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COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CHINESE MALTREATMENT OF AFRICANS UPR-OHCHR

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This is a report primarily on the April 2020 eviction of Africans in China from their homes by landlords and turning away of blacks from hotels, despite many claiming to have no recent travel history or known contact with Covid-19 patients in China. At this lockdown period due to the covid-19, (mid April, 2020) there were rampant issues of Africans being subjected to online abuses and bullying and negatively profiling, with the call for their deportation from China and this has to be reckoned with as racism against Africans. The report is therefore addressing the universal un-acceptance of the xenophobic attacks on Africans in China and the cases of mistreated employees by Chinese Companies in Nigeria.

This xenophobic attacks on Africans with demeaning undertones that they are the carriers of the deadly corona virus is depressing and malicious and the IHRC Africa Region HQ regards this as the height of treachery and submits that this defies social relations and human rights, let alone international protocols. It is racist and objectionable. This report is a call for the UN system through the OHCHR to recommend that Beijing must signify the ways and means a pacifier China wants to carry out for the cordial relations with Africa to continue.

The IHRC investigation to produce this report was following public allegations of the xenophobia in Guangzhou, where Africans were being made homeless – evicted from their homes by landlords then turned away by hotel managements. The findings confirmed that the hostility is not new and that the situation has been exasperated by the outbreak of the covid-19 because Africans were being discriminated in China as the ones infected by the disease.

In the month of August 2020 allegations of abuse surfaced against Nigerian employees by managers of a Chinese company in Abia State, south-east Nigeria through a whistleblower, simply known by his Twitter handle @Truthfully83. The account shows that @Truthfully83 claims to have secured a job in the company in order to experience the maltreatment of the workers. The IHRC Africa Region HQ got more details from @Truthfully83 who was in contact with some employees of



the Chinese firm as his source of information and was convinced to become a member of the Staff of the Chinese firm to confirm the claims personally. The resulting Twitter thread was damning, exposing that “every Nigerian in that company is mandated to call their Chinese employers MASTER or MISTRESS and failure to do that attracts a direct sack,” and that “male Nigerian workers are physically assaulted, while their female counterparts are sexually assaulted. ... Chinese MASTERS will boast of killing you and getting away with it.” The thread exposed the inhumane treatment of workers, and the apparent pleasure taken by the employers in this maltreatment. The Chinese company is called Inner Galaxy Steel Company.

In social media, @Truthfully83 wrote: “There is a wide range of corruption amongst various government agencies ... the companies bribe them to look the other way. People saddled with the right to investigate most of my claims, are compromising it.” The IHRC has no doubts that these actions are antics of racists, and they engage in bribes, using law enforcement agents to intimidate whoever that opposes them. These are completely human rights and labour relations occurrences that call for urgent intervention.

@Truthfully83 stated also that “As I speak to you, I am in Ogun State in Nigeria, investigating another Chinese company using Nigerian employees as slaves, and subjecting them to detestable inhumane conditions.” In Ogun State, a Chinese



company was said to have locked up Nigerian workers and refused to let them go home, despite the lockdown order as a result of the covid-19. Frustrated by this, and the fact that they were owed months of salaries, the workers rebelled, refusing to work, staging a protest, and setting a truck belonging to the company ablaze.

The coronavirus pandemic has, without a doubt, increased tensions between Sino-African social interactions. However, the government does not seem to be very eager to tackle the problem on their very own soil, with comments from government officials being hard to find because of the Chinese loans to Nigeria.

Bottom line

Sino-Nigerian relations are strained, but more so at a societal level rather than a governmental one.