

OUR VISION

To build a newspaper organisation anchored on the sanctity of truth.

OUR MISSION

To publish a newspaper of superior value, upholding the fundamental ethics of journalism: balanced reporting, fairness, accuracy and objectivity.

Sanctity of Truth
New Telegraph
Nigeria's most authoritative newspaper in politics and business

Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon and the truth
- Buddha

One more killer vigilante

While celebrations were going on in Abia State over the successful conduct of the gubernatorial elections, Umuahia was darkened by the murder in cold blood of Izuchukwu Mbakwe by a member of the Vigilante Services.

Mbakwe arrived at his duty post in one of the eateries in town only to be accosted by the Internal Auditor who accused him of stealing a mobile phone belonging to the organisation. Unable to extract confession from the accused, the organisation invited the Abia State Vigilante Services.

Mbakwe was stripped and beaten to a pulp. Not satisfied, a vigilante shot him in the leg. As if that was not enough, another shot was released and the bullet hit Mbakwe's lap. When it dawned on the perpetrators that the situation would end in death, they tried to escape from the scene.

The gunshots attracted passers-by who joined with some of the diners to stop the shooter from escaping with his colleagues. While this was happening, Mbakwe lay on the floor bleeding. By the time he was rushed to the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia there was little life left.

As the body was wheeled into the morgue, news came that the phone was not missing after all. Apparently, someone had taken it to a charging point in one of the offices in the complex. The phone, a lifeless object, was intact receiving power and life was snuffed out of a

living soul.

There must be something with Abia Vigilante Services and Fast Food joints. In 2016 one of their operatives turned a birthday party in Aba to a theatre of weeping. The lady whose day it was became a dead body when she went out of the eatery to find out who was scaring her guests with gunshots.

The proliferation of different bands of local security outfits has contributed to bloodletting in all parts of the country since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999. Some of them, with state backing, emerged in the first place to stem the tide of crime.

Emboldened by state sponsorship, some of the operatives resorted to extra judicial killings and went as far as apprehending, detaining, trying and executing perceived criminals without recourse to the law. In some cases, the police looked on helplessly.

In Abia, Imo and Anambra states, the dreaded 'Bakassi Boys' moved about with automatic weapons, machetes and clubs and decapitated alleged robbers. On November 4, 2000, Eddy Okeke, a

religious leader from Nawgu was arrested. A summary execution was carried out five days later.

Onitsha witnessed the gory beheading of Okwudili Ndiwe, alias 'Derico'. He was fingered as too dangerous to walk free. July 9, 2001 was his last day on Earth. Twenty five persons

died at Ariaria Market, Aba when traders clashed with the Bakassi Boys for descending on a shoe maker for late payment of rent.

In August 2001, the Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), which held sway in the South-West geo political zone, crucified Akanni Arikuyeri in the very hot Idi-Oro part of Mushin, Lagos. He was accused of killing some policemen and OPC operatives and was consequently apprehended and nailed to a cross.

The police did try to reign in the Bakassi Boys. In February 2001, 46 members of the group were arrested in Imo State for setting up illegal detention camps, killing innocent persons in the streets without proper investigation and carrying prohibited arms. In Lagos they trailed some OPC members to St. Peters Anglican Church, Idimu and shot some of them who took

refuge near the altar.

The emergence of quasi forces has not helped the security situation in the country. From the Bakassi Boys and OPC, other groups took over. In the North, Boko Haram exploded with all savagery. Many of them use militancy as cover, like in the Niger Delta.

In all these, the government has not guaranteed the safety of citizens by coming hard on these groups. During the last elections, some politicians worked hand in hand with them especially in areas with infractions.

Questions are being asked if some of these groups fuel insurgency in the country considering the manner of killings and the lull in their activities during the elections. With elections over, the government must enforce laws against illegal possession of weapons.

Mbakwe was not a criminal. One account said he returned from Dubai and was working to save some money for another trip to the UAE. There are allegations that he was owed five months' salary.

The proper thing to have done was to have invited the police if Mbakwe was suspected to have stolen a phone. That was not done. The young man was not given an opportunity to even defend himself before he was brutally murdered. This case must not be swept under the carpet. We call for proper investigation of the dastardly act and prosecution of whoever was involved.

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