



ASAA STATEMENT ON THE ON-GOING VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS IN NIGERIA

The African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA), is a membership-organization of scholars, practitioners, and activists of the African continent and her diaspora (www.as-aa.org). The association's vision includes, among other things, the promotion of Africa's own specific contributions to the advancement of the peoples and cultures of Africa and the Diaspora. In that spirit we [denounce the ongoing police and military brutalities against the people of Nigeria](#).

As an association whose membership is united by a brutal common experience of relentless structural violence and racism, we are strongly committed to upholding the sanctity and dignity of life of all people and especially people of African descent. We have therefore spoken out in the past against violence and racism in the United States of America such as the recent [shooting of Jacob Blake](#), and more dangerously, the state-supported violence against Black people, including the [murder of George Floyd](#).

The ASAA condemns the use of the police and military by African states to mete out violence against its citizens. We especially condemn the ongoing brutalities in Nigeria, spurred by the violation of human rights and abuses by the erstwhile Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was a Nigerian police force unit that was created in late 1992 to deal with crimes associated with robbery, motor vehicle theft, kidnapping, cattle rustling and crimes involving firearms. However, over the years, [SARS has been linked to extrajudicial killings](#), extortion, torture, framing [citizens for crimes they didn't commit](#), and blackmail. Examples of how the SARS unit has lost its way include: the killing of a bus driver by a SARS operative in October 2005 for the driver's failure to pay a bribe; the harassment of Nigerian youth for the social offence of [wearing dreadlocks](#), having body piercings, driving cars that they are deemed to have no right to drive let alone own, and for carrying "expensive phones", the murder of a 15-year old boy by a SARS operative in 2010; and the shooting of a young Nigerian man by a SARS operative in October 2020. These extra-judicial killings have been independently verified by [Amnesty International](#).

The ASAA stands in solidarity with Nigerian youth who have been unequivocal in their call for the disbandment of SARS and any police unit with a similar mission. We note that SARS has been 'disbanded' or 'reformed' five times in as many years, most recently on October 13, 2020 when the creation of a new unit – Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) – to replace SARS was [announced](#). We also stand in solidarity with [protestors on social media and street marches in decrying](#) the state-sponsored violence in Nigeria that appears to target young people who are the present and immediate future of the nation. We further join in the condemnation of the beatings, arrests, and shootings of the peaceful protestors. We have been particularly horrified by the events of Tuesday October 20, 2020, when, after a curfew was suddenly imposed, peaceful protestors who had gathered at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos, were shot at by the Nigerian army, with several confirmed [deaths](#).



As an association, the ASAA stands with the youth and people of Nigeria to condemn the state-sponsored violence against Nigerian citizens, and join the call on President Muhammadu Buhari and the leaders of Nigeria to heed the voice of Nigerians in their call for 1) the immediate end to this violence; 2) an independent enquiry into the violence; 3) the prosecution of police and military officers who have been involved in acts of brutality against citizens; 4) a retraining of all police officers before their “redeployment; and 5) the release of all arrested protesters. As allies of the #EndSars movement, we also call for the nationwide training, reform, and accountability of all security instruments in Nigeria. Furthermore, we call on the Chair of ECOWAS, President Nana Akufo-Addo, and other leaders of ECOWAS states to speak out against the on-going state-sponsored brutalities against the people of Nigeria in accordance with the ECOWAS principles which call for the “recognition, promotion, and protection of human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ [Rights](#)”.

In the words of Kwame Nkrumah, “our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.” Today, we ask President Buhari and Nigerian leaders in particular, and African leaders generally, to guarantee our independence by ensuring justice for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria.

The association remains actively seized on this matter.

Dated the 21st day of October 2020

Signed On behalf of the ASAA

Akosua Adomako Ampofo
(President)

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