

# Vigilance group burns six youths to death

**S****I**X youths accused of criminal activities were at the weekend burnt to death by a vigilance group in Gboko, Benue State.

When *The Guardian* visited the area yesterday, the charred remains of four of the victims were seen at the scene of the incident. The bodies of the other victims were said to have been removed by their families.

Reacting to the development, the new Benue Police Commissioner, Mr. Paul Iseghehi, vowed that the command would

fish out those behind the heinous act.

It was a sad weekend for residents of the town, as some members of the town's vigilance group set ablaze the youths in broad daylight on the claim that they were criminals.

Pleas from prominent indigenes of the area that the matter be referred to the police for thorough investigation reportedly fell on deaf ears, as the leaders of the outfit insisted on metting out "justice" to their victims.

Although the identities of the victims could not be established, it was learnt

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*From Simeon Nwakaudu  
(Makurdi)*

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from residents of the area that the youths were members of a gang that had constantly terrorised the people.

According to one of the residents, "these youths have been in and out of the police net, only to turn around to terrorise Gboko town."

*The Guardian* learnt that the act of burning suspected criminals had been in practice in Gboko. In fact, some residents attributed the relative peace in the town to the adoption of

jungle justice by the vigilance group since armed robbers turned the heat on the area.

Confirming the incident, Iseghehi said: "We got the report of the dastardly act this morning (yesterday) and we shall tackle it head-on. This is because this type of situation spells doom. Under my administration, we shall not sit and watch people claiming to be vigilance operatives take laws into their hands."

He said that the Gboko Divisional Police Officer (DPO) had been directed to take urgent steps to

bring to justice all those who participated in the killing of the youths.

The police chief added that no vigilance group had the power to take the life of any citizen without due recourse to the law.

Iseghehi, who was recently posted to the state, said his mission to Benue was to create a peaceful and secure environment that would facilitate the development of the state.

He declared that his command would henceforth treat political thugs in the state as armed robbers, "since they use arms to

intimidate peace-loving members of the public."

He advised politicians seeking security cover for their rallies to engage the police, as the use of thugs for such exercises is illegal.

Iseghehi said: "The police will provide security for all those who apply before their rallies and campaigns. There is no need to apply for thugs, as we shall treat all political thugs as armed robbers. We shall not hesitate to disperse any group that fails to apply for police permit before campaigns."