

CORRUPTION VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS
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‘Corruption’ lies within us all, but so does the yearning to be respected, to have ‘rights’. The reduction of one is the inevitable rise of the other.

Human rights and corruption, although deeply embedded in the fabric of our societies, do not have any definitions written in stone due to their multi-faceted, complex natures. Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Human rights can on another hand be seen as the fundamental freedoms every individual is entitled to throughout their lives. For concision and depth, these two will be analyzed from an institutional context. My primary case-study will be the 200 million strong, West-African Nigeria.

The first intersection of corruption and human rights in Nigeria is its democratic institutions. Democratic institutions include structures such as the Judiciary, Legislative, law enforcement agencies and an independent electoral body. These bodies are heavily manipulated, as its top officials answer to a small circle of Nigerian leaders who have raped the country’s wealth for too long. Because they cannot make decisions based on justice and integrity, not only do they prove their corruption and that of individuals pulling strings, but this is done at the cost of the rights of millions who have nowhere else to turn. Law enforcers arrest citizens unjustly, frequently harassing them for bribes; courts of law favor individuals with the heaviest pockets; INEC, Nigeria’s supposedly independent electoral body, is not as integrous and transparent as it should be. When all these elements are analyzed, we see that the economic, judicial and social rights are stripped off a people. Worse still, they lose true franchise, ensuring the continuous cycle of corruption and deprivation of fundamental privileges as the same leaders recycle themselves. So long as institutions set up to uphold a country’s democracy have questionable procedures, there is no hope for a true democracy, there is only hope for endless corruption, there is no hope for true human rights.

If one knows not their rights, one has no rights. The Nigerian educational system has suffered for countless years. As funds flow into its government’s coffers, proper allocation is ignored and wealth meant to be poured towards educating the Nigerian masses lodge in secret Swiss bank accounts, severely misappropriated. 39% of Nigerian adults cannot read or write, 40% of primary school teachers are not qualified, there have been 14 university strikes in the past 20 years where university students have lost a up to 40 months of education. There is a singular cause of these disturbing facts and gross deprivation of educational

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rights, governmental embezzlement. Lecturers strike, their salaries are unable to feed families, schools offer poor educational quality, governmental support is inadequate. These jarring details have over the years bred certain dangerous trends. Firstly, younger Nigerian generations barely know anything about their basic entitlements. Secondly, corruption is being viewed as a normalcy among social circles, the people expect their leaders to embezzle, even encourage them if sufficient connections are available. Nigerians have grown so accustomed to the deprivation of rights and corruption within their governments that it has become culture. No one is held accountable, the murderous cycle is in motion, its only change is its deterioration.

The Nigerian constitution allows for what Jide Olagunju, a seasoned Nigerian lawyer and civil servant, calls, 'legal theft'. Every people group should have the right not to be stolen from, their resources should be utilized towards their betterment, this is not the case in Nigeria. Crude oil, one of earth's most demanded commodities and Nigeria's foremost income source is found predominantly in the South-South geographic region in Nigeria. The constitution states that the billions in revenue that stream into the country monthly from this resource belongs to the federal government and must be shared in varying amounts to states as it deems fit. This causes two things, it allows for governors in control of each state to steal funds they never work for and simultaneously deny the constituents of their respective states basic developmental provisions as they claim not to be receiving 'tax money'. These states rely heavily on their monthly 'allowances' like children, promoting poor productivity levels and negligence of resources within every state. The southern states providing this resource are left with less than they deserve and mass underdevelopment reigns as states have no incentive to be productive. Who gains here? the corrupt politicians that embezzle this free flow of funds. Who loses? The Nigerian masses, stripped of their rights to the most basic of infrastructural provisions. Hence, the cycle continues.

CITATIONS

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