

Assessment of the Dilemma of Insecurity and the Proliferation of Security Agencies in Southeastern Nigeria and its Implications for SDG-16: A focus on Anambra State

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Abstract

This study examined the insecurity and the paradoxical narrative of the proliferation of security agencies in Anambra State, Nigeria, and their implications for SDG 16. The ugly upsurge of various dimensions of insecurity in Anambra State has made it hostile and unbearable for every human endeavour. In a bold move to tackle the rising insecurity in Anambra State, Governor Chukwuma Soludo unveiled the Anambra Homeland Security Law 2025 and launched a 2000-strong special security operation code-named “Udo Ga-Achi”. This initiative that expected to bring succor to the residents of the state, has received mixed reactions. The specific objectives of this study were to identify positive outcomes of the security agencies and unravel the adverse effects of their operations on the attainment of SDG -16. This study was anchored on Human Security and State Crime Theories. The researchers employed a desktop research design. Methods of data analysis were content analysis and ordinary historical analysis. The findings showed that the security agencies have had positive impacts in the fight against insecurity. More so, the study revealed that the operations of the security agencies have had adverse effects on humanity. Finally, practical policy options were put forward by the study.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Security Agencies, SDG 16, and Anambra State.*

INTRODUCTION

Insecurity is a global phenomenon and as old as human existence, though more prominent in developing nations like Nigeria. It revolves around being open to threats and danger, breach of peace, feelings of vulnerability, inadequacy, and physical/economic unsafety. Nigeria, like many other African countries, is experiencing different forms of insecurity.

Nigeria has different security architectures in a bid to protect the lives and properties of its citizens. For instance, Section 214 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides for the existence of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) with the exclusive responsibility of internal security across Nigeria. The Nigerian police force, a centralized institution, relies on a staff strength of about 371,800 personnel to provide security for a population of over 220 million people from more than 300 ethnic groups and over 500 languages (Green, 2023). The performance and services of NPF are far less than desired and expected by the citizens as regards the protection of lives and properties. The abysmal performance has been attributed to various factors such as shortage of personnel, inadequate funding, poor remuneration, dearth of modern equipment, weak accountability mechanism, and pervasive corruption, among other factors, which have greatly inhibited the capacity of the Police to maintain internal security (Agbibo, 2013; Akinyetun, 2016; Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019; Kwaja, 2020; Iran Press, 2022). Other security architectures in Nigeria with distinct mandates include: the

Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), and various paramilitary organizations.

Over the past decade, Nigeria's security landscape has deteriorated into a complex patchwork of insurgencies, banditry, gangsterism, state-sponsored violence, and secessionist movements. From Boko Haram's evolving tactics in the north-east to the resurgent Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the south-east, each region now faces a diverse array of security threats. Specifically, Ezeuzo in Chukwujama (2024) postulated that insecurity threats in Nigeria include discomfort from theft, armed robbery, kidnapping, contract assassination, constant invasion of communities, property vandalism, social injustice, and rising cost of living. The country is currently ranked sixth on the Global Terrorism Index, rising from eighth in 2022-24, after experiencing a 34 percent year-on-year increase in terrorism-related deaths (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2025). This is in spite of the massive investment in the Nigerian security sector.

Realistically, the citizens' trust in formal security institutions has plummeted. Extrajudicial killings, misinformation, and suppression of legitimate protests have fueled widespread resentment (Peoples Gazette, 2023; Premium Times, 2024). Moreover, the "commodification of security" has created stark inequities in security, where the wealthy can buy private protection, while ordinary citizens are left vulnerable (Amao, 2020; Sanda, 2020). For example, even as state security forces remain under-resourced, over 150,000 police officers are redirected to the protection of elites (Daily Trust, 2018).

Amidst growing insecurity, some governors, civil society organizations, and opinion leaders have repeatedly called for the establishment of State Police and other community-led approaches that can complement overstretched formal security services to nip insecurity in the bud. Despite this proliferation of security agencies, there is still a clear concern about how these structures act within the ambit of their jurisdictions and the rule of law.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Anambra State, one of the states in Nigeria's South-East region, has had its fair share of insecurity incidents since its creation. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the most common form of insecurity was communal clashes resulting from land disputes. Prominent among these clashes were the Aguleri – Umuleri communal war of the early 1990s and the Anaku – Omor land dispute. It is said that during the ceasefire periods in the clashes between the two communities, mercenaries would return home and start criminal activities with arms in their possession.

In the past decade, the insecurity in Anambra State has taken different devastating dimensions with massive threats and negative impacts on the socio-economic development of the state and the general well-being of the residents. The State has experienced communal clashes, political violence, criminal activities, farmer-herder conflicts, cultism, police brutality, extrajudicial killings, secessionist agitations, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and ritual killing. The state recorded 952 fatalities from security incidents between 2013 and 2023 (Onuoha & Onuoha, 2025).

The imprecise course for the escalation of insecurity in Anambra makes it more difficult to tackle. While the incident on the 6th of August 2017 at ST. Philips Catholic Church Ozubulu, Anambra State, where unknown gunmen attacked worshippers, was allegedly attributed to the

fallout of drug business among some indigenes of the community in South Africa; the killing of police and other security agencies, and burning of police stations and vehicles were attributed to the quest for Biafra and pressure to release Mazi Nnamdi Kalu. More so, the abduction and killing of Justice Azuka, who represents Onitsha North Constituency in the State House of Assembly, was ascribed to be a political issue. The massacre of mourners at a burial in Ebenebe, Awka North, in February 2022 was alleged to be a cult war. All these have created a severe crisis, abandonment of ancestral homes, crippling development, and hindering the SDG 16 goals of peace and justice.

This precarious situation propelled Governor Soludo in 2025 to inaugurate Operation Udo Ga-Achi, which is a specialized security operation launched to combat kidnappings and violent crime. Anambra Homeland Security Law was established to restructure the state's local vigilante architecture (including the Agunchemba force) and integrate AI-powered CCTV surveillance. The Anti-Touting Squad (SASA): tasked with clearing out street-level extortion and touting across major commercial hubs like Onitsha. This brought tremendous hope and a sigh of relief to all residents of Anambra State towards the safety of their lives and properties. Consequently, the specific objectives of this study were to identify positive outcomes of the security agencies and unravel the adverse effects of their operations on the attainment of SDG -16

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The Concept of Insecurity

The complexity of what constitutes insecurity is equally reflected in its definitions from various researchers. It is often understood as the absence of safety or stability within a state or society, manifesting in various forms, such as physical violence, economic deprivation, or political instability (Wabueze & Eyina, 2021). Scholars perceive insecurity as a worrisome problem troubling the safety of properties and the lives of the citizens of a country (Chioke & Umeokafor, 2023). Insecurity is a hydra-headed monster; its prevalence endangers life, puts valuable properties in harm's way, triggers socio-cultural dislocation, and slows down the pace of socioeconomic development (Mathias and Atta, 2025). Insecurity is a state of vulnerability that arises when individuals, communities, or states lack the capacity to secure themselves from physical, economic, or political threats. It involves both immediate, tangible dangers and underlying structural factors such as poor governance, inequality, and external pressures, which collectively undermine societal stability and national cohesion (Nathaniel and Kenigua, 2025). Insecurity is a condition of worry or anxiety stemming from a deficiency of protection, which can be examined from two viewpoints. Insecurity refers to the condition of being vulnerable or exposed to risk, which is defined as the susceptibility to harm or injury (Akindoyin and Obafemi, 2025). From the above views of various scholars on the concept of insecurity, it can be deduced that insecurity is multifaceted. It involves a threat to life, property, and every other factor that has the potency to trigger insecurity.

Sustainable Development Goal 16: An Overview

The Sustainable Development Goals are inherently interconnected, with each goal dependent on the others for its success. SDG 16 can be regarded as the soul of all SDGs. SDG 16 is the fundamental precondition for accelerating the implementation of other SDGs (Hope in Singh & Singh, 2024). SDG 16, which focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies by ensuring the effective existence of peace, justice, and strong institutions. The dimensions of

SDG 16 with the strongest interlinkages are ensuring participatory decision-making (SDG 16.7), justice (SDG 16.3), reducing arms flows and organized crime (SDG 16.4), building transparent institutions (SDG 16.6), reducing corruption (SDG 16.5), and ensuring peace (SDG 16.1). These focus areas show significant interlinkages with several other SDGs, underscoring the crucial role of rights, participation, representation, and the rule of law in achieving sustainable development and addressing various interconnected challenges (Stacey, 2024). Lin & Spaulding (2022) emphasized that SDG 16 emphasizes three significant aims, i.e., peace, justice, and strong institutions. Strong institutions are an embedded prerequisite for maintaining peace and justice within society. Strong institutions are necessary to enforce justice, ensure peace, and enhance sustainable development. Strong rule of law, transparent institutions, respect for fundamental rights, and protection against crime are necessary to peaceful and inclusive societies. They are the cornerstone to achieving the other 16 SDGs (Advocates for International Development, 2021). The thrust of SDG 16 revolves around peaceful coexistence, access to justice at all levels, and the existence of strong institutions that ought to protect lives and guarantee the well-being of the populace. SDG 16 is fundamental because without peace, justice, and strong institutions, achieving objectives such as ending poverty, ensuring education, or promoting economic growth will remain difficult, if not impossible. On the other hand, truly peaceful and just societies, based on the rule of law, with effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, can protect human rights and drive forward development that is truly sustainable. Today, however, progress towards SDG 16 is lagging. Conflicts, insecurity, weak institutions, corruption, and limited access to justice remain a major threat to development. Too many people are excluded from the protections and opportunities that the law ought to provide for them (Advocates for International Development, 2021).

Current Trend of Insecurity in Anambra State

Anambra State, located in southeastern Nigeria, is recognized for its economic vibrancy and cultural significance. However, like many parts of Nigeria, it has faced significant security challenges over the years. The old format of insecurity that revolved around communal clashes has metamorphosed into multidimensional cases. These challenges are linked to issues such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, and, more recently, activities of separatist movements.

Apart from rampant kidnappings and killings by gunmen, suspected ritual activities have been on the rise in the state. Many of those involved in the activities reportedly present themselves as real estate developers and cryptocurrency traders, while others, including students, are said to be engaged in cyber fraud, popularly known as ‘Yahoo Yahoo (Onu, 2025).

The State has increasingly been confronted by attacks by UGM. For instance, on September 27, 2021, gunmen went on a rampage at two locations in the State, killing two persons and wounding many at an APC rally, and setting ablaze a car belonging to a leader of Governor Chukwuma Soludo's group (Ujumadu, 2021). Also, on October 12, 2021, a group of armed men thwarted the scheduled campaign of the All-Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) in Ihiala Local Government Area of the state. The assailants were said to have stormed the area in the morning of that day, shooting sporadically in an attempt to make their way into Odoata Central School – the venue of the rally. Shortly after their arrival, they were engaged by a joint team of security operatives – comprising soldiers and policemen – drafted to the venue to prevent any form of breakdown of law and order. A soldier was killed during the shootout (Ajibola, 2021). Also, Dr. Chike Akunyili, the widower of late Prof. Dora Akunyili, was assassinated by gunmen, believed to be UGM, on September 29, 2021, while returning to Enugu from an event in Onitsha, Anambra State, where his late wife was given a posthumous

award (Okafor, 2021). In addition, IPOB's violent enforcement of SaH is very pronounced in Anambra State. This has particularly affected the security of the lives of residents in the state. For instance, in May 2022, militants reportedly associated with IPOB murdered 14 civilians in a series of attacks in the state. Among the victims were a pregnant woman and children (Akinwotu, 2022).

Cultism is another form of insecurity in Anambra State. Cult activities were originally predominant in areas where there are higher institutions due to the presence of students. This trend has changed in Anambra State. Incidents of cultism are reported across all parts of the student body. Nwokedi et al. (2025) asserted that cult killings have plagued Anambra State for years, with Awka being a hotspot. Rival cult groups have been engaged in a deadly turf war, and the resulting violence has claimed numerous lives, leaving families shattered and the community traumatized. For instance, on 22 February 2022, at least 20 persons were killed when gunmen suspected to be cultists invaded a burial in Ebenebe, Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State. They also desecrated the corpse of a suspected member, identified as Ozo, that had been prepared for burial (Odinye, 2022). Similarly, some gunmen, suspected to be cultists, have killed at least four people while 15 others sustained "serious" gunshot injuries at a burial event in Ezi Village, Ogidi, a community in Idemili North Local Government Area of the state (Ugwu, 2025). The suspicion in the community is that those who attacked were rival members of another cult group who came for a revenge mission (Obianeri, 2025). The Anambra State Police Command has confirmed the killing of two persons and the abduction of two others during a cult-related shooting in Oko, in the Orumba North Local Government Area of the state. Two other persons, including a female, were rescued from the scene of the shooting and are currently receiving treatment in a hospital (Anichukwueze, 2025). At least six youths were allegedly killed in Awka, the capital of Anambra State, on Easter Sunday, during a clash between rival cults. It was gathered that while some were felled at the Okpuno area, some others were killed around Dike Street, near Eke Awka market, while another happened at the Obinagu area (Eleke, 2024). On 20th October 2024, no fewer than eight lives were lost when a group of suspected armed cultists engaged each other in a supremacy gun battle in Nibo, Awka South Local Government Area. Also, another clash between rival cult groups reportedly claimed three other lives in Nodu Village of Okpuno community, a suburb of the northern border of Awka (Njoku, 2024).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researchers anchored this study on Human Security Theory and State Crime Theory. Human Security theory shifts the focus of global security from the military defense of state borders to the protection of individuals. Popularized by the United Nations Development Programme, it argues that true global stability requires safeguarding people from pervasive threats to their survival, livelihood, and dignity. On the other hand, the State crime theory, which is a subfield of criminology, examines illegal or socially injurious acts committed by or with the complicity of governments in pursuit of their organizational goals. It focuses on crimes committed by government officials or state institutions when acting outside legal procedures. Human Security Theory is designed to ensure the overall security of people, such as personal, community, and political security. This explains why various nations and sub-national governments allocate substantial resources in their budgets for security. In cases where insecurity overwhelms the national security architecture, independent nations seek assistance from other sovereign nations or international organizations. The action of the Anambra State government to look beyond the conventional state security in the fight against insecurity and

establish other local security agents to complement their efforts signals concerted efforts to ensure human security in the state. Their mandates were to ensure the protection of lives and properties, restore peace and order, eradicate extortion, stem kidnapping and ritual cases, etc. Unfortunately, the actions of these security outfits in the course of discharging their responsibilities constitute state crimes. These actions include poor professionalism, extrajudicial killings, abuse of fundamental human rights, poor or lack of investigation, etc. This poses a dilemma to residents of the state who wish to be protected and ensure their security by the security agencies, but regrettably are abused, harassed, and even lose their lives in the hands of the same security outfits.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed a desktop research design, a framework for gathering and analyzing existing data, reports, and literature for this study. The study adopts a qualitative approach, relying on content analysis and ordinary historical analysis of secondary data, including media reports, policy documents, and verified social media evidence. The design and methods adopted for this study are justified because the data needed for this study are already published.

DATA PRESENTATION, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION

• Positive Outcomes of the Local Security Agencies in Anambra State

The end part of Governor Willie Obiano's administration and the first two years of Governor Chukwuma Soludo's administration were characterized by a flurry of incidents of different forms of insecurity. Many communities were displaced from their ancestral homes, while many indigenes refused to visit their communities. There were high cases of assassination, including some prominent people in the state, and the disappearance of human parts. This formed the basis of unveiling the Anambra Homeland Security Law 2025 and launching a 2000-strong special security operation code-named “Udo Ga-Achi.”



Fig 1: Camp of gunmen at the Achalla Camp in Awka North Local Government Area of the state

Source: Eboh (2025).

Since the commencement of their operations, the security outfit there has achieved commendable successes in the fight against insecurity in Anambra state. Most camps of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) that have been terrorizing the state were successfully busted; arrests were made, and various ammunition were recovered. For Instance, the officers of the Operation Udo Ga-Achi security outfit raided and dismantled a notorious camp of gunmen at the Achalla Camp in Awka North Local Government Area of the state, reportedly following a credible intelligence on the activities and the hideouts of the said criminal elements.

Many sophisticated weapons (guns, bombs, live ammunition, etc.) were recovered from the operation (Eboh, 2025). Similarly, The security outfit equally channeled their operations to hotels in the state, where intelligence showed that kidnappers, ritualists, and cybercrime perpetrators reside in disguise to carry out their crimes. Agunechemba security outfit conducted a coordinated operation in a popular hotel located in Oba, Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, resulting in the arrest of several individuals, including alleged kidnappers and sex workers. The security squad discovered no fewer than 30 graves, shrines, and numerous charms within the premises. It was gathered that the uncovered graves contained decayed bodies (Onu, 2025).

Finding:

Based on the data presented above, this study found that the security agencies have impacted positively in the fight against insecurity, such as arresting criminals, identifying and busting criminal hideouts, reduction in kidnapping cases, etc.

Discussion

The fight against insecurity in any society is more of an alleviation than an eradication. This is because, as society evolves, so too does crime follow the same suit. Despite the current reports of insecurity in Anambra State, the local security outfits have played significant roles in the fight against insecurity since the commencement of their operation in the state.

The presence of camps and consistent attacks by Unknown Gun Men (UGM) forced many people in some communities in Anambra state, such as Ukpok, Utu, both in Nnewi South, as well as Lilu, Orsumoghu, Mbosi, Uli, all in Ihiala Local Government Area, and Ogbuka and Owerre Ezukala that shared a boundary with Umunneochi, Abia State, to desert their homes for over years. The operations of the local security outfits restored life and brought the people back to the communities after five years of exile (Okoli & Iheaka, 2025). Similarly, Chukindi (2025) stated that Indigenes of communities within Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State, who fled their homes over the activities of insurgents posing as freedom fighters, have started returning home after a series of Operation Udo ka Achi interventions.

The local security equally recorded success in busting the camps of criminal elements and arresting kidnappers. Uzor (2025) stated that it has not been the best of times for unknown gunmen who have been terrorizing various parts of Anambra State, as offensive attacks from the Anambra Security Outfit (Agunechemba) have forced many of them to flee their camps, abandoning their loot and property. Gunmen operating in Umunze Community in Orumba South local government area of the state have also fled their camps following the arrest of the kidnap kingpins in the area. The Security Squad also smashed an armoury suspected to belong to a deadly kidnap gang operating within the Enugu- Agidi axis in Njikoka local government area. Statistics released on kidnapping across the country by The Cable Index, covering the period from July 2024 to June 2025, showed that Anambra was among the states with the least kidnap cases, with only 63 cases, alongside Adamawa with the same number (Eleke, 2025).

•Adverse Effects of the Operations of the Local Security Agencies towards the Attainment of SDG -16 in Anambra

The emergence of the Anambra Homeland Security Law, which was established to restructure the state's local vigilante architecture (including the Agunechemba force) and integrate AI-powered CCTV surveillance and Anti-Touting Squad (SASA), birthed huge hope and expectation for total sanitization and repositioning of the state in terms of insecurity and extortion of the residents. The activities of these security outfits have received mixed reactions from the residents. While some residents of the state have applauded the security outfits for their efforts in the fight against insecurity, others have expressed total dissatisfaction with their activities, particularly regarding peace and justice, which are key elements of SDG-16. The residents of the state have experienced and reported various incidents of arbitrary arrest, illegal detention, loss of lives, extreme torture, poor/lack of investigation, undue demolition of properties, etc., in the course of operations of these security outfits.

Many residents of the state have lost their loved ones due to the recklessness and unprofessionalism of the security outfits in the course of the operations. For instance, the brutal murder of Fabian Ugo, a 13-year-old boy, by the operatives of Operation Udo Ga-Achi, attached to the Onitsha South Local Government Area. The only offense of the boy was that he and his friend (Samuel) went to the toilet by the roadside. It was reported that the operatives of Operation Udo Ga-Achi not only killed him, but they had the courage and were so shameless as to collect his Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Card from his pocket when they were forced to evacuate his corpse from the gutter he fell into when they shot him dead. (Nwaiwu, 2025). Similarly, another ugly incident happened at ever-busy Ibeto Junction at Nnewi in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State when an Anambra State security outfit, 'Agunechemba,' shot a woman dead while trying to create a passage for the convoy of the outfit. Eyewitnesses near the scene said motorists were trapped in a gridlock at Ibeto Junction when the convoy of Agunechemba operatives suddenly arrived. "The operatives, in their attempts to clear the way for their patrol vehicles and their convoy, started firing gunshots; and in the process, a road user, simply identified as Chiamaka, got hit by stray bullets and she slumped immediately (Obianer, 2025). One of the most outrageous incidents involving the local security was a shooting incident that claimed the lives of a pregnant woman and four others by the "OCHA Brigade". The OCHA Brigade is a state-run enforcement agency tasked with activities that include clearing illegal structures, enforcing proper waste disposal, ensuring roads remain clear of obstructions like roadside trading, and confiscating products from illegal businesses (Obianer, 2025). One ultimate question begging for an answer is "why will an agency charged with environmental management operate with guns to the extent of shooting inside a crowded market like Onitsha Main Market?"

The manhandling and humiliation of innocent residents by the security operatives has been a recurrent ordeal. The incident of the female National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member, Jennifer Elohor, who was assaulted by local security agents and even threatened with rape and killing for speaking out during the incident, was a clear indication of the violation of people's rights and peace (Okere, 2025). The harassment of the corps members by the security operatives, who appeared masked without any form of identification, denied the corps members the opportunity to reach out to their LGI (Local Government Inspector) and made some derogatory comments, like asking her who gave her the right as a lady to speak to us anyhow, that thing you're trying to cover, we'll see it today. We'll beat you up, we'll rape you, kill you,

and dump you, and nobody can say anything,” is a clear breach of trust on the institution (security operatives).

The mode of operation of the Anti-Touting Squad (SASA), which is also known as “Ndi Akaodo,” who uses a pestle to torture residents who, in most cases, are not guilty of the offence they are accused of, has been totally condemned and rejected by the residents, human rights, and civil society organizations. In describing the unacceptable mode of operation of SASA and its implications, Nwanosike (2025) asserted that “The unleashing of Ndi Aka Odo (pestle carriers) on our ways as task collectors has brought pains to the masses”. The group of boys has unleashed mayhem on the residents. Those in hospitals are not sure of recovering their legs and hands.

The inhumane treatments that these security outfits have meted out to residents of the state instigated a total protest by the residents of the state. Irate youths of Ifite Ogwari, Ayamelum Local Government Area protest was triggered by the death of a young man accused of theft and reportedly beaten to death by members of the Agunechemba security outfit. The youths carried the corpse of the deceased in protest to the office of the security outfit, where houses were allegedly vandalized and an operational vehicle set ablaze. The situation later degenerated into a clash between the protesting youths and security operatives, resulting in the alleged death of two additional persons (Elekwachi, 2026). A similar protest occurred in Amaeze village in Mgbakwu, Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State, where the operatives of the state’s Special Anti-Touting Squad (SASA), triggering outrage and protests in the community, killed A 26-year-old man, the only son of his parents. Chinyeaka IkeAwka residents, mostly youths, marched in their hundreds, waving green leaves and displaying placards with inscriptions such as “Governor Soludo, help us, we don’t want SASA again” and “Disband SASA now.”



Fig 2: Protest by Residents

(Ndeke, 2026).

A more comprehensive protest against the security outfits was the one organized by Youths from the 179 Communities in Anambra state under the umbrella of Anambra State Town Union Council, ASTUC, at Awka, protesting what they described as a plot to dissolve the Agunechemba Security Squad.



Source: Maduforo (2025)

The ASTUC youth President, Hon. Ken Okoli, who led the peaceful protest, however, condemned the 8 members of Agunaechemba spotted in a viral video assaulting a member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Ms Jennifer Elohor, and urged the government to prosecute them accordingly.

One of the major provisions of the Anambra Homeland Security Law 2025 was the immediate demolition of any house where the occupant or occupants are found guilty of any crime, a provision that has received mixed reactions from residents. The major argument of the people is that most of the time, the occupants are tenants and not owners of the property. Also, the owners of the house may reside far away and may not be informed when a particular tenant switches from one business to another. For instance, the demolition of Udoka Golden Point Hotel and Suites, but popularly known as La Cruise Hotel, located along the Onitsha-Owerri Road, and Airtight Guest House and Bar at Y-Junction, Okpuno, in Awka South Local Government Area (Obianeri, 2025, 2026) was described as a hasty action that needed further investigation. Most of these houses and hotels are left in the care of caretakers or managers who may not have information about the occupants.



Fig 3: Demolished Hotels (Udoka Golden Point Hotel and Suites, and Airtight Guest House and Bar)

Finding:

The study revealed that the operations of the security agencies are characterized by poor professionalism, extrajudicial killings, hasty demolition of houses, abuse of fundamental human rights, etc.

Discussion

The efficacy and credibility of Nigeria's security agencies have come under intense scrutiny, especially as the country faces increased security challenges, ranging from insurgency to banditry, kidnapping, and communal clashes. The need for professionalism in the course of discharging duties among the security outfits cannot be overemphasized. Professionalism encompasses specialized knowledge, competency, accountability, self-regulation, emotional intelligence, politeness, physical appearance, honesty, and integrity. Reports and research have shown that some security agencies have performed below expectations in terms of professionalism. The unprofessionalism of the security agencies has resulted in the infliction of pain upon the offender through coercion (Oluwasanmi, Oluwasanmi & Ojo, 2022). Bello & Mela (2023) asserted that, from its years of military authoritarianism, which witnessed the killing of several human rights activists, and since the return to democratic rule, the country's human rights narrative has not changed. Government authorities and law enforcement agents (the police) frequently engage in various human rights violations, notably unlawful killings, torture, ill-treatment of non-criminal suspects, forced evictions, interference with the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association, and violence against women and children, which are widespread across the country.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Globally, nations strive to ensure that law, order, and stability are maintained within their territory. Considering the complex nature and emerging trends in insecurity, particularly in developing nations, it has become difficult, if not impossible, for conventional security architecture like police to effectively tackle the upsurge of insecurity incidents. There is a need for decentralization of security architecture. This accounts for one of the reasons for the clarion call for state policing and empowerment of local vigilantes in Nigeria. This is to enhance localized intelligence gathering and sharing, rapid response, community trust, etc. This study examined the proliferation of local security agencies in Anambra and their effects on SDG 16, which focuses on peace and justice. It was found out that despite some commendable efforts made by the security outfits towards tackling insecurity, the adverse effects of their operations cause much damage to peace, justice, and the general well-being of the residents.

To address these anomalies, the following recommendations are made:

❖ Professional Training for the Security Personnel:

Creation of security outfits, recruitment of young men, equipping them with arms, is not enough in the fight against insecurity. The general assessment of the activities of these security outfits is marred by highly unprofessionalism such as careless handling of arms, nondisclosure of identity, unlawful detention, absence of intelligent investigation, etc. There is an urgent need for a holistic training program on general security management for all local security outfits in the state. Also, there is a need for routine drug tests for all officers to ensure that anybody with arms is not under the influence of drugs that will put the lives of humans at risk.

❖ **Review of Homeland Security Law:**

One of the sections of the Homeland Security Law that needs review is the instant demolition of houses where suspected criminals reside. This is because many landlords who do not reside in the area will lose their houses without having any hand in any crime. Secondly, guest houses are ultimately made for public usage; it will be difficult to know the exact identity and occupation of any guest who comes to the guest house daily. Even if demolition of the house will be part of the sanction, it should come after a comprehensive investigation.

❖ **Proper Prosecution of Default Officers:**

Although a loss of any human being cannot be replaced, there needs to be actions and measures that will pacify the grieving hearts. Officers of any security outfits that are found guilty of any form of brutality and extrajudicial killing should be properly prosecuted publicly enough that the families of the victims of their actions will know as well. It will also serve as a deterrent to other officers.

❖ **Proper identification of security personnel and explicit delimitation of responsibilities amongst security agencies:**

Most times, the security outfits appear masked during arrest or any other form of their task. This makes it difficult to identify a particular officer or security outfit that carried out an operation. Secondly, there is a need to explicitly define where the responsibilities of these security outfits start and end. This is because there are reports of unlawful arrest and detention of residents in an uncompleted building until they pay a certain amount of money.

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