

NIGERIA AND THE MENACE OF KIDNAPPING: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to highlight the increasing rate of high profile kidnapping and the attendant consequences in Nigeria. In addition, the paper discussed the origin and motives of kidnapping in the country. Although Security of lives and property in Nigeria is the primary function of the Nigeria police as enshrined in section 214 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the effectiveness of this function has according to this paper been impaired by a number of factors which include; corruption, repressive style of policing and manpower shortages. The obvious result is the escalating wave of criminal activities as exemplified in the recent upsurge in the rate of kidnapping in different parts of the country especially in the south east. As a lasting solution to this endemic security problem, this paper has recommended the use of capital punishment for convicted offenders and a modified form of community policing. These strategies are among others expected to provide appropriate panacea for arresting the ugly menace of kidnapping in the country.

Introduction

To say that kidnapping is a menace in contemporary Nigeria is surely an understatement. Kidnapping in Nigeria first attracted national attention on 25th February 2006, when restive youths in the Niger Delta abducted some foreign oil workers in the bid to press home their demand for restitution and increased infrastructural development. Since then, this deadly crime has not only become ubiquitous, it has been shamelessly commercialized in different parts of the country. Today in Nigeria, victims of this reprehensible crime are no longer predominantly foreigners, they are now mostly Nigerians and sadly they include; adult males and females, the rich as well as the poor, the aged, children, infants and even corpses! Kidnappers in Nigeria have become so mean and senseless that they have even lost respect for highly placed clergy men in the society. At the beginning of this year for instance, the 'Catholic News Agency' of Nigeria, had reported that the Anglican Bishop of Benin Diocese was kidnapped on January 24, 2010 after celebrating Sunday mass at the Benin City Cathedral. In fact, the latest of this abominable crime is the abduction of fifteen innocent primary and nursery school children in Abia State (Daily Sun, Sep. 29, 2010 pg.1). Although this crime against humanity takes place in both rural and urban areas and is in fact perpetrated in virtually all parts of Nigeria, it is most pronounced in the south east. The most frightening and worrisome aspect of this deadly crime in

Nigeria is not just the torture and humiliation that victims pass through at the hands of these criminals and the monetary extortion in the name of ransom that usually follow, but the evidently helpless response of security agencies to curbing the menace. This paper is of the opinion that more than ever before, Nigeria has an urgent and serious need to re-examine critically her security out-fit with respect to the capacity and structure of the nation's policing system. This is especially necessary in the context of the current emphasis on crime prevention as against the unpopular crime fighting strategy which is currently adopted in Nigeria. This crime fighting strategy which was inherited from our colonial masters has largely contributed to the parlous security situation especially with respect to the rising incident of kidnapping in the country.

It is in the light of the above situation that this paper, has proposed a number of measures which include the adoption and consolidation of a modified form of community policing. This approach is considered in the opinion of this paper as an effective strategy that could help to stem the tide of kidnapping in the country. There is no doubt that the Nigerian government has largely failed to protect lives and property in the country. Thus, reacting to the current high-profile kidnapping in the land, Nigeria's senate president, retired General David Mark has recommended the declaration of a state of emergency especially in states where the incident has become rampant. According to Senator Mark;

If the federal government can declare a state of emergency in the power sector to get power back, it should as well declare a state of emergency in all these areas where we have armed robbery and kidnapping'.(The Source Magazine, July 26, 2010 pp22).

Most Nigerians are likely to agree with Senator Mark. They are also likely to agree that the absence of radical deterrence signals to kidnapers is largely responsible for their boldness and reckless methods of operation. The unfortunate increase in the number of kidnapping in recent times has made it extremely difficult to keep track of the number of these ugly crimes in the country. The diary of the recent major kidnaps in Nigeria, has however shown that between January 2007 and July 2010, eighty three kidnap incidents have taken place in the country involving the forceful abduction of hundreds of Nigerians and foreigners alike.(The Source Magazine, July 26,2010 p.22). The magnitude of the problem of kidnapping in Nigeria is also exemplified by another report by the United State's security group-clayton consultants. According to this report, there has been about 512 incidents of kidnapping in Nigeria in the first half of this year (2010) alone as against 353 incidents for the whole of last year (2009). According to the same source, Nigeria is in the world's top eight kidnapping hotspots, alongside war zones and failed states such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. (Thisday, July26, 2010 p.68). The most unfortunate victims of these incidents of kidnapping in Nigeria usually die in the

process while the more lucky ones are released after serious torture and payment of heavy ransoms.

Conceptual Clarifications

Samaha (2008:356-357) has defined kidnapping as ‘taking and carrying away another person with the intent to deprive that person of personal liberty’. Generally, kidnapping involves the abduction of an individual against his or her will, usually in furtherance of other criminal intentions. Samaha (2008) has further noted that kidnapping is of two categories: simple and aggravated. The later is prevalent in Nigeria and is more dangerous because it involves both physical and psychological deprivations and suffering. It might actually be difficult for most Nigerians to say which of armed robbery and aggravated kidnapping is the most feared and dreaded crime in the country.

Methodology

As a theoretical research, this study adopted the library sources method which especially sought to highlight relevant literature including current media reports on kidnapping in Nigeria. This method was adopted because it was considered the most effective strategy for obtaining authentic information about this violent crime in the country. It is also considered the best method for understanding the danger and magnitude of high profile kidnapping in Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In trying to explain the rampant cases of kidnapping in Nigeria, we have adopted both the Marxian conflict and the strain theories of crime. These two theories are undoubtedly capable of providing sufficient insight about this unfortunate crime in Nigeria.

Relations between conflict and crime have been conceptualized in many ways in criminological literature. In this study however, we have adopted the Marxian strand of these perspectives which according to Crutchfield, Bridges and Weis (1996:267) considers crime as the violation of laws by essentially normal persons in the course of realistic conflicts of interest, emanating from either;

- (i) The activities of those involved in organizations created to satisfy the demand for illicit goods and services, as well as to use illegal means to control and profit from legitimate economic activity.
- (ii) Resistance by vested interests to legal restraints, especially where efforts are made to modify institutionalized patterns of legitimate economic activity,
- (iii) criminal behavior as almost entirely a function of an inequitable and unstable economic structure promoting selfishness and resulting in uncertainty for all and misery for many, or conflict between those who

seek to preserve a given authority structure and those who are trying to modify or destroy it.

A critical analysis of the Nigerian crime situation especially as it relates to violent crimes such as armed robbery and kidnapping would readily indicate that at least the three objectives above provide useful insights in the explanation of these crimes. Many Nigerians would agree that structural poverty engendered by exploitation and injustice by the political authority in the country is the root cause of violent crimes such as armed robbery and kidnapping.

As we have indicated before, the strain theory also provides a useful insight into the Nigerian crime situation, especially with respect to kidnapping. Emile Durkheim, the erudite French sociologist and scholar had according to Blackburn (1993) theorized that under certain social conditions, traditional societal norms and rules lose their authority over behavior. Durkheim had referred to this condition as ‘anomie’. Blackburn contends that it was this major premise that provided the platform for Robert Merton’s strain theory of criminal behavior. Robert Merton had argued that a society instills in its members a desire for certain goals and prescribes socially approved means for realizing such goals. He had identified five different ways by which individuals adjust themselves especially in capitalist societies with strongly prescribed goals and clear distinctions between institutionalized and deviant means of realizing such goals. Innovation, the fourth method of adaptation in Merton’s analysis is what concerns us in this discussion. In Nigeria where every body is desperate to become rich over night, innovative methods have become the shortest cut to wealth. Such deviant strategies include; bribery and corruption, embezzlement, robbery, kidnapping for financial purposes and all forms of fraud. In fact, innovative methods or short cuts to wealth or financial success in Nigeria has translated into what Umez (2000:58) has described as a prevailing value system that encourages tainted, corrupt and illegal practices as necessary and sufficient means to an end.

Kidnapping: Motives and Historical Exploration

Kidnapping of human beings for various reasons is not of a recent development. This notorious crime has many motives which can generally be classified under; economic, social and political reasons. According to Cyriax, Wilson and Wilson (2005), the first reported case of kidnapping for economic reason was that of the four year old Charlie Ross from Philadelphia in the United States of America. These authors have further explained that the word ‘kidnap’ derives from the seventeenth-century English practice of seizing children and transporting them as slaves to the tobacco plantations in the American colonies. The American innovation or style of kidnapping was to make money not by sending children away but by sending them back (Cyriax et al 2005:234).

Samaha (2008) has also noted that kidnapping is an ancient result crime that originally involved holding the king's relatives for ransom. According to him, kidnapping was considered a serious offense because it interfered with the personal liberty of members of royal families. He specifically noted that aggravated kidnappings were mostly undertaken to achieve any or a combination of the following objectives:

- Sexual invasion
- Obtaining hostage
- Obtaining ransom
- Robbing the victim
- Murdering the victim
- Blackmailing
- Terrorizing the victim and
- Achieving political aims (Samaha,2008:356).

In the context of Nigeria, it must be emphasized that kidnapping for social reasons is not of a recent development. In ancient times, individuals especially strangers were often kidnapped either for ritual purposes or for the burial of prominent chiefs or warriors. This practice seems to have defied the modern criminal justice system even in some contemporary Nigerian societies. While kidnapping for social reasons especially for the purpose of the burial of prominent individuals has greatly subsided, kidnappings for ritual and financial purposes have largely remained on the increase. Reasons for this trend can be attributed to a set of factors which are greatly interwoven but which are separated here for analytical purposes. These include;

- (i) inordinate greed for wealth and power by politicians
- (ii) Misplacement of our value system with increasing emphasis on material gains at the expense of hard work and respect for constituted authorities.
- (iii) Unemployment, Poverty, exploitation and government insensitivity to the needs of youths and;
- (iv) Corruption and fraud

We shall now briefly explain how each of these factors contributes to the problem of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Politicians and Kidnapping in Nigeria

There is no gain saying the fact that many Nigerian politicians are power hungry and are indeed determined to kill in order to grab power by all means. The rising incidence of political assassinations in the country is a sufficient pointer to the fact that many Nigerian politicians can go to any length including killing by political assassinations and kidnapping fellow Nigerians for purposes of ritual murder to enable them attain their political ambitions.

It is unfortunate and in fact surprising to observe that individuals with haunch backs are usually targets for economic and politically motivated ritual

kidnapping in Nigeria. It has often been alleged that the hunch backs of such individuals contain substances that are useful for ritual purposes. It is an open secret that individuals with such deformities in different parts of contemporary Nigeria are now living in great fear as their movements are highly restricted because of fear of ritual kidnappers who are often agents of politicians.

Political kidnapping for ritual purposes in Nigeria is mostly experienced at the beginning of political campaigns in preparation for a particular election. As the 2011 election approaches, Nigerian parents are especially advised to restrict the movements of their children as politicians are once more ready to practice their trade.

The Changing Value System and Kidnapping in Nigeria

According to Umez (2000:53), the dominant value system in (contemporary) Nigeria is one that glorifies and endorses corrupt and illegal means as necessary, normal, and sufficient means to ends. This new value system which now shapes the moral rectitude of most Nigerians including the youths is a complete reverse of the traditional system which was essentially predicated on hard work and good morals. A number of factors which include; the influence of colonialism, the impact of the Nigerian civil war, the influence of long military dictatorship and the influence of the media have all contributed to this changing trend which has worsened the security situation in Nigeria. These factors were largely responsible for the institutionalization of the current negative value system in the country. This new value system has helped to make our youths indulge in all sorts of criminal behaviors which essentially include armed robbery and kidnapping. Reacting to the impact of this changing value system on Nigerian youths, Odey (2000:84) has noted that;

‘ ...a society that is keen on condemning its youths for being idle, for being dishonest, for constituting a menace to the rest of the people, for indulging in armed robbery (and kidnapping), for maiming and killing others in quest of quick wealth and so forth should equally be keen on providing better social, economic and moral alternatives that will make these vices less attractive to the youths and thus reduce their current drift to criminal life.’

As we have observed earlier, kidnapping for monetary gains in Nigeria originated from the activities of restive militants in the Niger Delta regions. Although the agitation of Niger Delta youths can be traced to the problem of political marginalization, it can be argued that their involvement in kidnapping for purposes of obtaining huge ransoms from expatriate oil workers is partly motivated by inordinate desire to get rich quick which is an essential aspect of our changing value system. Nigerian youths generally have imbibed the culture of materialism which is ultimately predicated on the philosophy of ‘get rich quick syndrome’ (Ugwuoke, 2005). The youths in Nigeria now operate within a

changing value system that neither encourages hard work nor perseverance. The urge to engage in economically motivated kidnapping in Nigeria by youths is therefore primarily an offshoot of our changing value system.

Unemployment, Poverty, Exploitation and Government Insensitivity to the Needs of Youths.

Other important contributing factors to kidnapping in Nigeria include the high level of unemployment and poverty especially among youths, exploitation of the poor by the few rich individuals and governments apathy to the needs of youths. It is often said that an idle mind is the devils workshop.

Many unemployed youths in Nigeria are poverty stricken and usually find solace in criminal activities which of course include participation in kidnapping and armed robbery. It can therefore be argued that a good number of Nigerian youths who have taken to crimes such as kidnapping are poor and unemployed and this is most prevalent in the south east where many school leavers including graduates of tertiary institutions roam the streets for years after graduation without finding jobs.

Exploitation and marginalization also account in no small measure to the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria. The long period of exploitation of the people of the Niger delta region of Nigeria by the Federal government equally motivated the aggrieved youths in that part of the country to take to kidnapping as an alternative approach to the solution of their problem. Governments insensitivity to the yearnings and aspirations of youths has equally encouraged the later to take to crimes such as kidnapping as a means of survival. While lamenting the predicament of Nigerian youths, Odey (2000:16) had again observed that the present generation of youths in Nigeria is endowed with millions of promising sons and daughters who have been compelled by pervasive and unbearable social conditions to indulge and specialize in one form of criminal life or the other.

Corruption/Fraud and Kidnapping in Nigeria.

Corruption and fraud are two related factors that account for a reasonable proportion of economically motivated kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria. Although these factors can be subsumed under the three factors enlisted above, they are discussed separately here because of their conspicuous role in kidnapping in Nigeria.

There is no gain saying the fact that corruption has been institutionalized in Nigeria. Since no body is in doubt whether Nigeria is a corrupt nation, our task here is merely to link corruption with kidnapping which has become an embarrassing crime in the country. The corrupt influences of Nigerian leaders must have played a significant role in the escalation of vices such as kidnapping in the country. For instance, it could be argued that the restiveness of Niger Delta youths in particular and those of Nigerian youths generally may not have resulted in kidnapping if our leaders have utilized our national resources judiciously. As

the kidnap business booms in Nigeria, it has become obvious that kidnapers have started to network with corrupt members of other professions such as bankers and police officers. Some recent reports by Henry Umahi and Uche Onwuchekwa, both of Saturday Sun seem to support the above claims. These reporters have in their recent story of a kidnap incident confirmed police involvement in this inglorious trade. They have disclosed that shortly after a Port- Harcourt-based businessman had reported the kidnap of his father at a police station in Imo State, the kidnapers called him on phone and told him the content of his statement. According to these reporters, this happened barely 15 minutes after the complaint was made. These reporters have also revealed that some bankers also supply information on the bank balances of their customers for a fee. They have further explained that armed with such information, kidnapers would strike at the appropriate time by informing the victim of the exact amount in his particular account of a given bank.(Saturday Sun, August 21, 2010 p.49). It must be recalled that collusion by the Police with armed robbers in Nigeria is not a new development. In fact, this problem necessitated a massive purge of the former Bendel State Police Command in September, 1986. During that exercise, more than 80 Police officers were transferred to other states, while those implicated by some of the arrested robbers were detained and some executed (Newswatch, December15, 1986). The former Inspector General of police, Ogbonna Onovo had also at the wake of the recently kidnapped journalists accused his men of complicity in some high profile crimes in the country (Saturday Sun, August 21, 2010 p.49). The above revelations have clearly shown that corruption has significantly contributed to the problem of kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria.

Summary and Conclusion

Since the enthronement of the current democratic dispensation in 1999, the situation of crime in Nigeria has continued to change for worse. In ascending order, the nation has drifted from one level of crime to another. Thus, within the period under review, Nigeria has witnessed a transition from the prevalence of armed robbery to criminal and political assassinations, to ritual murder and now kidnapping which has assumed a dangerous proportion. The parlous crime situation in the country is exemplified by the constant removal and replacement of the Inspector-General of Police, a change that has become both ridiculous and embarrassing to well meaning Nigerians.

This paper has reviewed the situation of crime in Nigeria with special reference to kidnapping. It further examined the concept of kidnapping in its historical context. The paper broadly identified the motives of kidnapping to include; economic, social and political reasons. In order to explain the incidence of high profile kidnapping in the country, the paper had adopted the choice of the Marxian conflict and strain theories as the best approach for this study.

In addition, the paper had identified a number of factors that seem to encourage the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria. These include; political motives, the changing value system, the influence of corruption in the society, the high incidence of poverty and unemployment, exploitation and lack of Government's concern for the welfare of youths.

As a way forward, the paper made a number of recommendations which include; the adoption of a modified form of community policing, the adoption of capital punishment for convicted kidnapers, formulation of effective government policies to cater for the interest of the teeming population of unemployed youths in the country. After fifty years experience as a nation, it is sad to observe that the Nigerian nation is still grappling with basic security problems. It is hoped that the recommendations of this paper will be able to provide the way forward for the security problems of our great nation with special reference to violent crimes such as kidnapping.

Recommendations and the Way Forward

From the fore going, it has become evident that the Nigerian state has failed in its basic constitutional responsibility of protecting the lives of the citizenry. In fact, Adibe (2010) has argued that the incidence of pervasive kidnapping in Nigeria is a symptom of a failing state. According to him, a failing state is characterized by a weakened ability to provide basic public service and prevent wide spread corruption as people usually think of themselves first. He had further argued that most of the countries in the developing world especially those involved in civil wars or protracted internal conflicts (such as Nigeria) belong to this unfortunate category of failing states. It is obvious that serious security problems such as kidnapping constitute a serious symptom of a failing state because it does not guarantee effective maintenance of law and order and especially confidence in political governance. In order to stem the tide of kidnapping in Nigeria, the following recommendations have been proposed.

- (i) A modified form of community policing strategy;
- (ii) Adoption of capital punishment for convicted kidnapers and;
- (iii) The formulation of effective social policies for youths.

Community Policing as a Panacea for Kidnapping in Nigeria

Albanese (2001:185) has defined community policing as 'a service oriented style of law enforcement that focuses on community issues such as; disorder, crime prevention and fear reduction as opposed to the traditional focus on prosecution of serious street crimes'. In the same vein, Moore and Trojanowicz (1988:225) had observed that in the context of community policing, community institutions such as families, schools, neighborhood associations, and merchant groups, are seen as key partners to the police in the creation of safe, secure communities. In this context, they further noted that the success of the

police depends not only on the development of their own skills and capabilities, but also on the creation of competent communities. The philosophy of community policing therefore promotes the application of organizational strategies which support the systematic use of partnerships in the fight against crime with special reference to public safety, social disorder and fear of violent crimes such as kidnapping. The application of community policing initiative in Nigerian villages would obviously allow the various communities and Police Departments to work together to reduce crimes of violence such as kidnapping and to improve the quality of life of Nigerian citizens.

It must however be recalled that the idea of community policing is not entirely new to many traditional African and indeed Nigerian societies. In fact, Rotimi (2001:1-4) had conducted a historical survey of pre-colonial palace organizations with respect to how they performed similar police duties especially in the emirates of the North and the Yoruba kingdoms. In addition to their palace duties, Rotimi had noted that some members of these palace organizations were also effectively used to police their various communities. According to Rotimi, the existence of these quasi security organizations provided the necessary impetus and the required basis for the later decision of the colonial administrators to allow the native authorities in those areas to own police forces. It is therefore the contention of this paper that if strengthened, the current idea of community policing in Nigeria could help to stem the tide of kidnapping in the country since it is in consonance with our cultural and traditional practices. The idea would however be more effective if police officers are made to serve in their home communities. This would frustrate any attempt by such officers to connive with kidnapers, since they would not want to undermine their professional reputation before their kinsmen. In addition, people would feel more free to report the activities of criminals and kidnapers to police officers who are their own relations. Community policing also recognizes the roles of traditional rulers and other stake holders in security issues such as the President-Generals of town unions. It is in this respect that we commend the recent decision by the south east Governors to the effect that these category of leaders should be held responsible for any crime in their communities with special reference to kidnap and armed robbery. It must be recalled that in order to meet up with these new challenges, Governor Peter Obi of Anambra state had particularly doled out a whopping sum of one hundred million naira (N100,000,000) to the leadership of the 177 communities in the state to enable them set up effective security arrangement in their respective areas (The Source, July 26, 2010 p.31).

The potential impact of community policing in Nigeria especially with reference to kidnapping can best be understood within the framework of the critical assumptions on which the foundation of the approach is predicated. A review of literature has shown that Riechers and Roberg (1990) have formulated and analyzed ten critical assumptions of community policing which are

Nigeria and the Menace of Kidnapping: The Way Forward

considered especially relevant for stemming the tide of kidnapping and crime generally in Nigeria. These assumptions include;

- The presence of the police through increased visibility reduces the public's fear of crime.
- The public is of one mind, a homogeneous populace whose satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the police can be readily measured.
- The police should be responsible for actively helping define and shape community norms.
- Public fear stems more from disorder than crime.
- Signs of neglect and decay in neighborhoods invite crime.
- Community-policing programs are starting at the initiative of the police with the aim of improving service, not giving influential citizens control over police services.
- Community-policing can be accomplished without violating the political neutrality of the police.
- Paramilitary police organizations, can readily adapt to a more flexible structure and managerial style.
- Police organizations, given their current quality of personnel, can be responsive to the demands of community policing.
- The police are the proper agency to attempt to fulfill the goals of community policing (Riecher and Roberg, 1990:107).

A critical appraisal of the above assumptions would obviously reveal that they are quite relevant in the context of the Nigerian society which has over the years been characterized by a very poor police-public relationship that is fraught with high level mistrust and suspicion. A major expected accomplishment of community policing initiative in Nigeria is therefore increased trust between the Police personnel and the citizenry which would obviously result in an enhanced flow of information to the Police especially with respect to violent crimes such as kidnapping.

Capital Punishment as a Solution for Kidnapping in Contemporary Nigeria

Capital punishment has been an important aspect of African penal policy which is predominantly deterrent oriented. Although critics from a number of jurisdictions have questioned the effectiveness of capital punishment, a review of criminological literature has shown that certain crimes had always necessitated decisive elimination of the offender, often in various ways. In fact, the history of the evolution of societies has shown with relative consistency that men have always shown a fertile imagination for the use of death penalty as a significant method of crime control. Most African traditional legal systems considered capital punishment as the last resort for capital crimes. While commenting on capital crimes and the indigenous Ibo society for instance, Oputa (1975:9) had

noted that for an ordinary Ibo man, there is only one law for murder and the law is 'hanging'.

In the opinion of this paper however, capital punishment for kidnappers should not take the form of extra-judicial killings as was allegedly experienced in Abia state recently. It must be recalled that in a recent declaration of war against kidnappers by the Joint Task Force (JTF) recently set up in Abia state, Wisdom (2010) had reported that one hundred and seventy two (172) persons suspected to be members of various kidnapping gangs that have been terrorizing residents of Abia state and its environs were allegedly shot dead in a shoot out. According to the same source, another two hundred and thirty seven (237) suspects were arrested in the operation. While the Federal government is highly commended for setting up the Task Force to monitor the activities of kidnappers in Abia state, the recent operation of the Task Force is condemnable because it is brutal, inhuman and counter-productive. Such operations are against the principles of due process and the rule of law which are essential characteristics of any credible democratic dispensation. Capital punishment must be reserved for kidnappers who have been tried and subsequently convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction. In this respect, the National Assembly should as a matter of urgency enact an enabling law that would necessitate capital punishment for kidnapping in Nigeria. As an effective deterrent option, common sense and logic suggest that a capital crime such as kidnapping should and must consequently necessitate capital punishment.

Government Concern for the Welfare of Youths

From the fore-going, it has become certain that a successful war on kidnapping in Nigeria can best be prosecuted from different fronts which include Government concern for the welfare of youths. A popular maxim as we have noted earlier contends that 'an idle mind is the devil's workshop'. This is obviously the case for many Nigerian youths who are not gainfully employed. Educational and social science researches have revealed with relative consistency the link between unemployment and crime. Ipaye (1986:50) had noted that unemployed persons in Nigeria usually resort to various crimes (including kidnapping) when they can not get jobs. He had further noted that these criminals who are usually within the ages of 15 and 34 usually resort to smoking marijuana, or using other drugs that will make them think less of their poor situation. Olurode (2000) has also noted that unemployment and persistent strikes by teachers have resulted in a situation where Nigerian youths are largely forced into the streets as hawkers and are especially no longer motivated or attracted to higher education. In fact, he has further noted that while unemployed males are now actively involved in the spate of ethnic, communal, and religious violence (including armed robbery and kidnapping), their female counterparts risk teenage pregnancy, abortion and prostitution (Olurode, 2000:31). It is therefore certain that an effective method of controlling the increasing rate of kidnapping in

Nigeria must include a purposive determination by the various tiers of government to create jobs for the large population of unemployed youths in the country. Thus, while we commend the Federal government's amnesty program which include the re-training of ex-militants especially for purposes of acquiring requisite skills, it must be emphasized that such programs must be extended to include all unemployed youths across the country. In the opinion of this paper, there is an urgent need to establish a data base that would reflect the number of all unemployed persons in Nigeria. There is also need to create employment centers at the Federal, state and local Government levels to cater for the teeming population of unemployed youths.

Apart from the above measures, the Federal ministry of education and its counterparts at the state and local Government levels must endeavor to reactivate the bursary and scholarship schemes in order to assist pupils and students at the various levels of our educational institutions. Such financial assistance would obviously reduce the suffering of students and at the same time diminish their motivation to engage in crimes especially violent crimes such as kidnapping and armed robbery. It must be recalled that in recent times, Nigerian students have largely been involved in property and violent crimes (Ugwuoke, 2005:65-68, *The Sun*....).

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Christopher Uche Ugwuoke, (Ph.D)

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