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How car 'indomie' led to the death of panel beater in police custody

By Christiana T. Alabi & Haleema Bashir, Kaduna | Publish Date: Aug 13 2017 3:00AM

After his arrested over allegation of theft in a mechanic's garage, a panel beater died in police custody and the incident has been raising a lot of questions.

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The late Ibrahim and his wife

The death of a 32-year-old panel beater, Ibrahim Abdulkareem, in police custody has continued to generate concerns among his family members

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and colleagues.

The father of two, who plied his trade along Rabah Road, Kaduna, was arrested by the police after he was accused of theft in the garage where he worked. But he mysteriously died in police custody on Thursday, August 3, 2017.

His relatives alleged that injuries and stitches found on his body showed that he must have been tortured. Also, some members of his family alleged that he was injured on his private part. According to his cousin, Safiya, the late Ibrahim was victimized at the same garage where he had worked for so many years.

Explaining how he got into police custody, Safiya said, a woman agreed with Ibrahim to fix her a component in her car's exhaust pipe, called "indomie" at N2,500 which he did. But after a few days, she came back complaining that the "indomie" had been removed and insisted on getting her money back or another one.

According to her, the union leader in the garage asked Ibrahim to return the money and add N1,500 to make it N4,000. Thereafter, the union suspended Ibrahim for two weeks. But Ibrahim came back the following day and when confronted, he told his colleagues that he could not possibly stay at home for that long because he had a family to cater for. However, the assistant chairman of the union called the Police who arrested Ibrahim and detained him at the Malali police station.

Safiya said Ibrahim mother went to the police station at about 7pm to give him food, but the police denied access to him, saying it was late. She was asked to drop the food and return the following day at 8a.m.

The next morning, the police denied Ibrahim's mother access to her son again but was told they don't have any business with her but the union of the garage. They asked her to go to the garage and speak with them.

"When she got there, she pleaded with the garage people and they said they will reduce his suspension from two weeks to one week. But just as they were talking, one of the garage workers got a call from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) that Ibrahim was dead. Immediately he got the call, the garage union told Ibrahim's mother to hold on that after Juma'at prayer, they will bring him to her. They all left in their cars. So Ibrahim's mother, wife and children took a motorcycle and followed them till they arrived at the station. When they arrived at the station, the union and the police asked them to wait outside," Safiya explained.

According to her, the Emir of Epira in Kaduna State went to the station, that the DPO had called earlier in the day wanting to see him concerning an "indomie case" and that the man had died.



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On what led to his death, Safiya explained that “The DPO said that he was called and told that Ibrahim, while in detention was complaining of stomach ache and he told them to get him Panadol after which they called him again to say it was getting worse and he directed them to take him to the hospital where he died.”

However, she said when they received his body from the hospital, they noticed stitches, scars and injuries and the Emir of Ebira was bitter about it and complained to the DPO on what he saw. But the DPO said he was unavailable but sent some officers.

Commenting on the matter, an advisor in the garage union, Bature Suleiman, alleged that the late Ibrahim was known with the habit of stealing “indomie” from customers’ cars saying, he had been in the act for many years. He also mentioned that the late Ibrahim had in the past been suspended over a similar offence when such cases became rampant.

“Three years ago, he removed ‘indomie’ from a customer’s car. He did it the second time and because of that, the customer stopped patronizing the garage. In fact recently, he was arrested and taken to Metro police station, it was I who paid N8,000 through his friends to bail him,” Sulieman said.

According to him, after a meeting was held by the garage union, it was agreed that Ibrahim be suspended for two weeks but he refused to obey, saying nobody can stop him from coming to work.

“So, the assistant chairman called the attention of the police and he was arrested and taken to the station. That was all we know about his case,” he said.

On whether Ibrahim showed any sign or symptom of sickness before he was arrested, he said, he did not know whether he was sick before but that nobody touched or beat him before he was arrested, denying the allegation that the union paid the police to “deal” with the late mechanic.

Also commenting on his death, he said, “We feel sad over the incident because nobody wished him dead. In fact, if we had known the whole thing will turn out to be like this, we wouldn’t have called for his arrest but we felt it was better to involve the police so as not to take laws into our hands.”

When contacted on the matter, the spokesperson of the Kaduna State Police Command, ASP Yakubu Sabo, confirmed the incident, saying the late Ibrahim was suspected of committing an offence and was arrested.

“While in detention, he complained of stomach pain and he was taken to the hospital. We are investigating to know his level of involvement in the crime as well as the circumstances surrounding his death,” he said.



He assured that investigation will reveal whether the late Ibrahim was tortured or not and whether the police was given money to “deal” with him. However, the family of the deceased has threatened to take a legal action against the police.

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