

COVID-19: Over 23 Killed, Several Brutalized by Security Agents Enforcing Govt's Lockdown Order–Report

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violence terrorism massacre

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No fewer than 23 citizens have been killed, while several others have been brutalised and their human rights violated by security operatives in states where the Lockdown order is being imposed by government.

The Lockdown which was a measure to halt the spread of the deadly Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and keep Nigerians safe has regrettably turned out to be deadly with the loss of several innocent lives, reports by the CLEEN foundation has revealed.

The Federal Government of Nigeria had on Monday 31st March 2020 enforced a restriction of movement in Lagos, Ogun and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja (FCT), for an initial 14 days period to tackle the disease in the country. On Tuesday 13th of April, the restriction of movement was extended for another 14 days due to the rising incidents of the pandemic. Some governors also followed suit and imposed the Lockdown in their states.

But according to recent report signed by the Executive Director, CLEEN Foundation, Mr. Benson Olugbuo, and made available on Tuesday, there are 23 documented incidents of extra-judicial killing across the country. Out of this number, 12 deaths were recorded in Kaduna State. Abia State recorded 5 deaths, Anambra State 2 deaths, while Delta, Niger, Ebonyi and Katsina states recorded 1 death each.

Notably, 18 of the incidents have been confirmed by the National Human Rights Commission with the exception of those that occurred within the last few days.

CLEEN's report on Southeast region of the country revealed that the first incident happened on April 5, 2020 at Umuahia Road Aba. A police-officer allegedly killed a petrol station attendant, along popular New Umuahia road in Obingwa Local Government Area.

The Policeman, Stanley Azu, is reportedly serving under Azumini Police Division in Ukwa East LGA of Abia State. He was said to have tried stopping a vehicle that violated the lockdown order occasioned by the coronavirus outbreak, but the driver defied the instruction.

“Residents of the area said the police inspector chased the driver and reportedly fired at him. The bullet hit Chibuisi, who was in his business centre. Chibuisi was said to have been pronounced dead at Abia State Teaching Hospital where he was rushed to for urgent medical attention.

Chibuisi until his death was a staff of Greenmac Energy Ltd, a filling station owned by his in-law. The Commissioner of Police in the state, Ene Okon who confirmed the incident said the officer has been arrested adding that the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) has taken over the matter.

The second death according to the report happened on April 7, 2020 at Umuneeochi LGA in Abia State.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Police, Abia State Command also confirmed the killing of an innocent young man identified as Ifeanyi Arunsi on Friday 17th April, 2020 night in Ebem Ohafia by a Policeman.

Geoffrey Ogbonna, Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the command, explained that the policeman was neither on duty nor on COVID 19 preventive assignment, but shot sporadically under the influence of alcohol until a bullet hit the deceased in the buttock.

The Abia state government has since condemned in very strong terms the unwarranted shooting of some Abians and the consequent loss of their lives. It said the breeding recklessness of some Security Men in the State must be nipped in the bud forthwith.

Dr. A. Agbazuere, Chief of Staff to the Governor reassured all Abians that anybody who takes the life of an Abian must definitely face justice. He informed that the soldier who killed an Abian at Umuokereke Ngwa has been dismissed from the army and is in prison awaiting final Justice for murder.

CLEEN reports further revealed that there has been extortions and brutality in some states by the Army and Police. It said there were pockets of human rights violations by the Army ranging from flogging of citizens and extorting money from commercial bus drivers at different locations in Owerri particularly at Control Post.

There was an earlier directive given by the Ebonyi State governor to security agents to shoot at sight anyone that tries to run away from the State isolation center.

Some Civil Society groups in the State have already issued Public statements condemning the directive. There was a video showing members of the State lockdown enforcement team in Ebonyi who approached villagers that gathered for their village meeting brutalized and looted their property.

“In Enugu, residents have lamented Police brutality, extortion amid lockdown, Extortion of citizens was recorded in Nnobi, Idemili Anambra State, victims bailed themselves with the sum of one thousand naira each, the report read.

Illegal Arrest and Detention of Citizens by Security Operatives was also recorded by in the region, the report added. It said two observers of CLEEN Foundation intervened in a case at Enugu State on Easter Monday 13th April, 2020.

“A man was arrested for walking on the street in the state but through prompt intervention of two volunteers of CLEEN Foundation, he was released. Also, Toll gate Police station Ogbunike illegally arrested the siblings of Ms Nzube Chukwu of Amawa village Ogbunike for a fight she had with a relative but when the Police came for the arrest, they didn't see Ms Nzube Chukwu, however against the rules of engagement of the Nigeria Police Force, they arrested her mother Mrs. Christiana and brother Peter Chukwubunna aged 14years.