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# RADICAL ISLAMISM: TRAJECTORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN AFRICA

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**Abstract:** *In Africa, radical and extremist Muslims are striving to transform society through violent change, claiming that African rulers are dictatorial and anti-Islamic; as a result, many African countries are experiencing serious human rights violations and abuses. Therefore, this paper examined radical Islamism and its trajectories of human rights violations and abuses in Africa and proffered workable solutions to the dilemma. To achieve the above aim, the paper employed historical and evaluative methods. The historical method was used to critically review the scholarly literature on radical Islamism and its human rights violations and abuses antecedents in Africa. At the evaluative level, the paper critically discussed the impact of human rights violations and abuses on the African nations and their citizens. The paper revealed that radical Islamism in Africa is driven by bad political leadership, poverty, poor education, unemployment, and religious exclusivism among others. The paper concluded that good governance, economic enhancement, and religious inclusiveness are key tools in discouraging and curbing radical Islamists in African countries.*

**Keywords:** *Radical Islamism; Trajectories; Africa; Human Rights Abuses; Violations*

## INTRODUCTION

In the early XXI century, Islam remains a major presence and political force throughout the world including Africa. The question is not whether the Islamic religion has a place and role in society, but how well it has assumed the role. While some Muslims wish to pursue a more secular path, others call for a more visible and radical role of religion in public life. For this reason, most Islamic activists and movements function and participate within society to bring about change while a few minorities are radical extremists who attempt to destabilize or overthrow governments and commit

violent acts and terrorism within their nations. For example, Boko Haram operating in some Nigerian northern states “seeks not only to realize the Usman dan Fodio manifesto, namely, to deep the Quran in the Atlantic, but also to effect a radical turn-around of what is considered by sect members as a weak or limping Islam and bring it up to a real Maliki version that would be faithful to the Prophet’s intention to Islamize the world” (Oraegbunam 2016, 29).

While the link between poverty and radicalization is disputed, there is substantial evidence that radical Islamism has exploited the weakness of political and socio-economic conditions and the high poverty rate of African nations to perpetrate and achieve Islamic revivalistic objectives (cf. Stith 2010, 62; Shea 2006, 56). The envisaged change and revivalism championed by radical Muslim extremists manifest in various forms and have serious implications for African society. Findings and experience have revealed that human rights violations and abuses constitute the major effects of the radicalization of Islam in Africa. Therefore, this research synthesized scholarly literature on radical Islamism and examined its violations and abuses of human rights in Africa. The paper argued for the ‘spirit’ of inclusivism among stakeholders and called on African governments to curb the problem through dialogue, economic enhancement, and good governance.

## CONTEXTUALIZING ISLAM

The seventh and eightieth centuries marked the rapid expansion of Islam through conversion and military conquest. Muhammad, who is believed to be the founder and prophet of Islam, first began preaching his visions in Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia) in AD 610. Within twenty-five years he had gained full control of the Arabian Peninsula, and Islam was fast becoming the world’s third great monotheistic religion, after Judaism and Christianity. By 650 AD Arabia had become an Islamic state and also expanded its Islamic trench hood to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt; and by 700s AD, China, India, and North Africa were penetrated by Islam (Itzkowitz 2009, 21). Today less than 15 percent of the world’s 1 billion Muslims are Arabs (Foltz 2009, 33). The use of military conquest accounted for the rapid growth of Islam. For instance, nations and empires became loyal to their military might, religious, political, and socio-economic powers as a result of the caravan raids which metamorphosed into full-scale battles in the early stages of Islam.

Islam is the only one, that is, the revelation and the spoken “Word of God” (*kalam Allah*) which was described and communicated by Muhammad in Mecca. Undoubtedly, the Continent of Africa was the first to experience the spread of Islam via Southwest Asia during the early seventh century (Levtzion and Pouwels 2000, 221). Islamism in Africa is dynamic and this dynamism is evident in the continuous reshaping through prevailing socio-cultural, socio-economic, and political dynamics.

Generally, Islam in Africa often adapted to African cultural milieus and belief thus, forming Africa's orthodoxies (Robinson 2004). In 2002, based on estimation, the Muslim population was believed to constitute about 40% of the total population of African people (Encyclopedia Britannica 2003, 301; Kaba 2005, 55). According to the Pew Research Centre (PRC), three of the ten nations having the highest Muslim populations in 2015 were in Africa. This includes Nigeria with an estimated Muslim population of 90.02 million (50%), Egypt (83.87 million [95.1%]), and Algeria (37.21 million [97.9%]) (PRC cited in Diamant 2019, 78). Notably, Islam is highly present in North Africa, Sahel, the Swahili Coast, and West Africa, with a minority of Muslims in South Africa.

Arguably, Islam in Africa is dimensional in scope - it is local and global (Hall 2011, 47-49). This means that it has local and global dimensions. At the local level, Islamic adherents in Africa practice their faith almost independently and without or minimal regulatory control by external authorities. For instance, dominant in the north is Islam which continues to spread, especially in the core north, middle belt, and southwestern Nigeria. Since 1990 more converts have been won by Islamic fundamentalists while Islamic extremism has become a powerful political tool in northern Nigeria (Onimhawo and Ottuh 2006, 342). Islamic extremism is rooted in 'radical Islam' which may not be compatible with human rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND ISLAM

Human rights (HRs) are the anthropocentric moral characteristic that describes the way human beings should behave. They can also be understood as inalienable and fundamental human rights to which every human being is entitled (Ottuh 2008, 64). This means that HRs is inherent in every human being, irrespective of sex, age, ethnicity, social, political, or cultural status. Human rights as basic rights are inherent in human beings throughout their lifetime. They apply irrespective of where a person is from, what the person believes or how a person lives.

Conventionally, human rights are regularly protected by local and international laws. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations (UN) attests to its international recognition and relevance. The UDHR's declaration by the UN in 1948 strongly affirms the dignity and rights of every human living on planet earth (United Nations 2009). The Declaration is rooted in the principles expressed in the UN Charter (The foundational treaty signed on 26 June 1945, in San-Francisco) (United Nations 2009). The Declaration is the first part of a proposed three-part international agreement (or covenant) on HRs and if adopted, it is expected to bind the participating nations like any international treaty does.

Furthermore, the two remaining sections of the agreement amplify the initial Declaration in specific and enforceable terms. One is concerned with civil and political rights, and the other with economic, social rights, etc. Rights described in the thirty

articles of the UDHR are right to life, liberty and security of person, freedom of conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association, assembly, fair and impartial trial, from interference in privacy, home, correspondence, nationality, secure society, rest, leisure, education, and an adequate standard of living (United Nations 2006). The declaration also affirms the rights of every person to own property; to be deemed not guilty until proven; to travel from a home country at will and return at will; to work under favorable conditions, receive equal pay for equal work, and join labor unions at will; to marry and raise a family, and to participate in government and social life of the community. The declaration affected the terms of several national constitutions that were written after World War II that took place between 1939 and 1945. At the request of the UN, every Member State is expected to give progress reports concerning the human rights of their nations every three years.

While some religious sects have recognized and respected human rights including the UDHR, some Muslim critics of human rights discourse have asserted that the UDHR does not adequately reflect the religio-cultural needs of Muslims and Muslim states (An-Naim 1996, 77). Thus, a variety of approaches can be seen from strong criticism, particularly from countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Sudan. Muslim critics, such as Abu Ala Maududi have argued for theoretical compatibility of Islam and human rights, though his submission has also been criticized for adopting a narrow-minded conception of equality and rights in his perception of human rights discourse (Soroush 2002, 40). The key obstacles for UDHR application in Muslim nations seem to arise from a mixture of philosophical and practical or cultural positions. Related to the notion of *hakimiyah* (divine sovereignty), some Muslims have argued that rights are conferred upon human beings by God and that *a priori* rights of human beings do not exist unless they are granted by God (Zemni 2006, 244). This vision sees the world through a narrow religious lens and ultimately could undermine the much shared, common approach necessary to create a universalized declaration of rights and an understanding of empowered demos that can assert its will which is central to the idea of democracy including the practical issues that border on controversies around freedom of religion and apostasy; and the equality status of women's rights (Wadud 1999, 119-120; Barlas 2002, 28).

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was the first internationally recognized declaration from a Western perspective, its articulation has undergone significant changes since 1948. The call of God in the first article (at the proposal of the Brazilian delegation) is consciously omitted from the Declaration itself (Gjorshoski 2018, 83). The Declaration is essentially a reflection and embodiment of enlightenment, neo-enlightenment, liberalistic, and secularist values (Al-Rahim 2013, 35-36). The processes of colonialism, the question of Palestine, and the torture of the infamous military camps against Muslims have contributed to the resistance to understanding human rights in Islam. The Islamic Declaration of Human Rights is the

Islamic Council's second foundational declaration, which was issued at the start of the 15th century. The first was the Universal Islamic Declaration, which was issued in London in 1980 during the International Conference on the Prophet Muhammad.

The Islamic political narrative opposed the international documents of a secularist and neo-liberal nature through its autochthonous international documents. The first, the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 19 September 1981 at the UNESCO Paris meeting, contains 23 articles (Gjorshoski 2018, 80-83). The Muslim Ummah believes in God, the devout, and merciful, the Creator, the Keeper, the Sovereign, the sole leader of mankind, and the Source of the whole law. Guided by these principled determinations, the 'Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights' incorporates rights binding on all Muslim governments and bodies including the right to freedom of speech, thought, conviction and conviction and speech; right to education (including the right to privacy); right to movement and settlement among other rights (Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights 1981; Gjorshoski 2018, 80-85). The criticism of the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, therefore, can be considered as an attempt by Islamic militants or radicals to redraw their model of the declaration that consciously abandons those rights that are in collision with Sharia.

However, the enormous value of this Declaration consists in the understanding, way of thinking, and demands that the modern Muslim world accepts. In addition, this Declaration of Human Rights provides a great impetus for Muslim peoples to stand firm and protect the rights bestowed upon them by God.

Another document that supports human rights in Islam is the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1990 during the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) 19<sup>th</sup> summit, which was dedicated to peace, interdependence, and development. As a result, it has 25 articles that regulate a variety of rights while also recognizing and guaranteeing Sharia. This Declaration shows that human rights and liberties are an inherent aspect of Islam, according to God's declaration, and their violation is evidence of unbelief and evil. The Declaration stipulates nearly the same rights as in the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms (life, property, honor and dignity, social security, opinion, and expression following Sharia, and so on), with some advancements in the areas of Women's rights as equal to the rights of the husband, with the husband having an obligation to support her and being in charge of the family's well-being; right to self-determination by people suffering from colonial slavery or occupation; rights as part of Sharia, and that Islamic Sharia is the sole source of explication and interpretation of any of the Declaration's articles (Gjorshoski 2018, 83-84).

For Baderin (2005, 79-81), Islamic law can be interpreted in ways that are compatible with the UDHR, while on the other hand, An-Naim (1996) has controversially argued for a radical Qur'anic hermeneutics based on earlier Qur'anic passages that take precedence over the later ones. Arguing further, Soroush (2002, 46; cf. Baderin 2005, 80)

has emphasized collective human wisdom and the need for the common heritage and interests of humanity to be recognized and respected by all Muslims and Islamic thought.

Some critics of practices in Muslim states, including human rights activists, have viewed Islamic objections to UDHR with skepticism, seeing them instead as political objections presented as religion-based to mask authoritarian practices (Terdman 2005, 27). Much of this human rights debate is reflective of changes in Muslim notions of the world, the function of the state, and the rights of minorities (Fadl 2007, 203; El-Affendi 2001, 101; Mandaville and Hussain 2015). As notions of a dichotomous world, divided between *Dar al-Islam* (house of Islam) and *Dar al-Harb* (house of war), which have gradually given way to a more globalized vision of a world of plurality. The above passive perception about human rights, especially by Muslim extremists has informed human rights violations and abuses around the globe including African nations.

## UNDERSTANDING RADICAL ISLAMISM

The term 'radical' also connotes the word 'reformist' which means advancing a total reform of political or social order (Byman 2017, 22). There is substantial debate among scholars as regards the meaning of radical or radicalization. For this paper, the meaning of radical(ism) adopted is "a political and religious rupture with nation-states to establish the early Islamic caliphate by violence" (Gow and Olonisakin 2013, 1). Thus, implying, that one would include countries and movements that are political but peaceful hence, the word "radical" may simply mean violent. In contrast, 'radical Islam', as a conjunction of two words, was first used by Jackson (1979, 118; cf. Blair 1998, 55; Abdelkader 2016, 91) when he spoke on the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, and called his anti-Christian, anti-Jewish, anti-Bahai rhetoric as radical Islam.

In 1985, The Wall Street Journal first reported on radical Islam's arrival in the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In 1986, the Chicago Tribune reported on radical Islamism in Libya and Syria, and in 1987, the US News and World Report added Egypt and Algeria in 1988. In 1990, serious violations of HRs were reported in Egypt by the government predicated its actions on the possible presence of radical Islamists. Because most of the citizens share the government's fear of and hostility towards Islamic radicals, they condoned steps taken against them.

Contemporary references to radical Islam usually link it to international terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. Therefore, the phrase 'radical Islamism' or 'Islamic radicalism' or 'radical Islam' connotes a variety of meanings or interpretations. The problem, of course, is that the phrase 'radical Islamism' is so ambiguous as to prompt confusion, meaningless, or even contradiction. For Americans, most terrorism problems are about killings, not ideas that are disliked by Muslims (Parvez 2017).



For instance, Donald Trump's administration has been using the phrase 'radical Islam' when discussing counter-terrorism (cf. Blair 1998, 55). Activities of some individuals and groups can be categorized into radical Islam such as the 'Salafist' (also sometimes called 'Wahhabism') tradition that US politicians and journalists commonly equate with radical Islam. The Salafists are believed to have direct experience with the original Islamic teachings and practices; thus making them be generally respected all over the Islamic world.

Conceptually, radical Islamism or radical Islam implies a historico-religious movement that sees Islam as an all-embracing religion with a perceived reformist political ideology to effect a change (Hassan 2014). Additionally, radical Islamism connotes a pattern of behavior that is targeted at transforming existing religious or political order through violence using the tools of *iman* (faith), justice, and equality. Intrinsically, radical Islamism is synonymous with radical reformation which involves tearing apart of an existing system through violence called 'Jihad' and installing it with another Islamic-based system rooted in Muslim laws or sharia (Ottuh 2012, 216) on the one hand, and the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (Prophet's traditions) on the other hand.

The laws of Islam are not all the same. Sharia law is divided into several schools. The four main Sunni schools that exist today were founded by the personal loyalty of legal academics or jurists to the founders of each school - Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, and Hanbali - from whom each school acquired its name. Each school had its own unique set of circumstances. Both Hanafis and Malikis, for example, represent the legal heritage of a specific geographical location - the former in Kufra, present-day Iraq, and the latter in Medina, Arabia. Following Abu Hanifa and Al-Shafi, the two later schools arose precisely from a jurisprudence debate (i.e. human reasoning over law). As a result, each school differs according to the cultural, political, and socioeconomic settings in which it was established, as well as the philosophy of reasoning that was accepted. There are also Shia schools of law, the most well-known of which is the Ithnar Azari.

The Maliki School refers to the application of Islamic law in line with Imam Malik's interpretations. The Maliki School was founded by the people of al-Madinah al-Munawwarah, the Prophet's lighthouse, and beautiful city. Madina was the initial capital city of the Muslim administration during the Prophet's lifetime, and it kept that role under the reigns of the first three Caliphs. As a result, the Maliki School was primarily founded on the knowledge and practice of Islam following the Madina people's approach before and after Malik (Aba al-Khail 1997, 127). Although it is sometimes assumed that variations between schools are modest, there can be significant differences, particularly when it comes to women's rights. In Hanafi law, for example, neither women nor males are required to have marriage guardians - a significant distinction from Maliki law, which allows fathers to choose the husband of their daughters who has never married. Women in Maliki law have the right to divorce on demand; this is not the case in other Muslim schools of law. Pregnancy outside of



marriage is only acknowledged as evidence of *Zina* (unlawful sexual intercourse) under the Maliki School's prevalent position. While the majority of Muslim jurists support contraception and abortion for up to 40 days, a small percentage do not. Even within a single school of Islamic law, there may be disagreements concerning women's rights and capacity to function as a witness, judge, or leader, with some embracing women's capacity in all three roles and others being more limited. These and other differences are not insignificant, but they have far-reaching consequences for women's lives and choices.

It is argued that Islam's integrating function is the extinction of race awareness between Muslims and it is one of the remarkable moral achievements of Islam, and there is, as it happens, a pressing need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue in the current world (Toynbee 1948, 205). However, as history has shown, accommodating adherents of other religions without proselytizing them into Islam by trick or crook is difficult for Maliki and other strains of hard-line Islam. Those who refuse to be co-opted are subjected to severe discrimination. Even though the most commonly quoted Quran verse is 47, which states, that there is no compulsion in religion. In reality, however, Maliki Islam does not accept apostasy and instead punishes it with death (Oraegbunam 2016, 46). This eliminates the option of converting to Christianity from Islam. This is, without a doubt, a foreshadowing weapon for division and mal-development in many ways including human rights violations and abuses in many African nations.

## **RADICAL ISLAMISM AND ITS ASSUMPTIONS**

Considered today, as a by-product of a conspiracy rooted in Judeo-Christian activism, radical Islamism features in the guise of radical Islamic movements operating with the understanding that Islam and the Western nations using the tool of colonialism are engaged in a battle of "inferiority complex" which stretches back to the formative years of Islam (Tibi 1998, 133). This conspiracy, as it is believed, is the outcome of superpower neocolonialism and the power of Zionism (a movement for the support of the Jewish nation). Supposedly, these radical movements blame the West (A'la 2017, 42).

Islamic radicals also conceive the idea that Islam is devoid of ideological alternative for Muslim societies but possess a theological and political imperative (Abdalla 2011, 20). Since it is God who commands it, implementation is immediate, not gradual, and the obligation to implement is incumbent on all true Muslims. Therefore, individuals or governments of any nation that hesitate, resist, and remained apolitical are no longer to be seen as Muslims. For such individuals and governments are considered as atheists or unbelievers, enemies of God, against whom all true Muslims should wage Jihad ('Holy war') (Tibi 1991, 133). This is one aspect that begs for scrutiny as an incomprehensive religious understanding that is leading people to the inability to capture the substantive vision and holistic mission of Islam. Thus, a fragmented

understanding can give rise to views that are not only incompatible but also contrary to religious purposes. And along with that, it will also bring about rigid and exclusive religious thinking and practices in the religious domain.

Until now, Tibi's view of religious radicalism (fundamentalism or extremism) to some extent still reveals its relevance. According to him, radicalism in religion does not represent a spiritual tenet, but rather a political conception resulting from the politicization of religion for socio-political and economic purposes to establish a pseudo "divine order" (Tibi 1998, 20). Arguing to support this view, A'la (2017, 43) opines that radicalism associated with religion is no other thing but a politico-ideological camouflage.

### **PRESENCE AND DRIVERS OF RADICAL ISLAMISM**

North Africa and West Africa are known to be important sites for Islamist radicalization particularly since 2001 (Gow and Olonisakin 2013, 1-3). Before this, experts have indicated that terrorist and their radical activities in the above-mentioned places were largely localized and contained (Canadian Security Intelligence Service - CSIS 2010, 18). Today, extremists have developed into complex organizations that combine religious ideology with criminal networks, operating both locally and globally. There are various factors responsible for the increased region's susceptibility to Islamic radicalism. Decades of conflict have left the area vulnerable to cross-border instability, while socioeconomic marginalization adds fuel to Islamic radicalization processes. The region's massive mineral wealth contributes an additional dynamic. The Gulf of Guinea, for example, is of strategic interest in global energy politics, while research indicates that Islamic terrorist groups have links with uranium management in Niger (Gow and Olonisakin 2013, 5-7; Wolf 2013, 562). The key ideological positions relevant to Islamic radicalization in the region are Wahhabi Salafism and Jihadism. However, in Africa, radical Islamism is driven by several factors including economic and political marginalization, high poverty rate, lack of education, and religious intolerance amongst others.

#### ***Economic Marginalization and the High Poverty Rate***

Experience has shown that radical Islamists have exploited economic marginalization as an excuse to carry out their radicalism, in Tunisia, for example, impoverished areas in the south and central regions, as well as 'poverty belts' that surround urban areas have a particularly high level of Wahhabi ultra-conservatives (Wolf 2013, 568). Belatedly, low levels of employment have been noted as a contributory factor to radicalization in Islam among young and old citizens.

In Nigeria, for instance, the poverty index is higher in the core northern states (Ottuh, Ottuh, and Aitufe 2014, 199). Evidentially, the center of Islamic radicalism is located in the core northern states. A case at hand is the terrorist group called Boko Haram. Experts indicate that when young people have limited opportunities and restricted economic means, the appeal of radical Islamist elements can grow.

### *Lack of Education*

Low levels of educational attainment resulting from the government's inability to provide basic education for her citizenry, when combined with other drivers of extremism, amount to important features of radicalization, particularly among African young people. Drawing from empirical research in Mauritania, for example, Boukhars (2012) reveals that lack of access to basic education disproportionately affects those who are already poor and marginalized, and have exacerbated feelings of anger with a central authority. Poor education and youth unemployment for young people add fuel to the radicalization process in Islam.

### *Political Marginalization*

Political deprivation among youths is multi-dimensional and widespread across African nations, particularly, in West Africa and North Africa nations. In various countries, young people across the political spectrum have reported feeling disenfranchised from the government and neglected and even 'deceived' by political leaders. Evidence from many countries indicates that radical Islamic groups have significant vibrant youth support. The emergence of Wahhabi Salafism in Tunisia, for example, has been linked to the political and social expression of a class of largely disenfranchised youth (Marks 2013, 108). Research identifies that the mobilization of disenfranchised young people contributes significantly to the growth of radical Islamist groups (Hinds 2013, 228).

### *Social Media*

The internet is an important driver of modern radical Islamism processes, particularly among persons under age 35. Empirical studies in North Africa and elsewhere have identified the significance of Facebook YouTube and similar video-sharing websites in increasing access to Jihadi materials and information. The internet facilitates network formation and thus enhances the platform available for Islamic radicalization. Experts have indicated that the internet has diversified its activities into various types of criminality, including drug trafficking and information network for kidnapping businesses (Ottuh and Aitufe 2014, 197 -198) among others.

### ***Extreme Qur'anic Interpretations and Islamic Revivalism***

Extreme Qur'anic interpretations and the pursuit of Islamic revivalism influence the emergence and progression of violent Jihad in contemporary times (Onimhawo and Ottuh 2007, 54). Islamic terrorists legitimize their violent action as an act rooted in the Qur'an and an act of defense to preserve God's will in the world of Islam (Venkatraman 2007, 221; cf. Onimhawo and Ottuh 2007, 55). Based on the Qur'anic principle of *ijtihad*, Islamic radicals emphasize the Qur'anic tenets of violence aimed at revivalism.

### **RADICAL ISLAMISM ABUSES AND VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

The issue of whether Islam is compatible with universal human rights or not is not the scope of this research but how Islamic radicalism impact significantly on human rights. The coming of radical Islamism in some African nations has led to huge amounts of human suffering and poverty whilst the right to freedom of association, religion, and free speech have been denied in many of these countries thus, stifling the rise of civil society (Ottuh 2015, 32). It is within this context that the issues of human rights violation and abuse by Islamic radicals in Africa are discussed below.

In many countries, the Islamist is harassed and persecuted, and their human rights are often violated. There is however a skepticism towards them among the advocates for human rights. Even in cases where they might support human rights, they are rarely taken seriously or allowed to participate in the more established human rights initiatives. For example, since 2000, twelve states in northern Nigeria have added criminal law to the jurisdiction of Sharia (Islamic law) courts (Ottuh 2008, 69; Ottuh 2012, 225). Sharia has been in force for several years in northern Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Muslim, but until 2000, its scope was limited to personal status and civil law. How Sharia has been applied to criminal law in Nigeria so far has raised many serious human rights concerns. This includes the imposition of dehumanizing treatments such as the death penalty, amputations, and public floggings amongst others. For instance, since 2000 several persons by the order of sharia courts, have had their hands amputated, sentenced to death and others flogged publicly (Ottuh 2012, 224).

Human rights are keys to achieving security and stability in a nation (CSIS 2010, 17). The producing effects of security forces will improve as relations with communities improve, which will in turn foster longer-term security. African citizens regularly report pervasive discrimination and have a long record of exclusion from administrative or political posts of authority. Radical Islamists continue to indoctrinate the country's youth with hateful ideas that dehumanize and encourage violence against other religious groups as well as against Sunni Muslims who deviate from orthodox religious teaching. The suffering of young Yazidi (Yazidis are Kurdish religious minorities predominantly located in northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, and northern Syria) women at the hands

of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is unending (Berlinger 2014). ISIS captures, tortures, rapes, and sells the women into slavery. Apart from targeting Yazidis, the Islamic militants practice indiscriminate warfare, rounding up all non-believers from Iraqi Christians to Turkmen, Shiite Muslims, and fellow Sunni Muslims. Islamic terrorist organizations like ISIS rely on misguided hermeneutical teachings of Islam, violating the basic tenets of Islam to justify unimaginable crimes (Winsor 2014, 21). According to Winsor (2014), radical Islamic groups violate principles of Islamic law such as denying women their rights, forceful conversion, mutilating dead bodies, harming the 'people of the book' (Christians), and emissaries amongst others.

Freedom of religion is the right of a person to form personal religious beliefs according to the person's conscience and to give public expression to these beliefs in worship and teaching as the person deems fit, but restricted only by the requirements of public order (Ottuh 2015, 23). The US was the first and for some times the only, nation to include the doctrine of religious liberty in its basic laws (Wilhelm 2009). The Maliki School of Islamic jurisprudence is a driver of radical Islamism. It considers apostasy, that is, the act of leaving Islam, joining another religion, or becoming an atheist, as a religious crime punishable with the death penalty. Leaving Islam is considered as *Hudud* (a crime) in Maliki jurisprudence, that is, one of six crimes against God a Muslim can commit, which deserves the fixed punishment of death. Maliki School also considers apostasy as civil wrongs as a result, the property of the apostate is seized and distributed to the person's Muslim relatives and his or her marriage is *Faskh* (annulled).

Today, Maliki jurisprudence is predominant in North Africa except in Lower and Upper Egypt, and West Africa. Maliki is almost the only school of Muslim law throughout West Africa and the Maghreb. Particularly, it is the only acceptable version operating in Nigerian Islam. It is therefore within the above strict jurisprudential framework that Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalists or radicals operate in Nigeria. Boko Haram emerged as a Sunni (traditional) Islamic fundamentalist sect advocating a strict form of Sharia legal system.

In modern usage, discrimination is usually conceived as unfavorable. This paper sees discrimination as unfavorable in sense of human rights abuses and violations. One of the most pervasive forms of discrimination in the nations of Africa and other parts of the world is directed toward racial and ethnic groups. Discrimination has also taken other forms. Foreigners and disfavoured minorities within African borders have suffered discrimination arising from radical Islamism. Radical Islam makes Muslim women understand that they have few rights as human beings. International efforts to combat discrimination were minimal until the passage of the UN Charter in 1945 (Dorsen and Lieberman 2009, 29), although, a broad statement of human rights is contained in the UDHR, it has no binding power on member states. It is a truism, that in radical Islamism, the most abused and violated are women's rights.

The status of women's rights today varies dramatically in different countries of Africa and, in some instances, among groups within the same country, such as ethnic groups or economic classes. The world's struggle for women's rights began in the eighteenth century during a period of intense intellectual activity called the Age of Enlightenment (Ottuh and Akinmoladun 2015, 237). During the Enlightenment, political philosophers in Europe began to question traditional ideas that were based on the rights of citizens on their wealth and social status. Instead, leaders of the Enlightenment argued that all individuals were born with natural rights that made them free and equal (Schultheiss 2009, 47). They maintained that all inequalities that existed among citizens were the result of an inadequate education system and an imperfect social environment. Enlightenment philosophers argued that improved education and more egalitarian social structures could correct these inequalities.

Women's rights are rights that establish the same social, economic, and political status for women as for men (Ottuh and Aitufe 2014, 48). Women's rights imply that women will not be discriminated against based on their gender or religion. Until the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the XX century, women in most societies were denied some of the lawful and political rights accorded to men (Schultheiss 2009, 49). Although women across the world have gained significant legal rights, 'radical Islam' or 'political Islam' still believes that women have no complete religious, political, and socio-economic equality with men. Thus, throughout the history of Islam, women are only allowed limited roles in Islamic society. For radical Muslims, women's natural roles are restricted to motherhood and wives. In recent decades women across the world except for Africa (with the exemption of very few cases), have made efforts in political participation. By the 1980s women could vote virtually everywhere in the globe, except for a few Muslim countries. The right to vote usually included the right to contest for elected offices.

The fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the northeast of Nigeria by the military and the consequent recovery of captured areas and rescue of numerous hostages held in the forest of Sambisa further proved the ideological tenets of radical Islamism (Oraegbunam 2016, 24). The sect sees as more effective and faster the use of arms and war rather than such measures as smuggling of the multi-religious Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), including manipulating school curriculum to Islam's advantage, violating the fundamental rights of non-Muslims, and Muslims alike for proselytizing purposes, Sharia compliance, and recently, the abduction of teen non-Muslim females amongst others. Yet, the type of religio-cultural rigidity and collectivism which Boko Haram and Maliki law yearn for is hardly humano-centric, and also far from being universal even in the Islam *ummah* (Community) (Jordan 2003, 56).

Nigeria is not the only African nation that has suffered the abuse and violation of HRs perpetrated by radical Islam. Cameroon, a border neighbor of Nigeria has suffered the same fate. Cameroon has suffered over twenty-eight major extremists' attacks by Islamic radicals between 1970 and 2011 (Ewi 2019).



In the 1990s Egypt took its turns in suffering severe HRs abuses and violations at the hands of Islamic radicals. In 2003 a series of suicide bomb attacks in Casablanca in Morocco killed 41 people and left more than 100 others injured (Hinds 2013, 229). The Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) kept a low profile afterward, fearing the government would use the attacks as a pretext to crack down on the party. Although the PJD claimed not to be a religious party, it was the only legal Islamic party in Morocco (Esposito 2009, 11). Brutality and bloodshed, which claimed the lives of some 150,000 Algerians, continued into the late 1990s and early 2000s (Esposito 2009, 23). Several terrorist bombings in late 2006 and early 2007 dispelled Algerians' hopes that the violence had finally ended. A new group claiming to represent al-Qaeda in North Africa also took responsibility for the bombings and hinted that it would attack the country again.

### RE-UNDERSTANDING ISLAM THROUGH THE FAMILY: AN EVALUATION

In examining the demographic shifts associated with the emergence of Islam in the West, a wide range of issues arise, the most important of which are divides between the older and younger generations of Muslims in Europe, North America, and Africa. Multiple generations of western Muslims have considerably reevaluated their parents' understandings of Islam and the role it should play in one's life. For instance, growing up in Pakistan, Syria, or another Muslim-majority country, Islam was taken for a ride as an aspect of the social fabric. But this 'Islam of the parents' does not necessarily speak to the paradoxes faced by adherents of Islam in the West and Africa today. Some writers, such as German sociologist Hanns Thomä-Venske note that when Islam is 'transplanted' in this way, the religious symbols and rituals are no longer affirmed by the social environment, and they thus lose the character of certainty which underpinned their existence (Ottuh 2020, 30). It is not only the social environment that fails to affirm them but also the next generation that fails to find much of use in this Islam and subsequently rejects it. Often, much of what the older generation regards as Islam is dismissed by younger Muslims as somehow tainted, or as a vestige of cultural practices specific to their parent's countries of origin. Younger Muslims have often sought an Islam that had something to say, for example, about how properly to live one life in a non-Muslim society and the particular challenges are posed by those circumstances. Mosque leaders tended to be of the older generation and, again, representative of "local" Islam from the villages of South Asia or Morocco to say the least.

In Britain, during the 1980s and 90s, for example, many religious organizations would even 'import' *Imams* (religious leaders) and *Ulama* (religious scholars) from Pakistan and Bangladesh for regular tours of duty, thus preventing the first generation of Muslim immigrants from ever leaving the relative safety of Islam contextualized in their homelands (Bruinessen 2011, 242).

Young Muslims often found this religious leadership to be particularly dogmatic and narrow-minded in its perception of Islam. It would, however, be erroneous to think in the line of a dichotomous generational divide whereby young Muslims hold and seek more pluralistic approaches to religion in contrast to the hardened conservatism of their parents. In some cases the search for a more universalist approach pushes young Muslims toward highly conservative currents of thought such as Salafism (radicalism), leading some to adopt positions that are considerably more rigid than that of their parents (Bruinessen 2011, 246). It is also important to note that the youth's rejection of religious practices associated with the religious culture of their immigrant parents does not always constitute a refutation of traditionalist Islam when postulating Sufism which is the inward or mystical approach to Islam. This kind of neo-traditionalist Islam has flourished in the last decade among young Muslims in the West and Africa, although the approach adopted is often different from that of their conservative parents.

Today, there is a search for renewal, reinterpretation, and reorientation of Islam, one that speaks directly to the circumstances of being Muslim in XXI century Africa. Turning to those who self-identify as Muslim, one finds a variety of trends. Overall, the more observant youth seek a Universalist form of Islam that would transcend ethno-sectarian squabbling, factionalism, and radicalism. For some, universalism is conceived as the compatibility of Islam with the common values and norms found in other moral systems and faith traditions, such as HRs and freedom, thus leading to greater pluralism and tolerance. For others, however, the search for Islamic Universalism leads to a hardened and literalist emphasis on the core tenants of 'true' Islam and global Islamic political order. While some have strongly advocated closer and stronger connections between religion and politics, the journey for other Muslims has been a search for how to limit the power and influence of authoritarian religion. Many other studies have also led to such a conclusion, suggesting that brutal radicalism is rooted in political contestation for economic purposes. In these circumstances, religion is simply justified to protect their narrow interests and justify their actions despite the contradiction of substantive values of religious teachings (Ottuh and Onimhawo 2020, 22). As a result, the moral and ethical values of religion increasingly decrease not influence attitude, behavior, and action of the people except violence and radical acts. In this context, HRs has become an important and controversial debate in the Muslim world. Therefore, the origin, development, and negative effects of radical Islam on HRs should give Africans a re-think.

## CONCLUSION

Arising from the foregoing discussion, there is no single driver of Islamic radicalization; hence the issue of how to address the phenomenon in Africa, and other parts of the world is undoubtedly complex. However, there are a variety of approaches that have been used in various African countries, most of which tend to be led by governments to stop human rights abuses and violations by radical Islamists. Many countries in Africa have tried to contain the negative effects of radical Islamic preachers through direct state oversight. Morocco, for instance, has introduced comprehensive counter-radicalization measures that have included an extensive and wide-ranging religious reform program (Schmid 2013, 34). Nigeria, on the other hand, has done the same including granting repentant extremists amnesty and holistic rehabilitation including recruiting them into the Nigerian military.

Admitted or not, education and good governance play a pivotal role in determining the pattern of religiousness and patriotism. Hence, the collaboration between education and the pattern of religiousness will not give birth to a brutal, radical religion or movement insofar as no political power intervention enters into it. Violence and the like will grow if religion is co-opted by political power and total ignorance. Human rights give a sense of humanness to the human person; hence true religion will not only recognize human rights but protect and uphold them at the time. The prevalent killings, maiming, bombings, raping, kidnapping, and forceful proselytization perpetrated by Muslim radicals in the name of Islam do not portray the ideals of true religion. Governments can de-legitimize radical Islamism and the actions of radical Islamic groups through religious rehabilitation programs. While the instrumentality of dialogue should not be neglected, propagating and demonstrating good governance, economic and political inclusiveness are significant tools in discouraging and cubing radical Islamism among African countries. 🌍

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