

editorial

The hapless Anambra boy murdered for refusing to violate sister

THE case of a young man named Emmanuel who was reportedly murdered by his captors for refusing their order to violate his sister is the latest reminder of how far the country has gone in its seemingly unstoppable descent into sheer barbarity. According to media reports later confirmed in a statement by the Anambra State Public Relations Officer, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, the tragic incident happened in Amansea, Awka North Local Government Area of the state. From the reports, both Emmanuel and his sister were in the custody of their kidnappers at the incident, which seems to have been motivated by a combination of gratuitous cruelty and a savage need for perverse entertainment.

Immediate responses to the incident have focused on the need for the authorities in Anambra State and the rest of the South-East region to improve daily security for residents. Harrison Gwamnishu, the human rights activist who brought the incident to light, said as much, urging "the government and security agencies to prioritize the safety of citizens above all else, intensify security presence, dismantle kidnap gangs, and ensure justice for victims." He added: "The safety of the people is the first duty of any government." The Commissioner of Police in the State, CP Ikioye Orutugu, was similarly direct in his condemnation, and has asked for the help of the officials of the State Intelligence Department in tracking down the hoodlums for the incident.

What is left unsaid, and something we have tried to draw attention to in previous editorials, is the highly unusual nature of the crime in question. Judging by media reports, the kidnappers decided on this inhumane course following the failure of members of the family to pay the ransom that they had demanded. While frustration at not getting one's way may be understandable, it hardly explains ordering a man to violate his own sister. This is not your everyday crime; it is the action of individuals who have lost contact with their own humanity. It is the kind of moral depravity that you would expect in an atmosphere of complete nihilism. Not even in war would this be countenanced, because at the end of the day, even war is governed by rules, and combatants, willy nilly, are subject to them.

When, not too long ago, Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka lamented that something was broken in the psyche of the Nigerian, it is incidents like this that he had in mind. This is the difficult part that Nigerians have to come to terms with, for it is not just about providing security, which we agree the state ought to do. What the country is faced with is a certain normlessness that should trouble all Nigerian citizens, and Nigerians deceive themselves when, as many are wont to do, they place all the blame at the doorstep of the authorities. There is something fundamentally rotten in the Nigerian condition, and the earlier this is recognised, the better for all Nigerians.