

## **COVID 19 PROTEST MOVEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH EFFECT ON THE NIGERIAN STATE**

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the popular youth protest of October, 2020 tagged “ENDSARS” (SARS standing for Special Anti-Robbery Squad) in Nigeria organized to challenge police brutality. In spite of the protest being held during the Covid-19 lockdown, the number of youth that trooped into the streets in the southern part of the country and in the North too, tagging theirs “ENDINSECURITY”) signified that beyond police brutality, the Buhari administration was due for questioning. As expected of any protest without effective coordination, the march was later hijacked by hoodlums and looters who burnt down, looted, and pillaged public infrastructure and private property, in the same vein attacking some politicians. The paper treats ENDSARS as Nigeria Spring of October, 2020 which had its roots in the wave of protests that started in the 1980s. The earlier protests were about calls for civilian government, claims of election mandate and fuel hike. The methodology applied in this study is both interview and secondary sources of data collection through the use of Nigerian dailies, journals and textbooks. For the interview, some youths in some towns were asked questions for the purpose of extracting variables that would explain the causes of the protests. The paper reveals that the thought that led to the “ENDSAR” is as a result of lies in the past to end police brutality which never materialized and the frustration is as a result of bad governance. We suggest that in a situation of another popular youth protest, the governments at both the federal and state tiers should act fast to solve the problem before it degenerates into a state of anarchy.*

## **Introduction**

Protest occurs as a result of tension on social, political and economic realities, and the action of the protesters serve as a tool that many government officials fear and consider a threat to the political system. This study aims to address how the youth protest was carried out in Nigeria on October 8, 2020 in the first place, and at the same time probe the political and psychological forces that move people to join protests in the midst of global Covid-19 pandemic. Looking at the activities during the popular youth protest of October 8, 2020, the paper examined the choice of Lekki Tollgate by the youth for their occupation, and the relevance of the location within the context of private and public property in Nigeria. In his work, “The Psychology of Protest and Activism”, Professor Lauren Duncan showed that the reason why people always come out for a protest is that, they act on their political belief by looking at internal factors like personality, and external factor such as current events (cited in Kim Mill, 2020)

The global past and current events of history of protest represent collective efforts to agitate for change in the political, economic, religious and social issues that affect the people. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Global Protest Tracker 2020 traces hundred (100) antigovernment protests that erupted worldwide ranging from election protest in Honduras to PetroCaribe in Haiti, Term Limit in Guinea, Pension Reform Strike in Greece, Police Brutality in Germany, Great March of Return protest in Gaza strip, Three Years is Enough protest in Gambia, Black Lives Matter protest in United States, Corruption protest in Egypt, Autonomy protest in Hong Kong, slave protest in Hungary, Criminal Code Protest in Indonesia, fuel hike protest in Iran, corona virus protest in Israel, economic protest in Liberia, ethnic violence protest in Mali, religious law protest in Montenegro, racial equality protest in New Zealand, police brutality protest in Portugal, corona virus restriction protest in Russia, and police brutality protest in the United States of America (cited in [www.carnegieendowment.org](http://www.carnegieendowment.org)). All these protests took place within 2017 and 2020.

In Africa continent, Adam & Zachariah (2015) in “Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change” summarized the following points as the reasons of Africans protest: i) people challenging the application of capitalism ii) rejection of liberal democracy iii) work of social media hashtag, knowledge of the youth against government policy and vi) outburst by frustrated middle classes on government decision. More so, protest has been viewed as a legitimate way of expressing opinions concerning government actions or inactions in managing the affairs of the state. To Adam & Zachariah (2015), popular protest in Africa continent is believed to be politically motivated using the Tunisia, Egypt and Libya experiences in 2011, during the Arab Spring. Libya protest has made the country to be polarized along rebel lines that now control large parts of the country.

In the case of Nigeria, the country has witnessed several protests during the military and civilian regimes, ranging from Anglo-Nigeria pact of 1962 when the Nigerian University students kicked against the defence pact entered with Britain, and the 1993 election annulment, when the military ruler Babangida cancelled the election of the acclaimed winner M.K.O. Abiola, leading to demonstrations in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria. Looking at popular protests in Nigeria from Labour Strike of 2003 asking President Olusegun Obasanjo to reduce the fuel pump price, 2012 protest on fuel hike to the “ENDSARS” protest of 2020, all speak volume on the leadership style in the country.

In October, 2020 the “ENDSARS” youth protest was confronted with allegations of political undertones of anti-government persons sponsoring the protest. The reason of protesting against police brutality is not new in Nigeria and calling for it at the time when there is insecurity all over the country could weaken the security architecture by paving way for high crime rate, argued some commentators. Afe Babalola (2020) writes that in Nigeria Constitution, the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression are guaranteed as fundamental rights. At the same time protest must not disturb the peaceful movement of people in the public space. The occupation of the Lekki Tollgate and other flashpoints in the metropolis started initially as a peaceful protest, readily drawing the ears of the government. The government readily agreed to the five-point demands of the youth, which included:

- a) immediate release of all arrested protesters
- b) justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and appropriate compensation for their families
- c) setting up of independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct (within 10 days)
- d) in line with police Act, psychological evaluation and retraining (to be confirmed by an independent body) of all disbanded SARS officers before they can be redeployed.
- e) increase police salary so that they are adequately compensated for protecting lives and property of citizens (Vanguard, October 12, 2020);

This was with a promise that they would act on all the demands, and the inspector general of police went ahead to scrap the FSARS. On their side, the youth were to end protest. But this was not to be. The peaceful protest led by youth turned violent when hoodlums infiltrated their ranks, paving way for looting and burning down of private and public properties estimated to run into trillion of Nigeria naira.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The paper looks at several concepts of protest as defined by some scholars. A protest is a public display of disapproval or displeasure carried out by chanting and marching along the streets or public places, targeted against a particular regime, either civil or military. Protest movement is usually composed of like-minded individuals or organisations that agree on certain principles or who recognize the need to develop coalitions with other groups of similar interest (Bunch et al 1992:8). Uwandu (2020: 34) writes that protests play an important part in political, economic, social and cultural lives of all societies. He stresses that protests encourage the development of an engaged and informed citizenry and also strengthen representative democracy by enabling direct participation in public affairs. This means that in both advanced and developing countries, protest is crucial for democratic consolidation and therefore it is considered as legitimate. All over the world too, protests can be peaceful or violent depending on the organizers. Violent protests have a positive impact on political and policy changes while non-violent protests bring awareness to an issue. Violent protests bring urgency to an issue and promptly gain the attention of the international community, especially when it leads to confrontation between protesters and security agents that probably leads to recorded injuries, destruction or actual death of protester or security personnel(s).

A crucial question to consider at this point is “Why do people resort to protests in both developing and developed countries?” To unravel this, it is necessary to conceptualize protest in general, and closely tie it into democratic society.

From the viewpoint of classical theorists, people participate in protests to express their grievance stemming from relative deprivation, frustration or perceived injustice (Berkowitz 1972, Gurr 1970, cited in Stekenburg and Klanderman, 2013:888). Wright et al (1990) list three hallmarks to understand protest as follows: (i) protest occurs as an action directed at improving one’s personal condition (individual), or actions directed at improving the conditions of one’s group (collective action) (ii) the second distinction is between actions that conform to the norm of the existing social system – normative actions like petitioning and taking part in demonstration (iii) non-normative actions like illegal protest and civil disobedience (cited in Stekenburg and Klanderman, 2013:887). Observers of protest movements are of the opinion that most protests are prompted by shared grievances among groups. Protest groups have a lot of strategies to sustain the protest. These include issuing petitions, legal options, lobbying and other means of mounting pressure through legislative arms in a democratic state (Bunch et al, 1992:8).

The source goes on to say that the significance of protest is that it stimulates changes that ultimately help to preserve the society. In some cases, the protesters adopt the non-violent direct action and the passive resistance philosophy of Gandhi that include use of boycotts, and marches, all these actions geared to “fight the good fight” (Bunch et al, 1992:9). In some cases the popular protest can lead to riot.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts Grievance theories that state clearly that feelings of relative deprivation result from comparison of one’s situation with a standard – be it past, from someone else’s situation or a cognitive standard such as equity or justice (Folger 1986 cited in Stekenburg and Klanderman, 2013:887). This would lead to frustration when the person cannot meet up with his or her personal needs. The word frustration is derived from a Latin word ‘frusta’ that stands for obstruction. In the society, frustration occurs in two ways; internal frustration occurs through challenges in fulfilling individual goals and desire and needs; external causes of frustration include the situations outside an individual. Ted Gurr (1970) argues that an individual whose basic desires are thwarted by the state and who consequently experiences a profound sense of dissatisfaction and anger is likely to direct aggressive behaviour to what he or she perceived as responsible for thwarting those desires (Abang, 2014: 183). That is, if one is not receiving what one expects to get from the state, one experiences relative deprivation and when it comes to group interest it leads to fraternal deprivation which strongly motivates people to take to the streets.

### **History of Protest in Nigeria**

Evidence of protest in Nigeria could be traced all the way back to the colonial period when activists challenged colonialism, slavery, unemployment and corruption by using print, radio, and music to pass messages to the people. Iwe Irohin, a newspaper circulated in the Western part of Nigeria, was used to sensitize the Yoruba-speaking population into protesting and ultimately delivering the Egba people from the rulers of

Dahomey Kingdom who were among the major players in slave trade with the British merchants in 1859 (Akeredolu, 2020).

In the South Eastern part of Nigeria in 1929, the Aba women protested against the colonial masters by adopting 'sitting as a major tactic' to challenge the imposition of direct taxation on the people (Adu Boahen cited in Baltimore, 1987). Baltimore (1987) explains that a warrant chief in Oloko village in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria reassessed the taxable wealth of the people and counted the men, women, children, and domestic animals together. That action alone created its own problem among the Aba women protesters who used non-violent approach by dancing and singing round outside the homes of warrant chiefs and native court officers expressing their grievance over the tax imposition. That singular protest led to the reduction of taxes and the resignation of a number of local stooges appointed by the colonial authority (Baltimore, 1987).

Other notable protests in Nigeria include the railway workers and the labour strike of 1945, Kano riot of May 16 to 19, 1953 and the list of protests chronicled by Falola (1998):

*When the country won its independence in 1960...the most notable crisis occurred in 1978 in Zaria [...] In 1980, the Maitatsine crisis claimed thousands of lives [...] On the last day of October 1982, eight large churches were burned in the prominent city of Kano[...] A major riot in Kaduna that same year claimed at least four hundred lives. In 1984, violence sparked by Muslims in Yola and Jimeta killed approximately seven hundred people and left nearly six thousand people homeless ... At Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state, Palm Sunday turned disastrous as Christians clashed with Muslims, leading to the destruction of three churches. In the south, at the University of Ibadan, Muslims set fire to a sculpture of Jesus in front of the Chapel of Resurrection ... In 1991, the religious crisis in Bauchi state reached the breaking point, leading to numerous deaths and massive destruction. In the same year, Kano and Katsina witnessed a series of riots. In 1992, large-scale violence returned to Kaduna state, with severe clashes in Zangon-Kataf, Kaduna, and Zaria ... (Falola, 1998 cited in Akinwale & Aderinto, 2011: 58)*

In the South-South geopolitical zone, where Ogoniland is located, the city had its fair share of the protests on January 4, 1993. The contentious issues were environmental degradation and gas pollution caused by the oil exploration by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), a Nigerian subsidiary of Royal Dutch/Shell. The Ogoni people, under the auspices of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), clamoured for right to self-determination, including greater control over the exploration of the natural resources (oil) found in their lands"(Demirel-Pegg & Pegg, 2015). The climax of this protest was the sentencing and hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa, an author and a popular human rights activist, on November 10, 1995.

The June 12, 1993 election annulment, and call for strike by National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) on July 5 1994 pulled protesters out into the street of Nigeria to demonstrate against the military government action of annulling a widely claimed free and fair election.

From the return to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 till 2020, protests were common as Nigerian Labour Congress called for strike actions against President Olusegun Obasanjo, President Goodluck Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari for serially increasing fuel pump price. Also, the action of 'occupy Nigeria movement' of January, 2012 is another protest against hike in fuel price under President Ebele Goodluck Jonathan, when the announcement of fuel subsidy removal by the Federal government was made. This galvanised the organised labour on a strike action to protest against government action. The pump price was later changed from 140 naira to 97 naira.

Duncan as cited in Kim Mill (2020) noted that anytime there is any sort of meaningful social change, there comes a tipping point where people who have been oppressed or treated unfairly with violence for years would come out and protest. In October 8, 2020, under President Muhammadu Buhari administration, the youth protested against police brutality by presenting five demands that the regime must act upon immediately before they would leave the streets.

The five demands were accepted by the presidential panel and the Inspector General of the police quickly proscribed F-SARS. However, a few days later, precisely on October 14, 2020, the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Department was announced, a move the irate youth saw as mere continuation of the SARS squad under another name. They thus continued with the protest, while gaining sympathy from other militant groups. Vanguard newspaper of October 20, 2020 reports that the “coalition of nine renegade militant groups in the Niger Delta declared support for the EndSars protests across the country saying they are ready to resume hostilities, attack on oil and gas facilities if Federal government did not meet the demand of protesting Nigerian youth. They also gained enemies, especially from the Northern part of Nigeria, where the incumbent president is from, and where the governors and most of the youth formed a parallel protests calling for an end to insecurity, and that SARS officers should not be disbanded but be transferred to the North to fight insurgents, bandits, cattle rustlers and kidnappers

### **Principle on the Protection of Human Right during protest**

The right to protest is enshrined in both national and international laws. Globally, the international law serves as a guide to the right to protest which is found in Article 18, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right as expressed by Uwandu (2020). Principles to guide rights to protest globally are cited in international human right law:

- i) Principle 2 imposes obligations on state to respect the right to protest.
- ii) Principle 4 makes provision for the protection of internationally quarantined human rights during all protest.
- iii) Principle 8 enables everyone the freedom to choose the location of a protest and the location chosen should be considered integral to its expressive purpose.
- iv) Principle 9 provides that everyone should have the freedom to choose the form and manner of a protest including its duration.
- v) Principle 12 imposes duties on states to adopt a human rights approach to policing protesters.( cited in Uwandu, 2020: 34)

Uwandu writes that the rights to protest are also safeguarded in the Nigerian 1999 Constitution as amended in 2014. Section 38 of the constitution spells out the right to freedom of thought and conscience and religion; section 39 dwells on right to freedom of expression, followed by the right to peaceful assembly and association in section 40, as section 41 talks about right to protest (Punch, November 30, 2020). In a case challenging the right to protest by some bodies in Nigeria, the Court of Appeal in 2008 upheld the right to protest in the case between Inspector General of Police and All Nigeria Peoples Party that “certainly in a democracy it is the right of citizens to conduct peaceful procession, rallies or demonstrations without seeking and obtaining permission from anybody. It is a right guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution and any law that attempts to curtail such right is null and void and of no effect” (Guardian, November 24: 34). The Nation newspaper of

October 20, 2020 reports that a court in Nigeria has interpreted section 10 of Nigeria Constitution of 1999 as amended in 2014 that it has not only guaranteed the right of every Nigerian to peaceful assembly but also extending the provision to the right of citizens to conduct peaceful procession, rallies or demonstration without seeking and obtaining permission from any individual or agency of government. Both national and international laws subscribe to the right of a peaceful protest with the proviso that policing of protesters should be guided by state agencies.

### **The Issues in October, 2020 Popular Youth Protest Movements in Nigeria**

Grievance theories become useful in understanding the popular protest tagged “EndSARS” of October, 2020. The call for “EndSARS” (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) started in 2017 and in August 14, 2018, the Vice President of Nigeria then ordered the overhaul of SARS but the Inspector General of Police Mr. Ibrahim Idris merely changed the name to read Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad –FSARS (Ray Ekpu 2020:32). The question is what led to the ENDSARS protest of October, 2020? The answer can be chronologically given as follows: on October 3, 2020, a video trended on social media showing an FSARS police officer shooting a man in front of Wetland Hotel in Ughelli, Delta State, Nigeria. The video spread widely on social media, attracting the attention of the youth who unanimously called for a nationwide protest to ENDSARS and all forms of police brutality. The protest came to be, and dragged for about two weeks, starting from October 8, 2020.

Certain questions come up at this point, like: i) what sustained the protesters for more than two weeks? ii) what was the strength of their organisation? Unsubstantiated sources hold it that the protesters were supported by celebrities in Nigeria and abroad including football stars, singers, actors, doctors, lawyers and technologists to make them a formidable group. Because of these external supports and influences, the protesters exhibited tenacity, durability commitment and unparalleled organizational ability and raised 60 million naira within two weeks (Guardian, November, 2020).

The ‘EndSARS’ protest in Nigeria was largely socio- political, and economic. “The bottom-line is the lack of trust in the country leadership” (Oboli, 2020). The remote causes of “EndSARS” as a protest staged at a time when the whole world, including Nigeria, is battling with the Covid-19 pandemic could be traced to insecurity all over the geo-political zone that affected investment leading to high rate of unemployment, underdevelopment and cost of living.

Onyekakeyeh (2020) centres his argument on causes of “EndSARS” on unemployment:

*“Nigeria’s unemployment rate as at the second quarter of 2020 is put at 27.1 percent indicating that about 21,764,614 million Nigerians remain unemployed, Nigeria’s unemployment and under development rate 28.6 percent in a combined 55.7 per cent. Onyekakeyeh maintains that everyone knows this is far from the truth- the truth is that only about 25 percent of Nigerians active labour force of 48 million people is employed. The other 75 percent are unaccounted for. And these represent the teeming masses of the youthful population engaged in street trading, commercial motorcyclists (Okada) taxi driving, mechanics, Vulcanizers, market women ...” (Guardian, October 21, 2020: 13)*

In an interview with Arise Television in Lagos, Abiola Dosunmu, the Erelu Kuti IV of Lagos, blamed the emergence and resoluteness of the movement on leaders that are fast removed from the people they lead, but listen to advisers that are not familiar with

local terrain and from whom they are bound to receive wrong advice on what to do for the people (Arise Television, October, 2020).

Reflecting on the initial FSARS that was scrapped, Akintunde (2020) explains that: The SARS had gone rogue. Its officers arrested citizens for phantom crimes, only to extort money from them. There were reports of the officers actually robbing hapless citizens, in some cases leading people to ATMs at gunpoint to make cash withdrawals from their accounts for the security agents...the protests were well organised, coordinated and resourced, but no one was named as the leader. To some, this was a brilliant strategy. Leaders of such protests are usually easy targets of the government. They are either arrested or financially induced to betray the masses supporting their call for civil resistance ( Financial, November 4, 2020).

The successful recruitment for the ‘EndSARS’ protest could be traced to the Covid19 pandemic, and lockdown. Idly sitting at home with little or no aid from the government, the enormous youthful workforce suffering the pangs of hunger and neglect saw the protest as a vent for their frustration. Technology played a prominent role in mobilizing the youths through the use of phones, video, twitters. To Duncan (2020), social media provides ways to enable people donate money or to even do things like clicks or report events happening around the neighborhood. Interestingly, one of the discoveries was the ‘palliatives’ which weredeliberately locked away from the target communities served as momentary compensation for the toil of these hapless youth.

**Table 1 Record on contributory factors to October 2020 popular protest in some towns and cities in Nigeria.**

S/N	Cities / Towns	Respondents interviewed	Comments/ Reason for joining the protest
1	Warri	3	i) Unemployment rate is high to the extent that 65 percent of commercial motorcycle riders are graduates without job. ii) The killing of the young man in Ughelli, Delta
2	Ago-Iwoye	4	i) We protest because of high cost of living and police brutality ii) unemployment
3	Lagos	20	i)We protest because of high university school fees pushing our parents to seek for loan to train us. ii) police brutality. ii) unemployment
4	Ibadan	4	i) The killing of a brother by FSARS, and police officers deceiving us about his death which we later discovered the deceased body at Adeoyo hospital, Ibadan.
5	Calabar	10	Two brothers from the same university join the protest because their senior brother was arrested by FSARS without committing any offence in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.
6	Ijebu-Igbo	3	We protest because of the maltreatment given to the yahoo boys by FSARS.
7	Portharcourt	3	The respondents want government to EndSARS
8	Apo, Abuja	3	The respondents want government to EndSARS. Protesters in Kabusa junction turn violent when the Hausa hoodlums came to disrupt the protesters and start destroying items owned by the Igbo. This led to retaliation.
9	Oyo	5	Many yahoo boys joined the protest with the unemployed youth calling for EndSARS.

Some youths were interviewed during the protests to know why they left the comfort of their homes to parade under the sun protesting.



*Authors Field work, October, 2020*

In the analysis of the contributory factors to the protest in some states, unemployment topped the list followed by police brutality. Duncan (2020) model of movement of crisis and movement of conscience becomes relevant here. Duncan explains that in the time of crisis, immediate action happens because of killing or some sort of violence which makes people to react. In Nigeria it is the killing of the young man in Ughelli, Delta State, on October 3, 2020 that appeared in the social media, remotely fuelled by the rate of unemployment. The second model which talks about movement of conscience is centred on when people are agitating for equal rights for many years and no proper attention is given.

In the course of the research, it was discovered that the thrust of the protest went beyond ‘ENDSARS’, and included other factors. The peaceful protest turns violent when hoodlums, looters and political thugs join the protest to loot. See the looting and destruction in Table 2.

**Table 2 Data of indicating Looting and Destruction of Public and Private Properties only in Lagos and Cross River states in Nigeria.**

S/N	Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria	Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria
1	Nigeria Ports Authority was set ablaze	Cold Stone looted
2	Orile police post set ablaze	Value Mart looted
3	Lekki toll gate, Lagos was partially destroyed	INEC office, Marian looted
4	BRT Terminal, Oyinbo with new buses set on fire	First Bank at 8 mile Calabar looted
5	Television Continental, Ketu, Lagos set ablaze	Ministry of works warehouse looted
6	VIO, FRSC office, Ojodu FRSC branded cars, generators set ablaze.	Calabar Carnival properties like speakers carpets, microphone, Amplifiers stolen by hoodlums
7	BRT terminal, Ojodu, Lagos buses set ablaze	Mbukpa police station attacked
8	BRT bus at Berger set ablaze	Atakpa police station on siege
9	Recreational Centre, Oregun, Lagos set on fire	Access/Diamond Bank at Mayne avenue attacked
10	Oba’s palace, Lagos attacked and his scepter of authority seized	NDDC office looted
11	The governor of Lagos, Sanwo-olu’s mother’s house, Surulere, Lagos set ablaze	Chronicle Building burned down
12	King’s College attacked	Etagbor phones shop attacked
13	Private properties attacked within the metropolis	Unicem trucks hijacked along Atimbo road and bags cement taken away
14	Some banks attacked	Ibedmore Phones World attacked
15	Lagos Island Local Government destroyed	Academic publishing centre building in University of Calabar attacked
16	Lagos Island LCDA secretariat set on fire	Accountant General office attacked,
17	Ibeju Lekki LCDA secretariat destroyed	Psychiatric hospital, Calabar looted
18	Lagos mainland local government secretariat destroyed	Government Secondary School Henshaw town attacked
19	High Court Igbosere set ablaze	Former senator house in Asari aso house looted and burned

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20	Market shops looted	Current senator house in Asari aso house looted and burned houses attacked.
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*Nigerian dailies, 2020 and Authors Field works, November 2020.*

The presence of hoodlums and political thugs changed the dimension of the protest from peaceful to an arena of looting, destruction and arson.

The looting, burning and destruction of public and private properties were worst in Lagos State and Calabar, Cross River than any other state as reported by the Sun newspaper of November 30, 2020: that at least 71 public warehouses and 248 private stores were destroyed across the country.

### **The Aftermath of October 2020 Protest in Nigeria**

The youth population of Nigeria is enormous, comprising more than 60 percent (ThisDay, November 3, 2020: 32) of an estimated population of above 200 million. With the rising unemployment ratio, co-opting people for the protests (be it ‘EndSARS’ in the South or ‘ENDINSECURITY’ in the North) is not a difficult task.

A second revelation of the protests is the security problem in the country, where uniform men take laws into their hand to brutalize citizens, while a lot of locales in the country are controlled by terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, and armed robbers.

Lekki Tollgate, the galvanizing point for the protesters in Lagos, was carefully chosen as it is a glaring proof of oppression in the hands of the government. Twelve days into the “ENDSARs” demonstration, the military was invited to the tollgate to dissipate the crowd. Uwandu(2020) says that policing of protest by law enforcement agencies should be guided by human right principles- the use of the military may arise only on exceptional circumstances to serve only as a support for the police. Sporadic shots were fired by military, and till present there has not been a concise report on the casualty figures, or lack of any thereof because of accusations and denials that have trailed the incident ( Channel Television, October 2020). In the shooting of the protesters on October 20, 2020, it was claim that some of the youth were killed by CNN reporter 2020.

According to Aliyu Tanko (2020) a BBC reporter noted that the trashing of the palace of Oba of Lagos was symbolized as the youths dragged down the throne, looted possessions of the swan in the Oba’s pool. The reporter went further to conclude that the success of the protest in forcing the government to disband SARS and widen police reform has given Nigerian youths confidence and that they now believe that the youths can make a difference. Onyedika Adetayo in his report noted that after the EndSARs protest, resulting from an unprecedented destruction of both private and public properties in many states of the federation, the rebuilding process had begun. He went further to inform that many of the affected states have unveiled some initiatives targeted at repairing/reconstructing public properties destroyed during the protest, compensating the victims of the protest and forestalling a reoccurrence in the future.

In Lagos, the state government promised 200 million compensation funds for victims of police brutality while Oyo State set aside 500 million naira for the same purpose (Sun, November 30, 2020); other states expanded their workforce to accommodate the unemployed youth like Cross River State. And twelve states out of the thirty six have

inaugurated panels to probe cases of human rights abuses against the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

The cost of damages in many of the states where properties were looted and properties burnt down may be well above a trillion naira, and in an economy affected by Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Conclusion**

The ENDSARs protest was an expression of anger and frustration at the maladministration characteristic of the leadership in Nigeria. The EndSARs that started as a hash tag on social media in this age of technology motivated the youth to call themselves out without a leader and present a five-point demand that government must act upon. The struggle was peaceful for eight days before being hijacked by hoodlums leading to destruction and shooting. The Lekki Tollgate where the protesters gathered was attacked by soldiers on October 20, 2020. In ThisDay newspaper of November 3, 2020, “one of the lessons during the “ENDSARs” is about people’s power both in the ENDSARS protest in the south and ‘ENDINSECURITYNOW’ protest in the north by holding their leaders accountable”.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that to prevent future occurrence of mass popular protest, the population figure of the youth should be taken into consideration through a pre-census at the beginning of 2021 to separate the literate from the illiterate for the purpose of effectively planning for them. It is not about releasing a huge amount of money for them to access in order to start business in an insecure environment; it is all about proper utilization of such fund and having prior training in a choice enterprise. The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to harness the youth energies, wisdom and knowledge to attend to vital issues and possibly introduce National Guard to all streets in Nigeria, where residents contribute to what we call security welfare package. We know that security of people, their lives and property is the responsibility of government but to solve this immediate problem from degenerating to a class war in future between the poor and the comfortable in future, there must be a plan to engage youth in a meaningful project.

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