

# Legality of EndSARS Protest: A Quest for Democracy in Nigeria



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## ABSTRACT

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An essential hallmark of a democratic society is a statutory institution responsible for protecting (Human Rights) the lives, properties, and catering to its people's needs. However, in Nigeria, there has been an incessant abuse of its citizens' rights by the Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS) and complaints of low sustainable development, which had trigger the EndSARS protest. Hence, this study's essence is to ascertain the reason for the EndSARS protest and how to salvage the protest. Given this, the study used an online survey questionnaire sent to 363 respondents (randomly selected) residing in the various state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Descriptive and analytical statistics were used to analyse 363 respondents' responses to the questions. The study found that the reason for the EndSARS protest is police brutality and poor sustainable development. The study therefore concludes and recommended concerning its findings that there is a need for the Nigerian Government within the State and at the Federal level to embark on a sustainable development project that will cater to the need of its citizens and also endeavour to curtail police excess in abusing human rights.



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## 1. Introduction

The Police Force is one of the key elements central to the protection of the lives and properties of the people and maintenance of the internal peace.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the Police Force in a democratic society increases with the increase in the heterogeneity of society.<sup>2</sup> In Nigeria, as the spate of crimes associated with

<sup>1</sup> Danielle Watson, *Police and the Policed: Language and Power Relations on the Margins of the Global South* (Springer, 2018) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-00883-3>

<sup>2</sup> James Russell McDonald, 'Developing a Peace Course in Police Studies: How a Culture of Peace Can Enhance Police Legitimacy in a Democratic Society', *Journal of Peace Education*, 12.1 (2015), 74–91 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2014.948412>

robbery and kidnapping amongst other crimes increases thereby undermining the duties of the Nigerian Police,<sup>3</sup> a special unit of the Nigerian Police Force called Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was created in 1992 as part of the Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department.<sup>4</sup> This special unit of the police, though created to combat armed robbery and kidnappings, thrived greatly in the various acts of human rights violations.

However, it suffices to state that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) that was created to curtailed incidence of armed robbery crime related offence and protect the society, are now the monster hunting the society. This is concerning the fact that, an awful characteristic of Nigerian SARS is the use of force to citizens of their legal rights, a character that has now generated oppositions (EndSARS) from teaming youths across the country who are victims of the SARS abuse.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, over the years, the Nigerian SARS was linked to extra-judicial killings, extortion, torture, framing, blackmail, kidnapping, home invasions, rape, and the invasion of homes, illegal stop, and search operations.<sup>6</sup> They were also involved in violation of the right to privacy through inordinate checking of mobile phones and computers, harassment, and intimidation of citizens (most especially the Nigerian Youth, to mention but a few.<sup>7</sup>

The above heinous act of the Nigerian SARS cumulated ignited the Nigerian youth for a protest against police brutality and a quest for sustainable governance. In this regard, it suffices to state that the massive protests against the end of SARS in Nigeria are not only a result of police brutality but also a direct offshoot of Nigeria's style of governance and poor sustainable development on the part of the government.<sup>8</sup> The protests are demonstrations of the need of sustainable development and freedom of expression, which is essential to democracy and good governance.<sup>9</sup> Dreadful governance has been understood to reflect a general

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Chukwuemeka Nwoko, 'Amotekun: The Southwest Region's Response to the Failures of the Nigerian Police and Worsening Insecurity in Nigeria', *African Identities*, 2021, 1–17 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2021.1994368>

<sup>4</sup> Tope Shola Akinyetun, 'Reign of Terror: A Review of Police Brutality on Nigerian Youth by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)', *African Security Review*, 30.3 (2021), 368–85 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2021.1947863>

<sup>5</sup> Victor Chidubem Iwuoha and Ernest Tooichi Aniche, 'Protests and Blood on the Streets: Repressive State, Police Brutality And# EndSARS Protest in Nigeria', *Security Journal*, 2021, 1–23 <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-021-00316-z>

<sup>6</sup> Iwuoha and Aniche.

<sup>7</sup> Blessing Chinweobo-Onuoha and others, 'Modelling Journalists' Coping Strategies for Occupational Hazards in Their Coverage of Protests against Police Brutality (ENDSARS Protests) in Nigeria', *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics*, 2021, 1–8 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803548.2021.1999651>

<sup>8</sup> Chinweobo-Onuoha and others.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Anne Oyenmwosa Odojor, and Patience Omohoste Agbale, 'The Legal Impact of Plea Bargain in Settlement of High Profile Financial Criminal Cases in Nigeria', *Sriwijaya Law Review*, 5.2 (2021), 161–74 <https://doi.org/10.28946/slrev.Vol5.Iss2.852.pp161-174>

tendency of a public institution, not managing public affairs and resources.<sup>10</sup> It is the connection involving the government and the governed as a result of decision-making. This unfavourable affiliation is created as a consequence of outside factors or decisions such as contravention of central or suitable norms such as those of moderate democracy, and awful economic policy.<sup>11</sup>

Concerning the above, the study tend embark on a study to theorise the right to peaceful protest recognize by international and national instrument. Furthermore, empirically examines the on-going endSARS protests and campaigns across Nigeria in ascertaining if the endSARS protest is a result of police brutality, ineffective governance, and poor sustainable development in Nigeria. Furthermore, to ascertain the effective solutions to savage the endSARS protest and further future occurrence of police brutality in Nigeria. This research is in the attempt to answer three questions: (1) Is the EndSARS protest a political agenda to destabilised the Nigerian government or a revolution quest for good governance?, (2) What is or could be responsible in igniting the EndSARS protest?, and (3) What are the possible solutions that can be employed to salvage the civil unrest and prevent future occurrence?

## 2. Research Method

This study employs the use of doctrinal and non-doctrinal survey research methods. The theoretical session is aimed at analyzing and theorising the legality of endSARS protests under the Nigerian law, various international conventions, also to theorise the end SARS protest as a quest for good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. Concerning the non-doctrinal method of study, questionnaire was distributed to 363 respondents residing in Nigeria. In this regard, a descriptive and analytical research approach was used to enable the authors to gather data that are objective, statistical, mathematical, and numerical for analysis. Furthermore, the non-doctrinal method of research enables the authors to collate and analyse data generated from the questionnaire to reach a conclusive generalisation in ascertaining if the endSARS protest is a political agenda or a quest for good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. Furthermore, it also enable the authors to ascertain what triggered the protest and how to salvage the civil unrest of the endSARS protest in Nigeria.

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Ebekozi and Clinton Aigbavboa, 'COVID-19 Recovery for the Nigerian Construction Sites: The Role of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Technologies', *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 69 (2021), 102803 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2021.102803>

<sup>11</sup> Tamar Haruna Dambo, Metin Ersoy, Ahmad Muhammad Auwal, Victor Oluwafemi Olorunsola, and Mehmet Bahri Saydam, 'Office of the Citizen: A Qualitative Analysis of Twitter Activity during the Lekki Shooting in Nigeria's# EndSARS Protests', *Information, Communication & Society*, 2021, 1–18 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1934063>

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### *A Recount of Few Brutalise victims by Nigeria Special Anti-Robbery Squad*

One of the major reasons for the endSARS protest in Nigeria is the incessant complaining of the Nigerian youth's brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigeria Police Force. The major function of the Nigeria Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) is to combat the increasing rate of banditry, kidnappings, and other crimes in Nigeria.<sup>12</sup> However, the Nigeria SARS seems to have abandoned this mandate of the safety of life and security of properties to taking the life of Nigerians and seizure of their properties through unlawful means as reported in several newspapers in Nigeria. This session of this study considers a few of the victims of these brutalities, and they are as follows.

Ifeoma Abugu was a 28year old graduate of the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, who was allegedly sexually assaulted and murdered by the personnel of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, Federal Capital Territory Command, Abuja.<sup>13</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at the hour of 5 pm, Some men of the special squad (SARS) allegedly stormed the deceased fiance's residence, Afam Ugwunwa, Wumba Village, Lokogoma Area, Abuja, to arrest him, but the suspect was not found at home, Ifeoma Abugu (fiancée of the suspect) was arrested in lieu of her fiancé.<sup>14</sup> However, it was reported that Ifeoma had died in the police cell. While the family members saw signs of sexual assault on her corpse, the police alleged that she died due to an overdose of cocaine.

Tiamiyu Kazeem was playing for the National League side Remo Stars before he was murder by the Nigeria SARS.<sup>15</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of February 2020, the deceased, alongside his teammate, were stopped by some personnel of the SARS in Sagamu and were questioned about their means of livelihood. They were attacked verbally on the claim that they were fraudsters considering the way they were dressed, which the deceased and his friend quickly debunked that they were footballers. The SARS officers insisted that they must take them to their station. Unfortunately, one of the policemen pushed the deceased down from the vehicle out of anger, and another motor coming from the back crushed him immediately.

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<sup>12</sup> Franklin Onwuegbuchunam, 'The Sacredness of Right against Torture Vis-à-Vis the Recent Trend of SARS Action in Nigeria: A Need for Legal Consideration', Available at SSRN 3709419, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3709419>

<sup>13</sup> Tamar Haruna Dambo, Metin Ersoy, Ahmad Muhammad Auwal, Victor Oluwafemi Olorunsola, Ayodeji Olonode, and others, 'Nigeria's# EndSARS Movement and Its Implication on Online Protests in Africa's Most Populous Country', *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22.3 (2022), e2583 <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2583>

<sup>14</sup> Dambo, Ersoy, Auwal, Olorunsola, Olonode, and others.

<sup>15</sup> Chinenyenwa Ohia and Mobolaji Modinat Salawu, 'COVID-19 Pandemic and Civil Unrests in Africa: Implication of Recent# EndSARS Protests for Increased Community Transmission in Nigeria', *The Pan African Medical Journal*, 37.Suppl 1 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.supp.2020.37.47.26956>

Daniel Dominic, also known as Sleek, a 20-year-old musician, was shot by a member of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Elelewo axis of Obi-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.<sup>16</sup> The deceased was allegedly standing by a hotel with his friend, Reuben, waiting for a car to transport them when police officers confronted them. They were unharmed and with no incriminating object on them. However, a group of SARS officers on patrol at the location beckoned at them. They were afraid because the SARS officers were holding guns, and they took to their heels. Immediately, the officers ran after them screaming “thief” “thief,” and on hearing that, a police sergeant attached to a supermarket within the area came out, chased, and shot Dominic; he died before he could be taken to the hospital.

Linda Angela Igwetu, a 23-year-old who was a serving Corps member in Abuja, Nigeria, on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018 she was murdered by the Nigeria police. She had worked late at about 11 pm and with a few friends before their passing from the National Youth Service Corps scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018. She was reported to have been driving and playing music in her open roof car, and at the checkpoint immediately after Ceddi Plaza, she was shot by a police officer named Benjamin Peters. The bullet shot by the policeman hit her on the part of her midriff, and she began losing blood and suffered a low heart rate before she died.

Kolade Johnson is 36 years old and a graduate of the University of Benin; he had a fiancée, a son, and was the only son of his parents. He was shot dead from the barrel of the gun of the members of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 at Onipetesi, Mangoro bus stop, Lagos State, where he went to watch a football premiership match.<sup>17</sup> The members of the SARS were searching for a suspect when they opened fire, and Kolade Johnson was hit with a stray bullet where he was watching football. The killing of Johnson provoked widespread anger amongst Nigerians, who clamoured that the special police unit be disbanded. The officers of the SARS who allegedly killed him include the following: Ojiawuna Samuel (a corporal), Godwin Orji (a sergeant), and Ogunyemi Olalekan (an inspector).

Tina Ezekwe is a 16-year-old girl who was shot by a trigger-happy policeman at Lagos State on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020.<sup>18</sup> Tina died two days later, and the allegedly drunk police officer wanted to scare people off at the scene where some SARS personnel had shot a driver from whom they wanted to collect a bribe of N200 and

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<sup>16</sup> Usman A Ojedokun, Yetunde O Ogunleye, and Adeyinka A Aderinto, ‘Mass Mobilization for Police Accountability: The Case of Nigeria’s# EndSARS Protest’, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 15.3 (2021), 1894–1903 <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paab001>

<sup>17</sup> Ernest Tooche Aniche and Victor Chidubem Iwuoha, ‘Beyond Police Brutality: Interrogating the Political, Economic and Social Undercurrents of The# EndSARS Protest in Nigeria’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2022, 00219096221097673 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096221097673>

<sup>18</sup> Tobia Fattore and Jan Mason, ‘Humiliation, Resistance and State Violence: Using the Sociology of Emotions to Understand Institutional Violence against Women and Girls and Their Acts of Resistance’, *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 9.4 (2020), 104–17 <https://doi.org/10.3316/agispt.20210518046839>

in the process shot Tina Ezekwe. The above are just a few cases reflecting how the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) has been indulging in brutalising, abusing, and extra-judicial killing of promising youth of Nigeria, which is a major consequence of the endSARS protest in Nigeria.

### *The Right to Peaceful Protest Recognise by Nigeria laws and International Instrument*

It has been argued that the EndSARS Protest (champion by the Nigeria youth) is one that is undemocratic, unknown, or recognised by the International Community and within the Nigerian terrain; hence the protest is unconstitutional and ought to be condemned by the Federal Government of Nigeria as one which violates democratic tenets. In this regard, it suffices to ascertain what the meaning of a protest is? A protest is a formal and peaceful complaint, declaration, or expression by an individual or group of individual expressing dissatisfaction against an act done or about to be executed.<sup>19</sup> It is also a solemn way of dissenting, objecting, or disapproval to a violation of existing morals or principles<sup>20</sup> (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 2003).

However, it is also relevant to note that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria<sup>21</sup> has a salient provision affirming the right to protest in Nigeria and which right cannot be taken away from the people under any guise. By the provision of Section 39 and 40 of the Nigeria Constitution, the people's freedom to protest or engage in any peaceful processions is guaranteed. It recognizes the right of any individual to associate, assemble freely and express their opinion freely in protecting their interest. Given this, the right to peaceful protest is guaranteed under the constitution, which cannot be taken away unless in the manner provided in the Nigeria constitution, particularly Section 45, which is not the focus of this research.<sup>22</sup> The right to peaceful protest has been given judicial affirmation in the case of *Inspector General of Police V All Progressive Peoples Party & Ors* when the Court of Appeal held thus.

From the above postulation of the court, it is settled beyond peradventure that the constitution, which is the *grundnorm* and the father and mother of all laws in Nigeria, recognizes the right of the people to protest in so far as the protest is not one that may necessitate the invocation of the provision of section 45 of the Constitution. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to state that there is specific legislation, the Nigerian Public Order Act that also recognise and regulate protest, demonstrations, rallies, or processions in Nigeria. By Section 1(1), the right to a

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<sup>19</sup> Philippe Hanna and others, 'Conceptualizing Social Protest and the Significance of Protest Actions to Large Projects', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 3.1 (2016), 217–39 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2015.10.006>

<sup>20</sup> Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2003 available at [Http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/protest](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/protest) Accessed 21st October, 2020

<sup>21</sup> Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) 2010

<sup>22</sup> Nat Ofo, 'Amending the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999', *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 4.2 (2011), 123–48 <https://doi.org/10.1163/170873811X577302>

peaceful protest is recognized when the section provides that each government of a state must ensure the safety of the state and individual involved in a peaceful and organise procession and assembly in a public place or road within the state.<sup>23</sup>

However, While Section 1 of Public Order Act (2004) provides for the right to a peaceful protest in Nigeria, Subsection 2 of the Public Order Act subjects the exercise of this right to the whims and caprice of the Governor of the State where the protest is to take place.<sup>24</sup> Subsection 2 imposes on the protesters to first obtain a protest license while it empowers the Governor to issue a license; otherwise, any protest without such license is declared illegal.

Interestingly, this Subsection 2 has been declared null and void by the court for being in contravention of the Nigeria Constitution's provision that recognises the right to peaceful protest. The court declared that it is not within the spirit of Section 40 of the Constitution that the right to protest granted under that section shall be subject to approval. This position was affirmed in the case of *Inspector General of Police Vs. All Progressive Peoples Party & Ors supra*, where the Nigeria court relied on the case of *Shetton v Tucker*, which is to the effect that no government possesses the power to stifle and suspend the fundamental right of its citizens. In this regard, the Public Order Act cannot be utilised to ensure law and order by suspending the fundamental right of Nigerian citizens.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, in the case of *Osadebey v A.G. Bendel State*, the power allotted to the legislature to enact laws cannot be used in any circumstance to accomplish an unconstitutional end result. In this regard, the power to the governor of a state to subject and permit any protest or procession under the Public Order Act will be offensive to use in attaining the unconstitutional result of depriving an individual the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. The court added that the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech is a core part of the democratic rights of all citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which must be jealous as they are part of the base upon which the government itself rests.<sup>26</sup>

From the above, the Nigeria Constitution remains the most valid and sacred position of law on the right to protest, and all other laws must either pitch tent with the constitution or bow to it. The Public Order Act is valid only to the extent of its consistency with the provision of Nigeria the constitution. The right to protest is a guaranteed constitutional right in Nigeria. Therefore, the EndSARS

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<sup>23</sup> Amos Adeoye Idowu, 'Security Laws and Challenges in Nigeria: The Boko Haram Insurgency', *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 8.1 (2013), 118–34 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361610.2013.738395>

<sup>24</sup> Bamisaye Olutola, 'The Right to Peaceful Assembly in a Chaotic Democracy: An Analysis of Nigerian Law', in *Governance, Human Rights, and Political Transformation in Africa* (Springer, 2020), pp. 217–46 [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27049-0\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27049-0_9)

<sup>25</sup> George William Mugwanya, 'Human Rights in Africa', in *Human Rights in Africa: Enhancing Human Rights Through the African Regional Human Rights System* (Brill Nijhoff, 2003), pp. 53–106 [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004478558\\_008](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004478558_008)

<sup>26</sup> Edieya Davidson, 'Hallmark of Legal Development: Justice Obaseki Through His Cases', Available at SSRN 3094901, 2017 <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3094901>

protest one that has attained its legal flavour and validity from our local laws, which is a settled position.

It is also germane to affirm that some international community also recognize the right to protest. This is because some international conventions and treaties recognise the right to protest, and Nigeria is a signatory to these conventions or treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Right (1981) is one of such international instrument which recognizes the right to protest in Nigeria. *Article 18, 19, and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* provide that everyone has freedom of thought, the right to self-expression, right to peaceful assembly and association. However, *Article 29* of the declaration further stated that the exercise of these must conform to the just requirement of public order, morality, and the wellbeing of a democratic society.<sup>27</sup>

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, also known as ICCPR, is a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It also recognise the right to a peaceful protest. By the Covenant, every state party must ensure respect for the civil and political rights of the people, which rights include freedom of expression, life to life, freedom of religion, and freedom of assembly. Nigeria ratified the ICCPR on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1993, and the direct implication of the ratification is that the Covenant is legally binding and enforceable in Nigeria, either against any individual(s), government, or institution. *Article 21 of ICCPR* validates the people's right to hold protest when it states that an individual or group of individuals have the right or freedom of peaceful assembly to the degree that it does not obstruct with the right of others, public order, public safety, and morality.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights is a regional international human rights law anticipated to advance and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in the African continent. By the ratification of the treaty in 1983 by the Nigerian government, it has become a binding document that shall be enforceable in a court of law in Nigeria.<sup>29</sup> Article 11 of the African Charter recognizes the right to protest as an essential and inalienable right of the people, which cannot be unduly taken away<sup>30</sup> except on the ground of national security,

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<sup>27</sup> Prince Chiagozie Ekoh and Elizabeth Onyedikachi George, 'The Role of Digital Technology in the EndSars Protest in Nigeria during Covid-19 Pandemic', *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 6.2 (2021), 161–62 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-021-00161-5>

<sup>28</sup> Linda Camp Keith, 'The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Does It Make a Difference in Human Rights Behavior?', *Journal of Peace Research*, 36.1 (1999), 95–118 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343399036001006>

<sup>29</sup> Eghosa Osa Ekhator, 'The Impact of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Domestic Law: A Case Study of Nigeria', *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*, 41.2 (2015), 253–70 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050718.2015.1049633>

<sup>30</sup> Frans Viljoen, 'Application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights by Domestic Courts in Africa', *Journal of African Law*, 43.1 (1999), 1–17 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002185530000869X>

public safety, and protection of the right of others.<sup>31</sup> It is imperative to state that the applicability and enforceability of this provision were also amplified in the case of *Kuti v Attorney General of Federation*.<sup>32</sup>

The above convention or declaration is a hybrid of both the Constitution of Nigeria and the Public Order Act. However, it relevant to also state that, it is upon ratification and domestication of these treaties or convention by Nigeria government that they become a binding document which shall be enforceable in a court of law in Nigeria.<sup>33</sup> However, The acceptance of a treaty as binding legislation in Nigeria is made possible by virtue of *section 12(1) of the Constitution of Nigeria*, which provided that a treaty or convention is only made to be enforceable in Nigeria if it has been enacted into law

From the above, it is crystal clear without any ambiguities that the campaigns and the EndSARS protest demanding for the dissolution of the unit of the Nigerian Police Force, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, and a request for effective governance that will ensure sustainable development are within the definition of the word "protest."

### ***Governance and Sustainable Development a Viable means of Savaging the EndSARS Protest in Nigeria***

The EndSARS protest in the various parts of Nigeria can also be attributed to ineffective governance and poor sustainable development.<sup>34</sup> The failure of the government to cater to the needs of the people in areas of security of life, empowerment, job creations, power supply, respect for human rights, etc. are responsible can spur civil unrest and protests from its citizens. According to the World Bank, to ensure effective governance and sustainable development,<sup>35</sup> the government must ensure effective governance that is the mode in which public officials and organisations obtain and apply the authority to form public guiding principles and provide public goods and services.<sup>36</sup> The World Bank had also stated that the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised are not violated with impunity by public officers. This includes the

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<sup>31</sup> Viljoen.

<sup>32</sup> Cheryl Johnson-Odim, "'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria', in *Women's Studies International Forum* (Elsevier, 2009), xxxii, 51–59 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2009.01.004>

<sup>33</sup> Gina Bekker, 'The African Human Rights System: An Uphill Struggle', *German YB Int'l L.*, 52 (2009), 45 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855306000210>

<sup>34</sup> Bukola Akintola, 'The Perils of Protest: State Repression and Student Mobilization in Nigeria', in *Encountering the Nigerian State* (Springer, 2010), pp. 99–121 [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230109636\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230109636_5)

<sup>35</sup> Mihaela Kardos, 'The Reflection of Good Governance in Sustainable Development Strategies', *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 58 (2012), 1166–73 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.1098>

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kraay, 'Governance Indicators: Where Are We, Where Should We Be Going?', *The World Bank Research Observer*, 23.1 (2008), 1–30 <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkm012>

procedure by which governments are chosen, monitored and replaced; the ability of the government to efficiently formulate and apply sound policies that cater for the need of its citizens,<sup>37</sup> and the reverence of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social exchanges among them.

Given the above, good governance in Nigeria should be the ultimate goal of the government; in this regard, Nigeria's government must efficiently and effectively promote the economic well-being of its people.<sup>38</sup> This is because good governance is a primary practice through which the lives, aspirations, and dreams of the citizenry are jointly pursued by premeditated and methodical strategies and policies for the realization of their maximum potentials.<sup>39</sup> From the above, it is clear beyond peradventure that the only way by which the people of a nation may have a conducive atmosphere for an improved standard of living is through good governance. The state of the country is a direct reflection of the kind of governance that operates. High-quality governance is a crucial tool that oils a persistent peaceful, secure, and overall society's advancement.

The authors designed an online questionnaire (using Google form, which suits the purpose of ensuring social distancing due to the Covid19) disseminated to respondents through various internet means of communication. 363 respondents were randomly picked from various states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to provide both predetermined options and free opinions response, and a simple random technique was used in selecting the respondents. The simple random sampling technique is said to be the best for this type of study, given the fact that it will enable the authors to arrive at a general conclusion.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the simple random techniques are also regarded as better, with regard to the fact that the sample size focal point is aimed at respondent within the various states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which is homogenous. In the words of Bajpai *et al.*,<sup>41</sup> in their research work "Law Research Methodology: 'Sampling Techniques' affirmed that the relevance of simple random sampling techniques are: (i) it is a

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<sup>37</sup> Kim Lah and Anthony Collins, 'The Kilwa Massacre: Critical Analysis for a Southern Criminology', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 9.4 (2020), 135-47 <https://doi.org/10.3316/agispt.20210518046841>

<sup>38</sup> Lukman Raimi, Innocent Akhemonkhan, and Olakunle Dare Ogunjirin, 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Entrepreneurship (CSRE): Antidotes to Poverty, Insecurity and Underdevelopment in Nigeria', *Social Responsibility Journal*, 2015 <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-11-2012-0138>

<sup>39</sup> Ademola Azeez, 'Contesting "Good Governance" in Nigeria: Legitimacy and Accountability Perspectives', *Journal of Social Sciences*, 21.3 (2009), 217-24 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2009.11892774>

<sup>40</sup> Paul Atagamen Aidonojie and Esther Chetachukwu Francis, 'Legal Issues Concerning Food Poisoning in Nigeria: The Need for Judicial and Statutory Response', *Jurnal Media Hukum*, 29.1 (2022), 65-78 <https://doi.org/10.18196/jmh.v29i1.12595>

<sup>41</sup> Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, 'The Societal and Legal Missing Link in Protecting a Girl Child Against Abuse before and Amidst The Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria', *Jurnal Hukum*, 38.1 (2022), 61-80 <https://doi.org/10.26532/jh.v38i1.18412>

hassle-free method of sampling the population. It is homogeneous; (ii) there is no chance of a personal bias of the researcher to influence sampling. However, to effectively reach an unbiased common conclusion, this study used a sample size of 363 respondents from the various states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

From the data generated from the response of the respondents, figure 1 and table 1 is a representation of the respondent's response to research question one, which aimed at ascertaining if the EndSARS protest is sponsored by the political elites to destabilise the Nigeria government. From the respondents' responses, 81.5% (296 respondents) representing a majority of the respondents, responded, "No." However, figure 2 and table 2 further sort to ascertain from the respondents if the EndSARS could be a quest to end police brutality, a request for good governance that will allow active participation of youth in governance and ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria. Given the respondents' response, 86.2% (313 respondents) of the respondent's response was "Yes." In this regard, it can be aptly said that the EndSARS protest majorly sponsored by youth in Nigeria is a quest to end police abuse of human rights which had been noted that a unit of the Nigeria police referred to as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad were known for the abuse and killing of young Nigerians.

The quest for the EndSARS protest is also a quest for good governance and sustainable development. In this regard, from the data generated as presented in figure 2 and table 2, the respondents also identify that apart from police brutality, the quest for good governance that will ensure sustainable development is also one of the reasons that heighten the EndSARS protest. Sustainable development is said to be the dream of most countries of the world to alleviate and reduce the rate of poverty and to ensure further that the future of its citizens is secured. According to the Sebudubudu, he stated that one of the attributes of good governance is stable economic growth and development that can alleviate the citizens<sup>42</sup> of a country from poverty. Keonang also stated that one of the key factors of ensuring sustainable economic development is to ensure responsive, economic development policy goals.<sup>43</sup> Given this, it will be apt to state that in a country where the level of development and government policies is not directly affecting or making an impact in the life of its citizens, it may degenerate into citizens protesting.

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<sup>42</sup> Geetika Goel and Meenakshi Rishi, 'Promoting Entrepreneurship to Alleviate Poverty in India: An Overview of Government Schemes, Private-sector Programs, and Initiatives in the Citizens' Sector', *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 54.1 (2012), 45–57 <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21437>

<sup>43</sup> John Edward O Rege and John P Gibson, 'Animal Genetic Resources and Economic Development: Issues in Relation to Economic Valuation', *Ecological Economics*, 45.3 (2003), 319–30 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009\(03\)00087-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009(03)00087-9)

However, irrespective of the complains that trigger and heighten the endSARS protest, and it will be very apt to state that there are no challenges without solutions. In this regard, in order to ascertain the possible solution to savage and end the civil protest endSARS, figure 3 and table 3 was aimed at providing the respondents to choose from a cluster of possible solutions that the government of Nigeria can employ in savaging protest. From the data generated, 94.6% (330 respondents) of the respondents identified good governance, and 92.6% (323 respondents) also identify “defending and protecting citizens right against police (SARS) brutality” as a possible solution. No doubts, one of the reasons for the protest is as a result of the brutality and abuse of human rights by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), hence the protest “EndSARS.” However, irrespective of dissolving and banning the SARS, the Nigeria Government further set-up a similar body know as “SWAT” this decision of the Nigerian government has been generally criticise as recreating the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, hence the EndSARS protest. In this regard, for any county to live in peace, every government must be sensitive in its decision and policy that directly affects its citizens. According to Daniel *et al.*, if governments of various countries in Africa want to serve as an ethical leader, they must be proactive and transparent in decision making, embark on policy and sustainable development that can set a blueprint and alleviate its citizens from poverty.

Furthermore, in identifying other possible solutions to curb the endSARS protest, 86.5% (302 respondents) of the respondent identify the following: improved public infrastructure such as; roads, health care, educational facilities, and power supply, 79.9% (279 respondents) identify improved minimum wage and standard of living and 43.8% (153 respondents) of the respondents identify job creation as possible solutions the Nigeria government can employ in solving the EndSARS protest and further future occurrence of protest. This finding is similar to the finding of Muhammad and Samra in their study ‘Competitiveness, governance and globalization: What matters for poverty alleviation’ which found that one way for underdeveloped countries to alleviate their citizen from poverty is through sustainable economic development, provision of adequate infrastructures and human development.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

From this study it has been theoretically and empirically show that the essence of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria by the Nigeria youth is to eradicate the

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<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Shahid Hassan, Samra Bukhari, and Noman Arshed, ‘Competitiveness, Governance and Globalization: What Matters for Poverty Alleviation?’, *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 22.4 (2020), 3491–3518 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-019-00355-y>

incessant abuse and killing of the Nigeria Youth by SARS (a unit in the Nigeria Police Force) , and to foster effective governance that will promote sustainable development in Nigeria. In this regard, the Nigerian government must ensure that the Nigerian police which is a department of government must be responsible for the preservation of law and order, detection of crime and enforcement of civil law, instead of abusing and killing innocent citizens of Nigeria. Furthermore, it is also apt to state citizens often assess the character of a government through its police force. This is given the fact that the police is one of the most visible agent of government, responsible as “guardians” of society. To a large extent, the growth, actions and behaviors of the police as an institution, further reflect the political and economic character of a society.

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