

Jungle justice reigns in Lagos

• We'll go after perpetrators - Police

BY LAWRENCE ENYOGHASU

WHEN Nurudeen Aliyu woke from his bedside on November 18, at his 40 Aborisade Itire, Lagos State home, little did he know that he would not have more than six hours to live, as he was lynched over a plate of food, barely six hours after leaving home.

The late young man, in his late 20s had gone to have his breakfast at his usual place, at Number 2 of the same street. He ate and was about to leave, when the owner of the shop, (name withheld), wife of a police officer, accosted him to pay for his meal. The late Nuru responded that he didn't have the money to pay but that he would pay later.

Saturday Sun gathered that his inability to pay led to exchange of words between the food vendor and her customer. Seeing the woman in war of words with Nuru, the woman's sympathisers joined in her support and beat Nuru till he cried for help. But by the time help came, it was too late as he eventually gave up the ghost at the hospital.

According to Nuru's friend, Mutiu, who narrated what transpired, he said "I was not far from him, but before I could intervene they had already wrestled him to the ground."

Just like in Nuru's case, another incident took place penultimate week at the Alafia bus stop in Orile Iganmu area of Lagos State, where the victim was alleged to be a member of a notorious robbery gang in the area. He was captured and beaten, before being doused with gasoline and set on fire.

The late young man whose name is yet to be confirmed by the State Police Command was said to have stolen a phone and also reportedly stabbed someone in the process. This was what angered the mob.

Also in first week of October, an *Okada* (commercial motorcycle) rider who was reportedly involved in a robbery operation, met his end after an irate mob lynched him in an act of jungle justice. He was burnt to death by an angry mob at Finger bus-stop on Lagos-Badagry expressway.

It is gradually becoming a trend that Lagosians no longer want to take suspects to the police station. They beat the suspect to death with stick and anything in sight or simply burn the person to death. At the shout of "thief" on Lagos street, hell will be let loose and the suspect may never live to tell the story.

Nigerians react

The development has generated mixed reactions from Nigerians. Some believe that it was necessary while some say it was barbaric and unlawful. Supporting jungle justice, a young man, Ife Deola Animasheun said that since the police cannot protect them, they have to protect themselves by showing criminals that they are not leaving anything

to law and incompetent policemen.

"They need to be killed immediately, the law might set them free and they will be on the street to commit more crimes, even go after the persons who reported them to the police. In this country, there is no witness protection and life of the common people are worth nothing to the government," he stated.

Likewise, Ogbonna said that suspected criminals need to be killed on the spot once the offence is confirmed. "These men do not have pity for the victims, I have been a victim of robbery operation and I know how I was treated, they treat you like cockroach. So, I say kill them all."

There are other people who believe that the law should take its full course either wrongly or rightly. Ada Omale believes that the alleged criminals need to have second chance and be found guilty by law.

"They are humans, they might have committed one or two crimes that have put them in the position, they are citizens and so they deserve to experience the harsh or soft side of the law. If we take to jungle justice, we will kill an innocent man accused by a reckless person," Omale stated.

Like Omale, Eddidong Ikot, a lawyer argued that it was unlawful and criminal to take another person's life in the name of jungle justice. He countered that it was not in the place of the citizens to carry out execution of suspects.

"Jungle justice is meant for the jungle and not for a city. Not even in a civilised country. Nigeria is supposed to have gone beyond this level.

The situation in the state has left family of the victims with no choice but to accept the fact that their loved ones were killed unjustly. According to Nuru's father, Seun, the death of his son was a tragedy but he has left everything to God. He said, he has accepted his fate and left government to take charge. Seun said he could not vouch that his son was not at fault but does not agree with how he was killed.

"I cant vouch for my son, I might say he was a good boy and you have other side of him, but I know how he died has been destined by God", he stated.

Mob attack is criminal - Police

Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Fatai Owoyemi told *Saturday Sun* that the police frown at the spate of jungle justice going on in parts of the state. He said though some of the lynched victims were wanted notorious robbers, they did not deserve to be killed unjustly.

"We frown at these killings and we want the people to know that it is a crime to take life. We pray you all to report to the police anytime any suspect is caught", he stressed.