



## NEWS SITUATION TRACKING - NIGERIA

### NATIONWIDE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE ILLICIT OPERATIONS OF THE SPECIAL ANTI-ROBBERY SQUAD (SARS) IN NIGERIA

#### Vol. 9

**Location:** NIGERIA

**Issue:** Protest Against SARS brutality and Extra-judicial killings in Nigeria.

**Date:** October 3- 16, 2020

#### COMMUNITY PROFILING

#### CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS

#### INCIDENT PROFILING

**Population:** Nigeria has a population of over 206,139,589<sup>2</sup>.

#### Basic Demography and Geography of Hotspots:

Nigeria shares land borders with the Republic of Benin, Chad, Cameroun, Niger and the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean. The country has 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There are 774 Local Government Areas (LGA's) divided across six (6) geo-political zones.

**Ethnicity:** Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups with Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba<sup>3</sup> in the majority.

**Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigeria Police Force:** The SARS created as a branch of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) under the Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department in 1992 was established to detain, investigate and prosecute people involved in crimes associated with armed robbery, kidnapping and other crimes associated with firearms.<sup>4</sup>

Despite its impact in tackling human security threats in the country, the SARS

#### Direct Actors:

Nigerians (especially youths), Human Rights Activists, Lawyers.

#### Affected Persons:

Nigerian youths, officers of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

#### Interested Actors:

Federal and State Governments, Amnesty International, Nigeria Bar Association, Civil Society Organisations, International Agencies, National/State House of Assembly, House of Representative, National Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Police Affairs, Police Service Commission, Federal Ministry of Justice, media.

The nationwide demonstrations against Police officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) continue to gain momentum across States. These demonstrations have generated increased conversations on the prevalence of human rights abuses perpetuated by security operatives and the inadequacies of law enforcement agencies to bring the perpetrators of abuses to justice.

On the other hand, issues of inadequate police funding and capacity building are among the underlying factors that account for lack of professionalism and corrupt practices in the security service's discharge of duties.

The increased agitations by Nigerian youths against SARS brutalities and extra-judicial killings were recently re-ignited by a video shared via social media showcasing a SARS officer assaulting a young Nigerian in Delta State on October 3, 2020. Subsequently, several other pictures and videos of similar assaults and extortion by officers of the SARS resurfaced in the social media with an #EndSARS hashtag created to further amplify the issues in national conversations. This led to uncoordinated protests by youths calling for the dissolution of the SARS and metamorphosed into a national protest since October 8, 2020<sup>10</sup>.

From October 8-16, 2020, twenty-six (26) States out of 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) recorded series of demonstrations in Nigeria<sup>11</sup>. The States include; Abuja-FCT, Lagos, Enugu, Ogun, Oyo, Delta, Imo, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, Anambra, Kogi, Osun, Kano, River, Plateau, Jigawa, Benue, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Bauchi, Adamawa, Abia, Kwara, Borno and Ebonyi States.

Also, Sokoto, Kaduna, Taraba, Katsina, Yobe, Zamfara, Kebbi and Gombe States have protested for the retention of the SARS and its deployment to the North to tackle banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping and other crimes that persist in the States.

Similarly, the protest has gained extensive international support with solidarity protests carried out in London, Dublin and Ireland in the United Kingdom and New York in the United States of America on October 11, 2020; Toronto in Canada and Berlin in Germany on October 12, 2020; Nigeria High Commission in Accra, Ghana on October 13, 2020; and the Nigerian Embassy in Johannesburg in South Africa on October 15, 2020, as monitored by WANEP<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?xsrf=ALeKk024WZQdV9kevtu8o3POhTqEE6kSdQ:1602836211476&source=univ&tbm=isch&q=map+f+Nigeria&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEWJQ-5GYIrljsAhURCWMbHXBDQDQ7A16BAGBEHE&biw=899&bih=578>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1122838/population-of-nigeria/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/nigeria/487468/pdfs/Nigeria%2030overview%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://snisnet.net/MFLDSS/MFLDSS.php?source=4&snu=0&factype=&owner=0&country=NG>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-features/361373-nigeria-budgets-n2000-for-the-healthcare-of-each-citizen-in-2020.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/25/nigeria-covid-19-cases-rise>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ncdc.gov.ng/themes/common/files/sitesreps/bfd8f02878f5ded5ed9c25308fdad.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ecowas.int/institutions/west-african-health-organisation-waho/>

<sup>9</sup> Paquette, Danielle. "Nigeria abolishes special police squad after nationwide protests". *Washington Post*. ISSN 0190-8286. Retrieved October 12, 2020

<sup>10</sup> www.wanep.org/news

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> www.wanep.org/news

has often been indicted for cases of torture, misuse of weapons, extra-judicial killing, physical and sexual assaults, unlawful arrest and detention, extortion, illegal stop and search, amongst other cases. However, this raises concerns regarding the efficacy of government policies especially, the Anti-Torture Act (2017), which criminalises the use of torture by law enforcement agencies.<sup>5</sup>

There have been previous agitations over SARS illegality and attempts on police reform by the Federal government. For example, between 2006 and 2012, three high-level Presidential Committees were constituted to recommend measures for the reform of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)<sup>6</sup>. Also, on August 14, 2018<sup>7</sup>, the Vice-President (VP) of Nigeria, Yemi Osibanjo made a pronouncement on SARS reform. Yet, the impact of the recommendations within the police force have not produced the desired results.

The President Muhammadu Buhari's administration has also made efforts to improve police welfare and technical expertise.

On April 2019, the President assented the Police Trust Fund Act<sup>8</sup>, which focuses on training of police officers, procurement of operational equipment, maintenance of police stations as well as improvement in the welfare and wellbeing of the Police Force.

Also, on September 17, 2020, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law the Nigeria Police Act, 2020. The new law provides for a more effective and well-organised police force driven by the principles of transparency and accountability in its operations and management of its resources, amongst others<sup>9</sup>.

Besides, the unlawful search of phones and laptops, illegal profiling of youths as fraudsters, extra-judicial killings and subjecting arrested persons to torture by officers of the SARS highlights the deficiencies in the police accountability system and practice that have characterized the Police Service over the years.<sup>13</sup> Between January 2017 to May 2020, the Amnesty International (AI) documented 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment and extra-judicial killings by officers of the SARS in Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Lagos States alone<sup>14</sup>.

Although the series of protests have been generally regarded as peaceful, suspected hoodlums exploited the protests to increase their criminal activities as recorded in Delta, Abuja-FCT<sup>15</sup>, Lagos<sup>16</sup>, Osun<sup>17</sup> and Edo States<sup>18</sup>. This resulted in 3 deaths in Delta and Edo States with several injuries in Abuja, Edo, Delta, Osun and Lagos States and destruction of vehicles<sup>19</sup>. Also, WANEP NEWS recorded cases of police clampdown, arrest, physical assaults and violent disruption of the protests in Abuja-FCT, Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Oyo States<sup>20</sup>.

Between October 8 and 13, 2020, the WANEP NEWS recorded 5 deaths (including 1 police officer) and 9 injuries during the protest in Oyo and Delta States. Also, in the Surulere axis of Lagos State, attempts by suspected hoodlums to break into a police station to release two convicted criminals during the protest resulted in a shoot-out that led to the death of 2 people (including 1 police officer) with 2 police officers injured<sup>21</sup>. In addition, between October 14-16, 2020, 4 people were reported dead with 3 others injured in road accidents caused by reckless driving during the EndSARS protest in Lagos, Abuja-FCT and Ondo, as recorded in the WANEP NEWS<sup>22</sup>. On October 15, 2020, the Federal Capital Territory Security Committee issued a ban on all street demonstrations in Abuja-FCT<sup>23</sup> to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The agitations has prompted series of actions by the Federal Government and the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mohammed Adamu, which includes; the ban on officers of the SARS and other Tactical Squads from routine security patrols across States on October 4, 2020 States<sup>24</sup> and the subsequent disbandment of the SARS unit on October 11, 2020.<sup>25</sup> Again, on October 13, 2020, the IGP set up a new Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team to replace the disbanded SARS unit<sup>26</sup>. In addition, the IGP and representatives of the Presidential Panel on the Reform of the SARS also approved the five-points demands issued by the protesters on October 13, 2020. The five-points demands of protesters include, release of all persons arrested; justice for victims of police brutality; salary increment of the police, psychological evaluation of all disbanded SARS as well as investigations and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct.<sup>27</sup>

In a follow-up to the interventions made by the Federal Government and the IGP, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has commenced plans to set up an Independent Investigation Panel to look into human rights violation by the SARS<sup>28</sup>. This is also in conformity with the establishment of state-based judicial panels of inquiry by the National Economic Council (NEC) to investigate complaints of police brutality<sup>29</sup>. Also, all State Governors are to set up a panel for compensation of all victims, as directed by the meeting of the Nigeria Governors' Forum<sup>30</sup>. As of October 13, 2020, the Lagos State Governor set up a 200 million naira trust fund to compensate victims of police brutality in the State<sup>31</sup>.

Despite these immediate interventions and commitments to police reform<sup>32</sup>, the protests persist.

<sup>5</sup> Police Reform in Nigeria: The Devolution Debate, 2018 (by Cleen Foundation) : <https://cleen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Police-Reform-in-Nigeria-The-Devolution-Debate.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Police Reform in Nigeria: The Devolution Debate, 2018 (by Cleen Foundation) : <https://cleen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Police-Reform-in-Nigeria-The-Devolution-Debate.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://dailytrust.com/-endsars-nigerians-react-to-sars-overhaul-265751>

<sup>8</sup> <https://businessday.ng/news/article/sars-experts-task-fg-on-police-trust-fund/#:~:text=On%20a%20June%202019%2C%20President,of%20the%20Nigeria%20Police%20Force.%E2%80%9D>

<sup>9</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/202009230514.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495052020ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495052020ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.channelstv.com/2020/10/14/sarsmustend-several-injured-as-hoodlums-attack-protesters-in-abuja/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/10/breaking-hoodlums-attack-protesters-in-lagos/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://dailypost.ng/2020/10/15/end-sars-protest-turns-violent-in-osogbo/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://dailytrust.com/2-killed-in-endsars-protest-in-edo>

<sup>19</sup> [www.wanep.org/news](http://www.wanep.org/news)

<sup>20</sup> [www.wanep.org/news](http://www.wanep.org/news)

<sup>21</sup> <https://guardian.ng/news/protesters-march-on/>

<sup>22</sup> [www.wanep.org/news](http://www.wanep.org/news)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.channelstv.com/2020/10/15/covid-19-fct-security-committee-prohibits-street-protests/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://dailytrust.com/l-g-bans-fsars-other-tactical-squads-from-routine-patrols>

<sup>25</sup> <https://punchng.com/breaking-sars-scrapping-first-step-in-police-reform-buhari-addresses-protesters/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://globalnewsng.com/fgp-form-swat-team-to-take-over-sars/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.theabc.ng/breaking-fg-accepts-5-point-demand-of-endsars-protesters>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/nhr-media/press-release/143-nhr-to-set-up-independent-investigation-panel-on-sars.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010160141.html>

<sup>30</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/202010160141.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/421139-endsars-lagos-govt-sets-up-panel-for-victims-of-police-brutality.html>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.channelstv.com/2020/10/12/breaking-buhari-reacts-to-public-outcry-promises-extensive-reform-of-nigeria-police/>

## IMPLICATION OF THE PROTEST ON NATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

- Continued demonstrations by the agitated youths amid several interventions reveals deep-seated resentment in the youths against the State, which further indicates trust deficit between the State and citizenry, with ripple effect on social cohesion in the country. This has potential to trigger lawlessness and disruption of public order. It could also intersect with organized crimes and armed violence in the affected areas to exacerbate insecurity in the country, if the protests continues unabated.
- The SARS brutality violates the fundamental human rights of victims as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. The effect of the abuses can be devastating, with long-term physical and psychological harm to victims. This further increases the risk of human insecurity and reduces public confidence in the activities of law enforcement agencies in the country.
- The protests have resulted in the disruption of vehicular movements and business activities. This may likely have adverse effect on economic activities and livelihoods of population in the affected areas due to fear of looting and destruction of valuables by hoodlums. Additionally, with many vehicles stranded due to the gridlock, there is also the risk of theft by criminal networks exploiting the insecurity created to attack commuters.
- The risk of an increase in COVID-19 transmission is imminent given the crowded procession and demonstration as well as the failure of some protesters to abide by the COVID-19 safety guidelines put in place to mitigate the spread of the pandemic. Nigeria is still recording cases of COVID-19. Between October 8 and 15, 2020, about 1,244 new cases of COVID-19 were recorded across 25 States of Niger, Imo, Ebonyi, Anambra, Lagos, Rivers, Abuja-FT, Oyo, Bauchi, Ogun, Delta, Kano, Benue, Edo, Nassarawa, Plateau, Osun, Akwa-Ibom, Ekiti, Yobe, Ondo, Bayelsa, Taraba, Katsina and Enugu States<sup>33</sup>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The intervention of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in rebuilding public confidence and trust through consultations with the citizens, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), media and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) should be sustained. This approach should be complemented with confidence building structures including the setting up of a public enquiry on the police reform procedures to foster trust in security agencies' ability to tackle issues of human security threats.
- The Federal Government, the office of the IGP, National Human Rights Organisations and the CSOs should carefully consider all options put forward by the police reform committee, especially the concerns on police welfare packages to resolve the incessant cases of human rights violations.
- The Federal and State Governments should invest in youth employment to create sustainable economic opportunities for young people in the country through the implementation of the 774,000 jobs approved in 2020. This should be linked with the creation of platforms for inclusive participation and amplification of youth voices in the decision-making processes in the country.
- State Governments, in collaboration with security agencies, Civil Society Organisations and traditional/religious institutions should create avenues for improved interface between communities and security officers for effective service delivery in terms of security.

<sup>33</sup> www.wanep.org/news