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CASES of lynching of robbery suspects are on the rise in Uyo and its environs, with at least six suspected robbers burnt publicly in the last three weeks.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) quotes residents as saying that the action is a result of the loss of confidence in the ability of the police to tackle the rising crime wave.

It is believed that many of the robbers operating in the state have "mystical powers" which they elude police arrest.

Most of the lynching had been carried out by commercial motorcyclists, who often had been accused by residents of being responsible for the rising crime wave.

In one such incident recently at the state secretariat complex, the suspected robber was burnt on a wooden cross and left for three days before the remains were removed by Uyo council officials.

While some residents interviewed by NAN applauded the lynching, others, however, condemned it as barbaric, as victims had no chance to defend themselves.

Residents called on the police authorities to re-double their efforts to tackle the criminals. When contacted, police Spokesman Gabriel Ngbam told NAN that no arrest had been made.

"We have warned people against taking laws into their hands.

The action is barbaric and illegal and police will not fail to prosecute the perpetrators of such crime when caught," he said.

Ngbam expressed the hope that the joint military task force recently set up by the state government would compliment the efforts of police in combating crime in the state.