

Tyranny of Freedom in Migration: An Arendtian Reconsideration

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Abstract

The issue of migration has occupied a considerable place in African scholarship. The primary reasons why Africans migrate include poverty, conflicts and environmental degradation. Migration comes with some mixed feelings within and outside Africa, thereby sustaining the claim that human freedom is unwittingly sacrificed in migration when individuals migrate outside their regions of origin. Thus, the paper agrees with Hannah Arendt that political freedom is spatially limited. Second, the study contends that migrants are tyrannized by the fact that their freedom via actions and speeches tends to be limited. While migration and freedom are natural phenomena, the study argues that they are major challenges facing contemporary Africa, but that they can be tackled if universal human rights and justice are entrenched in the African legal systems, and are accordingly enforced. The paper recommends that corrective actions should be taken by home governments of migrants to solve the problems that trigger unnecessary migration.

Keywords: Action, Freedom, Justice, Plurality, Speech, Tyranny

Introduction

Among the central contemporary problems ravaging Africa is the continuous immigration of people. While it is natural for people to relocate for one reason or the other, the crises leading to migration in Africa are deepening, with huge economic, political and ecological consequences for the continent. Given that migration is an adjunct of globalisation, its prime movers are identified and analysed in this paper for possible solutions.

The paper articulates that the major reasons for migration in Africa are poverty, conflicts and environmental degradation. While Africans migrate within and outside Africa, the issue of migration cannot be fully exhausted if the concerns of freedom as well as the fairness necessary for healthy movement are overlooked. So, this paper argues that human freedom is inadvertently restricted and is even often times forfeited in local and foreign migrations, leading to the tyranny of the migrants, since political freedom is always spatially limited. Then, the paper seeks to argue that the need to tighten the belt on human rights and justice in Africa is long overdue. Also, the need for governments of African states to find solutions to problems that are poverty, conflict and environmental related cannot be over-emphasized. The paper addresses the issue of tyranny against migrating Africans whose freedom is limited through its reliance on Hannah Arendt's conception of practical freedom.

Migration and Its Social Implications

The issue of migration today should not be debated without considering its effects on human and nonhuman lives. It is to be noted at the outset that migration is a natural action, which human and nonhuman beings engage in for various reasons wherein benefits and consequences abound.

The concept of migration has been variously defined. *The Cassell Dictionary* (925) defines migration as moving "from one country, place or habitation to another." In this respect, migration is the movement of people as well nonhuman species like animals from one place to another. Stanley L. Engerman (75) notes that migration is the "movement, whether on a large scale or relatively minor scale of individuals or families from one habitation to another, and it has occurred in all parts of the world, over much of recorded time." It is clear today that migration could either be international or local. While humans and animals migrate, our focus in this paper is on human migration.

It is to be noted that what constitutes migration has been differently conceived in different quarters. During migration, a traveler moves outside his territory for a given period of time. The United Nations considers an international migrant, for example, as a person who stays outside his or her country of residence for at least one year (Koser 4). In other words, "The United Nations Population Division defines international migrants as persons outside their country of birth or citizenship for twelve months or more, regardless of the reason for moving or legal status abroad" (Nassar 3). Of course, migrants also

move within their continent, which may involve the relocation of persons from one region to another. Given that migration is contingent on certain factors, Africans' migration is the thrust of this work.

The issue of migration in Africa has been a subject of philosophical debate given that the notion of migration entails movement to a place, whereas the idea of who an African is has generated serious controversy until recent times when it has been put to rest. In the words of Anthony Appiah (538), Africans are people who have dark skins. In the history of scholarship, this implies that Africans who live in Diaspora, especially in Northern America and Europe, are Africans. The conception of who Africans are then raises the issue as to whether the movement of these people to other regions forcefully as dramatized during the slavery era does not hinder the well-being of those enslaved and the continent itself. As it is commonly adopted today, the idea of Africa represents a geographical space, which the blacks; whites, Arabs and other non-Africans inhabit (Azenabor 9). Granted that Africa is a continent, the issue of movement of people within and outside Africa has given rise to several issues in philosophy.

The way migration takes place has led to different reactions on whether the manner in which the host countries treat migrants is fair or whether migrants are a threat to the receiving nations. This has given rise to contentious issues on the forms migration takes and whether it is natural to allow such migration due to the conditions that necessitate it. There is what is now known as forced and voluntary migration. For instance, violence in a region can lead to forceful movement of people for security reasons. In Nigeria, for example, victims of terrorism in the Northern states such as Borno, Gombe, Nasarawa, etc. who suffer from Boko Haram's insurgence run to neighbouring countries like Niger and Cameroun. People, in search of safety, have to vacate their homes, lands and properties in foreign African countries. In the course of relocation, many migrants suffer severe persecutions, which hinder their well-being and lives since it is somewhat difficult to identify who a terrorist is. According to Nassar (15), "...the terrorist and the victim of terror are often confused."

Again, environmental challenges like climate change could propel the movement of people to other regions. This is well captured in Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm's (13) words: "As early as 1990, the International Panel on climate change warned that 'the greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration' -

with millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and severe drought.”

Migration also emerges due to political and/or economic reasons. Some of the fundamental challenges in Africa in recent times are the issues of unemployment and political persecution. Economically, people who could not find better job opportunities and working conditions do migrate. The need to satisfy the necessity of life is apparent; hence human beings are driven to act due to hunger. The desire to address migrants' economic challenges at home or elsewhere often gives rise to illegal migration. According to Khalid Koser (17), illegal migrants as distinct from legal ones “cover a wide range of people, principally migrants who enter a country either without documents or with forged documents or migrants who enter legally but then stay after their visa or work permit has expired.” The fate of some migrants who seek jobs across the border of their native lands in other African countries is well captured as follows:

A major destination for African migrants is South Africa, a country of 46 million that is far richer than its neighbours... Unemployment among South African Blacks is very high, as in resentment against some of the foreigners from neighbouring countries and countries as far as Nigeria. South Africa's political leaders are reluctant to crack down on illegal migration because many of the migrants' countries of origin sheltered them during the struggle to end apartheid, but many South Africans, Black and White, blame foreigners for rising crime (Martin, *et al*, 44).

The crucial issue is that migrants face stiff opposition outside their territories when they relocate. The point is that when people migrate for whatever reasons, they “... are exploited and their human rights abused” (Koser 1). Many migrants undergo severe discrimination and prejudices long after they arrived at their new-haven.

As the foregoing has indicated, migrants cross borders for several reasons. However, the most motivating factors for migration in and outside Africa today are as a result of poverty, conflicts and environmental degradation. For emphasis, Nigerians and many young people in Africa who graduate from

universities could hardly obtain sustainable jobs due to Africa's growing population and poor economic management. So, economic differences between Africa and Western nations put the youths at the verge of forceful migration, with the intent to survive and explore greener pastures. Human biological needs therefore have constituted strong basis for migration to South Africa, Nigeria, Northern African territories as well as Europe and America. This situation is captured by Koser as follows:

Today, North Africa is changing from an origin to a transit and destination region. Increasing numbers of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are arriving in countries like Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Some remain, others cross the Mediterranean into Southern Europe, usually, illegally, where again some stay and others try to move on into Northern Europe (Koser 8).

Over the years, the issue of migration has centred on the economic benefits it brings to the migrants as well as the regions where migrants relocate to. When Migrants arrive at their destinations, many of them are ready to sustain livelihood so as to contribute to the economy of their new places of abode. Today, violence against migrants has questioned the interrelations of the global community and as such, has exposed the inhumanity of man to man. The more recent violence is the deterioration of human freedom, which migration has occasioned and which human beings have overlooked. This is one of the serious fallouts and consequences of migration. Whereas this is not the place to debate the problem of freedom of migrants during migration, however, when a restriction provokes unfairness, a need to evaluate its pros and cons becomes necessary. One central problem in migration is that migrants who flee their lands due to poverty, conflicts and environmental dilapidation often become illegal migrants. This tends to hinder their well-being, self-worth and dignity.

The questions then are: Are migrants who flee from poverty, conflict and ecological degradation entitled to foreign governments' protection? If they are not, how can they be defended by their local governments and laws against exploitation, marginalization and oppression in a foreign land? To adequately address the above questions, let us explore the idea of practical freedom in Arendt's

thought before situating the posers in Arendtian resolution of the scourge.

Practical Freedom in Arendt's Philosophy

Johannah Hannah Arendt was a German-born political theorist and philosopher. She could best be described as an existentialist who considers the task of politics as a practical concern than a speculative kind. Hence, she focuses on what seems to be the utmost task of a political society. In her numerous works, she takes the central concern of *the polis* to be that of freedom. But, what does freedom constitute to Arendt and how can it be gained or retained.

To explore the issue of freedom, Arendt 1958 considers three activities, which human beings engage in. These, according to her, are labour, work and action (Arendt 7). For her, out of these three activities, it is only action that can guarantee as well as defend human freedom. According to her, labour is the activity that is compatible with our biological nature. In this respect, human beings engage in labour so as to survive. Arendt believes that humans share this kind of activity with nonhumans such as animals. This activity, according to Arendt, would hinder what people are because in the hope to survive, people often sacrifice their being. In other words, the point, which Arendt strikes at, can be expressed as follows:

As compared with the elements of freedom, the elements of necessity often press upon the will with the greater force, a force which most men by themselves would not be able to resist ... Man - seeking to *will* himself and more than himself as manifestations of his freedom - is beset by forces of necessity which forever threaten to submerge him, thus engaging him in a perpetual struggle ... and his dignity lies in pursuing the unmasked path of freedom rather than easy way of necessity" (Gottsegen 40).

It follows from Arendt's position that one who seeks necessity or survival hardly attains freedom since necessity would be sacrificed for life, rather than for freedom. For Arendt, therefore, labour seeks necessity and human being, through the gratification of daily needs and desires, breaks down his identity. Thus, Arendt believes that "in labour, the individuality of each person is submerged by being bound to a chain of necessity, to the constraints imposed by biological survival"

(D'Entreves 72). The second human activity identified by Arendt is work, which she describes as the activity, which corresponds to the use of artefacts. Here, Arendt says that a man who fabricates things would lose specific human quality. For Arendt 1958, activity of labour or work does not need the presence of others but a being that labours in solitude would not be human but still remains *animal laborans* (22).

Subsequently, she contends that only action can guarantee our freedom. And, according to her, action is possible through speech and words. She posits that action is possible only in a public realm or *polis*, which gives rise to the recognition of the plurality of men across the globe. She writes that, "The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other" (52). Our freedom, therefore, lies in action because Arendt (1958) believes that "Tyranny is always characterized by the impotence of its subjects, who have lost their human capacity to act and speak together, it is necessarily characterized by weakness and sterility..." (203).

Arendt 2005 therefore notes that since action and speech are the two outstanding political activities that can guarantee human individuality, it follows then that men across the world are distinct, and political society should protect the distinctiveness of each man. Thus, she holds that "politics is based on the fact of human plurality" (93). In this respect, politics in Arendt's view "means a global dominion in which people appear primarily as active agents" (97) such that it would be wrong to denounce one's freedom in the desire to live. Accordingly, she stresses that the answer to the question of the meaning of politics is that "politics is freedom" (108).

To be free in Arendtian preview, is to have capacity for action and speech. This means that one who is free has capacity to invent, begin and to influence actions via persuasion. In this respect, she argues that freedom or politics "begins where the realm of material necessities and physical brute force end" (119).

Hence, the realization of freedom for Arendt does not lie in free-will (or idea), but in the practical realization of something that is willed. He rules out the belief that political freedom entails freedom of choice since, in most cases, while choosing the actual human freedom - that is, action and speech, have been submerged. She avers that:

The idea that freedom is identical with beginning or, again to use a Kantian term, with spontaneity, seems

strange to us because, according to our tradition of conceptual thought and its categories, freedom is equated with freedom of the will, and we understood freedom of the will to be a choice between givens, to put it crudely, between good or evil (Arendt 109-110).

In the demonstration of human freedom, Arendt 1972 believes that violence has been a tool employed by the oppressed in articulating their freedom. For her, “rage and violence that sometimes - not always - go with it belong among the ‘natural’ human conditions, and to cure man of them would mean nothing less than to dehumanize or emasculate him” (161). However, when violence emerges, she says, it does not promote the cause nor address the problem, “but it can serve to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention” (176).

Rather than burying oneself in total dehumanization, therefore, Arendt suggests that violence can be used to the extent that it would address the challenges against human freedom within a short term. However, she stresses that “since the tactics of violence and disruption make sense only for short-term goals, it is even more likely ... that the established power will yield to nonsensical and obviously damaging demands” (177). She argues that if the goals of violence are not addressed urgently, the practice of violence, like all actions, would lead to a more violent world. According to J.B. Apam 1991, Arendt submits that, “If there is no ‘polis’, there is no freedom, and if there is no freedom, there is no action. To deprive man of his capacity for action is to reduce him to animal” (81).

Therefore, thinking about freedom and realizing freedom in action are two different things. But Arendt realizes that each political society has woven rules and regulations around its borders, thereby making freedom to be politically limited.

Having considered Arendt’s view, we set to show how we can adopt her idea of freedom to confront the tyranny of migrants in migration. The issue of tyranny of migrants during migration is considered in the following section. Our central goal is to articulate that Africans who migrate within and outside Africa needed to be adequately protected by African governments and laws. It is against this backdrop that we shall argue that the need to reinvigorate human rights and justice in Africa is fundamental if capable and skilled Africans are to remain in, have attachment to and/or become responsible to Africa.

The Tyranny of Migrants in Migration: An Arendtian Reconsideration

This section considers Arendt's idea of practical freedom as useful for addressing the challenges facing African migrants in and outside Africa. We set to achieve this by connecting Arendt's conception of freedom to the reality of Africa and African migrants. As we have earlier noted, the push factors of migration in Africa rest primarily on the existence of poverty, conflicts and environmental degradation. It should be noted, however, that these determinants do not suggest that there are no stimulating factors, which draw foreign migrants to the continent.

The fundamental point that is central to our exploration is that despite the blessings that are attached to migration such as cultural mix, economic expansion, exposure and technological benefits, the freedom of African migrants is unwittingly being sacrificed in migration. Here, there is a need to show how the freedom of individuals that migrate to other (local and/or foreign) regions is hindered. Again, we hope to advance that freedom is possible via action and speech, which migration has the tendency of limiting, or even denied.

The issue of poverty has had a strong force, which pushes Africans to Europe and America, among other continents. Even within Africa, many unemployed youths who hardly could find some meaningful works to do have found refuge in migration to foreign lands for the sake of survival. In recent times, particularly since 2015 till date, the natives of South Africa attacked migrants who went to South Africa. These xenophobic attacks which led to brutal killings and injury of innocent migrants were occasioned by the strong feelings by the natives that more sophisticated cultures of the migrants were being introduced to them, which could lead to the submergence of their (natives') culture. While it is natural that natives and settlers' controversy has been witnessed in such countries like Sudan and Nigeria, migrants have contributed to the economic growth of the countries in which they settle.

Given that migrants desire to survive in the countries of their settlement, many of them are ready to live under any inhuman conditions, which the natives might put them so long as they have food on their table. Hence, migrants' desires to meet their daily wants have made them to become victims of exploitation, attacks and dehumanization. In other words, when migrants seek survival outside

their nations, they tend to sacrifice their freedom. This gives rise to the exploitation of migrants across all cultures.

Thus, the issue of migration raises the concerns of freedom and justice. The citizens of the receiving nations often nurse the fear that when people enter their regions legally or otherwise, it tends to increase the economic and political costs of their governments, which they bear through tax-payment. For instance, caring for migrants who seek refugees' protection requires a huge humanitarian cost on the receiving countries. In order for the natives to protect their countries, migrants who seek refuge are restricted to a particular location, and all the rights of protection by laws such as relief materials in times of wants, political participation, etc. which they have in their own lands are withdrawn. When migrants move to other lands, they forfeit their rights to public action and speech, and so lose their genuine freedom and become less human. As Arendt 1958 clearly argues, even when a person is allowed to engage in labour in his/her new world, he/she still falls short of a genuine humanity because he/she can still not participate in solidarity and sheer human togetherness:

The easier that life has become in a consumers' or laborers' society, the more difficult it will be to remain aware of the urges of necessity by which it is driven, even when pain and effort, the outward manifestations of necessity, are hardly noticeable at all. The danger is that such a society, dazzled by the abundance of its growing fertility and caught in the smooth functioning of a never-ending process, would no longer be able to recognize its own futility - the futility of a life which 'does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject which endures after [its] labour past' (135).

Put differently, D'Entreves notes that, "The revelatory quality of speech and action is contingent on plurality and solidarity, and is only fully realized, in Arendt's memorial expression, 'where people are with others and neither for nor against them - that is, in sheer human togetherness' (D'Entreves 73). Where people desire only to survive; action and speech are eroded. Thus, freedom in its practical sense, disappears. Needs and bio-necessity therefore would have no natural limit unless humans recognize the fact that any necessity or desires that hinder action and speech, that foreclose humans in relation to others as humans, tyrannize the migrants, since by so doing, such migrants'

freedom is limited, or in some cases, is completely denied. It is crucial to note that Africans' experience in the Diaspora is strongly faced with negation of freedom, which, itself, is constantly willed by Africans at home and, allowed by Africans abroad. Of course, Arendt is correct to say that if practical freedom is denied, those who are coerced due to their status usually have resentment that later translates into violence. So, the continuous challenges of migrants, either those who voluntarily or forced to migrate, often trigger violence against those who attack their humanity. Arendt thus vividly captures the mood when she writes:

Rage is by no means an automatic reaction to misery and suffering as such; no one reacts with rage to an incurable disease or to an earthquake or, for that matter, to social conditions that seem to be unchangeable. Only where there is reason to suspect that conditions could be changed and are not, does rage arise. Only when our sense of justice is offended do we react with rage, and this reaction by no means necessarily reflects personal injury, as is demonstrated by the whole history of revolution (160).

For instance, in July 2016, some Black Americans were killed by some police officers in the United States. In a counter-reaction, a Black soldier killed about 5 police officers a week after to demonstrate his grievance against the discontent directed at the Black in general. One crucial problem that often arises when freedom is denied is that injustice will ensue. In Nigeria, at some points, violence against foreign migrants erupted in the Niger Delta because the natives of that region felt neglected in the scheme of things despite continuous environmental degradation and conflicts that emerged in that region.

In one of its programmes, *Al Jazeera News, The Qatar International TV* captured the consequences of the misuse of the environment of that region. It was reported that, "Over 1.2 million tons of oil has been spilled in the Niger Delta, Nigeria leaving the people disposed without land to farm, water to drink, and fresh air to breathe" (Fayemi and Samuel 385). This has inspired resistance and violence in an area like Bayelsa by some youths of the region, while others have migrated to neighbouring cities, especially Lagos, Nigeria. As natural

rights thinkers have argued, the state should strive as much as possible to protect her citizens' life, liberty, property and happiness (Mosk 14).

Social conflicts and environmental degradation like poverty, have also contributed to the tyranny of African migrants. Hausa, Fulani and other displaced people in the Northern Nigeria and people in Niger as well as Sudan have experienced several ecological problems, which have necessitated them to relocate. In the process, many of them have become victims of criminal acts, while some, in their desperate attempts to survive have been lured into such groups like Boko Haram. This situation presents challenges to those migrants, whose hope was to escape attack from local social conflicts and environmental problems, only to become tools in the hands of terrorists. When terrorist acts are unleashed, "Law becomes no longer capable of sustaining livelihoods and people will be forced to migrate to areas that present better opportunities" (Brown 19). When this happens, the migrants who are, first, victims of social crises are exposed to other social challenges, which make them to migrate to yet another place. To be certain, these displacements are forced migrations and those who suffer them are mostly seen as illegal migrants, even when humanitarian relief measures are considered necessary for them. One fundamental issue involved here is that unless their governments as well as laws make solemn provisions for addressing their needs, most of them are faced with serious exploitation, dehumanization and subjugation. Many African women and children who have experienced this situation are often raped, sold and disposed of as commodities.

While migration and freedom are natural phenomena, these challenges in contemporary Africa need to be well managed. It is not the case that migrants must be treated entirely equally as natives of the land they migrate to. That is, it would be erroneous to suppose that migrants should be accorded all the rights and benefits which the natives are entitled to, such as access to vote or political positions if they (the migrants) lack the qualifications/documentation to partake in such. However, certain basic rights that make the migrants human must be accorded them. For instance, migrants who lack the capacity to relate with others as humans have had their freedom limited or denied, and as such, have been tyrannized psychologically. Like Arendt has rightly argued, people should be seen as humans, but not as tools. Migrants who come into a country to work as domestic staff do share this bitter ordeal. The need to safeguard the freedom of Africans and Africa therefore requires that universal human rights and justice be rigorously revived in Africa. This calls for concerted efforts on the part

of the United Nations Organization (UNO) to make a firm re-declaration of the Fundamental Human Rights with special attention to the migrants the world over.

According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 34 (1), "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly- (a) no person shall be subject to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment; (b) no person shall be held in slavery or servitude; and (c) no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour" (web).

Like the law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, The United Nations General Assembly on global issues declared, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," and that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, ... birth or other status" (un.org).

The Universal Human Rights therefore have already prohibited the dehumanization, exploitation and subjugation of all mankind, of which the African migrants are a part. Our contention, therefore, in this paper, considering Arendt's arguments on how best to ensure the freedom and welfare of African migrants, is to urge for a UNO's firm and irrevocable re-declaration of the Fundamental Human Rights as they specifically apply to migrants anywhere in the world. Along with this reaffirmation, the UNO should pursue a policy of ensuring that all nation states without exception should enforce the provisions of the Re-declaration in their various constitutions/laws. Failure to do this by the world body would only amplify the already tensed global atmosphere, for the migrants (either legal or illegal) whose freedom is being emasculated would always fight back violently if pushed to the wall.

In the final analysis, based on the aforesaid, we believe that one of the major problems which African governments are yet to address is the issue of injustice against migrants in Africa. Governments are yet to take as vital the lives of Africans who migrate. To address this issue, African governments should ask and attempt to answer such questions as: Do we care to know who the migrants are? Do we know how they contribute and can contribute to the wellbeing of Africa? And, are the African governments bothered whether the migrants are exploited within or outside Africa? It is obvious that the answers to these questions are currently not in the positive since many Africans have

been abused within and outside their countries. We need not sweep under the carpet the cases of injustice against African migrants in Africa and outside the continent when they arise. Hence, the need to strengthen our legal and justice systems cannot be overemphasized. This need requires the vigilance and commitment of African leaders and governments to always be vehement in coming to the defence of the African migrants anytime and anywhere their human rights are being abused by authorities (either within or without).

Conclusion

The world is gradually becoming totally globalized such that it would become unnatural to hinder human freedom and migration. While migration and freedom are fundamental, we established that human rights and justice systems in Africa had not rigorously addressed the challenges confronting Africans and Africa when people migrate in and outside Africa. The paper stressed that African governments would need to confront the fallouts of migration, which had affected the continent. We then emphasized the need to strengthen our economic and political systems as well as African environs given that the growing level of poverty, conflicts and ecological degradation had necessitated Africans to conceal their exploitations and abuses in local regions and foreign lands. The need to confront the implications of migration in Africa therefore incited a re-engagement with the tyranny of African migrants occasioned by the limitation or denial of their freedom in the process of migration.

Embracing Arendt's theory of freedom, we articulated that it is by invigorating African justice system through the support of a firm re-declaration of migrants' rights by the UNO, wherein the people's fundamental human rights are openly entrenched can migration in and out of Africa not hinder the migrants' freedom. The tyranny against African migrants during migration therefore needs not to be covered up as if the travelers are free when they migrate.

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