

**SPEECH BY DR. TONY OJUKWU, OFR, SAN, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE
APRIL 2025 HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION DASHBOARD**

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Fellow Nigerians,

It is my honour to welcome you to the presentation of the April 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard. Today's presentation is not merely a data exercise; it is a call to collective conscience. The figures we share reflect the lived experiences of our fellow citizens. They demand not only our attention but our urgent action.

In April 2025, the National Human Rights Commission received 261,483 complaints. While this number is significant, it represents only the visible portion of a much deeper crisis. Our Observatory has documented alarming trends, widespread human rights violations, forced displacements, and unchecked violence, particularly in conflict-affected states of the country.

Our Human Rights Situation in April was the grimmest we have seen in almost a year. The killings in Plateau and Benue States as well as the resurgence of the attacks by Boko Haram and ISWAP in Borno state have left hundreds of citizens dead and injured.

Nigeria is a signatory to international human rights instruments and have also enacted constitutional provisions and laws protecting the human person. In particular, section 14(2)(b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that ***“the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”***. This immutable constitutional injunction and governance imperative has come under series of violations over the course of April 2025.

The crisis in the middle belt of Nigeria is not new. It has persisted for decades. Yet the bloodshed continues, and our national discourse too often treats these atrocities as commonplace. This must not be allowed to continue. We must collectively resist the normalization of the horrors that play out when families are slaughtered in their sleep, when children are laid to rest in shallow graves, when survivors are left without shelter, support, or justice. Nigeria must honour its national and international obligations to protect and fulfil the right to life and the right to the dignity of human person.

Silence in the face of injustice is complicity. Every failure to name these violations, to investigate them, and to hold perpetrators accountable represents a betrayal of our national and moral responsibilities. It is reneging on our national, regional and international obligations to protect human rights.

As an institution mandated to protect and promote human rights in Nigeria, the National Human Rights Commission urge governments at state and national levels, including our legislatures, the Nigerian Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies to prioritise security of lives as a fundamental obligation of governance and human rights.

The National Human Rights Commission reiterate our unwavering commitment to ensuring that these atrocities are not treated as routine incidents, but as the urgent human rights emergencies that they are.

Accordingly, we call for the following:

- Independent, impartial, and prompt investigations into all reported killings and displacements;
- Comprehensive support services for survivors, with particular attention to the needs of women and children;
- Accountability for all perpetrators, including state and non-state actors;
- And sustained investment in peace building, justice mechanisms, and community-based reconciliation efforts.

The National Human Rights Commission restates that the right to life is inherent, inalienable, and non-negotiable and that the state has a responsibility to protect the right to life and dignity of all Nigerians.

The state of human rights in our country is not simply a matter of numbers or reports. It is a mirror reflecting our shared values, and our commitment to human dignity and advancement and our progress towards becoming a civilization where freedom, dignity, equality and justice shall prevail. It is time to confront these challenges with courage, resolve, and the conviction that every Nigerian life matters.

Thank you.

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National Human Rights Commission