Memory of Human Rights Violations during the Nigeria-Biafra War and the Imperative for Transitional Justice in Nigeria

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Memory of Human Rights Violations during the Nigeria-Biafra War and the Imperative for Transitional Justice in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Human rights violations during the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967-1970) have elicited interests from scholars and international agencies. Although these studies provide significant insights into the nature of human rights violations during this period, the issue of transitional justice has not been adequately considered. Consequently, this paper examines the memory of human rights violations during the war, attempts made in the area of transitional justice and the imperative for a holistic transitional justice system. The paper begins with the conceptualization of human rights violation and transitional justice. It then makes a historical contextualization of human rights violations during the war and the sustained memory of such violations especially by the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria. Data for the study were from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were sourced through key informant interviews with men and women who were victims and some perpetrators of human rights violations during the war. The key argument of the paper is that there is a sustained memory of human rights violations during the war and efforts towards ensuring sustainable peace and unity in Nigeria have not been associated with effective transitional justice system. The only major attempt (Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission popularly known as Oputa Panel) failed to yield the desired result. Since transitional justice is a requirement for sustainable peace after periods of gross human rights violations and violent conflict, there should be an effective transitional justice mechanisms put in place to promote reconciliation and provide redress for victims.

Presenter information:

Nathaniel Umukoro is Senior Lecturer and Ag. Head of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Edo University Iyamho, Nigeria. During his doctoral programme, he was a fellow of the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Programme of the Social Science Research Council, New York, U.S.A. He is also an alumnus of Brown International Advanced Research Institute, Brown University, USA and the Georg Arnhold Programme on Education for Sustainable Peace of Georg Eckert Institute, Germany. In addition to his postgraduate studies, he received training in mixed-method research from the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, Nairobi, Kenya, in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, United Kingdom. He has received grants for academic purposes
from foreign institutions and universities such as United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Carnegie Corporation of New York, United States Population Reference Bureau, African Development Bank (ADB), UNESCO- Merck, Switzerland, Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection, South Africa, International Network for Genocide Scholars, African Studies Association of the United Kingdom, University of Paris, University of Ghana and Brown University, USA. Dr. Umukoro has over 40 publications and has presented papers in 21 international conferences and workshops organized in countries such as United States of America, France, Germany, Switzerland, Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana.