



Gboyega Alaka takes a look at the wave of violent crimes of kidnapping, rape, ritual killing, armed robbery, insurgency and its attendant suicide bombing currently sweeping across the land, wondering how a nation once described as home to the happiest people on earth found itself in the deep trench.

**L**AST week, news broke of the gruesome murder of brother-in-law to former Guardian correspondent and activist, Richard Akinola at the hands of armed robbers who also doubled as kidnappers. According to Akinola, his late in-law, Pastor John Ayuk, had come over from Owerri to spend the weekend with him in Lagos and left on Monday November 24, via an ABC Transport night bus. Reports gathered later revealed that the bus broke down at a place called I5 and some of the passengers,

including his brother-in-law and his friend, a lady were robbed. In the process, he struggled with them and got macheted on the neck and then shot. His lady companion was then dragged into the forest and a call placed for a N5m ransom, with the gang vowing not to release her until the ransom was paid. Somehow, she managed to loosen herself from where she was tied in the forest and escape after the gang had gone on their usual night operations. She wandered about in the bush and eventually found a place to lay her head before a hunter stumbled on her and took her to the highway, where a Good Samaritan paid her fare to Lagos.

The Nation's Abia State correspondent, Ugochukwu Ugorji-Eke, whose daylight kidnap made headlines late November, recalls how he was kidnapped by a group of gun-wielding men, as he made to call his wife to open his gate. He was thereafter taken to a coded place, from where they told him to call his wife and inform her that he had been kidnapped. He recalls how they told his wife matter-of-factly over the phone that "Madam open your gate and take your car and your child's materials in the car, we have gone with your husband". Thereafter, they started demanding a ransom of N20m, while the boys with him were demanding N5m. All his plea that there was no way his family could raise that kind of money, fell on deaf ears.

By far, the most despicable in the recent weeks would probably be the kidnap of the

95-year old Pastor Moses Aibangbee in Benin. If not for his very old age, one would at least have expected the kidnappers to have shown some respect for his position as senior apostle general of a church.

**Michael Anyiam-Osiwe killed by robbers**  
Another horrible news that graced the headlines last week and which sent many hearts a-sorrowing was the report of the death of businessman Michael Anyiam-Osiwe, killed by armed robbers along Benin-Ore Road, near Okada Junction. The news further lends credence to the guage of violence in the nation. Anyiam-Osiwe was until his death, the co-coordinator-General of the Osiwe Anyiam-Osiwe Foundation. The foundation which has become renowned internationally was instituted in honour of their late philosopher, philanthropist and businessman father, Chief Emmanuel Osiwe Anyiam-Osiwe.

**Chilling headlines all the way**  
Everywhere you look, the headlines are gory, chilling, horrific! '95-year old cleric abducted in Benin', 'How I was kidnapped and raped for one whole week', 'Ritualists cut off girl's breast while alive (in Ado Ekiti)', 'Men cut off baby's penis, as mum sleeps with fathers friend (Lagos)', 'Man arrested for selling wife to ritual killers', 'I was offered N30,000 for human skull', 'Married man ends up in jail after acid attack on lover', '14-year old bride kills husband, three others', 'HIV Positive kidnap suspect confesses to raping female victims', 'Fulani herdsmen kill 25 in Nassarawa', 'Horror as Cleric is caught

slaughtering woman. And the list goes on and on.

Whilst Nigeria has never really been the most peaceful place in the world, daring criminality has never been this bad. At most, the biggest malaise was armed-robbery, and of course rape, which were hard enough to manage.

The current wave of kidnap is also a respecter of nobody, as local government chairmen have been kidnapped (Kehinde Bamigbetan of Ejigbo LCDA, a case in point); frontline lawyers and former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) have been abducted (Mike Ozekhome and Okey wali, two cases in point). It will be recalled that former Anambra State governor, Chris Ngige almost went down as the first governor to be abducted. Journalists have also not been left out. The Nation's Abia State correspondent, Ugochukwu Ugorji-Eke, was abducted for nearly a week and a ransom of N20 million placed on him.

The scourge is also not a respecter of age or religious position, as clerics have been seized and made to cough out huge sums. The news of a 95-year old cleric, Moses Aibangbee, a senior apostle general of a church in Benin, who was seized at gun-point, also comes to mind here. And of course we all still remember the experience of veteran actor Pete Edochie. Never mind his memoirs that he was treated with

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