

Ebonyi: Concerns mount as jungle justice cases rise

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By sunnews

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•Kenneth, wife and 9-year-old boy being dehumanised by the community.

• How mobs kill, dehumanise innocent victims

From Uchenna Inya, Abakaliki

In Ebonyi State, jungle justice has become the norm, in spite of efforts of security agencies to stern the tide.

The practice, which has been in existence since the pre-civilisation era, was very severe that those who committed heinous crimes were lynched or buried alive in some parts of the state including Amasiri and Afikpo in Afikpo Local Government Area. The capital punishment is known as “ikpa oke okwu” in Afikpo and “ikpa ogidi” in some other communities.



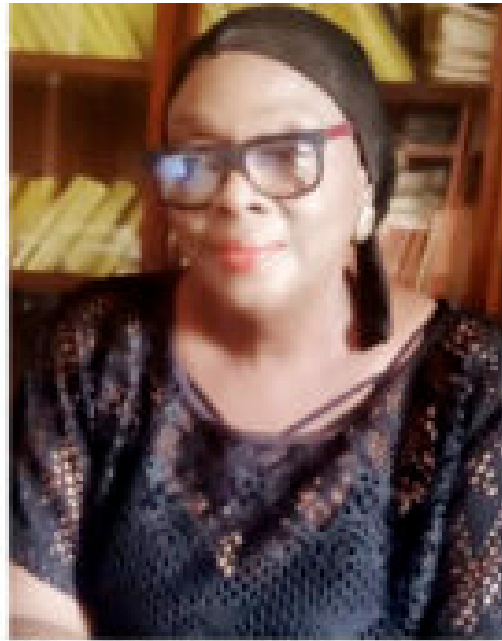
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•Hope Okafor, Ebonyi CP.



•Ajanwachukwu

Those who committed heinous crimes were buried in the middle of the night after approval of the punishment by their fathers with threes planted on their graves.

The communities practised both capital and corporal punishments for offenders. Many other communities in the state practised more of corporal punishments

Today, some areas in the state still practise jungle justice with lives lost, and victims dehumanised and banished from their communities.



•Okorie



•Damia Offorbulike battered for killing his mother.



•Okiechukwu Nwanga lynched in Okpori Umuoghara.

One state, numerous cases

On August 2, 2025, Okechukwu Nwanga, popularly known as Ezza nwurunwa was killed on the allegation that he stole a cell phone.

The incident occurred in Okposi Umuoghara, Ezza North Local Government Area of the state where he relocated following the communal war in his Effium community.

He was taking refuge in Okposi Umuoghara with his three wives, one of who was heavily pregnant, and 13 children when a mob lynched him

The deceased left his house around 5am on the fateful day and told his six-month pregnant wife, Chiamaka, that he was pressed and needed to urinate.

Shortly after leaving the house, his wife said she started hearing his screams. Then she started crying on top of her voice to attract help which eventually came.

But before help came, the man was already at the point of death. Four of those suspected to have attacked him were arrested by a team of policemen on patrol after rescuing him.

Nwanga was taken to the police clinic on the Abakaliki/Enugu highway after his rescue. But he died shortly after.

In a statement signed by Monday Eze, President General and Chukwudi Egbara, Secretary, the community said it received the death of Nwanga with a rude shock.

“The Alioma Community Development Union leadership strongly condemns the gruesome murder of the young man in cold blood.

“Given the growing tension over the unwarranted killing, the Alioma Community Development Union leadership hereby calls for restraint from aggrieved persons and all of us affected by the tragic incident to enable the police conduct a full-scale investigation of the murder.

“We, therefore, call on the peace-loving Governor of the Ebonyi State to use his good offices to ensure that the police conduct a dispassionate and comprehensive investigation into the unwarranted killing of Mr Okechukwu Nwanga and bring the culprits under the full weight of the law.”

The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Joshua Ukandu who confirmed the incident, said some persons were arrested in connection to the killing.

He said the suspects were apprehended by a team of policemen from the state command who were on patrol and saw the suspects cutting the deceased.

“The matter is still under investigation but the story is that the man allegedly maybe went to steal something from a compound when the person that the man was trying to steal something from raised the alarm and people came out and descended on him.

“This is currently under investigation. We have made arrests. We have currently, four persons under custody in connection to the incident. The people, that we arrested were the people we saw beating up the man; using a machete on him,” he said.

The deceased has since been buried.

On June 21 2026, a woman was almost lynched at the International Market in Abakaliki when she was accused of abducting three children who were found with her. She was rescued by the police following an alarm raised by one of the traders.

Thirteen suspects – 10 male and three female – were arrested by the police out of which three have been arraigned and remanded at the correctional service centre in the state.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Joshua Ukandu who confirmed the incident, condemned the jungle justice meted on the woman.

Ukandu said: “The Nigeria Police Force, Ebonyi State Command is aware of a video trending on social media showing the assault on a woman falsely accused by a narrator of stealing three children.

“On 21st June 2026, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of the Central Police Station, Abakaliki, received a distress call from a concerned citizen at the poultry section of the International Market, Abakaliki. The caller reported that a woman was about to be lynched after being accused of abducting three children who were found with her.

“The DPO immediately led a team to the scene, where they encountered a mob armed with weapons attacking the woman. She was rescued and taken to the station for safety and questioning.

“During interrogation, the woman identified herself and explained that the children belonged to her tenant, one Chinyere Okwuchukwu. She stated that Chinyere was working for her at her piggery, and she offered to assist her in looking after the children. She subsequently went to the market with the children so that the tenant could concentrate on the work she is doing at the piggery.

“As she got to the market, a woman asked if the children were her own because there was no resemblance, before she could answer or explain, the woman raised false alarm which led to the mob action.

“Preliminary investigation into her story led officers to the residence of the victim where the said Chinyere Okwuchukwu was seen and she identified the children as hers. She also informed the officers in her statement that she was aware that the victim was going out with her children.

“The Commissioner of Police, Ebonyi State Command, CP Hope Urunwa Okafor, strongly condemned the barbaric act and reiterated the Command’s zero tolerance for jungle justice. She emphasised that this incident demonstrates how an innocent person could have been killed due to false allegations.”

Another woman was almost lynched On March 20, 2026, in Amachi Amagu Community, Abakaliki Local Government Area of the state.

The woman, Mrs Mercy Chioma Nwewu, wife to an Inspector in the police, was confronted by members of the community over an allegation of child abduction after she was seen wandering aimlessly within the area.

She was stripped and tied up by some members of the community while being questioned about her presence in the area.

Following a distress call from a concerned citizen who feared she might be lynched by the irate crowd, police operatives swiftly mobilised to the scene and rescued her.

She was thereafter detained at the Central Police Station, Abakaliki, while members of the community were invited to provide evidence or statements to substantiate the allegations against her.

However, none of the accusers came forward while she was in the police custody. Police operatives also visited the community on several occasions in the course of the investigation, but no useful information linking her to any child abduction incident was provided.

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The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Joshua Ukandu who confirmed the incident, said preliminary investigation by the Command revealed that the woman experiences episodes of mental instability following a traumatic experience involving a stillbirth, a condition supported by a medical report she presented.

“In the course of the investigation, her bank account statements were also scrutinised for any suspicious transactions. Findings showed that the money in her account had accumulated gradually over the years through proceeds from her trading business. Furthermore, investigations did not establish any evidence linking her to any case of child abduction in the state.”

On March 19, 2026, a 30-year-old man, Oforbuike Damian also escaped being lynched in Ohatekwe Ukawu, Onicha Local Government Area of the state after killing his mother.

The victim, who was arraigned before an Abakaliki Magistrate Court, pleaded guilty to the crime. He is currently remanded in prison.

The Police Prosecutor, David Njoku, Senior State Counsel, said the defendant caused the death of his mother, Mrs Onyema Damian by stabbing her with a knife at her back.

He noted that the offence was punishable under Section 319 of the criminal code cap 33 vol. 1, Laws of Ebonyi State, 2009.

The defendant, who had no legal representation, told the court that he killed his mother for refusing to bathe for him.

On February 14, 2026, a man, Kenneth Nwiboko and wife were dehumanised and banished from their Ndiebor community in Ebonyi Local Government Area of the state following a chieftaincy tussle in the community.

The man and wife were tortured by the community, paraded and wheeled through Ishieke Market and Ukwuachi Market with charcoal rubbed on his face and dumped on a road near a forest.

The action of the community generated wide condemnation within and outside the state. Till today, the couple have not been allowed back into the community. As the

people have insisted that the man must withdraw his suits against the community and their traditional ruler.

In November 2022, three suspected electricity transformer vandals were burnt to death in Igweledoha Amagu, Ikwo Local Government Area of the state.

The suspects, among who was the first son of a late traditional ruler in the area, were accused of vandalising transformers in Igweledoha, Ndufu Amata and Ekawoke all in the local government.

Luck ran out on them in the middle of the night when they were caught with some transformer parts.

The suspects were five in number, but two escaped while three, including the son of the late monarch, were meted with the jungle justice.

In January 2022, there was mayhem in Akaeze, Ivo Local Government Area of the state when a robbery suspect was tortured to death by the defunct Ebubeagu Security Network, which has been replaced by the Neighbourhood Watch.

The torture of the robbery suspect, Nnaogo Anyim to death by members of the security network, led to the destruction of property worth millions of naira in the community.

The video of the deceased's torture went viral in the social media with some of the operatives seen hitting him with axe and other dangerous weapons. He died in the hospital where he was rushed to for medical attention

Houses, filling stations, vehicles and other valuable properties were burnt in the community when the protesters went on rampage over the suspect's death

Among those whose property was burnt was the then Chairman of the local government, Chief Onyebuchi Ogbadu. His house, filling station and others were burnt in the melee.

Also, the court building and police post in the community were razed by the angry mob. It was alleged that about four persons were killed.

In November 2023, two teenage girls were dehumanised in Ojegbe Ngbo community in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of the state for stealing local fowls.

The victims were stripped naked and flogged with wire by some members of the community and paraded over the stealing.

The state police command arrested two men, Dennis Ali and Ituma Sunday for the dehumanisation. The suspects were subsequently charged and remanded at the correctional service centre in the state.

In 2021, a cleric, Okoche Obeni, was made to drink faeces water in his Amasiri community in Afikpo North Local Government Area of the state for making a post against the then Chairman of the local government.

He was given 32 strokes of cane on the buttocks before he was forced to drink the faeces water.

The cleric was hospitalised for months following his ordeal and dehumanisation.

Those who tortured him, uploaded the video of the torture on social media and it went viral, eliciting condemnations from all quarters, including the then state government which set up a five-man panel on the matter.

In the video, Obeni was stripped naked while his hands were tied to his back, after which he was given 32 strokes of cane. He was to get 50 strokes, but it was reduced following the intervention of his elder brother, who is also a cleric. The elder brother had to buy off the remaining 18 strokes of the cane for N9,000 in accordance with the tradition of the community.

It was gathered that Isi-Oru age grade, the traditional police of the Amasiri community, was responsible for Obeni's torture.

After he was tortured, the cleric was taken to the Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (AE-FUTHA) by some human rights groups – the Human Rights Defenders (HURRIDE) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) – for medical attention.

NHRC condemns act

For the National Human Right Commission(NHRC), jungle justice is not the best option against any criminal.

Christopher Okorie, the state Coordinator of the commission, told Saturday Sun that jungle justice is against the principle of fair hearing and should not be tolerated.

He identified criminality, poverty and ignorance as the causes of jungle justice and enjoined people to stop resorting to self help against criminals.

His words: “Human rights operate under the principle of fair hearing. In fact, fair hearing is regarded as the major ingredient of human rights. It is regarded as a non-

derogable right because it is automatic and you cannot take away from anybody.

“So, jungle justice is against this principle. It is against fair hearing, it is also against the principle of rule of law and therefore, it is condensable against human right protection.

“So, here at the Human rights Commission, we condemn in strong terms jungle justice. One, it doesn’t allow the person so accused to say their own side of the story or give them the fair hearing so that you can have a balanced judgement of what really happened.

“Even when they say their own side of the story, they are saying it under duress because of the machetes, clubs, beating and all that to force them sometimes to just say whatever to get out of the situation. So, they are not saying it out of freewill.

“In the case of the man and his wife who were banished from Ndiebor Ishieke community, after dehumanisation, tying them with palm fronds and subsequently banishing them, it is condemnable and should not be allowed.

“There are other cases where people, all of a sudden, shouted that their genitals are missing and before you know it, whoever is being pointed as a suspect, is beaten immediately and sometimes killed. Some of these things are being generated by miscreants; anti-societal elements within the society. They just see somebody passing and they say oh, my genital is missing and they attract attention and their groups who are also around, come around.

“At this point, the accused person doesn’t even have the time to explain himself and they will start beating the person and the rest becomes a story. So, it is very wrong. It can only be exhibited by either criminals or persons who are ignorant.

“There are three things that cause these mob actions. One is criminality. People use the opportunity to attack the vulnerable members of the society, extort them, take money from them or even revenge over squabbles they didn’t settle in the past. They make accusation in the public and invite people to help them deal with the person or maim the person because of their criminal intentions.

“The second one is ignorance. People are ignorant about certain things and they do not know that it is against the law for you to take the law into your hands.

“The third cause of this action could be poverty. There is this poverty mentality that when people are so poor and oppressed in a very harsh economic system, they turn against each other rather than turning against whatever may be the source of their problem.

“People are angry, people are under pressure. And so, they want somewhere to vent their anger. They cannot vent their anger on the authorities that might be responsible for the economic downturn because the authorities are well protected by guns. So, they vent their anger on themselves.”