

# Nigeria's Descent Into Mob Barbarism Must Be Stopped Now

*Says mob killings, public torture and sexual violence are eroding the Constitution and replacing the rule of law with criminal anarchy*

The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has expressed profound outrage over what it describes as the horrifying escalation of mob violence, lynching's, public torture, sexual assaults and degrading treatment of citizens accused of crimes without any form of investigation, due process or judicial determination. HURIWA warns that Nigeria is steadily drifting towards a dangerous culture where suspicion has become a death sentence, accusation has become evidence, and criminal mobs have assumed the constitutional powers of the police, prosecutors and the courts. The rights body says the recent incidents in Plateau, Enugu and Rivers States are not isolated occurrences but disturbing manifestations of a growing national crisis in which organized mobs now routinely inflict brutal violence on fellow citizens while spectators record the atrocities on mobile phones for circulation on social media. This frightening trend, HURIWA notes, represents one of the gravest threats to constitutional democracy, human dignity and public safety since Nigeria's return to democratic rule.

The organization is deeply disturbed that in Jos, a promising young University of Jos graduate and model, Ibrahim Mbaya, reportedly lost his life after being brutally assaulted over an allegation of stealing a mobile phone. In Enugu State, a woman who reportedly fled years of domestic violence allegedly suffered mob torture, multiple sexual assaults and banishment alongside members of her family. In Rivers State, a female suspect accused of involvement in a "one-chance" robbery syndicate was allegedly stripped, sexually assaulted and publicly humiliated by a mob before security personnel intervened. HURIWA declares that none of these allegations—whether theft, robbery or any other offence—can lawfully justify torture, rape, mob assault or extrajudicial killing. The association reminds Nigerians that Section 36 of the Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to fair hearing and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty by a competent court of law. No individual, community, vigilante group or gathering of angry persons possesses constitutional authority to investigate, prosecute, convict or execute another citizen.

The organization describes as particularly nauseating the emerging trend in which suspected offenders are stripped naked, physically assaulted, forced to perform degrading acts, compelled to dance before jeering crowds and filmed while undergoing humiliation.

HURIWA says the deliberate recording and celebration of torture on social media reflects a frightening erosion of the nation's moral values and an alarming desensitization to human suffering. "What kind of society derives entertainment from the torture and humiliation of fellow human beings? How did we descend to a point where hundreds of people watch helplessly—or even participate—while innocent or accused persons are beaten, sexually assaulted or murdered in broad daylight?" The association insists that Nigeria must never normalize jungle justice as an acceptable response to criminal allegations. HURIWA therefore calls on the Inspector-General of Police to immediately issue comprehensive operational directives to all state commands to ensure prompt intervention in every reported



case of mob violence and to identify, arrest and prosecute every individual captured in videos participating in mob attacks, sexual assaults and public torture.

The organization also urges the Attorneys-General of the Federation and the states to ensure diligent prosecution of all suspects arrested in connection with these incidents, warning against the familiar pattern whereby perpetrators are arrested amid public outrage only to have their cases quietly abandoned.

HURIWA further calls on the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly to strengthen existing criminal laws dealing with mob violence, torture and extrajudicial punishment, ensuring that perpetrators face severe legal consequences and that victims receive protection, rehabilitation and access to justice. The association commends the security agencies that have commenced investigations into some of the reported incidents but stresses that arrests alone will not restore public confidence unless they culminate in transparent prosecutions and convictions where guilt is established by competent courts. The rights organization equally calls on traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth organizations, market associations and community leaders to intensify public education against jungle justice and reinforce the principle that every accused person must be handed over to law enforcement authorities rather than subjected to mob punishment. HURIWA warns that unless Nigeria decisively confronts this epidemic of mob violence, the country risks institutionalizing a culture where the loudest crowd becomes judge, jury and executioner. "A nation where citizens are lynched over allegations, women are publicly violated under the guise of punishment, and crowds applaud instead of protecting victims cannot claim to be governed by law. Such a nation stands on the precipice of moral and institutional collapse."

The association therefore demands immediate and coordinated action by the Nigeria Police Force, the Federal Ministry of Justice, the National Human Rights Commission, the Nigerian Bar Association, state governments and all relevant institutions to dismantle the growing architecture of mob justice before it consumes more innocent lives. HURIWA reiterates that the fight against crime can never be won by committing greater crimes against suspects. Justice administered outside the law is not justice—it is criminality. Nigeria must choose the rule of law over the rule of the mob.