

# Youths set suspected cable thief ablaze in A'Tbom

Iniobong Ekponta | Uyo

ANGRY youths of Obot Idim community in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State on Monday defied police warning against jungle justice and set a suspected cable thief ablaze.

The incident, it was gathered, occurred in the early hours of the morning on Aka Nnung Udoe road, few kilometers from Uyo, the state capital.

A member of the community youths group, Efremfon Bassey, said: "vigilant youths of the area

had laid ambush for thieves due to incessant vandalism of electric cables.

"Stealing of armoured cables around these neighbourhoods has become a recurrent problem, forcing frequent power outage. We could stay for months without electricity because of the cable vandals.

"Each time we reported the matter to the Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHEDC), of which Akwa Ibom is a part, the officials would ask us to contribute money since we could not protect power facilities in our area.

"So, we had to form ourselves into a vigilance group to keep vigil against the vandals, and lucky for us, today [Easter Monday], the thieves came as a group with all the implements to vandalise the cables.

"We caught up with one, while the others fled. We immediately set him on fire before the police would come to rescue him, because the police are in the habit of collecting bribes to release criminal suspects," he alleged.

However, following series of extra-judicial killings of

suspected criminals in the area in recent time, the Commissioner of Police, Amiengheme Andrew, has warned youths against the administration of jungle justice on suspected criminal elements.

The police boss said: "Jungle justice has no place in the criminal justice system. Individuals have the right to arrest criminals, but should hand them over to the police for diligent prosecution."

He added that those behind jungle justice in the state would be made to face the law when caught.