



INTERROGATING THE QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THE UROMI KILLINGS

INTRODUCTION

Addressing the questions surrounding the Uromi killings requires careful analysis of available information and context surrounding the incident. In the recent events surrounding the extrajudicial killing of alleged hunters in Uromi, Edo State we are confronted with a grave violation of human rights and a stark reminder of the urgent need for accountability in law enforcement practices. This incident not only reflects a barbaric action taken without justification but also represents a significant erosion of the fundamental rights to life and dignity for all individuals involved.

What matters to everyone at this point should not be the correct identities of the victims, whether they were hunters or suspected criminals as alleged. The concern should be that jungle justice and any form of extra judicial killings should be condemned. Our law is definitely not in support of jungle justice. The superior courts in Nigeria have made pronouncements on illegality of jungle in a plethora of cases: See the case of **OMAH V THE STATE (2017) LEPLR – 42745 CA** it was held that –

“When a criminal act is done by several persons in furtherance of the common intention of all, each of such persons is liable for the act in the same manner as if it were done by him alone”

BACKGROUND

Uromi, a semi-urban town and the headquarters of Esan North-East Local Government in Edo State, Nigeria, has a history of coexistence between the local Edo people and various ethnic groups, including Fulani herders.

However, the relationships have often been marked by tension primarily due to competition over land and resources, particularly as agricultural practices and cattle grazing come into conflict.

Tensions have been exacerbated in recent years by incidents of violence attributed to bandits, many of whom have been reported to operate under the guise of herding communities. Previous altercations, clashes, and criminal activities have laid the groundwork for the larger conflict that culminated in the massacre. Prior to the recent Uromi massacre, there were multiple reported incidents of killings, kidnappings, and violent confrontations between local farmers and suspected herders. Victims often included locals who were attacked on their farms, with reports highlighting increasing lawlessness in the area.

The local population also faced significant threats to their livelihoods, especially regarding farm security; frequent kidnappings disrupted agricultural activities, and many farmers were reluctant to return to their fields. The destruction of farms not only impacted food security and local economies but also diminished community resilience, as families lost crucial sources of income and food, thereby increasing vulnerability to external threats.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

While some media outlets and community leaders worked to raise awareness about these incidents, the response from local and state governments was often seen as inadequate. Reports indicated a lack of timely intervention and protective measures by authorities, leading to community frustration.

The responses from government authorities have varied but generally included promises of increased security. However, these often fell short of providing immediate safety to the affected communities. There were few concrete measures or resources allocated to develop a sustainable security framework before the escalation in violence. Community needs were frequently overlooked, and many locals felt abandoned by the government. Law enforcement resources, including manpower and equipment, were often insufficient to tackle the magnitude of the violence being faced. Reports suggested that police presence was minimal and reactive rather

than proactive.

EMERGENCE OF VIGILANTE GROUPS AND EXTRA JUDICIAL KILLINGS

The increasing violence and perceived failures of the government to provide security prompted the formation of vigilante groups. These groups were formed out of a necessity for immediate protection and community response to the threats they faced. Vigilante groups sometimes operated in cooperation with local law enforcement; however, this relationship was not always structured. In some cases, these groups were viewed with suspicion, and tensions arose between community-based security efforts and official forces.

The recent killings of alleged hunters in Uromi raised serious concerns about the methods employed by the Vigilante group as a law enforcement group and it has broader societal implications. The unlawful and deliberate killing of individuals by the Vigilante Group in Uromi without due process undermine the rule of law, create an environment of fear, and erode public trust in a group designed to protect citizens.

The extrajudicial killing of these individuals is particularly troubling as it was executed without any clear justification. Members of the community who knew the victims have reported that they were not engaged in any violent activities at the time of their deaths. This absence of evidence or legitimate cause for such drastic measures warrants an immediate and thorough investigation. The premature labeling of these individuals as “hunters” suggests a predetermined narrative that overlooks essential human considerations, reducing the victims to mere scapegoats for larger societal issues.

The actions taken against the alleged hunters constitute a violation of their most basic human rights. The right to life is enshrined in numerous international treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These instruments emphasize that every person has the inherent right to life and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of this right. The denial of this fundamental right to the victims in Uromi represents not only a failure of the state to uphold its legal obligations but also a systemic disregard for

the dignity of individuals.

The brutality of this act must also be contextualized within a larger framework of societal violence and the perceived impunity of law enforcement. Such actions are often rationalized as necessary steps in maintaining order, yet they disproportionately affect marginalized communities and contribute to the cycle of violence and retaliatory actions. By perpetuating a culture where extrajudicial measures are seen as acceptable, we divert attention from the necessary reforms and dialogue required to address the root causes of conflict and crime.

CALL TO ACTION

Key lessons from the Uromi massacre include the importance of proactive governance and consistent dialogues between communities and the state. Effective conflict resolution mechanisms that address underlying grievances are crucial must be put in place.

Possible interventions could involve improving local governance structures, providing community-based conflict resolution training, enhancing police-community relations, and developing resource-sharing agreements between farmers and herders to prevent future tensions.

These insights can facilitate understanding of the complexities surrounding the Uromi massacre and may inform both local and national strategies for mitigating such conflicts in the future. Addressing the root causes and improving governance and community relations are essential for enhancing overall security in the region.

CONCLUSION

The extrajudicial killing of alleged hunters in Uromi is a horrific act that represents a fundamental violation of human rights and a significant threat to the rule of law. Only through accountability, reform, and ongoing dialogue can we hope to construct a future where such injustices do not occur again.

We call on the government to strengthen the law enforcement institutions in the country in such a way to prevent and discourage jungle justice. Similarly, a non discriminatory approach should be utilized to give justice to

past and most recent victims of jungle justice . Offenders involved should be prosecuted in order to discourage future incidents.

Dated this 3rd April, 2025

Signed By

Tesleem Adewuyi, Esq.

Chairman,

NBA Ikeja, Law Reform

And Policies Review Committee

Adeniyi Quadri, Esq.

Chairman, NBA Ikeja Branch