

DSS hid my wife's death for two years – Husband

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Mr Sunday Ifedi and his late wife. Photo: Grace Edema

| By Grace Edema

Mr Sunday Ifedi, who was detained for four years without prosecution at the DSS facility in Wawa Barracks, Niger State, shares with GRACE EDEMA his unlawful detention and how his wife, Callista, died in the security outfit's custody two years ago

You and your wife were arrested four years ago by the Department of State Services. Did you see your wife again after the arrest?

No. The day they took us in the same vehicle was the last time I saw her. From that day until today, I have not seen my wife.

What led to your arrest and detention?

I had no problem with anybody. It happened on November 8, 2021. In the middle of the night, security operatives, including soldiers, came to my house, saying they were security men. I opened the door for them.

They searched our phones and found a number on my wife's phone. They asked who the person was, and my wife told them it was a customer who regularly bought items from her shop.

That was how everything started. They took us to their office that same day and later released us, saying we had no case to answer because they were actually looking for that person.

After two weeks, they called us and said we needed to come and sign a document so that our names would not appear on their list again. We went there, but from that day, they refused to release us.

What was your wife occupation before she was arrested?

My wife owned a shop where she sold soya products—both liquid and powdered soya products—along with snacks and minerals. She produced the liquid and powdered soya herself, and people regularly came to buy from her.

What about you?

I am a woodworker and furniture maker. I make chairs and handle house interior fittings.

What was the allegation levelled against you and your wife at that point?

They said someone accused us of being members of IPOB. That was it—just an allegation. I didn't understand it, but that is how everything started.

Were you taken out of Enugu?

After we went back, we spent two days in DSS custody in Enugu. Subsequently, they took us to their headquarters in Abuja, where we stayed. After four months of interrogation, they moved us to their barracks in Niger State.

Were you charged to court?

No.

What reason did they give for moving you to Niger State from Abuja?

I cannot say. They asked me questions, and I answered everything. I don't know what evidence they claimed to have against me. On March 23, 2022, they put us in their vehicle and took us to Niger State, where they kept us for almost four years.

Did you see your wife at that time?

Yes. In March 2022, we were all in the same vehicle. After that day, they separated us, and I have not seen my wife again to this day.

Do you know when she died?

I don't know. I kept asking to see my wife, but they never told me anything about her.

When were you released?

I was released on December 16, 2025, and I returned to Enugu on December 19.

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Why did they release you? What reason did they give?

They didn't give any reason; they only told me that they had decided to release me.

Do you have any friends who are members of IPOB?

Even if someone has a friend who is an IPOB member, that does not mean the person should be arrested. Many people have friends whose activities they do not know about. Unless you are moving with them or involved, you cannot say for sure that someone is an IPOB member. Sometimes, they even say that every woman is an IPOB member. I don't understand it.

What did the officers tell you when you asked about your wife?

The officers told me they were new and did not know anything about my wife. They said they had not spent up to a year at the office and that only the older officers could give information about her.

Who later told you that your wife had died?

I received a call from (Omoyele) Sowore, who told me that he had received information from the DSS that my wife had been dead for about two years. They (the DSS) never told me.

Why didn't they allow you to contact your family or let your family know where you were?

They didn't allow that at all. They didn't want anyone to know where we were. Everything was hidden.

What was life like in detention?

It was not easy at all. Only God knows what we went through. It was very difficult.

What experiences did you have there?

I developed high blood pressure because of constant thinking. I didn't know when I would be released. Living there was very hard. Everything was difficult. I can only thank God. If not for God, I don't think I would be alive today. God knows everything.

What were the most painful aspects of the experience, and how did it affect you?

Being there was like being cut off from the world. You don't know what is happening outside. Nobody comes to see you. You don't know what is happening to your family or your children. It is very painful. I don't even know how to explain it.

How are your children now?

I saw them when I came back. They are okay, but it has not been easy for them. It is only God who has been keeping them.

What would you like to say about your wife, knowing that she had been dead for two years without your knowledge?

Since the day we were separated, I never saw her again. I never imagined that something like this would happen to her. My wife was a strong person. But only God knows why it happened this way.

In detention, there was no proper medical care. If sickness came, a person could easily die. I believe she tried her best, but she could not survive.

Did your family or friends take any step to locate you?

If anything was happening outside, I wouldn't have known. There was no way to know what was going on. We had no access to the outside world.

I later learnt that many people tried to ensure that I was released, but there was no access at all. Nobody could reach us.

It was painful because I did not commit any crime, and I was not even the person they were looking for. But I still thank God for everything, because I am alive today.

At that time, many people believed that we were already dead. Even now, when people see me, they are shocked that I am still alive. That is the reality.