



APPRAISAL OF THE RIGHT TO DIGNITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The right to dignity of the human person is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Section 34 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended). It is a constitutionally protected and inalienable right, and is intended to safeguard individuals from degrading, inhuman, and humiliating treatment. Despite the constitutional guarantee and Nigeria's commitment to international human rights standards, violations of the right to dignity remain prevalent, raising concerns about the effectiveness of its enforcement and protection. This research examines the right to dignity in Nigeria, unveiling the factors militating against its effective realization. The objectives of the research are to evaluate the constitutional and statutory provisions protecting the right, identify the challenges hindering its enforcement, and propose measures for enhancing its protection. This article adopts the doctrinal research methodology, relying on the analysis of constitutional provisions, statutes, judicial decisions, and relevant scholarly materials. The findings reveal that although the right to dignity is expressly guaranteed under the Constitution, its enjoyment is significantly undermined by factors such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, environmental degradation, weak institutional mechanisms, and inadequate enforcement of human rights laws. The research further finds that these challenges have contributed to persistent violations of human dignity despite governmental assurances of commitment to the rule of law and human rights protection. The research recommends constitutional and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the enforcement of the right to dignity. It further advocates the adoption of policies that address socio-economic challenges, strengthen anti-corruption measures, improve access to justice, and enhance governmental accountability. These measures are necessary to ensure the effective realization and protection of the right to dignity in Nigeria.

Key Words: Rights, Human Dignity, Enforcement.

1. Introduction

The right to dignity of human person is largely interconnected with practically every human rights provision under the laws of any nation and as such same cannot be fully enjoyed without the attainment of other human rights. The high level of poverty has become a growing concern and this also affects the right to dignity of human person as a poor person, by virtue of his position, cannot afford the basic needs of life such as

food, clothing, shelter, access to basic health care, etc. Furthermore, the poor cannot afford to go to school and this does not only leave them poor but illiterate as well. Poverty has eaten so deep into the Nigerian system.¹

The enforcement of the right to dignity of human person is often characterised by a lot of challenges ranging from unenforceable legislation necessary for the attainment of this right, as stated above, particularly rights provided for under Chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), which by law are non-justiciable rights. It has been observed that most of these non-justiciable rights, if not made justiciable, will forever make the attainment of the right to dignity of human person impossible. A close look at the rights contained under Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which are generally referred to as social rights, cut across rights around the issues of poverty, social amenities, unemployment, environmental degradation, illiteracy, lack of proper health care, etc.

The non-justiciability of the rights contained under Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) has consistently made the right to dignity of human person a mere wish to the extent that the Nigerian society now learn to live within a system where citizens are left to cater for their welfare with little or no intervention from the government. These issues have continued to raise grave concerns, which, if not mitigated immediately, may lead to anarchy in society.

A large population of our teeming youths who are graduates account for over sixty percent of our population which are unemployed and this has caused many youths to resort to all manner of vices like armed robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, ritual killings, cybercrime etc., in their quest to make ends meet, hence the need to strengthen the legal framework for the attainment of the right to dignity of human person, which will inevitably serve as a lasting solution to the issues at stake.

2. Definition of key terms

i. Rights

Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement. Captured more lucidly, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical

¹ Article 11, International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Philip Alston and Ryan Goodman, *International Human Rights* (OUP 2013) 279.

theory. Rights are legally or morally recognised entitlements that individuals or groups possess, allowing them to act or be treated in a certain way within a legal or moral framework. These rights can be natural, legal, civil, political, economic, or social, depending on their source and scope.² The history of social conflicts has often involved attempts to define and redefine rights.³ defines rights collectively viewed as ‘something of which no one may be deprived without a great affront to justice.’ He adds that “There are certain deeds which should never be done, certain freedoms which should never be invaded, some things which are suppressively sacred.”⁴

ii. Human Dignity

Dignity is gotten from the Latin word *dignitas*, meaning “worth, worthiness; dignity, position, rank, status; authority, office; self-respect, grace.” In some of its modern usages, it has come to mean the right of a person to be valued and respected for their own sake, and to be treated ethically. In this context, it is of significance in morality, ethics, law and politics as an extension of the Enlightenment-era concepts of inherent, inalienable rights. The term may also be used to describe personal conduct, as in “behaving with dignity”.⁵

The content of contemporary dignity is derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, summarised in the principle that every human being has the right to human dignity. In Article 1, it is stipulated that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’⁶

Dignity is a complex concept. In academic and legal contexts, it is typically used in the couplet “human dignity” to denote a kind of basic worth or status that purportedly belongs to all persons equally, and which grounds fundamental moral or political duties or rights. In this sense, many believe that dignity is a defining ideal of the contemporary world, especially in Western society. However, the concept of dignity has long been

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² Bryan A Garner (ed), *Black’s Law Dictionary* (10th edn, Thomson Reuters, St Paul, Minnesota, 2014) sv ‘right’.

³ The above views of Cranston were cited in Gasiokwu, MUO., *Human Rights: History, Ideology and Law* (Mono Expressions Ltd 2001) 1.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Wikipedia<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dignity#:~:text=Dignity%20\(from%20the%20Latin%20dignitas,and%20to%20be%20treated%20ethically.>](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dignity#:~:text=Dignity%20(from%20the%20Latin%20dignitas,and%20to%20be%20treated%20ethically.>) accessed 5 May 2026.

⁶ Ibid

associated with many more meanings, some of which cut in distinctly different directions: rank, station, honour, uniqueness, beauty, poise, gravitas, integrity, self-respect, self-esteem, a sacred place in the order of things, supreme worth, and even the apex of astrological significance. Some of these connotations have faded with time. But most have enduring influence.⁷

iii. Enforcement

Making sure a rule or standard or court order or policy is properly followed.⁸ Enforcement is the act of compelling compliance with laid-down laws or regulations. Enforcement may involve necessary action(s) in a bid to ensure compliance with legal obligations. Enforcement is generally about upholding law and order, ensuring adherence thereof.

3. The legal framework on the right to dignity in Nigeria

i. Universal declaration of human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th December 1948 in Paris. The Declaration was birthed by the experience of World War II and represents the first global expression of rights for human beings. The provisions of the UDHR gained global acceptance and we see this characterized in its adoption by various constitutions and legal systems of the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is part of the International Bill of Rights, and the authorship of this Declaration is credited to John Peters Humphrey (Canada), Rene Cassin (France), Stephane Hessel (France), P.C. Chang (China), Charles Malik (Lebanon), Eleanor Roosevelt (U.S) and others.⁹

During World War II, the allied powers adopted the Four Freedoms i.e. speech, assembly, freedoms from fear and freedom from want as their basic war aims. The United Nations Charter¹⁰ reaffirmed faith in fundamental rights and dignity and worth of the human rights and committed all member states to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. When the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany

⁷ <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dignity/>> accessed 13 May 2026

⁸ <<https://thelawdictionary.org/enforcement/>> accessed 13 May 2026

⁹ Hersch Lauterpacht, *International Law and Human Rights* (Archon Books) 391

¹⁰ Ibid at 147-150

on Jews became apparent after World War II, the consensus within the world community was that the UN Charter did not sufficiently define the rights it referenced and this necessitated a Universal Declaration, which specified the rights of individuals so as to give effect to the Charter's provision on human rights.

The United Nations issued this Declaration to serve as an initial element in an international bill of human rights. The Bill emphasizes the equality and dignity of human person. It affirms the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. It maintains that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion includes the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief in "teaching, practice, worship and observance." The Declaration protects the rights to property, free association with others, and every right to good standard of living, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services. Among others, it maintains the rights to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond one's control. Although the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is very elaborate, there were several other conventions and declarations, all pointing to the universal demand for human rights.

The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides thus:

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people, whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law, whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations. Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge, Now, therefore, the General Assembly,

proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.¹¹

Article 1 states thus: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”¹² A close look at the preamble and Article 1 of the UDHR, will reveal without ambiguity that the issue of dignity is prioritized in the pursuit to attaining and enforcing Human rights universally.

In perhaps the most resonant and beautiful words of any international agreement, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The commitments made by all States in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are in themselves a mighty achievement, discrediting the tyranny, discrimination and contempt for human beings that have marked human history. The Universal Declaration promises to all the economic, social, political, cultural and civic rights that underpin a life free from want and fear. They are not a reward for good behaviour. They are not country-specific, or particular to a certain era or social group. They are the inalienable entitlements of all people, at all times, and in all places—people of every colour, from every race and ethnic group; whether or not they are disabled; citizens or migrants; no matter their sex, their class, their caste, their creed, their age or sexual orientation.¹³

Human rights abuses did not end when the Universal Declaration was adopted. But since then, countless people have gained greater freedom. Violations have been prevented; independence and autonomy have been attained. Many people—though not all—have been able to secure freedom from torture, unjustified imprisonment, summary execution, enforced disappearance, persecution and unjust discrimination, as well as fair access to education, economic opportunities, and adequate resources and health-care. They have obtained justice for wrongs and national and international protection

¹¹ Ibid, preamble

¹² Ibid

¹³ Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, ‘Human Rights Day Statement: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70’ (office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 10 December 2018) <http://www.ohchr.org>> accessed 15 May 2026

for their rights, through the strong architecture of the international human rights legal system.¹⁴

It is pertinent to note that one of the fundamental rights upon which the UDHR rests is the right to dignity as its preamble begins with the recognition of the inherent dignity of all human beings as the foundation upon which freedom, justice, and peace can be attained in the universe. This recognition, it is believed, is given bearing in mind the fact that where a person is unduly deprived of his right to freedom of thought, expression, association, and or tortured or brutalised, such a person's dignity is invariably abused.

ii. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended)

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended) is the grundnorm and the *fons et origo* of all other laws in Nigeria. In fact, it is the supreme law of the land, to which all other laws kowtow and gauge their validity. For any other law in Nigeria to be valid, it must be determined from the standpoint of the Constitution.¹⁵ Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), talks about the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy, while Chapter IV deals with fundamental rights. This paper will expound briefly on these constitutional provisions, beginning with fundamental rights.

Fundamental Rights:

In Nigeria, the fundamental rights of citizens, though acquired naturally, are constitutionally guaranteed under Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended).¹⁶ Fundamental rights are distinguishable from other human rights because of all the human rights provided for under our constitution, only fundamental rights are guaranteed by the constitution. Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) provides for fundamental rights as follows:

Right to life¹⁷

Right to dignity of the human person¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ *A-G, Lagos State v A-G, Federation* [2004] 18 NWLR (Pt. 904) 1 SC; *Hon. Muyiwa Inakoju & 17 Ors. v. Hon Abraham Adeolu Adeleke & 3 Ors.* [2007] NGSC55, *ANPP v IGP* (2006) CHR 181.

¹⁶ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), Chapter IV, ss 33-46

¹⁷ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 33

¹⁸ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 34

Right to personal liberty¹⁹

Right to fair hearing²⁰

Right to private and family life²¹

Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion²²

Right to freedom of expression and the press²³

Right to peaceful assembly and association²⁴

Right to freedom of movement²⁵

Right to freedom from discrimination²⁶

Right to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria²⁷

Having recourse to the topic of this research work, it is therefore imperative to go on to expound on the right to dignity, in order to have a clearer picture of this discourse. In an attempt to appreciate the concept of human dignity, Pico Della Mirandola, an Italian humanist of the early modern age, has suggested that human dignity arises out of the way human beings conceive and form themselves and this point also goes on to buttress the fact that the question of dignity relates back to the beginning of the existence of the human person. That is from a certain idea which was later developed by Immanuel Kant on autonomy. Thus, our self-respect is formed primarily by the way we conceive of ourselves, by the way we construct our lives, rather than by any essential; be it genetically-based properties or not; but in any case, by the way we constitute ourselves rather than the way we are born.²⁸

This therefore shows that the dignity of all human beings must be respected irrespective of their situation, condition or purpose at any time. There are inherently universal values that all human beings share no matter their traditions or surroundings. Besides the need for basic bodily requirements, everyone wants to be treated with dignity and respect. The notion of dignity itself is universal even though it manifests itself in varying forms. Genuine respect for human dignity provides a strong binding

¹⁹ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 35

²⁰ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 36

²¹ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 37

²² CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 38

²³ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 39

²⁴ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 40

²⁵ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 41

²⁶ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 42

²⁷ CFRN 1999 (as amended) s 43

²⁸ Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), in A B Dunning (ed), *Humanist Texts and Studies* (Harvard University Press 1956) 5-10.

force to bring about improvements amidst varied circumstances of deprivation.²⁹

The right to human dignity is an automatic right which applies to all humans, thereby qualifying them as worthy and honorable and thus this accounts for the fundamental nature of this right. As sacrosanct as the right to life is so also the right to dignity of human person as when a person is robbed of this right, that person is inevitably shut out from accessing all other rights, as the right to dignity appears to be the foundation for the enjoyment of other human rights.

Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy:

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) provides for fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy under Chapter II of the constitution.³⁰ These rights are also referred to as non-justiciable rights because when breached, there is no culpability on the government for failure to prevent such breach. These rights include objectives on political, economic, social, educational, foreign policy, environmental, cultural, media, national ethics matters and duties of citizens. However, one of the major challenge or setbacks in the appropriation or enforcement of these rights is the provision in section 6 (6) (c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) which makes the objectives non-justiciable by ousting the powers of the courts as it relates with chapter II of the constitution, and it reads thus:

...shall not except as otherwise provided by this Constitution, extend to any issue or question as to whether any act of omission by any authority or person as to whether any law or any judicial decision is in conformity with the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy set out in Chapter II of this Constitution.

There appears to be an urgent need for an amendment of the constitution, deleting the above provision thereby making the provisions of Chapter II justiciable hence any breach thereof shall be met with strict sanctions against the relevant authorities. One notable challenge which has commonly been ventilated by successive governments as a way of excusing their failure to uphold the rights contained in Chapter II of the constitution has been the problem of funding. However, section 13 of the constitution mandates the government to uphold and apply the provisions of the fundamental

²⁹ Rainer Forst, 'The Concept of Human Dignity and the Basis of Human Rights' in Christopher McCrudden (ed), *Understanding Human Dignity* (Oxford university Press 2013) 71-94.

³⁰ The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

objectives and directive principles of state policy provided for under Chapter II of the constitution. The said section 13 of the constitution provides thus:

“It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this chapter of this constitution.”

Generally, the provisions of Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), are of utmost importance both to the government on the one hand and the citizens on the other hand, they also include political objectives, economic objectives, social objectives, educational objectives, foreign policy objectives, environmental objectives, directive on Nigerian cultures, obligation of the mass media, national ethics, and duties of the citizen. All these are typically rights which have a direct impact on the citizens if adequately upheld, but their application remains non-justiciable or discretionary.

The provision on the non-justiciability of the fundamental objectives as mentioned earlier, is contained in Section 6 (6) (C) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) This section appears to exclude the jurisdiction of the courts on questions relating to contravention of the provisions relating to fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. This provision has raised strong arguments and criticism, and some have argued saying that since the courts cannot enforce the directive principles as it does not create any justiciable right in favor of any individual, it should at best be suitable for the preamble of the constitution or the manifesto of political parties. They are considered as mere pious hopes and aspirations, which could be likened to a cheque drawn on a bank and made payable when able or only when the resources of the bank permit the payment. Thus, one may entertain fear as to the possibility of achieving these lofty aspirations since it appears these are merely a set of platitudes designed by clever politicians to hoodwink unsuspecting Nigerians. The wording of the provision have been criticised as being vague for the government may never find a period practicable for the realisation of those laudable goals and objectives since it cannot be a subject matter of legal proceedings.³¹ This has raised concerns that the constitutional objectives may remain

³¹ CFRN s 6 (6) (c); Ben Nwabueze, *Constitutional Democracy in Africa* (Spectrum Books 2003) 146-148

aspirational rather than enforceable legal obligations.³²

It has been mentioned that section 13 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) provides that it shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of Chapter II of the Constitution. This obvious conflict between Sections 13 and 6 (6) (C) could only mean that the spirit of the objectives and directive principles should inspire and inform judicial interpretations although an action to enforce the objectives per se are not attainable.

It can therefore be said that the duty and responsibility of all organs of government is limited to the extent that the judiciary cannot enforce any of the provisions on the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state. In the case of *Okogie v. Attorney General of Lagos State*,³³ the Court in its judgment disclosed the fact that it did not have much difficulty in rigidly applying the provisions of Section 6 (6) (C), which declares that the directive principles shall not be enforceable by any court. It was also held in Okogie's case that where the provision of the constitution defines a certain course of action or enshrines certain rights, these provisions must be applied without any inhibition emanating from chapter II.

In *Donald Morebishe and 2 Ors v. Lagos State House of Assembly*³⁴ the Court in considering the utility value of the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State Policy in the Constitution held that the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State Policy are not justiciable, nevertheless they remain pillars of guide and focus of attention for all tiers of government. It is hoped that the Nigerian courts would adopt the approach of the Indian and South African Courts so as to give effect to the promotion and enforcement of fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. It must be noted at this juncture that, although item 60 of the Exclusive Legislative List empowers the National Assembly to make laws for the enforcement and observance of the fundamental objectives and directive principles of State Policy, sadly, no such laws have so far been made by the National Assembly. This tends to support the views of critics that the provision on fundamental objectives is utterly useless and merely of cosmetic value and should therefore be expunged from the

³² A O Obilade, *The Nigerian Legal System* (Spectrum Books 2005) 79-80. See also *Attorney-General of Ondo State v Attorney-General of the Federation* (2002) 9 NWLR (Pt 772) 222 (SC).

³³(1981) 1 NCLR 218.

³⁴(2000) 2 WRN 134 (HC).

constitution. Consequently, a careful and subtle application of the said doctrine of harmonious Construction will go a long way to resolve the apparent conflict of the provisions in Section 13 with other provisions of the Constitution, particularly Section 6(6)(C) of Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)

The Indian Supreme Court has, through judicial activism, converted certain non-justiciable Directive Principles into enforceable rights. Classical judicial precedence include *Olga Tellis v Bombay Municipal Corporation*³⁵, where the right to livelihood was read into Article 21³⁶ of the Indian Consitution, and *Unni Krishnan JP v State of Andhra Pradesh*³⁷, where the right to education was recognized as a fundamental right flowing from Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. These decisions demonstrate the judiciary's role in harmonizing Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles to advance social justice. In *Olga Tellis v Bombay Municipal Corporation*, The Indian Supreme Court held that the right to livelihood is an integral part of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. In doing so, the Court drew inspiration from the Directive Principles relating to socio-economic welfare and rendered an otherwise non-justiciable socio-economic interest enforceable through fundamental rights. Similarly, in the Supreme Court case of *Unni Krishnan JP v State of Andhra Pradesh*, The Supreme Court held that the right to education flows from the right to life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Court relied heavily on Article 45 of the Constitution (a Directive Principle requiring free and compulsory education for children) and made it judicially enforceable. This decision later inspired the insertion of Article 21A by the 86th Constitutional Amendment.³⁸

The South African Constitutional Court has also been at the forefront of transforming socio-economic rights from aspirational constitutional promises into enforceable legal entitlements for example in the case of *Government of the Republic of South Africa v Grootboom*³⁹, the Court enforced the right to housing, while in *Minister of Health v Treatment Action Campaign*⁴⁰ the Supreme Court enforced the right to health care.

³⁵ *Olga Tellis v Bombay Municipal Corporation* AIR 1986 SC 180; (1985) 3 SCC 545.

³⁶ Constitution of India, 1950, art 21.

³⁷ *Unni Krishnan JP v State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993) 1 SCC 645.

³⁸ Constitution of India 1950, art 21A (Right to Education)

³⁹ *Government of the Republic of South Africa and Others v Grootboom and Others* 2001 (1) SA 46 (CC); 2000 (11) BCLR 1169 (CC).

⁴⁰ *Minister of Health and Others v Treatment Action Campaign and Others (No 2)* 2002 (5) SA 721 (CC); 2002 (10) BCLR 1033 (CC).

These decisions remain classical authorities for the proposition that socio-economic rights, though often regarded as non-justiciable in many jurisdictions such as Nigeria, can be rendered fully enforceable through constitutional adjudication.

4. Factors that affect the Enforcement of the Right to Dignity of Human Person in Nigeria

By way of emphasis, the right to dignity of human person is a right provided by virtue of Section 34 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended). This right is guaranteed under Chapter IV of the Constitution. This right among other guaranteed rights is a non-alienable and non-negotiable right that accrues to all Human beings in Nigeria and any breach of this right automatically gives the aggrieved party a right to seek legal redress as this is a Fundamental Human Right. Sadly, this is only so on paper as there are eminent challenges which have persistently made it obviously impossible to attain the enforcement of this right. The discussions and agitations affecting fundamental human rights generally have been on the front burner over the years as there has been an ever-increasing need to address the prospects and challenges therein so as to meet the highest possible standards obtainable in other developed climes of the world.

Be that as it may, for the very fact that humans still exist in Nigeria and world over it naturally reiterates the continuous need to keep advocating for the attainment of human right fundamental or not in line with global best practices. Over the years we have had a plethora of agitations for the protection of human rights highlighting some of the challenges, the U.S. Department of State had this to say; The most serious human rights problems during ... [2011] were the abuses committed by the militant sect known as Boko Haram, which was responsible for killings, bombings, and other attacks throughout the country, resulting in numerous deaths, injuries, and the widespread destruction of property; abuses committed by the security services with impunity, including killings, beatings, arbitrary detention, and destruction of property; and societal violence, including ethnic, regional, and religious violence. Other serious human rights problems included sporadic abridgement of citizens' right to change their government, due to some election fraud and other irregularities; politically motivated and extrajudicial killings by security forces, including summary executions; security force torture, rape, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of prisoners, detainees, and criminal suspects; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center

conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; denial of fair public trial; executive influence on the judiciary and judicial corruption; infringements on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement; official corruption; violence and discrimination against women; child abuse; female genital mutilation ...; the killing of children suspected of witchcraft; child sexual exploitation; ethnic, regional, and religious discrimination; trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution and forced labor; discrimination against persons with disabilities; discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; vigilante killings; forced and bonded labor; and child labor.⁴¹

Experience has taught us that we cannot enjoy this right to the dignity of human person in isolation; certain other rights must be satisfied, especially a large number of rights provided for Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)⁴² which are known as Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. Unless and until some of these rights are made justiciable either by judicial interpretation or government policies and action, we may never attain the level of guaranteeing this right no matter how much we talk about it. When we talk about the right to dignity of person we are and should be talking about access to quality education (formal and or informal), basic health care, portable drinking water, good road network, electricity etc. A man who cannot access these basic amenities cannot be seen to have any dignity in society. Lack of basic social amenities amongst other factors have over the years become a huge impediment to the enjoyment of the right to dignity of persons in Nigeria. The legal framework necessary in true attainment of human rights generally abounds for executive, legislative and judicial intervention but the lack of will power to prosecute this task has posed a major setback in the protection of human rights in Nigeria, especially the right to the dignity of human person. Poverty, unemployment, and inequality mean many Nigerians lack access to education, health care, housing and a decent livelihood condition necessary for self-respect and dignity. Human dignity includes the ability to live with autonomy, well-being, and participation in society all compromised by deep economic exclusion.⁴³

The right to dignity of human person is largely interconnected with other human rights provided for under the 1999 constitution (as amended) and as such same cannot be fully

⁴¹ 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State.

⁴²Supra.

⁴³ Obilade (n2) 78-80

enjoyed without the attainment of other human rights. The high level of poverty has become a growing concern and this also affects the right to dignity of human person as a poor person by virtue of his position cannot afford the basic needs of life like food, clothing, water, shelter, access to basic health care and education etc. poverty has eaten so deep into the Nigerian system as the poor cannot afford to go to school and this does not only leave them poor but illiterate as well. In the year 2022, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released a document titled Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index giving details backed by statistics on the sad reality of Nigeria's poverty index. By data recently released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multi-dimensionally poor.⁴⁴

Another impediment to the right to dignity of human person is the challenge of unemployment. A large population of our teeming youths who are graduates and account for over 70 percent of our population are unemployed and the government over the years appears to be doing little or nothing in order to address this dangerous challenge. The nonchalant attitude of the government in this area has caused many youths to resort to all manner of vices like armed robbery, kidnapping, thuggery and the likes in order to make ends meet as a result of the increase in the level of unemployment in Nigeria.

Unemployment Rate in Nigeria increased to 4.90 percent in the fourth quarter of 2024 from 4.60 percent in the third quarter of 2024.⁴⁵ Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged 4.49 percent from 1991 until 2024, reaching an all-time high of 10.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019 and a record low of 3.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2013.⁴⁶

Nigeria's misery index - the sum of unemployment and inflation rates – rose to 36.9 percent in 2024Q1 from 30.5 percent in 2023Q3.⁴⁷ Thus, many Nigerians are experiencing a cost-of-living crisis and weak purchasing power due to rising inflation, with many being pushed into poverty. Efforts should be geared towards reducing inflationary pressures by improving agricultural productivity and combating

⁴⁴ <<https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/news/78> > accessed on 26 February 2026

⁴⁵ National Bureau of Statistics (Nigeria), *Labour Force Statistics Report: Q3 & Q4 2024* (Abuja: NBS, 2024) <http://nigerianstat.gov.ng/> accessed 18 May 2026.

⁴⁶ <<https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/unemployment-rate>> accessed on 26 February 2026

⁴⁷ NBS, *Misery Index Report* (2024)

insecurity.⁴⁸ Pervasive unemployment among the youth cohorts could be responsible for the high rate of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), which stood at 14.4 percent in 2024Q1 compared with 13.7 percent in 2023Q3.⁴⁹ Hence, there is an urgent need to empower youths with productive skills. This could reduce youth restiveness and minimise social unrest in the country.⁵⁰ Many unemployed persons finding it difficult to get jobs could be discouraged from further search. In 2024Q1, the rate of out-of-labour force rose to 3.6 percent from 3.1 percent in 2023Q3. The rate of out-of-labour force was higher for people with post-secondary education (7.1 percent) than those with lower educational qualification. This reiterates the need to revive the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) scheme to accommodate graduates and school drop-outs.⁵¹

Many Nigerians are exposed to vulnerable employment (representing over 70 percent of total employment), non-paid or low-paid jobs, and poor working conditions, characterizing the informal sector.⁵² Thus, efforts should be geared to improve the living conditions of informal sector players by subsidizing food and non-food household materials and healthcare. Measures should also be put in place to incentivize the easy transition of informal sector players to the formal sector. There is a need to correct the general orientation that such a transition would mean that the informal sector players would be exposed to higher taxes.⁵³

Another disturbing factor which impedes on the enjoyment of the right of human person in Nigeria is the violation of the child right which has deprived a lot of children from accessing basic nursery and or primary education to say the least hence, they are completely robbed of their dignity and do not experience a normal childhood.

Other factors which hinder the enjoyment of the right to dignity of human person are: climate change, environmental degradation caused by mining activities and oil exploration particularly in the Southern region of Nigeria where a lot of oil activities take place, polluting the water and the aqua life therein with little or no measures put in place to provide portable drinking water to the residents of those areas. Gas flaring and

⁴⁸ <https://app.nesgroup.org/download_resource_documents/Unemployment%20Alert%202024Q1_1727695202.pdf> accessed on 26 February 2026

⁴⁹ NBS, *supra* note X.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² NBS, *supra* note X.

⁵³ Ibid

other toxic emissions from the oil companies make the environment uninhabitable for humans. We also have the challenge of desertification in the Northern part of the country which has destroyed a vast majority of the green life causing Fulani herders to encroach into farmlands evolving into violent clashes with the farmers, which we often refer to as farmers/herders clash and in recent times we have seen diverse forms of banditry ravaging many northern states of Nigeria.

Flowing from the foregoing, it is crystal clear that Nigeria has a lot of human rights challenges which, if not addressed with urgency, will grow into a cancer which may destroy our sovereignty. It is also clear that over the years, government has failed in carrying out its obligations to the people in order to guarantee their rights.

5. The Role of the Executive in Ensuring the Enforcement of the Right to Dignity in Nigeria

The Federal Executive is headed by the president who is the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, while the states are headed by the Governors who are also referred to as the chief security officers. The second but most powerful organ of the government is the executive. It is that organ which implements the laws passed by the legislature and the policies of the government. The rise of welfare state has tremendously increased the functions of the state, and in reality of the executive. In common usage people tend to identify the executive with the government. In contemporary times, there has taken place a big increase in the power and role of the executive in every state.⁵⁴

The term 'Executive' has been defined both in its broad and narrow forms. In its broad form, it is taken to mean all the functionaries, political power-holders (Political Executive) and permanent civil servants who undertake the execution of laws and policies and run the administration of state.⁵⁵ The executive performs a number of functions among which are, law enforcement, appointment making, treaty making, security, foreign policy making, creating foreign relations, policy formulation, financial functions etc. The right to dignity of human person which is a fundamental right provided for under chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) is a final product of executive assent hence, the executive owe

⁵⁴<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/political-science/executive-definition-functions-and-types-of-executive/40360> accessed on 26 June 2026.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Nigerians that duty to uphold and ensure the application of this right without more. Unfortunately, this is not so as the executive has consistently been evidently slow in promoting and sponsoring certain policies and projects especially with regards to rights provided for under chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) so as to attend to the current human and economic needs and challenges of the citizens who continue to be dehumanized by the selfish and lopsided government policies and projects which has little or no direct value on the common man who has completely lost hope in the government and resigned to fate.

The Executive which is apparently the strongest arm of government, wields a lot of power and this makes it vital in the promotion and enforcement of rights. I have earlier opined that it is not possible for us to discuss the attainment of the right to dignity of human persons when a backlog of other rights necessary for the attainment of this right, are perpetually left unattained and if we continue in this manner, we can only but wish for the attainment of the right to dignity of human person and never get there. When we consider other advanced climes, like the US, the government introduces a high level of social security for its citizens so as to enable them have access to some basic needs, like food, shelter, clothing, education etc., and we have seen the executive in African countries like Liberia, declare free education in Liberia for all from primary to tertiary level and this initiative is to serve as an incentive to literacy.⁵⁶ Certainly, government policies like this will definitely give hope and dignity to the citizens of any nation.

Apart from the fact that many Nigerians have lost their right to dignity as they are either illiterate, unemployed, poor and hungry, without shelter, proper medical care etc., we also have certain executive actions which further affects this right to dignity for example, minorities are still being marginalized which is a clear indication that our constitutional evolution pre and post-independence in the light of the fear of domination of the minority by the majority has had little or no impact, today there is flagrant lopsided appointments made by the executive across government parastatals and a majority of these employments are done across ethnic and religious lines making those left out of government having a second look at their status as Nigerians wondering whether or not they have equal dignity with those in power. The issue of federal character has been thrown to the garbage and there appears to be some kind of divide and rule system at play. The executive truly needs to appear fair and unbiased to all

⁵⁶ <<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/4>> accessed on 26 June 2026.

Nigerians so we can all be truly equal before the law even though this assertion of equality before the law is true in theory but in practice, a lot of barriers such as the above abound.

Hence it is very instructive for the executive arm of government to exercise the will power which has been lacking over the years to introduce and consistently fund social security projects which shall ensure our citizens gain access to education, health care, shelter, food, portable drinking water, accessible roads etc., and also work closely with other arms of government in order to ensure the justiciability of other rights particularly those contained under chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) so as to bring our laws and government policies in line with the current needs and aspirations of the people thereby ensuring the attainment of the right to dignity of human person.

6. The Role of the Legislature in the Enforcement of the Right to Dignity in Nigeria

The legislature is very crucial in enforcing accountability and responsibility in any democratic setting. Oversight function is also a very important role of the modern legislature. Oversight function particularly appears to preoccupy modern legislatures. The watchdog function is perhaps more important for a legislative assembly than that of law-making.⁵⁷ The legislature provides the institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability and good governance. Stapenhurst also noted that in most countries, the legislature is constitutionally mandated as the institution through which governments are held accountable to the electorate.⁵⁸ Such oversight functions include scrutinising and authorising revenues and expenditures of the government and ensuring that the national budget is properly implemented. The constitutional power to participate in budgetary appropriation gives the legislature needed political influence to shape governance and possibly carry out reforms that leads to national development.⁵⁹

The legislature is typically responsible for law making and it is expected that for that to be largely reckoned with, these laws must ultimately have a direct impact on the citizens, unfortunately with respect to the subject of our discourse which is the right to dignity of human person, the legislature has to a large extent promulgated the laws but have

⁵⁷Verney, D. V. *Structure of Government* in J. Blondel (ed), *Comparative Government: A Reader* (Macmillan, 1969).

⁵⁸Edet J. Tom and Amadu J. Attai, (2014) 'The Legislature and National Development: The Nigerian Experience' Vol. 2, 66.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

failed to create that synergy with other arms of government in order to ensure that the law is upheld at all times to the latter. It is very common for us to witness heavy debates which almost always nearly leads to physical combat and in a few cases actual combat when these legislators who claim to be representing the people are pushing for laws which affirms or strengthens their 'dignity' like laws that ensure their allowances are either increased or made as of right and not discretionary as the rights contained under chapter II of the constitution which have remained non justiciable for decades, yet they spend billions in the process of passing just a single bill while they only show up with white elephant projects when they are seeking re-election to office. Sadly, the poor masses who largely depend on religious and or ethnic conjectures in deciding who to vote for and for what position are constantly thrown into the vicious circle of poverty and poor leadership at the end of most political cycles and this leads to a consistent decline in the dignity of the people.

Every serious legislature shall have the social welfare of its people as topmost thereby introducing and enforcing laws which ensures same. These laws ought to be made justiciable in order to strengthen its enforcement but in doing this, the legislature has to be mindful of executive rascality in our current democracy where the executive pick and choose which laws to uphold and which to throw away, hence a common trust fund should be created with the control of the funds as per in inflow and outflow left in the hands of a neutral commission whose sole responsibility shall be the collection and disbursement of such funds across the country in order to meet the social needs of the people in terms of education, housing, healthcare, employment etc.

The legislature also plays an important role in the constitutional amendment process, and can effectively amend the constitution to accommodate certain social rights provided for in under chapter II of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) under chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) in order to enable the attainment of crucial rights such as the right to dignity of human person.

7. The Role of the Judiciary in the Enforcement of the Right to Dignity in Nigeria

The Judiciary is the third arm of government, whose primary role is to interpret laws enacted by the Legislature and apply such existing laws to individual cases, in order to settle disputes between two private citizens or between private citizens and the

government. Judiciary is “the court and all those who work in the vineyard of justice.”⁶⁰ There is no better test of the excellence of a governance than the efficiency of its judicial system.⁶¹ For nothing more nearly touches the citizen than his knowledge that he can rely on the certain, prompt and impartial administration of justice. The Judge, therefore, fulfils an onerous function in the community.⁶² The role of the judiciary in a democracy is interpreting the law, upholding the principle of the Rule of Law and also, serves as a strong organ for ‘checks and balances’ amongst other organs of government.⁶³

A good, independent, upright and incorruptible Judiciary precipitates happiness and orderliness of the state. Judiciary is the bastion of the people’s hope, as it offers a formidable panacea to the sufferings and predicament of the masses. It is the desire of the public that justice must be done at all times and be seen to have been done. A bad or corrupt Judiciary on the other hand is the bane of the Nigerian society and democracy.⁶⁴ Thus, the Learned Niki Tobi JSC in *Eriobuna v Obiorah*⁶⁵ succinctly posited that:

A Judge by the nature of his position and professional calling is expected to be straight forward, upright, diligent, consistent and open in whatever he does in Court and in other places of human endeavor that he happens to find himself. This is because his character as a Judge is public property. He is the cynosure of the entire adjudication in the court, and like Caesar's wife of ancient Rome, he is expected to live above board and above suspicion, if the judicial process should not experience any reverse or suffer detriment. A Judge should know that by nature of his judicial functions, he is persistently and consistently on trial for any improper conduct immediately before, during and immediately after the trial of a case.

It is paramount to understand that the Judiciary represents an indispensable institution in any democratic state and in Nigeria in particular. The Judiciary is the antithesis of oppression, repression and anarchy. Everybody - both the mighty and lowly look up to

⁶⁰ S O Obikeze and E A Obi, *Government and Politics of Nigeria: The Struggle for Power in an African State* Book Point Ltd 2003).

⁶¹ J Bryce, *Modern Democracies* (Macmillan 1921).

⁶² A Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics* (Oxford University Press 1974)

⁶³ V C Madueke, U G Ojukwu and I F Agbata, ‘Judiciary and the Separation of Powers in Achieving Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria (the Fourth Republic)’ (2016) 4(8) *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Science* 89.

⁶⁴ *Ibid* at 88.

⁶⁵ (1999) 8 NWLR (Pt. 616) 622 at 630.

the Judiciary to obtain justice in any given disputation.⁶⁶ Hank Eso⁶⁷ clearly brought the imperative and indispensability of the Judiciary for redress and justice by any aggrieved party - both the mighty and lowly when he asserted that:

It is ironical that General Buhari would now seek political and legal salve, from a Nigerian Court, recognising the powers of the Court and its right to grant redress in a democratic dispensation. Doing so, also, confirmed the status of any Court in Nigeria as a constituted authority and arbiter in matters of law. Finally, by going to Court, Buhari unapologetically admitted that the Judiciary as the third arm of government had the pivotal role to play in matter of national security, history and general wellbeing.

Justice is both the hallmark and bulwark of the existence of any nation and without it, there will be the inevitability of chaos, brigandage, anarchy, commotion, imbroglio and eventual collapse of the political system. Consequently, the Executive can be accused of corruption, ineptitude, nepotism, and the Legislature constantly faces with charges of tardiness, arrogance, laziness, degeneracy. But the Judiciary cannot afford to put itself in any position of being blamed or accused of any of the shortcomings or failings associated with the Executive and Legislature above. Since the Judiciary is the only institution that will at the end of day, apportion blames to either of the organs of government for any of their ills in the conduct of the State affairs.⁶⁸

Flowing from the above, it needs to be reiterated that the judiciary has been described as the last hope of the common man and it therefore goes without saying that the role of the judiciary in the law enforcement process cannot be overemphasized. The Judiciary through the instrumentality of the courts and other judicial panels, interprets the law and whatever interpretation the court gives by way of rulings or judgments becomes binding except when set aside on appeal. It therefore means that the judiciary cannot afford to operate in such a way that its decisions cannot be enforced and without restrain.

There has been a huge campaign for our judiciary to emulate what is obtainable in India whereby non-justiciable laws are made justiciable through the process of the judicial interpretation and pronouncements and this goes a long way in enforcing human dignity. Certain provisions of the constitution should be interpreted in such a way that it helps

⁶⁶ Ibid at 89.

⁶⁷ Ibid at 89.

⁶⁸ Ibid at 89.

in the attainment of some fundamental rights. For example when we talk about the right to dignity of human person, we cannot begin to talk about its realization to any reasonable measure unless we begin to consider the justiciability of some non-justiciable rights which affect areas like education, employment, health care, etc., by so doing, we automatically guarantee the right to dignity of human person, as the right to dignity of human person is not a right which can stand on its own but needs the valid attainment of some other constitutional rights.

8. Conclusion and Recommendation

Suffice it to say that the prospects for the attainment of the right to dignity of human person in Nigeria are quite enormous and will go a long way in giving a brand-new image to the human rights crusade not only in Nigeria but in Africa at large. As it stands, we have one of the worse indices of human rights protection in the world and this has not only brought Nigeria to great disrepute but has also cost the nation loss of foreign direct investments from which we would have benefited, but for the negative effects of the flagrant abuse of the right to dignity of human person. Some of the negative effects are banditry, terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping etc., and some of these challenges are largely due to issues of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, corruption, etc.

One sure good omen set to befall Nigeria once we employ the solution of making justiciable those social rights provided for in chapter II of the constitution among others, is that most of the foregoing challenges shall die a natural death. Because when you have a governmental framework that ensures at least nursery, primary and secondary education are compulsory, you will see a drastic reduction in child trafficking and child hawking, which in the long run will entail that we are building a literate society which understands the value of life and appreciates our diversity as a people in a positive light. The issue of enforcing education must be backed by the availability of jobs after graduation as well as adequate provision of basic social amenities, which shall further enhance the quality of life, and this also will serve as an incentive to pay taxes and other government levies because people can now see the value of their taxes.

Flowing from the foregoing, we can now boldly say that a large chunk of criminality associated with the government's inability to protect this right to dignity of human person shall become an issue of the past, as the confidence which the people once had in government returns, this shall open doors for a more robust and diversified economy. Nigeria shall now become a New Haven for all and sundry as we are endowed with a

lot of humans, natural and mineral resources, much of which are untapped. For example, Nigeria has failed to catch up to speed with regard to its tourism potential, which is largely due to the issues of insecurity as well as lack of poor infrastructure in the country, which is largely due to the endemic corruption in our system.

The benefits or prospects of the enforcement of the right to dignity of human person are better experienced than imagined, little wonder millions of Nigerians who have consistently hoped for a better Nigeria, never live to see same but whenever such persons travel to some developed climes where issues of human rights are taken seriously most of them never want to return to the country because of the value and dignity they start to enjoy in such countries.

Nigerians are very intelligent, industrious and hardworking but because of the poor state of our infrastructure and other factors which affect human dignity, a great number of our professionals like medical doctors and engineers prefer to practice their professions outside the shores of this country owing to the value they receive for their services abroad. If we can afford to rebuild our infrastructures as well as construct new ones, and also make the necessary reforms in the economy such that we can compete with other developed climes of the world, we shall see a voluntary repatriation of most of our best brains which shall further boost our output in terms of quality and efficient service delivery and this will indeed put Nigeria in an attractive position within the global market space.

Having considered the right to dignity of human person and the impediments to the enjoyment of this right in Nigeria in the light of our human right history as well as our constitutional evolution, a lot has been considered particularly in the light of some constitutional constrain which has left us practically handicap in the light of enforcing these rights and the attendant solutions to the impediments discussed in this work, here are some recommendations:

- I. The legislative arm of government should by way of constitutional amendment make certain non-justiciable rights contained under chapter II of the constitution such as right to education, healthcare, and other basic amenities justiciable so as to provide for the attainment of the right to dignity of human person in Nigeria which is a fundamental right.
- II. The legislature can also look into the huge percentage of funds concentrated at the center and to legislate on how these monies can be cut down to provide more funding for the local governments and also ensure that the local governments

enjoy full financial autonomy from the states in reality and not on paper thereby ensuring the real electorates at the grass root reap the dividends of their citizenry irrespective of their political affiliation, religion, creed, or language.

- III. The executive arm of government ought to find no difficulty in assenting to the bills from the house of assembly which are made to ensure the attainment of the right to dignity of human person. The executive arm of government should come up with and execute policies and projects which are aimed at improving the social well-being of the people so as to ensure equality before the law and also introduce reforms amongst the armed forces and the paramilitary outfits of the country in a bid to ensuring citizens are given a more civil approach by these government outfits which have over the years continued to decimate the value of human life through various levels of inhuman treatment of suspects some of whom were hitherto innocent as well as the act of extrajudicial killings they execute almost on a regular basis; a plethora of such acts abound on our news headlines almost on a daily basis.
- IV. The Judicial arm of government which is often described as the bastion and or the last hope of the common man must live up to this expectation at all times. One of the very instructive ways of achieving this is through judicial interpretation of the law with respect to cases brought before it, particularly in human rights. The judiciary should be able to interpret the law in a manner that will ensure some rights which are key to the attainment of the right to dignity of human person, which were hitherto not justiciable, be made justiciable, taking a lead from countries like India. The Courts must constantly act boldly to protect the constitution as they appear to be the last line of defense for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is very instructive that the last line of defense be very strong.