

## ***DRC Police News***

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Lack of confidence in the legal system of the Democratic Republic of Congo, has prompted a spate of vigilante justice. At the beginning of July, in the town of Katuba, some seven kilometres outside Lubumbashi, a thief was heard trying to enter a house in the early hours of the morning. The owner of the house called for help, frightening the thief and prompting a search of the area. "The whole neighbourhood was searched," recalled the owner. "We found two of the five thieves and we attacked them. Around 6 am, the police came to collect the bodies of the criminals. His actions highlight a widespread loss of faith in the criminal justice system. "Our justice is the best because we know that when prison doors are opened, one forgets to close them," he said. "Prisoners who arrived there in the morning go out peacefully in the evening and commit more crimes." "It is a case of legitimate self-defence," said Georgette Misenga, another resident. "Often, thieves come in with firearms and sometimes they kill people they find in the house. When you feel insecure, you have to defend yourself." Another incident took place in Kenya, a suburb of Lubumbashi in July. Residents of the neighbourhood say that at 1 am, a man was caught trying to break into a house. He was dragged out to the street where he was set alight and suffered an excruciating death. One resident reports that the police did not arrive in time to intervene in the vigilante execution. "Our police always come too late," he said. "That's why the population took care of the matter themselves." For their part, the police are quick to defend themselves against allegations of ineffectiveness. Colonel Jacques Ilunga, the provincial police inspector, complains that the courts are often too quick to release criminal suspects on bail. "We are doing everything to arrest criminals," he said. "But just a few days after a man has been transferred to the prosecution, he is released. He comes to see us, ask how we are doing and to collect his belt that he left at the police station. All these criminals that we arrest must end up in prison. If they are released, they will just return to crime." The inspector says that dealing with mob justice is no different from dealing with any other crime. "In such cases, the police still does its job," he said. "This means arresting the perpetrators of mob justice along with the thief."