

RE-INTERPRETING DEUTERONOMY 24:7 IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIA'S LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON KIDNAPPING AND RITUAL KILLINGS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to interpret Deuteronomy 24:7 in the context of kidnapping and ritual killings, which have become a growing concern in Nigeria, posing significant threats to security, human rights, and social stability. The rise in these crimes reflects deep-seated socio-economic issues, including poverty, unemployment, and weak law enforcement. Previous works have reviewed Nigerian legal frameworks, such as the Anti-Kidnapping Laws and the Criminal Code, which seek to address these crimes, but enforcement remains a challenge. Despite all efforts, crimes continue to thrive, undermining national security and human dignity. However, little attention was paid to the applicability of the principles in Deuteronomy 24:7 to Nigeria's current legal and social context by analysing the scriptural condemnation of kidnapping and its prescribed severe penalties, can inform and strengthen Nigeria's legal frameworks to combat the intertwined issues of abduction and ritualistic killings. The paper was grounded in the restorative justice framework, which advocates a justice system that restores relationships rather than simply punishes offenders, in line with Nigeria's legal framework and aligns with biblical injunctions on Kidnapping and ritual killings in Nigeria. The paper discovered that the Hebrew terms "*ganab*" (to steal) and "*nephesh*" (soul/person) highlight the gravity of stealing a human being. The Bible presents a moral and legal foundation that aligns with the need for stricter and ethically grounded responses to kidnapping in modern Nigeria. It was discovered that some states impose the death penalty, others rely on life imprisonment, and implementation remains weak due to corruption, poor investigation, and societal complicity. The study therefore concludes and recommends the necessity for stringent legal measures, robust law enforcement, and community engagement to address and eradicate these heinous practices, thereby promoting social justice and restoring public trust in Nigeria's legal institutions.

KEYWORDS: Nigeria's legal framework, Kidnapping, Ritual Killing and Kwara State

INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping and ritual killings have become increasingly alarming issues in Nigeria, posing serious threats to security, human rights, and social stability. According to Ibukunolu (2024), the rise in these crimes reflects deep-rooted socio-economic problems, such as poverty, unemployment, and ineffective law enforcement. Although Nigeria has legal measures in place, like the Anti-Kidnapping Laws and the Criminal Code, enforcing these laws remains a significant hurdle. From a biblical standpoint, Deuteronomy 24:7 condemns kidnapping, especially human trafficking and enslavement, and calls for harsh penalties for those who commit such acts. This study delves into how this scriptural passage relates to Nigeria's legal system, drawing connections between biblical justice and modern legal responses to kidnapping and ritual killings (Johnson & Efebeh, 2023).

As highlighted by Human Rights Watch (2023), Nigeria is facing a troubling increase in kidnapping cases, many of which are tied to ritual killings. These horrific acts not only lead to the tragic loss of innocent lives but also create a climate of fear and insecurity among the people. Despite the presence of legal frameworks, the ongoing nature of these crimes reveals significant challenges in both enforcement and deterrence. Notably, since 2024, the North Centre in Kwara State has experienced several major kidnapping incidents across various local government areas. This disturbing trend emphasizes the urgent need for effective strategies to tackle kidnapping and ritual killings. This study aims to reinterpret Deuteronomy 24:7, which calls for strict penalties for kidnapping, to extract principles that can be relevant to today's Nigerian society. By examining this biblical directive, the research seeks to suggest improvements to Nigeria's legal and social systems to better address and prevent the intertwined issues of kidnapping and ritual killings.

Kidnapping in Nigeria often stems from various motivations, including ritual sacrifice, commercial interests, and political agendas. Ritualism, which refers to a set of established patterns or processes for conducting religious ceremonies, plays a significant role in this context. It's been noted that ritual killings represent a particularly horrific and extreme type of homicide, where perpetrators remove vital organs from their victims for use in so-called "holy" rites that involve human sacrifice. This practice is essentially a blood offering, where a living being is killed as a ritual gift to a deity or spirit, typically with the hope of gaining good fortune or fulfilling a specific request (La Fontaine, 2011). Items used in these sacrifices can include whole or severed human body parts—like heads, genitals, breasts, eyeballs,

intestines, arms, and legs—as well as excavated corpses or their dismembered parts. This study aims to analyse the connection between kidnapping and ritualism, specifically focusing on the prevalence of kidnapping in Ilorin, Kwara State. It will explore the factors driving kidnapping activities in Nigeria and investigate whether ritualism is a contributing factor. Additionally, the study will assess if there is a significant relationship between kidnapping and ritualism in Nigeria, although it will be limited to the Ilorin metropolis in Kwara State.

THEORETICAL REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The paper was grounded in the restorative justice approach. According to John Braithwaite (2002), this framework advocates a justice system that restores relationships rather than simply punishes offenders. Deuteronomy 24:7, which prescribes the death penalty for kidnapping, is viewed not only as punitive but also as restorative, aimed at preserving communal integrity. This theory helps assess whether Nigerian law emphasizes retributive justice or genuinely restores the dignity of victims and communities affected by ritual crimes. This study adopts a qualitative method grounded on the historical-critical exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:7. This study's methodology seeks to bridge Scripture and society, offering a biblically rooted yet legally relevant framework for confronting the dehumanizing realities of kidnapping and ritual killings in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications:

Kidnapping: This is a criminal act involving the unlawful taking and carrying away of a person, either through force or deceit, or the illegal detention of someone against their will.

Ritual Killings: The act of killing someone as a part of a superstitious, religious, or spiritual activity is referred to as a ritual killing. These murders are frequently committed in the hope of gaining favour from gods, spirits, or other supernatural entities, as well as power, money, or protection.

Nigeria Law: This refers to the system of rules, regulations, and legal principles that govern the country of Nigeria. It is derived from multiple sources. The supreme law of the land outlines the structure of government, the rights of citizens, and the legal framework.

DEUTERONOMY 24:7 IN THE LENINGRAD CODEX (HEBREW)

כִּי־יִמָּצָא אִישׁ גֹּנֵב נֶפֶשׁ מֵאֶחָיו מִבְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִתְעַמְרֵבּוּ וּמָכְרוּ וּמָת הַגֹּנֵב וּבְעֵרַת הָרֶעַ מִקִּרְבּוֹ:

Transliteration:

Kî yimmaṣē' 'îš gōnēb nepeš mē'eḥāyw mibbenē yiśrā'el wəhiṭ'ammer-bōw ūmākārōw ūmēt hagannāb ūbi 'artā hārā' miqqirbekā. BibleHub. (n.d.).

English Translation (Literal):

"If a man is found stealing a person from among his brothers, the children of Israel, and deals with him as a slave and sells him, then that thief shall die. And you shall purge the evil from your midst."

Manuscript Variations

Scholars opine that in Masoretic Text (MT), contains the phrase "one of his brothers of the children of Israel" (מֵאֶחָיו מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), emphasizing that the prohibition applies specifically to fellow Israelites. The Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation (circa 3rd–2nd century BCE), generally follows the MT but occasionally differs in wording. It translates the phrase as "one of his brothers from the sons of Israel" (ἐνὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ), which is a literal rendering of the Hebrew (Work, 2009). Besides, Wright (2004) affirms that some manuscripts of the LXX may slightly adjust word order, but there are no significant theological differences. Also, the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS): No direct fragments of Deuteronomy 24:7 are found in the DSS, but other portions of Deuteronomy confirm the general reliability of the MT if a DSS fragment with differences were discovered, it could shed light on whether textual variants existed in earlier Hebrew copies. The Samaritan Pentateuch often harmonizes texts with theological biases, but in this verse, it largely agrees with the MT. Some minor grammatical differences exist, but they do not change the meaning significantly. The Targums (such as Targum Onkelos) render the verse in Aramaic while preserving the same meaning. Some interpretive expansions emphasize the moral aspect of the law (Merrill, 1994).

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF SOME KEYWORDS IN DEUTERONOMY 24:7

This verse addresses the crime of kidnapping and selling a fellow Israelite into slavery, prescribing the death penalty for such an offense. In the Nigerian context, this can be examined in relation to kidnapping, ritual killings, and Nigerian law.

(a) The word כִּי־יִמָּצָא אִישׁ – *ki yimmaṣē' 'îš* which means "If a man is found." This implies an act of discovery, meaning the crime has been detected and proven. The

verb יִמָּשֵׁ (yimmaṣē) is used in passive form, indicating that the crime is not merely suspected but uncovered through investigation (Christensen, 2001).

(b) The Hebrew word גָּנַב – *gōnēb* translates to “stealing.” According to Joseph Owens (1989), the root verb גָּנַב (*ganav*) is used as a qal active participle, meaning “to steal” or “to take by stealth.” In this context, it specifically refers to kidnapping, or abducting a person, rather than stealing property. In the Torah, kidnapping is considered one of the most serious forms of theft because it infringes on a person’s freedom and dignity.

(c) The term מְאֻחָיו – *mē’ehāyw* means “Children of Israel.” Owens (1989) notes that the term מְאֻחָיו *ehāyw* is a masculine plural noun meaning “his brothers,” which emphasizes that this law is meant for the covenant community of Israel. Work (2009) suggests that this indicates that Israelites were expected to look out for one another and betraying that trust is particularly egregious. In Nigeria, we see similar communal expectations in African societies where kinship and social bonds are strong.

(d) The phrase מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – *mibnē yisrā’el* translates to “Children of Israel.” Merrill (1994) points out that this phrase makes it clear that the law pertains to Israelites kidnapping fellow Israelites. Even more troubling is the act of kidnapping for enslavement or selling into slavery, especially when the victim is another Israelite. The broader moral principle is universal: kidnapping anyone is wrong, no matter their nationality.

(e) The term וְהִתְעַמְּרָבוֹ – *wehith’ammēr-bô* means “and treats him as a slave.” The verb הִתְעַמְּרָ *hith’ammēr* is quite rare in the Hebrew Bible, meaning “to oppress,” “to deal harshly with,” or “to exploit.” It suggests severe mistreatment, turning the kidnapped victim into a mere object for profit. In Nigeria, this resonates with cases where kidnapped individuals are exploited

(f) The term וּמָכְרוֹ – *umkāro* translates to “and sells him.” Given Christensen (2001), this act of selling indicates that we’re dealing with more than just abduction; it points to human trafficking. This law sheds light on the harsh economic realities of the ancient world, where people were frequently enslaved after being kidnapped. It also resonates with the modern-day trafficking issues in Nigeria, where victims—especially women and children—are sold into forced labor, sexual slavery, or even for ritualistic purposes (Work, 2009).

(g) The phrase וְמֵת הַגָּנֵב – *ûmēt hagannāb* means “That thief shall die,” indicating that the death penalty is the prescribed punishment for the offender. Merrill (1994) suggests that the term הַגָּנֵב *hagannāb*, or “the thief,” specifically refers to the kidnapper rather than ordinary thieves. In Exodus 21:16, a similar law states: “Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.” The harshness of this punishment underscores that kidnapping is an assault on the divine image within humanity (Genesis 1:26-27).

(h) The term וְבִעַרְתָּ הָרָע – *ûbi ‘artā hārā* translates to “You shall purge the evil.” The verb בִּעַר (*bi ‘ēr*) means “to burn away,” “to remove,” or “to destroy.” This phrase appears throughout Deuteronomy to stress the importance of eliminating moral corruption from society. Societies must take decisive action against kidnapping and ritual killings to uphold justice (Christensen, 2001).

AN OVERVIEW OF KIDNAPPING AND RITUAL KILLINGS IN KWARA STATE, 2024

Given Olabisi (2022), the name “Kwara” comes from the Nupe language, where it means the River Niger, which runs along the northern edge of the state. Ilorin serves as the capital of Kwara State, but interestingly, “Kwara” was not derived from Yoruba, the main language spoken in Ilorin. Instead, it highlights the historical impact of the Nupe people in the area. Although Ilorin started as a Yoruba city, it has been shaped by Fulani and Hausa cultures, especially during the 19th-century Islamic expansion led by Shehu Alimi. Even with these influences, Yoruba is still the primary language spoken in Ilorin today. Kwara State, situated in western Nigeria, was created on May 27, 1967, as one of the first 12 states formed to replace the country's four regions. Initially called the West Central State, it was later renamed “Kwara,” reflecting the local name for the River Niger. The state is made up of 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs).



Plate1: Kwara is a state in the North-Central zone of Nigeria.

Source: <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/10/02/kwara-vigilante-commander-killed-during-rescue-of-kidnapped-victims/>

According to Kayode Abdulazeez (2024), the above constitutional provision prompted me to call on the Kwara State Government under the leadership of Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq to take decisive action in tackling incessant kidnapping in the southern senatorial district; cultism/armed robbery attacks in the Central; and Kidnapping/Communal clashes in the Northern senatorial district of the state. All these unrest cases could be averted on many occasions, or better still, brought to a minimal level by providing adequate security guards for surveillance and on-spot action. A quick check at recent kidnapping-reported cases in the state shows that urgent attention needs to be taken by the present administration led by Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum, to live up to one of his major constitutional responsibilities. On January 16, 2024, four members of the Afin Community in Ileire district of Ifelodun LGA were kidnapped, including the High Chief in the community (Ubanagu, 2024).

Significantly, on February 1, 2024, gunmen invaded the palace of Onikoro of Koro in Ekiti LGA, and killed the monarch, who was a retired Army General, and kidnapped his wife. On March 11, 2024, gunmen invaded a guest house located along Ilorin/Ogbomoso Road in Asa LGA and abducted a Chinese national identified as Williams Zang. On June 2, 2024, no less than 21 students at Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH), Osara in Kogi State, were rescued in the forest in the Kwara South area by security agencies. On August 17, 2024, gunmen ambushed a commercial vehicle along Osi-Obbo road in Ekiti LGA and kidnapped 20 passengers. On September 28, 2024, gunmen invaded the Olla

community in Isin LGA and abducted Rev S. O. Adewumi of Olla ECWA Church and Engr Adeyemi. On September 11, 2024, gunmen invaded Kosubosu town in Baruten LGA and abducted Mr Emeka C. Nwachukwu (Abdulazeez, 2024).

Thereafter, given Abdulhakeem (2024), in October 2024, Kidnappers killed the Commander of a vigilante group, Lukman Balogun, during a rescue operation in the Igbaja community of the Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. Also, within this critical period, sources in the town said that the victim was killed by kidnappers who invaded the community on Sunday and abducted three women. On September 30, 2024, gunmen invaded the Boriya community in Baruten LGA and abducted Adamu Aliyu Galadima. According to Abdulhakeem Garba (2024), on September 30, 2024, gunmen invaded the Igbaja community in Ifelodun LGA, abducted three persons, and killed the head of the community security guard (Chief Lukman Balogun). On October 10, 2024, some unidentified people suspected to be kidnappers were seen around Oreke/Okegbo community in Ifelodun LGA, and one person was later killed around Awere River with another person sustaining gunshot injuries (Truth Nigeria, 2024).

Abdulwahab (2025) postulates that the Kwara State Police Command has arrested the leader of a kidnap gang, Kazeem Mohammed, in Patigi Local Government Area of the state. According to a statement by the Police Public Relations Officer, Sp Okasanmi Ajayi on Wednesday in Ilorin, he said the kidnapper collected the sum of N160,000 from one Olokose Oluwasola Ojo now deceased, in the guise of helping him buy a cow to be used on the deceased wedding scheduled to hold between 12th and 13th of March 2024. The statement pointed out that since the victim left Ilorin with the suspect, he could no longer be reached by anybody, including his intended wife, Ilori Oluwakemi. It furthered that the intending wife of the deceased, however, received a phone call on the 3rd of March, 2024 from her husband's line demanding N12 million ransom if she hoped to see her husband again. The statement said, "When the incident was reported, the Commissioner of Police directed an all-encompassing investigation into the matter, ordering the arrest of the kidnappers and the rescue of the victim unhurt at all costs. "Investigation, however, led to the arrest of the leader of the gang by name, Mohammed Kazeem Beiwa, in Patigi via the use of hi-tech intelligence. The Investigation further led to the arrest of three other members of the syndicate, Mohammed Chatta, Jimoh Abdulateef, and Madi Jeremiah. They confessed to the crime, confirming the killing of the victim and burying him in a shallow grave inside the bush, they took policemen to the scene of the killing where the head of the victim and arm were severed and used for a money ritual by Mohammed Kazeem, the leader of the gang (The Blueprints Newspaper Mar. 2025).



Plate 2: Police arrest kidnappers who killed victim for rituals in Kwara
Source: Retrieved March, 2025 <https://theinformant247.com/police-arrest-kidnappers-who-killed-victim-for-rituals-in-kwara/>

Similarly, Abdulwahab (2025) opines, there is hardly a midnight, in recent times, without a report of an attack on innocent travellers around the Otte/Alaparun Communities in Ilorin/Ogbomoso expressway by armed robbers who would forcefully dispossess travellers along the route of their valuables. This often leads to killings and several people have been victims.



Plate 3: The Ritual Killing in Offa Garage, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria
Source: <https://blueprint.ng/ritual-killing-only-hard-work-gurantees-success-ilorin-emir-admonishes-young-clerics/>

According to Bayo Abdulwahab (2025), the spokesperson of the state Police Command, Toun Ejire-Adeyemi, in a statement on Sunday, confirmed the arrest of the 25-year-old Abdulrahman Bello. The police statement reads: “On February 11, 2025, at about 1800hrs, Mr Ibrahim A. Lawal ‘M’ of Adefalu’s Compound, Oju-Ekun area, Ilorin, reported at the divisional police headquarters C-Division Oja-Oba; that his daughter, Yetunde Lawal, had attended the naming ceremony of her friend’s baby not far from their place of residence, the previous day February 10, 2025, at about 1400hrs but never returned home. “Concerned about her whereabouts, her mother contacted some of her friends, but no useful information was obtained. When her father was informed, he made several attempts to call her phone numbers, but the calls went unanswered. “Her phone number was tracked, and the result led to the arrest of one Abdulrahman M. Bello. The suspect was immediately apprehended and taken into custody. During interrogation, he confessed to the killing of the victim. A further search at his residence led to the recovery of exhibits, including two mobile phones and slippers of the deceased, dismembered body parts (both hands), a plastic bottle containing the victim’s blood, a cutlass, a knife, an axe, a wooden box of black soap, a sack containing charms and a centre table used in carrying out this heinous act. According to Oyoyo (2024), the suspect Mohammed A Bello has confessed to the crime with the intent to do oshole/ajoo ówò (money rituals). The case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) Ilorin, for discreet investigation and subsequent prosecution. The Kwara command also extends its heartfelt condolences to the entire family of the bereaved.

THEMATIC EXPLANATION OF THE TYPES OF KIDNAPPING

Scholars like Aghedo (2015) and Ajijah (2015) emphasize that kidnapping is a serious crime that involves unlawfully taking or holding someone against their will, often for ransom, political gain, or personal reasons. It can be classified into various types based on the motives, methods, and circumstances surrounding the act. Here’s a breakdown of the main types of kidnapping:

1. Economic Kidnapping (Ransom Kidnapping): According to Ejike (2024), this is the most prevalent form of kidnapping. In these cases, abductors take individuals and demand a ransom for their safe return. They often target wealthy people, business leaders, expatriates, or public figures. This type of crime is particularly common in Nigeria, where criminal gangs and insurgent groups benefit from ransom

payments. A notable example is the surge of banditry in northern Nigeria, where kidnappers seize travellers and demand hefty sums for their release.

2. Political or Terrorist Kidnapping: In this scenario, terrorist or extremist groups kidnap individuals to push political agendas, instil fear, or attract media attention. The targets often include government officials, foreign diplomats, or aid workers. A prominent case is Boko Haram's abduction of schoolgirls, such as the Chibok girls in 2014, aimed at exerting political pressure and advancing their ideological goals.

3. Express Kidnapping: This type of abduction involves forcing victims to withdraw money from ATMs or make mobile transfers before they are released. It's more common in urban areas and requires less planning than ransom kidnappings. For instance, criminal gangs in cities like Lagos and Abuja often snatch unsuspecting victims and quickly extort money from them.

4. Child Kidnapping and Trafficking: This form of kidnapping involves the exploitation of children for illegal adoption, rituals, or forced labour. Children may be taken for illegal adoptions, organ trafficking, child labour, or even ritualistic killings.

5. Virtual Kidnapping: According to Maryam Abdullahi (2024), kidnappers often rely on deception and psychological manipulation to achieve their sinister goals. Instead of physically taking someone, these criminals trick families into thinking a loved one has been kidnapped and then demand a ransom. The victim is usually unreachable—like having their phone turned off—making the scam more believable. For instance, scammers in Nigeria have been known to call families, pretending that their relatives have been taken hostage while insisting on immediate payment.

6. Human Trafficking-Related Kidnapping: As noted by Madubuike and Dimnaji (2023), victims are often abducted and forced into sex trafficking, drug trafficking, or labour exploitation. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, especially in areas where law enforcement is weak. For example, many women are trafficked from Nigeria to Europe under the guise of job opportunities, only to find themselves trapped in prostitution.

BIBLICAL LAW AND NIGERIA'S LEGAL PROVISIONS ON KIDNAPPING AND RITUAL KILLINGS IN NIGERIA

Kidnapping is a capital offense in some states (e.g., Kwara State). Nigerian Criminal Code: Section 364 defines kidnapping and prescribes up to life imprisonment. Anti-Kidnapping Laws (various states): Some states impose the death penalty for aggravated kidnapping. Ritual killings are prosecuted under: Section 316-319 of the Criminal Code: Covers murder (punishable by death).

Biblical Law (Deut. 24:7)	Nigerian Law
Kidnapping = Death penalty	Varies by state (some death, some life imprisonment)
Covers enslavement and trafficking	Covers ransom, slavery, and trafficking
No exceptions for political status	Some high-profile cases escape justice
Focus on removing evil from society	Struggles with enforcement, corruption

Section 36(12) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides:

Subject to as otherwise provided by this Constitution, a person shall not be convicted of a criminal offence unless that offence is defined and the penalty therefore is prescribed in a written law; and in this subsection, a written law refers to an Act of the National Assembly, or a Law of a State, any subsidiary legislation or instrument under the provisions of a law.

Criminal offences are often regarded as having the potential to annihilate order in a society if left unsanctioned, and criminologists have long posited that a society breeds its criminals. The implication of this is that crimes evolve as society evolves. The so-called “newly defined crimes” evolve from existing ones and need the promulgation of new laws or modification of existing ones. To promptly arrest or slow the pace of these crimes in a society, its criminal justice system must constantly evolve to meet the exigencies of time. Although it is not a new occurrence, lately, a species of crime has become more prominent due to the alarming rate of its continual manifestation in various parts of the country.

In Nigeria, late into 2021 and since the commencement of the year 2022, rarely a week goes by without media reports of “*Ritual Murders*”. On the 28th of December, 2021, it was reported by the Nigerian Tribune that an alleged internet fraudster (locally known as Yahoo Boy) in Benin City, Edo State, known as Osas, was declared wanted for killing his girlfriend, Elohor Oniorosa to increase his wealth via money ritual. Also, on the 12th of February, 2022, Vanguard reported that a

couple out of Ogun State -Kehinde Oladimeji and his wife Adejumoke Raji were allegedly caught with human body parts. The duo admitted that the decomposing body found with them was to be used for a money ritual (The Blueprints Newspaper, Mar. 2025).

A cursory appraisal of the Criminal Code Act, which is applicable in the Southern part of the country, has some interesting provisions that prohibit some of the acts manifested in money ritual killings. Section 210 prohibits the possession, selling, threatening with, or worshipping when expressly prohibited by the President or State Governor, and the use of juju or witchcraft on another person. Secondly, merely having a human head at the point of arrest contravenes the provision of 329A of the Criminal Code Act. This also corresponds with Section 33(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which expressly provides that “Every person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in the execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty.”

Sections 308, 315, 316, and 317 of the Criminal Code Act prohibit murder, homicide, and manslaughter in whatever guise. Notwithstanding the notoriety of ritual-related murders or “money ritual” murders, there is, however, no cohesive enactment specifically declaring it as a crime on its own. Laws prohibiting ritual-related murder can only be inferred from existing criminal laws, as there are convergences of provisions under Nigerian laws from which variously manifested conduct can be punished or generally catalogued under murder and/or homicide, etc. These laws can, however, be amended to cover and define the entire act of “Money Ritual Murders” as an offence with its own prescribed penalty written in law, as its prevalent level of occurrence in very recent times calls for such.

Given Tunde and Ajisebiyawo (2017), section 364 of the Criminal Code Act in Nigeria. Kidnapping any person who-(1) unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him out of Nigeria without his consent; or (2) unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him from applying to a court for his release or from discovering to any other person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for ten years. Section 308 of the Criminal Code Act in Nigeria. Definition of killing, except as hereinafter set forth, any person who causes the death of another, directly or indirectly, by any means whatever, is deemed to have killed that other person (Criminal Code Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, Gallup International 2012).

RELEVANCE OF DEUTERONOMY 24:7 TO NIGERIA'S ANTI-KIDNAPPING AND RITUAL KILLINGS LAWS IN NIGERIA

The principles in Deuteronomy 24:7 offer valuable insights into strengthening Nigeria's legal response:

1. Stronger Punitive Measures: The Bible advocates severe punishment for kidnappers to remove evil from society. While Nigeria's laws impose the death penalty or life imprisonment, inconsistent enforcement undermines deterrence. The legal system should ensure stricter and more certain punishments. Biblical justice demands serious consequences for kidnapping (Olumayowa, 2024). Nigerian laws must ensure swift justice to deter crime. Religious and moral teachings should emphasize the sacredness of human kidnappers and ritual killers who evade justice due to corruption. In his view, Mohammed (2024), central to addressing Nigeria's human rights crisis is the need for a holistic, multi-pronged approach. Strengthening the rule of law, ensuring the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, and reforming law enforcement agencies are essential steps toward restoring public confidence and ensuring justice for victims (Olumayowa, 2024).

2. Moral and Ethical Awareness: The biblical approach emphasizes the sanctity of human life. Nigeria can integrate moral and religious education to reshape societal values and discourage ritual killings based on superstitions. According to Demehin and Raji (2024), the government must prioritise the protection of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and internally displaced persons, by implementing robust social safety nets and supporting survivors of abuse and exploitation. Collaboration with civil society organizations and international partners will also be critical in building awareness, improving institutional responses, and providing comprehensive support systems for victims.

3. Preventive Measures: In other words, Ede & Okafor (2023), the verse promotes a proactive stance in eliminating kidnapping from society. Nigerian authorities should implement intelligence-based policing, community engagement, and stricter monitoring of financial transactions linked to ransom payments. These violations are exacerbated by entrenched socio-economic inequalities, weak institutional frameworks, and a lack of accountability mechanisms that allow perpetrators to operate with impunity. Despite the gravity of these challenges, the report also acknowledges efforts by law enforcement agencies and the government to address these issues, even though much remains to be done

4. Justice for Victims: *Deuteronomy 24:7* prioritizes justice by ensuring that evil is removed from the community. Nigeria must improve its judicial processes to deliver timely justice for victims and their families. *Deuteronomy 24:7* is a powerful biblical mandate against kidnapping and human trafficking, prescribing the death penalty to purge society of evil. In Nigeria, kidnapping and ritual killings are rampant, and while Nigerian law criminalizes these acts, enforcement is often weak. A biblical perspective demands stricter penalties, moral reformation, and a justice system that truly protects human dignity (SBM Intelligence, 2024).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND LEGAL REFORMS

To effectively curb kidnapping and ritual killings, Nigeria should:

1. Enhance Law Enforcement Efficiency – Strengthen police response, surveillance, and investigative capacity.
2. Ensure Swift and Severe Punishments – Improve judicial processes to eliminate delays in prosecuting offenders.
3. Increase Public Awareness and Education – Promote ethical teachings in schools and religious institutions to counter harmful traditional beliefs.
4. Implement Stricter Financial Regulations – Monitor ransom payments and suspicious financial activities linked to kidnapping syndicates.
5. Encourage Community Involvement – Support whistleblowers and local security networks to identify and prevent criminal activities.

CONCLUSION

The principles of *Deuteronomy 24:7* remain relevant in addressing the menace of kidnapping and ritual killings in Nigeria. By aligning biblical justice with Nigeria's legal framework, the nation can strengthen its policies, enforce stricter laws, and foster a moral consciousness that discourages these crimes. A combination of legal, ethical, and preventive measures is necessary to combat this growing threat and restore societal stability. Recommendations for Policy and Legal Reforms. *Deuteronomy 24:7* remains a relevant scriptural guide in addressing kidnapping and ritual killings in Nigeria. It highlights the severity of such crimes, the need for strong deterrence, and the importance of swift justice. By aligning biblical principles with Nigeria's legal framework, policymakers can strengthen the country's response to these crimes. Beyond legal measures, moral reorientation through religious teachings

and community engagement is crucial in eliminating these societal evils. By integrating biblical ethics with effective law enforcement, Nigeria can create a safer society where the dignity and sanctity of human life are upheld.

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