

Security forces, Police have institutionally failed to protect citizens from unlawful killings by Islamists:

HURIWA

The pervasive institutional failures of security agencies and more specifically, the Nigeria Police Force to adequately and much more effectively protect citizens accused of committing the so-called blasphemous offence from unjustified and extrajudicial executions by Islamic fundamentalists in the North has been described as a red flag which signposted the near collapse of the policing institution in Nigeria.

HURIWA said it is unconstitutional for law enforcement agencies and the armed forces to habitually and constantly sabotage the enforcement of the rule of law and bring perpetrators of extrajudicial killings of citizens accused of blasphemy to justice. "It is so very wrong that Nigeria is normalizing the primitive public executions of citizens accused of religious blasphemy as if to say that resorting to self-help measures such as lynching citizens publicly is tolerable. These killings are intolerable and absolutely unconstitutional and must be stopped. Section 33(1) of the 1999 constitution provides that "Every person has a right to life, and no one SHALL be deprive intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of alleged criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria."

HURIWA which condemned the very recent incident of lynching to death of a female food seller over alleged blasphemy in Niger state, spoke against the backdrops of the confirmation of the dastardly crimes of lynch-mob killing of a citizen as confirmed by the Niger State command of the Nigeria Police Force just as the lady simply known as Ammaye, was burnt to death by a mob over an alleged blasphemous utterance against the Islamic faith before security reinforcement could arrive.

HURIWA which called for the sack of the Area commander and the state Commissioner of police for dereliction of duty and for their incapacity to save her life, lamented that the deliberate failures of security agencies to be proactive and respond in good time to save citizens on the verge of being killed, said the systematic public execution of citizens accused of blasphemy has become a pattern. "It is more appropriate to remind security heads that their allegiance first and foremost is to the Constitution of Nigeria and not to their religious sentiments of affiliations.

Spokesman of the Command, Wasiu Abiodun, who confirmed the killing of the food seller by Islamic



extremists in a statement on Sunday, said efforts are ongoing to identify, arrest, and prosecute all those involved in the crime. Ammaye, a food seller, was lynched and set ablaze in Mariga Local Government Area of the state by suspected angry youths over alleged blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad. — — —

According to eyewitnesses, the incident occurred at Kasuwan Garba in the council area, when the lady, a Muslim faithful and well-known food seller, was said to have engaged in an exchange of words with a young man said to be her nephew.

HURIWA in a statement signed by the National Coordinator Comrade Emmanuel Nnadozie Onwubiko said HUMAN RIGHTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA is shocked that the Federal policing institution alongside sister security organizations with significant presence in the 36 states of the Federation and in local government areas have on over one dozen times deliberately allowed religious fanatics to take the law into their hands and have resorted to public executions of citizens accused of blasphemy as if Nigeria has returned to the prehistoric and primitive era when lives were short, miserable, brutish and might was therefore right. HURIWA is also worried by the rise in support for extrajudicial killings by religious fanatics on Social media platforms just as HURIWA observed that government has the obligation to protect and stop the promotion of hate messages by religious fundamentalists using the social media.

HURIWA further condemned the seemingly silent decision by the security agents to allow religious fanatics and killer extremists to enforce brutal and illegal execution of citizens who they unilaterally accuse of blasphemy just as it is regrettable that in all of these cases in many decades, the security operatives have failed to arrest, prosecute and punish the killers who ought to be charged for premeditated murders and executed by firing squads upon conviction.

HURIWA recalled that on 12th of May 2022, a 22-year-old Christian, Deborah Samuel Yakubu, was attacked by her classmates, stoned to death, and her body set on fire. A second-year economics student at the Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto, northern Nigeria, Deborah was accused of having sent a blasphemous message complaining via WhatsApp to her class about the forced introduction of religion into an academic study group. It was upon her return to school following the holidays that classmates led a group to capture her. Witnesses described that "school security and police attempted to rescue the victim but were overwhelmed by the students."

Contrary to Islamic legal norms, the brutal act of mob violence was a summary execution. A statement released

by Sa'idu Mohammad Maccido, the Sokoto State Sultanate Council Secretary, denounced the attack stating: "The Sultanate Council condemns the incident in its totality and has urged the security agencies to bring the perpetrators of the unjustifiable incident to justice." [...] "The Sultanate Council has urged all to remain calm and ensure peaceful co-existence among all people of the state and nation." After the attack, two individuals were arrested for the murder whereupon groups of young rioters – encouraged by adults in the background – attacked two Catholic churches; the vandals destroyed windows at the Holy Family Catholic Cathedral and partially burned the St. Kevin's Catholic Church. HURIWA said that in 2022 June in Abuja a Nigerian man was burned to death by a mob in the capital Abuja following an argument with a Muslim cleric, police said.

Josephine Adeh, police spokesperson for Abuja, said Ahmad Usman had an argument with an unidentified cleric, which turned violent. Police who arrived at the scene took him to hospital where he was declared dead on arrival. "The heated argument degenerated into an outbreak of violence that led to the murder and setting ablaze of Ahmad Usman by the enraged mob mobilized by the clergy numbering about two hundred," the police spokesman for Abuja said.

HURIWA has therefore advocated that the Federal Government should encourage the National Religious Council coordinated by the Sultan of Sokoto and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria and another prominent Roman Catholic Cleric to embark on massive public enlightenment of citizens on the dangers of getting involved in religious motivated mob attacks especially those kind of public execution of citizens accused of committing blasphemy but to ensure that the due process of law take its full course. HURIWA urges the National Orientation Agency and the ministries of Information around Nigeria and especially in the North to educate citizens on the illegality of killing citizens they accuse of blasphemy without the accused persons being taken to the competent court of law recognized by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999, as amended.

HURIWA is advocating the establishment by the police, the DSS and the armed security agencies to set up departments to coordinate speedy response to cases of alleged blasphemy and stop unruly mobs from taking the law into their hands against citizens accused of blasphemy by Islamic fundamentalists. "Allowing a pattern of public execution of citizens to become acceptable and for the police to willfully fail on each occasion to save citizens facing allegations of committing blasphemy by religious fundamentalist is totally unwarranted and unconstitutional.