

Southern Ijaw in chaos as alleged rapist of minor dies during flogging



By Samuel Oyadongha

YENAGOA — Chaos erupted in Southern Ijaw on Wednesday after a 47-year-old man, identified simply as Emi, collapsed and died while undergoing a traditional punishment for the alleged rape of a 10-year-old girl in Ekeowe.

According to community sources, the victim was returning from a farm with her aunt when Emi allegedly ambushed and assaulted her in a nearby bush. Under a longstanding local custom, the punishment for such an act involves receiving 10 strokes of the cane from each of the community's 12 families, totaling 120 lashes.

Tensions mounted as some residents offered alternatives to the brutal flogging, with one proposing N50, 000 and another N15, 000 to spare the suspect. However, the wider community rejected the offers, insisting that the full traditional penalty be enforced as a deterrent.

During the marathon flogging session, Emi collapsed and lost consciousness after receiving just 40 strokes—a third of the prescribed punishment. He was later confirmed dead upon arrival at the community hospital.

The death sparked immediate pandemonium, with angry youths flooding the streets.

Armed soldiers from the Ogboinbiri base were deployed to restore order, following fears that the situation could escalate further.

The chief press secretary to the Southern Ijaw council chairman, Mr. Ayebaitari Easterday, condemned the mob action, emphasizing that the government does not condone such vigilante measures.

He said: “As much as the council does not condone the repugnant attempted rape of the minor, the action of the youths is alien.

It would have been commendable if the matter had been reported to security agencies for lawful action.”

Easterday noted that normalcy has since returned following intervention by the council chairman's team and security operatives.

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He also explained that the council chairman was away attending a zonal and national convention of the All Progressives Congress, APC, and was represented by a high-powered delegation led by the Special Adviser on Security Matters.

Four individuals have been arrested in connection with the death and are currently in custody at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Bayelsa State Police Command in Yenagoa. The body of the deceased has been evacuated from Oporoma town, the council headquarters, and deposited at the morgue of the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa. Efforts to obtain an official response from the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Musa Mohammed, were unsuccessful, as he stated he had yet to receive full details of the incident at the time of filing the report.