes into consideration, such questions as “what sort of person should I become because I believe in Christ?” (p.3).

Peschke (2004), intimated that a presentation of Christian ethics implies that “the ideals and norms presented are inspired by the sacred books of the old and New Testament and related to what Christians believe about the world, God and each other” (p.4). Little wonder Shields (2004), simply defined Christian ethics as the standards God has set for human behavior in the scriptures; and to equally note how those standards apply to ourselves as individual Christians and as Christian communities today.

Nmah (2012), on his own part defined Christian Ethics as “Love Centered”. Thus he declared, “christian ethics is centered on love. This love will be understood only by having faith in Christ” (p.6). He insisted that the love is vertical and horizontal in nature. The vertical is directed to God while the horizontal is channeled towards one's neighbors. This implies that Christian ethics highlights the basic facts that man is accountable to God in everything he does, every action he takes and in the entirety of his life's endeavors. Man must love and live it out. No one should treat another the way such one abhors, or does not one to be treated. Mankind then is expected to live lives worthy of their calling in line with

loving God by doing His will. Christian Ethics hinges on “being human”. With this conception, officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad ((SARS) in Anambra state ought not to engage in acts of brutality against their fellow human beings. They ought not to abuse the fundamental human rights of their fellow individuals, by being violent and inhuman in dispelling or discharging their duties. They are called to protect and not to destroy citizens of Anambra state.

### **The Conception and the Content of Human Right**

The United Nations defined human rights as rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. These rights were all recorded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This document is a milestone document in the history of human rights. It was drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world. This Declaration of Human Rights was equally promulgated and enacted by the United Nations General Assembly held in Paris on 10th December 1948; in the General Assembly Resolution 217A, as a common degree of accomplishment for all peoples and all nations. It stipulates for the first time the fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into more than 500 languages of the world. There are more than seventy human rights treaties adopted and ratified in this document and the ones pertinent to this study includes: the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and receive just wages, the right to education, the right to free hearing and to be represented by a judge in the court of law, the right to be counted innocent until otherwise disapproved by the court of law and many more.

UNICEF (2015), defined Human rights as “standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings” (p.1). According to this definition, Human rights:

Govern how individual human beings live in society and with each other, as well as their relationship with the state and the obligations that the state has towards them. Human rights law obliges governments to do some things, and prevent them from doing others. Individuals also have responsibilities: In using their human rights, they must respect the rights of others, No government, group or individual person has the right to do anything that violates another's rights. (p.1).

This is all inclusive. No one is above the law. With this in place, the government ought to be prosecuting the SARS police department when anyone amongst them is discovered to have abused the human right injunctions; but the reverse is the case in Anambra state.

It is very important to note that according to UNICEF (2015), human rights embodies the following qualities: universality and inalienability; indivisibility; interdependence and inter-relatedness; equality and non-discriminatory; participatory and inclusive; as well as accountability and rule of law.

### **Human Rights From Christian Ethical Perspective**

Peschke (2004), commented that human rights serves as a basis for justice in the Christian theologians thoughts. He made this affirmation because the contents of Human rights aligns with the Christian idea of man and woman as the image of God. He equally

noted that some Christian theologians of Spanish origin in the 16th century like F. de Vitoria, G. Vasquez, D. de Soto and M. Cano, promoted the idea of a right of nations and even succeeded in securing its legal validity in the “so called” *Leyes Nuevas*” of 1542, which granted the Indians human rights. Peschke equally noted that it was Pope John XXIII that first used the term human rights in a papal document and the council Vatican II equally endorsed it. The Synod of Bishops of 1974 drew up a catalogue of human rights as well: An official document of the commission *Iustitia et pax* of the same year equally deliberated on the issue at greater length.

Human Rights is actually related to the concept of natural law which was championed by the Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas. Thus all that is enshrined in the Human Rights act are all promulgated courtesy of the fact that man is of rational reasoning nature and endowed with the ability to reason and behave appropriately. The content of the natural law according to D'Andrea (2021), occupies a central position in the moral theory of Thomas Aquinas. Hence Aquinas (cited by D'Andrea), defined natural law as “that law which the ultimate efficient cause (God) infused in man commanding him to do good and avoid evil in order that he (man) may attain his end. Natural law appeals to reason that naturally has the capacity of discovering it” (p.2). This implies that when one fails to carry out those natural obligations like honouring the fundamental human rights, severe punishment awaits such a one at the end of life on earth. Thus the SARS in Anambra state has no moral justification for engaging in acts of brutality and abusing the fundamental human rights of their fellow human being.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:13-14, noted that by the mere fact that man is created in the image of God, the emoluments of equality, right to life, freedom, dignity and rationality which Human Rights emphasises are bestowed on him naturally. Besides, Christian ethics emphasises morality. The law and the commandments are set within the context of devotion to God but are deontological platforms specifying what this morality is as Stefan (2017), pointed out. The prophets of the Old Testament show God as rejecting all unrighteousness and injustice, while commending those who live moral lives. Johnson (2005), declared that Christianity helped to groom the pivotal concepts of dignity, equality, liberty, human welfarism, as well as democracy that solidified the contemporary human rights paradigm. Christianity equally aided in fashioning the law of public, private, penal and procedural rights that constituted modern legal systems in the western world and beyond.

### **The Menace of Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) Brutality in Anambra State**

Under this subheading, this study will posit indices of the SARS brutality in the process (or even guise) of undergoing their so called special assignment in Anambra state between 2015 and 2021; which constitutes the abuse and violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals. The gory records especially as evidenced in the Headquarters of SARS in Awkuzu town, Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State; as well as Awka and Onitsha environs will be cited as examples. This work will attempt to be extensive here for proper substantiation of facts.

The Northern and South police forces in Nigeria merged into the National Police force of Nigeria in 1930; although the Nigerian police was first established in 1820. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was however formed in 1992 with the special task

of combating armed robbery and other dangerous crimes. This unit at the inception gained laudable achievements like the arrest of notorious criminals and armed robbers such as Chukwudi Onuamadike, best known as Evans; who was arrested in 2017 after the police spent five years tracking him and placed a 30 million naira (\$80,000) reward on his head as Malumfashi (2020), recorded.

However, according to Malumfashi (2020), for a period of 10 years after the inception of SARS, they were only operating in Lagos. By 2022, they had spread to all 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was equally counted as one of the 14 units under the Nigerian police force criminal investigation and intelligence Department. Its mandate include arresting, investigation and prosecution of suspected armed robbers, murderers, kidnappers, hired assassins and other suspected violent criminals. Malumfashi noted that emboldened by its new powers, SARS moved on from its main function of carrying out covert operations and began to set up road blocks and extorting money from innocent citizens irrespective of the fact that they remained in plain clothes; they started carrying arms in public. SARS over time has been implicated in series of widespread violence and brutality ranging from extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention to extortion of money from innocent citizens. They started to even target and detain young men for cybercrimes or internet fraud simply on the evidence of their owning a laptop or smartphone, and then demanding excessive bail fees to let them go.

Malumfashi (2020), recorded that in March 2017, SARS arrested 23years old Miracle Ifeanyichukwu Okpara and detained him in SARS headquarters at Awkuzu on a charge of having stolen a laptop. He was tortured and hardly given any food during 40 days of detention before he was taken to court and charged with armed robbery: Funny enough, the court ended up discharging the case for lack of evidence. Udora (2020), who highlighted some of the traumatic experiences of citizens of Anambra state in SARS headquarters in Awkuzu maintained that they treat human beings like Animals. Udora noted that the notoriety of the SARS brutality in Awkuzu was so much that it attracted the attention of the Amnesty international in 2014 and 2016: During which the international human rights organization after an indepth research described it in their report as the headquarters of human rights violations, pertinent to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and extra judicial executions. The International body in a report published on September 21, 2016 (cited by Udora), affirmed that they have been systematically torturing detainees in it's custody as a means of extracting confessions and lucrative bribes. They maintained that former detainees informed them that they were subjected to horrific torture methods including hanging, starvation, beatings, shootings and mock executions, at the hands of corrupt officers at the SARS headquarters Awkuzu.

Damian Ugwu, Amnesty Internationals' Nigeria researcher (cited by Udora, 2020), reported that SARS officers make money through their brutality. He insisted that their research uncovered patterns of ruthless human rights violations where victims are arrested and tortured until they either make a confession or pay officers bribe to be released.

According to the reports of Udora (2020), Sahara Reporters, New York (2020), Oduah (2021), News 24 (2020), and that of The Native (2020), on the morning of January 19, 2023, villages in Amansea and Ebenebe in Awka North Local Government Area of

Anambra State, woke up to discover the bodies of over 35 people floating on Ezu River, with no idea of who killed them, the cause of death nor how their bodies ended up in the river: Four years later, a report released by the international society for civil liberties and the rule of law, on July 2017, (cited by Udora, 2020), accused the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of Anambra State Police Command of being responsible for the 35 corpses discovered in the Ezu River. Miracle Ifeanyichukwu Okpara (cited by Udora), confirmed that at both Awkuzu headquarter of SARS as well as Neni detention center; they have various iron stands where they hang people. He exposed that he was hanged their and beaten to unconsciousness before dumping him at the interrogation hall. He alleged that eight of his co-detainees died of starvation during the period of his detention. According to him as noted by Udora, he managed to stay alive with the help of inmates who smuggled sachets of water into his cell at midnight. The testimony of a 33 year old fuel attendant who was detained for two weeks in SARS Awkuzu January 2015; was later released on bail by the order of a high court in Onitsha; as well as that of 27 year old trader, who was equally later released; all made confessions of being severely tortured and instructed never to intimate what they experienced to anybody under the threat of death as recorded by Udora.

Chijioke Eruchalu known professionally as an Environmental Biologist (cited by Udora, 2020), documented the harrowing experience of Bonaventure Chokwebundu who was both arrested for a case he was not involved in and even threatened to be killed whether he was innocent or not. Bonaventure Chokwebundu according to Eruchalu (cited by Udora) exposed that he was dumped at cell 5 in Awkuzu SARS. Three days after, seventeen young men equally dumped together with him in that cell were all killed in the night. One of them was a small boy of between the age of 19 and 22, a second year Engineering student of FUT0, and an Orphan who landed in SARS Awkuzu because he resisted his rich uncle's attempt to steal his father's land as he lamented. Cell 5 as he reported is where they dump people they have determined to kill after torture. He equally exposed that Awkuzu and Neni SARS stations are Abattoirs where human beings are butchered at will. They had to carry corpses of people at times. He was later released by the help of his lawyer, Professor Umenweke Nnama Meshac.

The case of Mrs Obianuju Iloanya's older brother as recorded by Udora (2020), was quite painful because the dreaded officer CPS James Nwafor who headed SARS in Anambra state between 2018 and just before ENDSARS in 2020, looked the parents in the face and told them point blank that he had killed their son Chijioke and there is nothing they can do about it. The parents as narrated by Obianuju (cited by Udora) went to the extent of contacting the then commissioner of police in Anambra state, Mr. Bala Nasarawa and yet he was unable to assist them because the dreaded officer James Nwafor lied to him that Chijioke probably died in a shoot out they had with armed robbers some days back. He never accepted that he was even in their custody irrespective of the fact that the parents sighted him the first day they entered Awkuzu station at an open hall. The parents lodged the complaint up to Abuja to no avail. Chijioke was never found again.

Udeogu Arinze (cited by Sahara Reporters, New York, 2020), who narrated his experience of SARS brutality in their compound at Umumeibe street, Uru Umudim, Nnewi, in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State in 2018 expressed it as hellish. He lamented that his brother was shot in the buttocks just because he wanted to inquire why the SARS entered their compound; the incident later left the brother almost

paralysed till date. He is equally jobless because he cannot work again in such state owing to the fact that he trained as a professional plumber. He also complained bitterly that his uncle, Mr. Lawrence Udeogu died a few days after that incident because of the trauma.

Oduah (2021), recorded that the incredulous tales of torture and extrajudicial killings in Awkuzu headquarters of SARS made it to become popularly known as “Awkuuzu SARS”; and associated with a saying which captures the station's chilling reputation: “if you're taken there, you may never come out” (p.1). Oduah noted that irrespective of the fact that SARS was disbanded on October 11, 2020 after the nationwide protests against their brutalities; their building in Awkuzu is still used by the Nigerian police force: The terrifying, frightening and dreadful fact is that there still exists a gloomy atmosphere or aura that hovers over the building as cars and pedestrians pass by. Oduah recorded that the sister of a 27year old university student narrated to Amnesty International that his brother was detained for two days in January 2015 at Awkuzu SARS: On being released, he was limping, looking sick and had injuries on his shoulder, legs and torso owing to the extreme torturing and inhuman treatment he received inside “Awkuzu SARS”. Oduah recorded that Nwankwo who was detained in Awkuzu SARS for 81 days gave a description of the Awkuzu SARS thus:

It is a human abattoir .... With “welcome to Hell Fire”, etched on a wall in black paint at the entrance ... There is a torture hall with odd-looking metallic rings and bars hanging from the walls... there are five cells in total... cell 5 and 4 are pitch black. Cell 3 is adjoined to 4 by a wall. Cell 2 is for women. Detainees in cell 1 are usually asked to clean up the blood in the torture hall. (p.2).

Oduah (2021), recorded that Mrs Ugochukwu lost her son Chimezie, a successful 32 year old Angola-based businessman when he was arrested by SARS for doing absolutely nothing: He was accused of driving a stolen Toyota Siena Minivan, even though an investigation proved that he legitimately bought the car. Mrs Ugochukwu never saw her son again according to Nweke Nweke, a local crime reporter (Cited by Oduah), who followed the story. The same is applicable to Mrs Ukamaka Obasi, another mother, whose three sons, Ebuka (20 years), Obiora and Chibuike were allegedly killed in Awkuzu SARS between 2012 and 2014. Nweke Nweke (cited by Oduah), insisted that he got to know that each of the sons of Mrs Ugochuku had died once they tell her that she should stop bringing money for the food that he had “travelled”. They use the word “travelled” to refer to people that they have killed such like “we have travelled him” (p.1). Despite all these atrocities committed by SARS, the panel that was set up to look into the case invited both CPS Nwafor James and the then inspector general of police in 2020, but none of them showed up. The Government authorities did nothing: Everything is back to square one; business as usual. Uduah, recorded that more than 310 petitions were submitted to the effect of the SARS brutalities and extra judicial killings led by CPS James Nwafor; yet nothing has been done to that effect.

The gory stories of SARS headquarters in Awkuzu still abounds. Many journalists and scholars outlined series of atrocities committed at SARS station at Awkuzu. Okoroafor (2020), recorded the case of brutality on a female member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Seun, serving at Ogbaru Local Government Area of Anambra State. The SARS forcefully entered her room, beat and tortured her; and ended

actually naked when they forcefully entered her room. She was accused of being an internet fraudster. Till date justice was not served regarding this false accusation and inhuman treatment irrespective of the fact that later investigations proved that she was innocent. The bone of contention is not even the victims being innocent or not but the inhuman treatment meted at victims without being found guilty. Besides, criminals are not meant to be dehumanized: Moreso all the recorded cases were innocent civilians. Okoroafor exposed that Amnesty international documented 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial killings by SARS. What of the innumerable undocumented cases since SARS stations at Awkuzu, Ekwuluobia and Neni were referred to as burial grounds were innocent citizens were buttered and buried ingloriously according to the various reports of news 24 (2020), and Nwanosike (2020).

It will be extremely important to note that the SARS were able to persist in their atrocious and evil modes because they have solid, unflinching back up and coverage from the Inspector General of Police, the Nigerian Government authority and other top politicians in Nigeria. Evidences of this abound as Eze (2022), Uwazuruike (2021), Iwuoha and Aniche (2022), and Uti (2022) all indicated and expressly condemned. Chukindi (2020), related that the Anambra state judicial panel of inquiry on police Brutality, Extra-judicial killings and other related matters attempted inviting the former Governor of Anambra state, Mr Peter Obi since he was indicated by petitioners as using SARS as Vendetta to set up political opponents: This was hushed up and never effected by the same powers that be, irrespective of the open accusations of one of the victims, Bonaventure Mokwe, who accused the two immediate past Governors Mr Willies Obiano especially Mr Peter Obi of not only backing SARS up in their atrocities but using SARS to demolish his Hotel.

Anambra state was described as the most abused state in Nigeria under the defunct SARS: This was observed by the publicity secretary of the All Progressive Congress in Anambra state, Okolo Madukaife (cited by Ofomah, 2021). The general opinion is that while the other states of Nigeria were conversant with the proceedings and actions arising from the panel set then on abuse of human rights by the defunct SARS; Anambra states panel stance was shrouded in secrecy and uncertainty as Ripples Nigeria (2020), Onuigbo (2022) and Anoruo (2023) all reported. The fact is that the Nigerian state was implicated in SARS brutalities: SARS Wields no moral justification to employ violence of such level as evidenced in the guise of executing their responsibilities. No human person deserves such brutalities as SARS inflicted on innocent citizens in Anambra State.

### **Conflict Theory**

Social conflict theories perceive crime as a function of the conflict that is evidenced in the society pertinent to the works of Karl Marx. Siegel (2000), affirmed that social conflict theorists proclaim that crimes committed in various societies are created by those at the helm of authorities to serve their purposes. Thus all criminal acts have their political undertones geared towards protecting the rights and interests of those in power. Quinney as Siegel declared, tags this ideology the “social reality of crime” (p.1).

One of the conflict theory's most popular postulation is that the justice system is biased and prejudiced; purely fashioned to protect the whims and caprices of the wealthy: Although various studies are not unanimously in agreement with this view. Marxists criminology views the competitive nature of the capitalist system as a major cause of

crime. Thus Siegel (2000), outlined that the poor commit crimes because of their frustration, anger, and need, while the wealthy engage in illegal acts because they must do so to keep their positions in society. Petrocelli, Piquero and Smith (2003), and Study Cogi (2022), on their part maintained that conflict theory holds that law and the mechanisms of its enforcement are used by dominant groups in society to minimize threats to their interests posed by those whom they label as dangerous, especially minorities and the poor.

In view of the foregoing explanations on conflict theory, this then account to what was evidenced in the SARS dehumanizing treatments meted on innocent citizens without being held accountable for such outright abuse of Human Rights: Those that suffered most in their hands were the masses and persons that were not in the corridors of power. They were not even properly and clearly prosecuted because those in the reins of government used them in serving their purposes. SARS (the puppets) were protected because they served their masters, (The wealthy that wields power) adequately by guarding their interests and prospects. The masses and the poor were victims because the powerful needs to keep them perpetually downtrodden so that they will continue being in power without any form of opposition or challenge.

### **Frustration – Aggression Theory**

Jost and Mentovich (2017), posited that when this theory is applied to intergroup relations, pertinent to the instance of SARS brutalities on innocent citizens in Anambra state; a person or group of persons transfers their aggression to a weaker circle within their milieu instead of the actual host or source of their provocation. Thus SARS for instance transfers their aggression on innocent citizens by brutalizing and dehumanizing them because of the unfavourable and stringent conditions they experience in their line of work which includes poor or low salary income and lack of provision of basic social amenities and welfare for the deceased families in the Nigeria police force which is consequent of the federal government of Nigeria corrupt and irregular stance.

Gonzalez (2023), in exposing frustration – aggression theory summarized that if an objective is being blocked, people often become frustrated. When one feels angered at the source of that frustration, such a one may become aggressive. Thus the frustration-aggression theory states that frustration often leads to aggressive behavior. He indicated that the frustration-Aggression theory was proposed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears in 1939: Leonard Berkowitz then made some revisions to the theory in 1989, declaring that exposure to violence in the environment could lead someone to be more aggressive in the face of frustration; such that frustration that cannot be expressed directly to the source may be displaced onto an innocent, yet easier victim.

Nickerson (2023), stressed that frustration-Aggression Theory uses the concepts of Catharsis (receiving emotional tension) and displacement (unconscious defense mechanism whereby the mind diverts emotions from their original source to a less threatening, dangerous, or unacceptable one in order to avoid experiencing anguish and anxiety). Whitley and Kite (2009), added that not only Leonard Berkowitz, but that Neal Miller is equally amongst the persons that further developed the theory. He issued that the re-formulated hypothesis stated that while frustration prompts a behavior that may or may not be aggressive; any aggressive behavior is the result of frustration, thus making frustration not sufficient but a necessary condition for aggression. In all, frustration

causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged; the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target hence it is equally referred to as frustration-Aggression-Displacement theory.

This theory offers another explanation to what stems the SARS acts of brutalities. This as well implicates the Nigerian government authorities. The Nigeria Police Force more often than not request for improvement in their working conditions which is seldom addressed. The resultant effect is acts of brutalities emitted by various special squads like SARS in their field of work. Although this should not be an excuse because Christian Ethics forbids situational Ethics; and does not project such.

### **Broken Windows Theory**

Kelling and Wilson (1982), pointed out that this theory attributes the perpetuation of serious crimes to the existence of social disorders that breeds vices like prostitution, drug addiction, betting, cultism, gangsterism and so on. Thus the existence of social disorders in the society promotes crimes and aids its being on the rife. This means that to address crimes in the society; the police had to arrest youngsters and adults that get involved in social disorders within the society and crime rate will be reduced drastically.

As McKee (2023), registered, Broken Windows theory had an enormous impact on police policy throughout the 1990's and remained influential into the 21st century. The most famous adoption of this theory as recorded by McKee was in New York City under the direction of police commissioner William Bratton. Bratton as McKee noted, employed the theory by releasing plain clothes police men into the streets to arrest those involved in various social vices; this proved beneficial and reduced crimes drastically. He equally adopted the same method when he became the chief of New York City's transit police between 1990 and 1992. It equally proved beneficial. This theory irrespective of its criticisms, is actually the simplest, cost reductive and most efficient form of combating crimes in contemporary times.

Those at the helm of the promulgation of this theory, Kelling and Wilson (cited by McKee, 2023), took a different view from the previous perceived stance of the police combating only what they view as serious crimes like rape, murder and robbery: Wilson and Kelling saw serious crime as the final result of a lengthier chain of events; theorizing that crime emanated from disorder and that once disorder were eliminated from the society, then serious crimes would not occur.

In criminology then, the broken windows theory equally states that visible signs of crime, anti-social behaviour and civil disorder create an urban environment that encourages further crime and disorder, including serious crimes. The theory insists that policing methods that target minor crimes such as vandalism, loitering, public drinking, jaywalking, and fare evasion assist to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness as Batton and Kelling (2014), expatiated.

Broken Window Theory introduces police friendly option of combating crimes to SARS in Anambra state, although now defunct: It actually will serve as a better option of policing to the Nigerian Police force. This will strip acts of brutalities from their mindset in going about their responsibilities. This theory makes the average police personnel perceive crime as being committed by persons that need help, counseling and therapy. They will not be seeing criminals as Animals. Besides, it will reduce crime rate drastically if all efforts are directed to it in all sincerity. Crime rate will be reduced and the police will

have no need of harassing anyone.

This theory equally accounts for the countries that have very low crime rate especially Switzerland that evidences 216 police officers on duty for every 100,000 inhabitants: Iceland which is actually the safest country in the world has simply redefined security and calm, employing only 700 police officers who are not even allowed to carry guns, as they are of no use in such a peaceful country; Bahrain has 1900 police officers for every 100,000 people; and this makes residents of these nations to equally make and have more money, making robberies and associated crimes less prevalent as elucidated by Bscholarly Logo (2023) and the World Population Review (2023).

### **Factors That Induced The Act Of Brutalities By The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) In Anambra State**

The information acquired so far from this work from both personal communications and clear-cut recorded events of SARS brutality on concrete settings that constitute the outright abuse and violations of peoples fundamental human rights; posits to the fur that SARS brutality was induced and equally persisted because of the following reasons:

- 1. Strong government backing:** The theory of conflict adopted in this work made it clear that one of the reasons for conflict in social settings is the class struggle wherein those in power, the wealthy and influential Lords it over the poor masses. This equally suggests that laws were often made to suite the whims and caprices of those in power that never want to loose their grip of the corridors of power. These rules and regulations never favours the poor masses. SARS were used in Anambra state as stooges and weapon of vendetta to serve the interests of the political lords in Anambra state: They are used to subjugate oppositions directly or indirectly. Thus the Anambra state government is highly implicated as they backed SARS up. The instant of Anambra state not submitting the report of the panel of inquiry set to probe and prosecute SARS actions is a clear point. Besides, no SARS member was indicted, arrested nor even prosecuted. Not even the dreaded CPS Nwafor.
- 2. Poor condition of service:** The same corrupt nature of the Nigerian government makes them not to be taking the welfare of the Nigerian police force into adequate consideration. They are not well paid. The deceased family of late officers are not properly catered for. Police barracks is more of a Ghetto; always in squalid state. This state of affairs often frustrates the officers of SARSs they thereby gets easily provoked out of tunes when dealing with innocent civilians or perceived suspects. The theory of frustration-Aggression expressly accounted adequately for this.
- 3. The power bestowed on the SARS was too much;** and they were not being properly supervised by their superiors in order to control and contain their excesses. There ought to be functional police internal affairs that investigates, probes and prosecutes corrupt and rogue police officers in Nigeria.
- 4. Greed and Envy:** SARS officers were very greedy. They are not contented with what they have. They, at a point, started envying youngsters that are driving big cars. Police officers should not just be stopping every car in the streets for

searching at will without search warrants. I. Okoro, J. Idoye, K. Anisoba and Y. Eneh (Personal Communication, January 12th, 2023), all lamented that the then SARS are so brutal in their stop and search syndrome of cars in the street. The Nigerian police equally still engage in that till date. They do this to intimidate people in order to strip them of their hard earned money.

**5. The Government of Nigeria Places no Value on the Fundamental Human Rights; and the Civic Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens within the Nigeria State.** The Nigerian government does not place importance on this aspect at all. Once a police officer or any uniformed person abuses one in Nigeria, the case ends there and then. It's obvious that justice is never served as even the superior officers keeps pushing up the matter. Talking about one's fundamental human rights before anyone in uniform in Nigeria is like singing a lullaby before a lion about to devour one. The police ought to be acquainted with their limits: citizens should know their Rights. The Federal Government must uphold all these strictly.

**6. Nigeria is a country dominated by gullible and complacent citizens:** Without mincing words, a good number of the citizens of Nigeria appears to be gullible in the face of irregularities, corruption, as well as the SARS brutalities evidenced in all the states in Nigeria especially Anambra state. Most of the testimonies against SARS came after the END SARS demonstration all over the federation. Citizens of Nigeria easily give in to intimidations by the police and government authorities; and this is not proper. They must understand that they are “human beings” and not “human doings”. They must first be (exist), before they do (sustain-survive) anything. A situation where one struggles to survive when all source of sustaining life is cut short or stifled; such a one ends up striving to survive all through such a one's life. The situation in Nigeria both economically and otherwise is so hard that a normal person should not survive it; yet you see Nigerian citizens trying to make ends meet against all odds. Citizens of Nigeria should start being proactive. They should start demonstrating when required; and learn to shut down the nation if need be. Accepting the terms of those in the reins of government hook, line and sinker tantamounts to stupidity and extreme form of foolishness cum mental derangement. In contemporary times in Nigeria, the average citizen is wallowing under the bondage and shackles of “survival mentality”. No one talks; when one decides to open up, such a one not only becomes a victim but also is seen as the trouble maker.

### **Special Anti-Robbery Squad Brutalities in the Light of Christian Ethical Stance**

Christian Ethics hinges on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the trail blazer, space setter, path finder and the role model or mentor in Christian ethical teachings. Jesus' central message on Earth is “Agape Love”. Loving ones neighbor without reason in all sincerity; and without any expectations of the lover from the beloved.

Christian Ethics equally hinges on equality and “being human”. All men are equal and no one is more equal than the other. Christian Ethics actually serves as a bulwark to

the Human Rights precepts. It projects that no one should treat another in ways such a one abhors. In Christian ethics, one is always required to put oneself in another's shoes: All human kind are expected to perceive circumstances and situations from another's perspective. Christian ethics preaches on giving one a second chance and equally stresses on availing people the benefits of doubt. Christian ethical precepts promotes justice, selflessness, sincerity, contentment, patience, equity, accountability and other quality virtues; while condemning wickedness, superiority complex, subjugation, prejudice, vendetta, deprivation, false accusation and other deplorable vices associated with the acts of Human Rights violations externalised by officers of SARS. The foundation of Christian ethics lies in Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:37-40 (as rendered by Maxwell, 2002), viz:

... You shall love the Lord Your God with all Your heart, with all Your Soul, and with all Your Mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (p.1183)

Thus Jesus Christ summarized all the precepts in both the old and the New Commandments in the above statement.

In view of the aforementioned assertions, SARS acts of brutalities meted on innocent citizens does not blend well with the basic principles of Human Rights. It is obvious that the SARS officers cannot endure nor tolerate such treatments. They would not even allow such to be meted on their relations nor close friends. The mode of operation of SARS is totally condemned in the light of Christian ethical perspective. There is no extension of love in SARS *modus operandi*. Their actions stands outrightly wicked, animalistic, bestial and despicable: It should never be accepted in any form whatsoever.

### **Towards Averting Subsequent Acts of Brutality by the Nigeria Police Force**

Sahara Reports, New York (2020), recorded that the Nigeria Police Force had announced measures to reform SARS up to seven times within three years without result. These announcements were made by the Inspector General of police in various times thus; December 2017, August 2018, September 2018, January 2019, February 2020, October 2020, and December 2020. The allegation against the Nigeria police force in lieu of these series of announcements is that they make such announcements to douse the tension created by the illegal activities of SARS at each period: The police, as Sahara reporters, New York declared rarely punished erring SARS operatives, because many Nigerian's believe that the Nigeria police force discreetly transfer such officers to another state where they soon continue their nefarious activities.

Little wonder, Ujumadu (2023), recorded that an Anambra-based human rights lawyer, Justice Ijeoma once alleged that the Police Rapid Response Squad (RRS), domiciled at the premises of the defunct special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS, Awkuzu, Anambra state, is a reincarnation of the dreaded defunct SARS. This is sequel to allegations that started trickling in that they are operating in exact same manner as SARS. In view of all these assertions and allegations, this work suggests the following as the way forward to ensure that Nigeria police force is sanitised of rogue and corrupt officers that inflict brutalities on innocent civilians:

- Nigerian Government should embark on wholistic development and improvement on all infrastructures in the country. This should be extended to all the segments of socio-economics, socio-political and socio-religious sectors of the country. Wholistic improvement and development on consistent stance as against one sided strive towards advancement on their areas of interest alone. When the economy, political and socio-religious sectors of the country are growing; the country will not go down the drain. Aggression resulting from frustration will not be evidenced from the citizens.
- The Nigerian Police Force should seek for other methods of policing. Like evidenced in the theory of Broken Windows, they should stop tackling crimes and criminals head on; they should rather resort to combating and eliminating factors that perpetuates crimes in the society.
- There should be a functional Police Internal Affairs that is powerful enough to discipline rogue and corrupt officers. The disciplinary measures should be strict and severe. The strength of the Police Internal Affairs will aid in sanitasing and stabilizing the Nigeria police force.
- There should be forum created by the Federal Government to always reward, celebrate and honor disciplined police men on a national level.
- The conditions of work for the Nigeria police officers should be improved. A conducive atmosphere for their operations should be created with special reference to their accommodation, salary structure, and general social, medical (health) and recreational welfare. They should go for leave and vacations when necessary and have a breathing space outside the terrain of “crimes and criminals war zone”.
- The Church and the State in Nigeria should employ concerted efforts towards improving on the social level of morality via their teachings and public enlightenment campaigns. A high level standard of morality could be created in the Nigerian society via this medium and this will keep police officers in check.
- Citizens of Nigeria should inculcate zero tolerance for crime amongst themselves. Parents should instill noble virtues in their children. It should be enthroned in the classrooms. Everyone should learn to report even minor infractions to the authorities irrespective of whose ox is gored. Once the Police Internal Affairs is functional, fear of retaliation from reported officers should not be an issue. Nigerian citizens should stop tolerating crimes. Nigeria as a nation posses high level of tolerance, with people not acting as harbingers of bad news: This should be discouraged totally.
- The Government of Nigeria should learn to show love to their citizens. Those in the reins of government in Nigeria should be patriotic. They should endeavor to maintain healthy and stable relationship with their citizens. The attitude of indifference from the Nigerian political leaders in the face of hardship and difficulties experienced by citizens is more than enough to enhance the production of corrupt police officers in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

There is still hope for Nigeria. All the social problems in Nigeria are artificial; thus manmade. The Government in Nigeria is corrupt; each new regime is laid on the foundation of corruption. The endemic corrupt nature of the Nation gives room for all manner of vices to be display on the streets of the country. At times it appears as if the presidential seat in Nigeria is a stage wherein each regime strives as actors to outsmart each other on indecency, irregularities, insincerity, wickedness, greed, brutality, infidelity, perfidiousness and various strands of indiscipline.

A deep and thorough examination of other institutions in Nigeria equally posits that various acts of brutalities that tantamount to the violence of Human rights are still practised therein. There are some so called “Men of God” who use human beings for rituals inorder to acquire power to perform miracles; There are lecturers in the Nigerian higher institutions who still require sex for marks; there are children that kill their parents for rituals, maltreat and kidnap them, and some parents that do likewise to their children; even up to keeping their female children in bondage while impregnating them. This study insists that if Christian ethical stand and the contents of Human Rights acts will be enthroned in the Nigerian societies, and equally be employed by all and sundry in their daily living; Nigeria will become automatically enrolled as one of the safest countries in the world.

## Recommendation

The Nigeria police force is a sensitive agency of the government which deals with the enforcing of law, detection and prevention of crime and the protection of life and property. The values of the Nigeria police force as recorded by Alao and Adeyemi (2019), includes: Respect for other people, Human equality, Honesty and Fairness. These are equally the integral parts of the Fundamental Human Rights.

Moreso, the Nigeria Police is formed as a disciplined unit to combat crimes. Acts of brutalities by the force various sectors like SARS are evil trends that came up courtesy of the corrupt stance of Nigeria.

In view of the aforementioned assertions, this work recommends, that the Nigeria police force starts implementing that which are enshrined in their code of conduct: The government of Nigeria should give directive for functional police complaint units to be opened at various accessible standpoints to the citizens for easy complaint of police brutalities: The government of Nigeria should get the National Assembly to pass a National Human Rights Commission Amendment Bill that would increase the independence of the commission and empower it to prosecute cases of human rights abuses: The government should ensure that police officers implicated in violations of Human Rights are promptly arrested, investigated and prosecuted. All these will curtail the abuse of Human Rights by any sector of the Nigeria police force.

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