

EFCC under fire over killing of 16-year-old suspect

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Economic and Financial Crimes Commission logo. Photo: EFCC

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The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has come under intense public scrutiny following the killing of 16-year-old Sesugh Atser.

The incident, which reportedly occurred in May 2026 in the Kanshio axis of Makurdi, Benue State, has sparked allegations of extrajudicial killing and renewed calls for an independent investigation.

In a statement on Saturday, the EFCC detailed what it described as the sequence of events leading to Sesugh's death.

According to the commission, operatives arrested 26 suspected cyber fraudsters on April 28, 2026, at its Makurdi Zonal Directorate.

The suspects were profiled and remanded after being taken to court.

On May 4, three suspects, including Sesugh, allegedly escaped after being allowed to use the toilet.

They reportedly broke through the toilet roof and fled.

The EFCC released images on X showing what appeared to be a damaged roof with a hole and exposed structure at its holding facility.

According to the agency, fresh intelligence on May 21 led operatives to a location in Kanshio, where Sesugh was allegedly in hiding.

The EFCC claimed that upon sighting the team, Sesugh and suspected cult members opened fire.

“Operatives of the commission returned fire in self-defence. All the suspected cult members, including Sesugh, fled owing to the exchange of fire between them and EFCC operatives.

“However, Sesugh was later sighted lying in a pool of blood by the roadside. He was promptly taken to the Police Cottage Hospital at the Police Headquarters in Makurdi, where he was pronounced dead,” the EFCC said.

The commission emphasised that Sesugh did not die in custody and was never granted bail.

However, the official account was met with scepticism and outright rejection.

Many users on X questioned the plausibility of the escape narrative.

Critics also raised logistical concerns, questioning how three detainees could break through a roof undetected in a secured facility, and why no immediate manhunt or public declaration of wanted suspects was issued.

Activist Rinu Oduala wrote, “A 17-year-old boy opened fire? He was first a fraudster, then a cult member who broke a toilet roof and escaped from your own custody, in your own office?”

Another user commented, “Everybody allegedly ran away. Then later, the same suspect was ‘sighted lying in a pool of blood by the roadside.’ Did the bullet chase him on its own?”

A third user said, “From suspected fraudsters to suspected cultists. I wonder how you guys sleep at night, considering how you’ve ruined someone else’s life. What a country.”

Another said, “This story isn’t believable. This entire write-up is nonsensical. Please go back and investigate the death of this young man.”

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The victim's mother, Jennifer Atsar, in an exclusive interview with *Saturday PUNCH*, had described her son as a hardworking JSS 3 student who was learning furniture-making and doing menial jobs to support the family.

According to her, EFCC operatives had previously arrested Sesugh but later released him after finding nothing incriminating, though they allegedly retained his phone and demanded N100,000 for its return.

She said that on the day he was killed, a friend came to their house and went out with him.

"A few hours later, one of my neighbours rushed to my house and said they had killed my son," she said.

"I was told that two EFCC operatives, dressed in mufti, contacted my son's friend and asked him to come to a hotel located within the community where they were staying.

"When they arrived at the hotel on a motorcycle, Sesugh got down, opened the gate, and they rode inside. Upon seeing them, one of the EFCC officers drew a gun. My son ran when he saw the gun, and they chased and shot him at close range.

"As soon as my son was shot, the officials tried to leave, but people in the area insisted that the EFCC should go with the body. My son was still calling the name of the officer who shot him while gasping for breath.

"He asked for water, but the people insisted they must take him along, so they ordered a vehicle and took him to the Police Headquarters in Makurdi," she added.

The grieving mother, who said she had not yet seen her son's corpse, insisted he was on "bail" and not in custody at the time of the incident.

She denied EFCC claims that Sesugh was a fraudster, describing it as a fabrication meant to justify his killing.

Recent EFCC operations, particularly raids targeting suspected Internet fraud, have drawn criticism over alleged high-handedness, rights abuses, lack of warrants, indiscriminate arrests, and disruption of civilian spaces.

Last month, during a raid on the Uyo Teaching Hospital, EFCC operatives reportedly went to authenticate an alleged fake medical report tied to a suspect's trial.

Staff resisted, leading to reports of tear gas being deployed inside the hospital, shots fired, assaults on medical personnel (including senior staff such as Prof Effiong Ekpe), injuries, damaged phones, and panic among patients and visitors.

The incident prompted an indefinite strike by health workers, threats of a N1bn legal action by the Nigerian Medical Association, and widespread condemnation.

In June, operatives also raided two major nightclubs in Akure, Ondo State, arresting over 50 to 127 people, including customers attending events such as a bachelor's eve.

Reports included confiscation of vehicles, laptops, and phones, as well as the alleged removal and destruction of CCTV systems, triggering public outrage, protests by youths demanding releases, and accusations of inhumane treatment.

In Edo State, multiple reports between 2025 and 2026 described midnight and early-morning raids on homes, hostels, and communities suspected of internet fraud.

These operations sparked protests at the Edo State House of Assembly, with youths accusing the EFCC of harassment, warrantless arrests, illegal searches, and targeting innocent individuals.

Similar protests were reported in Benin City and at Kwara Polytechnic.