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## MAIN ARTICLES

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### Proportionality as a Moral Principle in Punishment: Examining the Issue of Lynching/Jungle Justice in Nigeria Through the Lens of I Kings 21:1-19

*A Proporcionalidade como um princípio moral na punição: examinando a questão do linchamento/justiça popular na Nigéria através da lente de I Reis 21:1-19*

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examines I Kings 21:1-19 and its significance to the increasing mob lynching across Nigeria. I Kings 21:1-19 records the narrative of Naboth, who was lynched on the basis of a false allegation against him. Naboth was lynched by stoning. Jungle justice is also known as lynching and arbitrary execution, and it is on the rise in Nigeria. In 2022, Nigeria recorded more than ten cases of jungle justice, with the killing and burning of a female college student on false allegations. The government also seems to be carefree with regard to the arrest and prosecution of those involved in jungle justice, which has given boldness to perpetrators. This study used literary analysis to engage the text and the context. This article argues that the themes presented in I Kings 21:1-15 advocates for both proactive and reactive measures to prevent the occurrence of jungle justice.

**KEYWORDS:** I Kings 21:1-19. Jungle Justice. Naboth. Lynching. Mob Action.

**RESUMO:** Este estudo examina o linchamento em I Reis 21:1-19 e sua relevância para o aumento do linchamento por multidões na Nigéria. I Reis 21:1-19 relata a narrativa de Nabote, que foi linchado com base em uma falsa acusação contra ele. Nabote foi apedrejado até a morte. A maioria das literaturas explicou a nar-

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rativa de Nabote no contexto do meio cultural israelita. No entanto, esta pesquisa contextualiza o pericope no ambiente sociocultural nigeriano. A justiça popular, também conhecida como linchamento e execução arbitrária, está em ascensão na Nigéria. Em 2022, a Nigéria registrou mais de dez casos de justiça popular, com o assassinato e queima de uma estudante universitária com base em falsas acusações. O governo também parece ser despreocupado em relação à prisão e perseguição dos envolvidos na justiça popular, o que encorajou os perpetradores. Este estudo utilizou a análise literária para engajar o texto e o contexto. Este artigo argumenta que os temas apresentados em I Reis 21:1-15 defendem tanto medidas proativas quanto reativas para prevenir a ocorrência da justiça popular.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** I Reis 21:1-19. Justiça popular. Nabote. Linchamento. Ação de multidão.

## *Introduction*

Similar to what transpired during the reign of Ahab, justice in the context of Nigeria is synonymous with words like lynching, jungle justice, and mob attack, while from the elitist viewpoint, it's an avenue for subduing the commoners into a damnable quietude of class submission" (Toheeb, 2016, not paged). Ancient Israelite society saw life as sacred. In the Old Testament, Yahweh made it taboo for anyone's life to be taken (Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17). This is seen when Israel was in the wilderness and even when they settled in Canaan. When Israel operated under the monarchy, taking one's life was seen as a punishable offence by God. Notwithstanding that many narratives in the Old Testament narratives and the aphorisms in the Ketuvim, I Kings 21:1-15 provide invaluable insights for understanding the moral and theological axioms of lynching, otherwise known as jungle justice. I Kings 21:1-15 presents the narrative of Ahab and Naboth. Ahab appears to have been a worshipper of Yahweh, God of Israel, but probably along with other deities. He frequently consulted with Yahweh's prophets, used the divine name in naming his children (Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Athaliah), and did not interfere with the execution of the Baal's priests after the Mount Carmel contest. However, Jezebel's influence in his life overshadowed any significant influence the prophets of the Lord had in his life. He became a prime example of evil (Mic. 6:16) (Chad *et al.*, 2003, p. 37). Ahab, due to his interest in getting the vineyard of Naboth, conspired with his wife, and there was an abuse of the administration of justice. MacLaren noted three types of dangerous characters in the pericope: (1) Ahab, who was wicked and weak; (2) Jezebel, who was wicked and strong and (3) The Elders of Jezreel, who were wicked and subservient (MacLaren, 2020). Naboth was lynched by the supporters of Jezebel without due investigation. This is similar to the happenings in

present Nigerian society, where jungle justice is now the order of the day, coupled with the increased burning of people for reasons which have not been decided by a competent court.

Nigeria has witnessed an increase in the number of people who have been killed through jungle justice. The practice is seen as the quickest way to “show callousness, anarchy, and injustice” (Yusuf, 2021, not paged). For instance, on May 12, 2022, a “22-year-old Deborah was killed in a most horrendous manner and her body set ablaze by Muslim fundamentalists parading as students, who recorded and uploaded their unbelievable barbarism on the social media for the whole world to see” (Amaechi, 2022, not paged). There is also the case of David Imoh, a sound engineer, who was lynched by commercial motorcyclists in the Lekki area of Lagos state, Nigeria (Adelagun, 2022, not paged). For conceptualisation, “jungle justice” is a form of mob rule in which people take the law into their own hands and punish alleged offenders for perceived heinous crimes. Jungle justice is also referred to as mob or street justice and can lead to extra-judicial killing” (Nneka, 2022, not paged). Jungle justice refers to a

situation in which a large disorganised crowd of people resort to violence and destruction in an attempt to ensure fairness and equity for themselves without recourse to the institutionalised public bodies entrusted with this responsibility (Kodah, 2012, not paged).

Jungle justice is also a “practice whereby a mob, usually several dozens or several hundred people, takes the law into their hands in order to injure and kill a person accused of wrongdoing” (Ng’Walalilaal; Kitinya, 2006, p. 36). Recently, many reasons have been given for this increased jungle justice in Nigeria. Most of the victims of jungle justice are innocent of the charges against them. Also, “the lack of public trust in the entire judicial system to properly investigate, prosecute, and sanction criminal behaviours” (Eno-Abasi, 2022, not paged). Jungle justice makes mobs take the lives of people without due judicial process. George Uwaifo, a public analyst, reveals that many times, angry mobs take the law into their hands by exercising mob justice (Eno-Abasi, 2022, not paged). In such situations, the government seems helpless as arrests are rarely carried out, and those who are arrested are often released soon after. The continuation of jungle justice in Nigeria is partly attributable to the near collapse of the judiciary system due to corrupt officials. However, no crime is worth taking human life by mob action. This is the lens of the proportionality. Judgments in the light of proportionality as a moral principle of this kind reflect has the an underlying belief that there is an appropriate amount of punishment for a given crime (Mecklenburg, 2024). Proportionality enables fairness by scaling punishments in relation to the offence (Hirsh; Ashworth, 2005). Unfortunately, the judiciary has deviated from its original mission of justice to

become a centre of injustice. Based on proportionality as a moral principle in punishment, a sentence must reflect the gravity of the offence relative to other offences and the various degrees of seriousness in the range of conduct covered by the offence (Manikis, 2022, not paged). In the same lane, the Nigerian police, who are supposed to maintain law and order and ensure the respect and protection of persons, have not been working well due to their interest in areas where they can get bribes and pervert justice (Samah, 2017, not paged).

This paper proposes a moral-theological praxis to tackle the challenge of jungle justice using I Kings 21:1-15. Thus, this study examines jungle justice in the Nigerian context in light of the narrative in the selected pericope. The methodology used in this study is literary analysis, which involves examining the text and its context by drawing information from various sources such as the Bible, commentaries, and classical literature. Therefore, this study begins with an analysis of I Kings 21:1-15. It then explored the themes that emerge from the text, followed by a discussion on the issue of jungle justice in Nigeria and its causes and implications. Finally, the study applied the moral lessons from the pericope to the Nigerian context.

## ***1 I Kings 21:1-15 in its context***

It is believed that I Kings was written in 970 B.C. The narrative of I and II kings spans 410 years of history. These 410 years witness monumental changes within the nation of Israel, including the kingdom's division in 930 BC., the height of monarchy under Solomon (970-930 B.C.,) and the exiles of both Israel and Judah (722 BC and 587 BC) (Stabnow, 2006, p. 738). Although the Book of I Kings does not explicitly name its author as the Prophet Jeremiah, much scholarly literature attests to this (JobJOB, 2006, p. 12006). The "Book of I Kings was likely written between 560 and 540 B.C" (Gotquestions, 2022, not paged). Also, the books consist of a first edition from the late 7th century BCE and a second and final edition from the mid-6th century BCE (Grabbe, 2016). The Book of I Kings is a sequel to I and II Samuel and begins by tracing Solomon's rise to kingship after the death of David. The story begins with a United Kingdom but ends in a nation divided into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel.

An analysis of the book of Kings explains that Jezebel was a Phoenician princess whose ancestors were Canaanites, and was brought to the northern kingdom of Israel to marry King Ahab who at that time was the son of Omri (I Kings 16:31) (Nadar, 2013, p. P.1). Jezebel married Ahab who was king of Israel. The story (I Kings 21:1-29) begins with King Ahab requesting a farmer by the name of Naboth to sell his vineyard to

him. When Naboth refuses to do so based on religious grounds, Jezebel gets involved by manipulating the Israelite legal system to get Naboth's ancestral land through 'legal means' (Farisani; Farisani, 2004, p. 389).

## ***2 A Moral Theological Analysis of I KINGS 21:1-15***

A literal reading of the pericope reveals this structure regarding jungle justice.

### ***2.1 Disagreement (vv. 1-4)***

Naboth had a vineyard that Ahab envied. Ahab met with Naboth, asking him to sell the land to him, but Naboth refused, and a disagreement ensued between them, which made Ahab sad. In v. 4, Naboth's main argument was that he could not transfer ownership of property belonging to his kin. It also reveals the fundamental conflict that might have taken place between the state and the peasantry regarding the question of ownership of the land (Lemche, 1988, p. 152). In v.4, Ahab was not happy (וְהָאָחָב) with the words of Naboth. The Hebrew word וְהָאָחָב means displeased, vexed, and angry. But "Ahab was not used to not getting what he wanted, and he was heavy in his spirit and displeased as a result of Naboth's refusal. Note the emphasis again on Naboth's refusal to give him what he regarded as 'the inheritance of my fathers'. Ahab knew that inheritance from one's father in Israel is sacrosanct because any inherited property is not expected to be sold to anyone (Pett, 2013, not paged). This shows that the way that Naboth spoke to Ahab made him angry with him.

### ***2.2 The Abuse of the Administration of Justice/False Witnesses (vv. 5-13)***

In v. 5, Jezebel came to the rescue of her husband. In v. 6, Ahab explains what transpired between himself and Naboth, placing himself as the victim in the case. In v.7, Jezebel supported the husband. V. 7 reveals that Jezebel does not "waste any time. A person like Naboth should be killed as soon as possible. She writes letters in the name of Ahab" (She told Ahab that he governs (הַשִּׁעֵת) Israel with authority (הַכִּיּוֹלֵם). Jezebel is a strong, ruthless, and dangerous character (Daniël, 2021, not paged). The Hebrew word הַשִּׁעֵת which means govern, also means commands, statutes, might, and exercise sovereignty. Here, Jezebel the husband to exercise sovereignty, shown in his lynching of Naboth. In v. 10, false allegations were laid against Naboth by Jezebel, who connived with Ahab. Jezebel became the accuser, judge and rejoinder. According to the allegation, Naboth was said to have blasphemed against God and the King, which,

according to Peake, Black, and Rowley (2004), was a treasonable offence Peake, Black, & Rowley. However, Naboth was not allowed to speak, and there was a lack of presumption of innocence. In v. 11, people who did not even know the root of the matter dragged Naboth and stoned him to death. It was mob injustice against Naboth because Naboth was not allowed to defend himself, making it a sham trial. When someone is accused, the person should be given the opportunity to defend himself. Allegations against Naboth were with no evidence; instead of taking him to prison to wait for trial on a later day, when enough proof may have been gathered, Naboth was lynched through stoning.

### ***2.3 God's Justice for the Affirmation of Life (vv. 14-19)***

In v. 14, Naboth was lynched due to the abuse of the justice system during the time of Ahab. Ahab took the laws into his own hands by serving as the executive, legislature, and judiciary in a matter without recourse to competent jurisdiction or a court of competent jurisdiction. In this case, Naboth was lynched based on a false allegation. After his death, his property was taken away from him by Ahab and Jezebel. In v. 17, God was not happy with the lynching of Naboth. God sent Elijah to go and warn Ahab that he had killed Naboth through false accusation and took possession of his property. Thus, Ahab's safety and that of his household was not assured by God anymore. Ahab, just as in contemporary times, sinned, thinking no one would know that a wrong had been committed against an innocent person and God was aware of it (Blackaby, 2006, p. 430). God now says that Ahab will surely pay with his life for the death of Naboth. It is also important to state that such institutions as the court or council of elders were not allowed to exist during the time of Ahab, which made the King an authoritarian. Thus, the court never committed a person to prison (Heaton, 1956, p. 169).

## ***3 The Problem of Jungle Justice in Nigeria: Insights and Analysis***

In this study, jungle justice, lynching, and mob justice are used interchangeably. For example, jungle justice could be defined as the killing of innocent suspects. It is a form of vigilante killing. There are various ways that jungle justice is carried out in Nigeria. These punishments "range from verbal harassment to various levels of physical assault, beating and lynching with the use of stones, rods, bricks, ropes, and fire. It is through jungle justice that the public takes the role of the judiciary by abusing the fundamental human rights of a suspect (Temitope, 2019, p. 83). Jungle justice refers to the extrajudicial death or physical attack of suspected

offenders by a mob without recourse to the established court system. In Nigeria, it is a severe and enduring issue that is exacerbated by a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, sluggish court proceedings, and the perception of ineffective police work. This type of mob violence threatens the rule of law and results in serious violations of human rights, such as summary executions and serious injuries to suspects.

There are so many cases of jungle justice in Nigeria. There was the story of the four students of the University of Port Harcourt who were horribly killed by a mob (Simwa, 2018, not paged). **In fact**, from “January 2019 until the violence in Dei Dei, Abuja on May 18, 2022, there have been 279 reported incidents of jungle justice which left 391 people dead” (Obogo, 2022, not paged). The problem of jungle justice is partly caused by the problems encountered in “the court system, finding it hard to obtain police assistance, and having to pay a bribe to police or court officials are factors that make people more likely to say they would take part in mob action against suspected criminals” (Kakumba, 2020, not paged).

Unfortunately, there is non-prosecution of those who participated in mob action and jungle justice. It is because of this non-prosecution that the increasing menace of jungle justice in Nigeria has been sustained. For instance, those who carried out jungle justice against Deborah Yakubu on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 are yet to be prosecuted in accordance with the law. Furthermore, in situations where jungle justice is being carried out, the police do not respond to calls made to them. Ezea lamented that the non-response to such situations of jungle justice gives room for perpetrators to go scot-free in most cases (Ezea, 2017, not paged). Notwithstanding that the Nigerian constitution provides for the right of every citizen to life, Ezea further lamented that “People who have been involved in these extra-judicial killings have not been prosecuted to get justice for their victims”. The Nigerian constitution provides for the protection of life and provides for capital punishment for anyone who takes another’s life. The irresponsibility and lack of accountability and transparency of the judiciary have sustained the increasing level of jungle justice among Nigerians.

There are many causes of jungle justice in Nigeria. First is the lack of trust in security agencies such as the police, army and Nigerian civil defence. Many Nigerians think that police arrested suspects are frequently freed without being held accountable, sometimes as a result of corruption or ineptitude. Communities turn to self-redress as a result of this mistrust of the judicial system (Amnesty International, 2017). Second is the weak judicial system we have in Nigeria. The corruption in the judiciary has led to distrust of Nigeria on the third tier of government. Long delays, expensive fees, and a backlog of cases are common features of Nigeria’s court system, which gives victims the impression that they are not get-



ting justice (Onyejekwe, 2018). Mob action thus takes the place of what is thought to be an ineffective formal structure. Third, social and economic impediments have sustained the menace of jungle justice in Nigeria. Mob justice is one way that high rates of poverty, unemployment, and inequality express frustration. When governmental actors look absent or ineffectual, communities frequently view this as a means of reducing crime and discouraging criminal activity (Nwaubani 2020).

The consequences of jungle justice in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. Victims of jungle justice lose their right to a fair trial and to life. Human Rights Watch states that innocent persons are frequently falsely accused, beaten, or killed without any proof or trial (Human Rights Watch, 2014). It undermines societal order and gives vigilantism legitimacy as a kind of justice by starting a vicious cycle of violence and lawlessness (Amnesty International, 2017). It increases mistrust between the public and the government, which makes it more difficult for the authorities to seize back control and carry out justice as intended (Iweze, 2019). The issues of jungle justice in Nigeria will be examined through the prism of I Kings 21:1-19. When looking at I Kings 21:1-19, the problems with jungle justice in Nigeria are brought to light by the abuse of authority, corruption, and lack of due process, as demonstrated by King Ahab's unfair seizure of Naboth's vineyard. The passage highlights how, in contemporary circumstances, unbridled authority and mob action sustains injustice and breaches of human rights.

## ***4 Implications of I Kings 21:1-19 in the Context of Nigeria***

Contextualizing 1 Kings 21:1-19 requires paying proper attention to the themes in the pericope that provide limelight to the situation of jungle justice in Nigeria. The historical and cultural contexts of the pericope are important in understanding jungle justice in Nigeria. The following themes are derivable from the text.

### ***4.1 Trampling of other People's rights and rule of Law***

According to Nadar, what transpired between Ahab and Naboth was the confiscation of other people's inheritances and rights (Nadar, 2013). Naboth was denied the right to life and property. Naboth resisted an attempt to defraud him of his property. However, his resistance led to his lynching and death. This is not far from the Nigerian context. In Nigeria, some people who struggled with someone with regard to land, children, women, or any other property were set up, and jungle justice melted on them. Just like Ahab, some Nigerians were killed because their



enemy blew a false alarm. People are lynched to death, which is a denial of their rights. For instance, David Imoh was killed and burnt by some motorcyclists on May 12 in Lekki because he refused to be defrauded of the remaining money that was supposed to be remitted to him (Eniola, 2022, not paged). Nigerians are no longer safe to air their views or stand for their rights or property. When someone struggles over anything with another, especially if the person is of the other religion, religion is used as a cover-up to exterminate the victim. Thus, the rule of law in Nigeria is highly threatened by the increase in religious identity that has led to some of the jungle justice witnessed. Such action violates sections 33, 34, and 36 of the Nigerian Constitution, where the rights to life, to the dignity of the human person, and to a fair hearing are all guaranteed.

#### ***4.2 False Accusation and Corrupt Judicial System***

During the period that Ahab was King of Israel, the king had much political authority to control the outcome of any judgement. This is also the same amount of political mechanidizing going on in present-day Nigeria. Ahab, in his time, felt that Naboth had something he needed and that Naboth, indeed, was not worthy to struggle with anything with him. This was the interpretation that the wife, Jezebel, had placed in his mind. He used his political powers to carry out a state-sponsored jungle justice against Naboth. Thus, one could conclude that there was a corrupt judicial system that manifested during the time of Ahab, king of Israel. It is because of this corrupt judicial system, that opened room for false accusers and accusations. Jezebel, who had no regard for Israel's laws, plotted Naboth's judicial murder on the charge that he had blasphemed against God and the king (I Kings 21:8-14). Naboth's murder evoked God's judgement on Ahab and his family. Hence, the activation of an anger or aggression node brings about the activation of "crime or violence nodes", with which they are related (Higgins, 1996). In Nigeria, the law is meant to protect lives and property. However, politicians, in order to protect their political interests, turn a blind eye to any issue of jungle justice against a person. Sometimes, these politicians will not do anything against the aggressors, probably because the aggressors are from the same political, religious or ethnic groups. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important" (Wells, 2013, not paged). there is a corrupt judicial system in Nigeria, just as Ahab's cabinet was filled with corrupt cabinet matters. Law courts are corrupt to the point that bribes are given for the perversion of justice against the innocent. This was what Jezebel did by bribing those who gave false allegations that Naboth spoke against God and the King. When someone is seen as an obstacle to a person's progress, he or she is falsely accused and sentenced to death. Like the case of the mob action against Deborah in Sokoto state, she was

said to have denied someone friendship, and the person planned to ruin her life. It was the person who raised the allegation that she spoke against Muhammed. In Nigeria, it has gotten to the point where the ordinary man on the street can also, without any corrigible investigation, take the law into their own hands, killing, burning, and beating to death a suspect on the street. Ng'walali and Kitinya lamented that in Nigeria, corruption has "affected the police department, the courts, and other government agencies. Therefore, when a suspected criminal is apprehended and is handed over to the police, many are able to either negotiate their way out using the intricacies of the law or through corruption" (Ng'Walali; Kitinya, 2006). In Nigeria, perpetrators of jungle justice do not trust the current system of order and justice (Simwa, 2018). Also, "no matter how much you preach to a community, they still trust the judgement of their hands more than that of the government (police)" (Yusuf, 2021, not paged). Hence, it becomes an irony of the phrase that two wrongs cannot make a right.

### *4.3 No opportunity to defend yourself*

In jungle justice, the suspect is rarely given an opportunity to defend himself. In the case of Ahab and Naboth, land was a very important property in ancient Israel. The pre-monarchic Israelite community had an agrarian lifestyle centred around agriculture, emphasizing the significance of the land (Farisani; Farisani, 2004, p. 389-403). The elders or individuals belonging to the aristocracy played crucial roles in this societal structure (Bewer, 1962). During the time of Ahab, justice administration in ancient Israel likely followed the principles outlined in the Mosaic law, which included both civil and criminal aspects. In many cases, local judges and elders would handle disputes and legal matters within their communities. These individuals were often respected for their wisdom and knowledge of the community's customs. Serious cases or disputes that could not be resolved at the local level might be brought before a central authority, possibly the king or his appointed officials. This was the situation for Naboth. He refused to give out his land to Ahab because God had already commanded Israelites in Leviticus 25:23 that no land should be sold permanently. Also, in Numbers 36:7, God warned that every Israelite should keep the tribal inheritance of their ancestors. Ahab went against the law by trying to force Ahab to let go of his land. A day of fast was proclaimed, and on the fateful day of judgement, Naboth was brought forward. Witnesses were brought forward, and Naboth was accused by two people of blasphemy against God and against the King. The king was seen as the representative of God on earth. He was not given the opportunity to defend himself against the charges levelled against him by his accusers. Thus, administering justice entails giving the accused person, who in this case is Naboth, the opportunity to adduce evidence in his defense (Farisani & Farisani, 2004). This is similar to what is obtainable in Nigeria, where

people struggle over land and even send mob to take the life of someone who may be a threat to them. Just like during the period of Ahab, the aristocrats do whatever they want and go free, similar to what is happening in present Nigeria where people who carry out mob action are not arrested because they have a connection to someone of the aristocratic family in Nigeria. Two witnesses stood as accusers; in the case of Nigeria, even one witness can lead to jungle justice against a person. For instance, on 11 October 2023, an Abuja based building engineer, Francis Atahh cheated death after a mob descended on him over an allegation of manhood disappearance by a man he had approached to direct him to where he could purchase some building items. Atahh was almost lynched when one Mr Jerry Danladi, whom he had stopped in a vehicle to enquire of where he could buy some building tools in the area, raised alarm that his manhood had disappeared after a brief conversation. Fear, ignorance, and intimidation by accusers are the hallmarks of cases of jungle justice. This is the case in Nigeria, where people who were lynched were not given the opportunity to defend themselves. They were accused and without proper judicial process, lynched by their accusers. The lack of judicial authority or transparency in judgement deliverance has necessitated the increase in jungle justice in Nigeria. Thus, before any punishment was imposed on a person, he/she was afforded an opportunity to defend himself/herself (Deist, 1986). There are also allegations that security forces turn blind to issues of jungle justice, which makes them unpopular when it comes to trust and respect from the masses with the blatant extra-judicial killings going on all over Nigeria (Samah, 2017).

#### ***4.4 The common man as a conspirator***

The common man is commonly involved in jungle justice. This was the situation during Ahab's time. The common men of Israel were brought to accuse Naboth of false accusations. Certain men of worthless character were hired to testify against him, and he had no chance to answer. They accused him of blaspheming God and the king and then dragged him to a place outside the walls of the city, and there, with stones, they beat his body to the ground. This is the same thing as what is obtainable in Nigeria. The youths are the main culprits concerning those who administer jungle justice. Stoning and burning suspects are the most employed modes of killing in Nigeria (Ng'Walali; Kitinya, 2006, p. 36-38). Also, youths who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow are the ones taking laws into their own hands in the killing of innocent Nigerians who have not been found guilty by a court of competent jurisdiction. Yusuf lamented that "the irony of the matter is that while the same people laud politicians that loot the country's treasury and impoverish them, they would be happy to kill another for stealing garri or N10" (Yusuf, 2021, not pagged). This shows that the poor are at a loss during jungle justice, while the rich are

always free to carry on with life no matter how much they have stolen from the national coffers.

The social context that caused the death of Naboth is still in existence in present-day Nigeria. Naboth was lynched by a combined force of elderly and ordinary Israelites. Unfortunately, those people lynched in Nigeria in 2022 have no justifiable reason given by their accusers. On this premise, the themes that the pericope brings to bear in the Nigerian context will be analyzed.

### ***5 The Moral Application of I Kings 21:1-15 to the Crisis of Jungle Justice***

The import of the pericope about the abuse of the administration of justice through jungle justice, as seen in I Kings 21:1-15, and its significance for the Nigerian context cannot be underestimated.

There is a need for the Nigerian government to investigate and prosecute anyone who is found wanting in any act of jungle justice or lynching. Nigerians should not join their hands in beating or stoning someone accused of committing a crime. Instead, Nigerians should ensure that they insist that anyone accused should be taken to the police for proper investigation. Whenever there is a call for the lynching of anyone, individuals should ask questions and advise others around them on the need for the involvement of security agencies rather than participate in lynching one to death. The idea that no one is above the law is reinforced by looking into and prosecuting offenders. Because it circumvents official legal channels and denies suspects their right to a fair trial, jungle justice is by its very nature extrajudicial. The government can show that it is committed to maintaining the rule of law and making sure that justice is served fairly by launching forceful legal action. The act of prosecuting someone discourages others from participating in mob justice. When offenders are not prosecuted, it sends a message of impunity and may inspire others to commit the same crimes under the mistaken impression that there won't be any repercussions from the law. One way to lessen the likelihood of such activities is to set a clear precedence for their punishment.

Nigerian judges also need to discharge their duties without fear or favour. Those who are not guilty of their accusation should be set free, and those who are guilty should be made to face the law accordingly. Some Nigerians were lynched through arbitrary confiscation. The demand that Nigerian judges carry out their responsibilities "without fear or favour" emphasises how crucial judicial independence and integrity are to maintaining the rule of law and maintaining justice. Judges contribute to the

advancement of the rule of law and public confidence in the judiciary when they are unbiased and act without giving in to outside pressure. Judges must follow the law and the facts of each case exclusively; they cannot be swayed by social norms, political influences, or personal prejudices. Justice is damaged and unfair decisions that threaten the credibility of the legal system result from judges who are influenced by fear of consequences or by partiality towards specific people or groups. The government should protect the lives and property of Nigerians by avoiding delays in the prosecution of culprits of jungle justice. The Nigerian judiciary should not emulate the corrupt judicial practice that led to Naboth's death. They should dispense justice without fear or favour to the peasants and the rich.

Due to the way that the Nigerian police have carried out extrajudicial killings without any consequences, ordinary Nigerians have engaged in this act of lynching. For the Nigerian police to rebuild public confidence, protect human rights, and bolster the rule of law, they must bring charges against personnel implicated in extrajudicial executions. When law enforcement personnel kill suspects or civilians without following the proper legal procedures, it is known as an extrajudicial killing. In addition to breaking both domestic and international human rights rules, this conduct damages the reputation of the police and the criminal justice system as a whole. A culture of impunity, in which police feel they can misuse their authority without suffering penalties, is facilitated by a lack of accountability for police misbehavior. The police force's discipline is being undermined by this circumstance, which encourages further infractions. By holding offenders accountable and creating a precedent that such behavior will not be accepted, prosecuting offenders encourages professionalism and commitment to moral principles. Nigerian police should start prosecuting officers who have engaged in extrajudicial killings. This will deter ordinary Nigerians from participating in mob lynching.

Churches should also start preaching sermons that will sensitize the youths on the dangers of jungle justice and the need to respect the laws of the land. In their communities, churches have a special role and responsibility to mould beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Preaching sermons that highlight respect for the rules of the land and warn against the risks of jungle justice can assist young people develop new perspectives and foster a culture that values justice, non-violence, and respect for human rights. Churches have a significant influence on the moral and ethical lessons that shape behavior. They can employ biblical allusions to emphasize the sanctity of life, the significance of due process, and the worth of mercy and forgiveness by discussing jungle justice. This is consistent with Christian beliefs on justice, which support treating people fairly and discourage breaking the law on one's own. Youths who hear sermons that highlight these ideals may be deterred from using mob violence. This can also be done through radio, TV and other social media outlets.

## Conclusion

The issue of jungle justice connotes bearing false witness and killing with regard to the context of this article. Unfortunately, just like what happened during the time of Ahab, Nigerian society is bedeviled with these anomalies. Also, “those who support jungle justice also hold that its frequent application is the best way to achieve their rights in society” (Samah, 2017, not paged). Such acts were tolerated in ancient Israel, and the perpetrators and collaborators were both punished. Using I Kings 21:1-15 to analyse the problem of lynching and jungle justice in Nigeria reveal how abuses of authority, contempt for due process, and social collaboration with violence can result in egregious injustices. Like in Naboth’s account, when the powerful used mob action and false allegations to further their own agendas, jungle justice in Nigeria frequently stems from an inefficient legal system that allows the powerful to subvert or manipulate the rule of law. It is important to state that any “society that tolerates such barbaric conduct clearly shows the level of its judicial development and that is very clear evidence of a failed state (Ojukwu, 2022, not paged). The Nigerian government should start the prosecution of those found wanting for participating in jungle justice and also officers of the Nigerian police and judiciary should not be spared.

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