

## **Challenges and Reforms in the Nigerian Prisons System**

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**ABSTRACT** The main aim of establishing the prison institution in all parts of the world including Nigeria is to provide a rehabilitation and correctional facility for those who have violated the rules and regulations of their society. However, the extent to which this maxim is true in practice has been a subject of controversy. A casual observation of the population that goes in and out of the prisons in Nigeria presupposes that there are some problems in the system, hence the prisons system has not been able to live up to its expected role in Nigeria. Against this background, this paper makes an argument on why reform is necessary in the Nigerian prisons. Some of these reasons include reforming the prisoners to be better than what they were before they were imprisoned, rehabilitate the prisoners in order to equip them with new skills or improve on their old ones, and seclude criminals from the rest of the society, pending when they have atoned for their "sins". The structural-functionalist approach of the system theory for the study of human society and culture as proposed by Radcliff-Brown of the British School of social anthropology and later developed by Meyer Fortes and Max Gluckman is utilized in explaining prison environment. Main sources of information for this study are secondary materials which include, journals and official bulletin of the government. Among other issues, this discourse articulates various reforms that have already taken place and are still on-going in the Nigerian prison system. These include efforts in the decongestion process, provision of necessary infrastructure facilities and other logistics including transportation services and general skills acquisition programmes. This article also makes a critical impact appraisal of the reform processes in the system. From the appraisal, the author believes that there are more gains than pains in the system since the gradual reform processes therein. In order to deal finally with prison congestion, this paper suggests that the decongestion committee needs to be strengthened in its work by changing their periodic visit to the prisons to be more regular and frequent, more prison yards need to be built, more non-governmental organizations should be encouraged and allowed to visit the prisons to monitor the activities there, from which they can make an input in form of suggestions to the various reform committees on what to do.