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**Course: Human Right 28: Free and Fair World
Assignment**

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Assignment Guide

Threat to freedom and fairness

Ukraine and Russia

Hope and resistance by Ukraine

Is your country free and fair?

What can you do to ensure your human right and security are respected?

Depict examples of how your country is free and fair or how it is not.

What grassroots movement helps this human right in your community?

1. Introduction

The world was created by a Supreme Being, believed to be God. God also created man and provided a biological mechanism by which man can grow and develop into generations. No particular human being is ever credited with the creation and ownership of the physical world. Therefore, since God has placed man on earth, all human beings are presumed to be equal, and should experience freedom and fairness. However, because of the egocentric nature and autocratic zeal in certain leaders, the need arose to develop constitutions, laws, statutes and conventions to check despotic excesses.

From historical records, there have been threats to the freedom of man and society by certain privileged individuals by virtue of their political power and authority. Dissipation of power, display of arrogance, and show of whims and caprices by political leaders led people to combine forces for resistance. This scenario had occurred several times over in history, resulting in wars, unnecessary destruction, displacement of people and loss of lives. Of recent, Russia has attempted to exert undue military power over Ukraine thereby encroaching the country's political independence. Such usurpation has implications for the security of the citizens of other nations resident in Ukraine as much as it threatens the peace, security and economy of the country.

This paper discusses freedom, fairness and resistance in the light of the Ukraine-Russia crisis. More importantly, the paper reviews the extent to which Nigeria (the writer's country) is free and fair.

Concept of Freedom

Freedom is the capacity or choice that every individual has to do what he/she wants to do, go anywhere without infringing the rights and privacy of others. Freedom is as certain as life. Freedom is making a choice without being unduly influenced or coerced by others. However, there are limitations placed on an individual's freedom to act, think and make decisions for him/herself. Freedom is akin to an individual's decision to determine how he/she goes about to actualize destiny and vision. The United Nations

found the need for freedom of man when it worked for the development of the articulation of the fundamental human rights of men and women all over the globe. It has therefore been proved that every individual has a right to freedom. A compendium of the United Nations on fundamental human rights highlights 30 inalienable rights of man while alive. The articles generally depict the power and significance of freedom.

Essence of Right 28

The provisions of Article 28 enunciate every citizen's right to freedom and fairness. However, human rights are violated or denied people in many countries of the world. The proponents of Universal Declaration of Human Rights had envisaged a world of peace, fairness and access to full enjoyment of rights for the promotion of global socio-economic development. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) brought to the fore the concept of equality, freedom and fairness in a world of different political ideologies and cultural differences. It was an attempt at forging peaceful coexistence. The UDHR document contains 30 articles, dwelling on different human rights.

Specifically, article 28 significantly addresses the fundamental right to live in a peaceful and orderly community such as to enable the protection and promotion of all other fundamental rights and freedoms as enshrined in the document. Article 28 is not restricted to a particular country. It is a global document the violation of which is a threat to both life and peaceful coexistence. An environment characterized by wars, social injustice and denial of rights is a hindrance to development and individuals' pursuit of personal vision. Indeed, peace is elusive in such environments. Therefore, social and international order is a pre-requisite for the respect for human rights and to enable individuals improve their living standards.

Article 28 of the UDHR sets the tone for freedom and fairness in countries of the world. Freedom of the individual is essential for survival and to attain cooperation with others, irrespective of culture or race. According to Michelle Bachelet, cited in an article published by OHCHR, "The grave danger we see today is the attempts to undermine and even discard the entire multilateral framework that was designed to protect human rights and prevent conflict. Increasing numbers of leaders no longer pretend to care about human rights, and seek to clamp down on civil society, often using national security as the pretext." Bachelet's comment is exemplified in the Nigerian government's clamp down on prodemocracy demonstrators, rallies for good governance and demands for justice both in the past and in recent times. The argument of the government is hinged on national security and national interest, but the government fails to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy their freedom of expression.

Right to a free and fair world is directed at promoting equality among people, and to enable them access opportunities without discrimination and denial on any unethical or illegal grounds. Right to freedom and fairness is aberration, empty and only a lip service from political leaders in a world or countries characterized by marginalization, social injustice, inequality, discrimination, denial of rights and rejection among other civil vices.

Russia and Ukraine Case

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has received strong condemnation from the international community, and resistance from the Ukrainian army. Indeed, supporting civilian fighters have combined forces to resist Russia. In spite of Russia's military might and the Russian President's strong desire to capture the capital of Ukraine, the heart of the Ukrainian nation is given to resist the Russian ambition with the hope of victory. Ukraine is an independent country, operating a democracy. The Russian action is deemed an unethical encroachment into another country's sovereignty. It is against international convention for Russia to attack innocent civilians, especially vulnerable children, women and the aged segments of the Ukrainian population. Over two million people have fled Ukraine in less than four weeks, resulting in a new dimension of world refugee crisis.

Essentially, the loss of Ukraine to independence and the expansionist agenda of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) tend to have infuriated Russia's Vladimir Putin. He believes that Ukraine is culturally and historically tied to Russia. Ukraine with a population of 44 million is being forced by Russia's President Vladimir Putin to return to Russia's sphere of political influence. But in the spirit of nationalism, Ukrainians have organized militia groups for guerrilla warfare against Russia. In the same vein, enlightened Russians of the democratic ideology have begun to protest against the actions and decisions of Vladimir Putin. In the light of events in Eastern Europe, it is expedient to examine the status of freedom and fairness elsewhere, using the writer's home country, Nigeria, for illustrative purposes.

State of Freedom and Fairness in Nigeria

Freedom is the relative capacity that all people have to move around and perform their daily obligations without fear. On the other hand, fairness is the degree to which everyone receives equitable treatment irrespective of position or social status. A great proportion of the people in Nigeria are currently not enjoying freedom in the sense in which the United Nations Conventions have defined it. In the four regions: the east, west, north and south of Nigeria, there is threat to freedom, peace and security. In spite of government's military efforts at checking terrorist activities, the Boko Haram terrorist attacks have continued to claim lives with mounting records of destruction of homes and displacement of innocent residents.

The raging situation depicts government as either incapacitated or without a strong vision. Although the Boko Haram uncivil attacks, including bombings and kidnap of school children are largely restricted to northern Nigeria, the southern part of the country is being tormented by cattle herdsman who equally destroy farms, kidnap and kill innocent citizens without provocation. The Nigerian government seems not to have taken any decisive judicial action against the culprits to stem the situation. In cases

where people fight back the incursion of cattle herdsmen, the government's posture tends to be in favour of the Fulani cattle herdsmen.

Majority of the people that constitute the executive arm of government in Nigeria, including the President are of the Fulani stock. Bias and favoritism are observed. Government's action is a negation of fairness. Furthermore, in matters of political appointment, for every ten federal appointments, eight of such are given to northerners. This is also against the existing policy of federal character in the distribution of appointment. The northerners tend to lay claim to natural resources and authority to govern in Nigeria without consideration for other segments of the Nigerian society. The issue of marginalization in the sharing of national resources and appointment compelled the people of the eastern region to demand for justice. The denial of justice consequently prompted agitation for cessation and the establishment of an organization known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a movement fighting for the rights of the Igbo people in the eastern region of Nigeria.

Government's treatment of the members of the group has attracted criticisms from the international community. Members of the group have been killed while the leader is currently being tried for what the government considers as treason and felony. In 2021, a Nigerian referred to as Sunday Igboho had his residence vandalized by government security agents for staging a protest against the Fulani cattle men who raped women, killed other people and destroyed farms in Oyo State of Nigeria. The federal government's action against Sunday Igboho is a reflection of denial of fairness to citizens. The present Nigerian government accords better treatment to northerners than other Nigerians from other regions in terms of promotion and spread of development. Evidence of lack of fairness in the government's treatment of non-northerners abounds in Nigeria.

Instances have revealed lopsided policies made to promote the admission of more children from the northern part into federal government colleges while brilliant children from the south, west and east are denied admission on account of unfriendly/unethical decisions by northerners in the realm of affairs. There is a high degree of social injustice, marginalization and denial of freedom by the government, which prompted mass protests and demonstrations by the people at different times in Nigeria's history. What measures then can be taken by the people for the respect of human rights and security?

Measures for the Respect of Human Rights and Security

Nigerians at home and those in the diaspora need to be in alignment to voice out the government's injustice against sections of the Nigerian society. Nigerians need human rights education and political education. These are educational contents that schools can integrate into their curriculum at all levels. It is important to engage human rights activists to protect people's inalienable rights. At a time when information communication technology is being massively developed, it has become a tool for the propagation of human rights awareness through every geographical region in Nigeria. Indeed, enlightened human rights groups now need to engage more people at fora to expose government's unethical practices and social injustice to the world. Civil societies in Nigeria and human rights activists can align with OHCHR for training materials to deepen knowledge of human rights and improve access to citizens in rural areas with the aim of disseminating human rights information. Appeal by human rights groups to OHCHR could equally draw support to those who are denied social justice.

Furthermore, advocacy groups in all countries need to arise and collaborate with international human rights activists to bring to the fore the import of freedom of the individual in the current generation. Another tool is dialogue. Dialogue needs to be engaged. Advocacy and human rights groups must dialogue with political leaders in nations where there is perceived denial of freedom and fairness. Most developing countries exhibit threats to freedom and fairness among the people. Again, multilateral cooperation among world leaders could motivate stronger adherence to respect for human right 28. In the light of current denial of people's independence by despots and military powers in certain areas of the world, the International Court of Justice now needs to place on its agenda attention to denial of Article 28 of UDHR.

In Nigeria for instance, the Lagos State government has put in place within the ambit of the ministry of justice measures for the defense of the less privileged and those who are denied freedom and fairness. But what needs to be done is to create awareness to enable more people access the platform to seek redress. Other states in Nigeria may not have an active platform for the promotion of human rights, but they could learn from the example of Lagos State. There are human rights lawyers and individuals who are personally motivated to listen to human rights abuse cases and put up a defense for victims. Similarly, most local radio stations air human rights advocacy programs in indigenous languages, directed at people in local communities. The local press has also regularly published cases of injustice surrounding denial of freedom and lack of fairness. However, intensive propagation of human rights education is still needed. In the same vein, stronger collaboration is suggested to harmonize and strengthen the various efforts at bringing freedom and fairness to the less privileged in the society.

Conclusion

Freedom promotes life, self-actualization and development. Individuals whose freedom is denied are trapped in invisible prison. Also, to deny an individual of right to freedom is a display of lack of fairness in a world where everyone is naturally endowed with the choice to do whatever they desire to do, but without affecting grievously the life of another. A free and fair world is envisioned as a world in which every individual irrespective of culture, race, color, language or geographical location has the personal power and authority to access every open opportunity on equal terms with others.

The right to life (existence) is the property of every individual. To deny anyone of existence is unfair and characteristic of injustice. Where powerful countries, by virtue of military might, natural resources and big economy tend to suppress the weaker nations, then threat to free and fair world is evident. Russia's display of power against Ukraine is indeed a threat not only to freedom and fairness in the world, it exposes innocent and defenseless citizens of Ukraine to misery and death. Ukraine can only survive by resistance, unmitigated hope and international support from other nations.

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