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Suleja SARS operatives face investigation over suspect's death

By Adam Umar | Publish Date: May 19 2018 3:00AM

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■ Late Auwal



■ Malam Adamu Abubakar, late Auwal's uncle

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About five SARS police operatives attached to the Suleja police area command in Niger State have been transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the state police command, in



Minna, after death of a suspect, who was held at the Suleja 'A' division while in custody, last Sunday. The deceased, Muhammed Kabir Auwal, a 27-year-old mobile phone repairer was earlier on reported to the division by his master over some money stolen from his bank account under mysterious circumstance.

Narrating how the incidence started, Adamu Umar, who is an uncle of the deceased, explained that Auwal's boss, one Salisu Usama, sent the boy on an errand to withdraw some money for him while they were working at his workshop located around IBB Market in the commercial area of the town. Abubakar said Usama instructed his employee to withdraw the sum of ten thousand naira for him, after giving him his ATM card, adding that while in the course of the transaction, the ATM card got stuck in the machine.

According to Umar, his nephew then solicited the assistance of two security guards on duty who in return demanded for the ATM PIN number, which Auwal did. "But upon return, the security guards gave late Auwal a different ATM card, though of the same colour, and without noticing that, he took the card back to his employer, who could not notice the replacement immediately, either. Later on, while they were at their workshop, Auwal's boss got a bank alert message from his mobile phone, that forty thousand naira had just been withdrawn from his account. While preparing to rush to the bank, another eight thousand naira was withdrawn. He only realized that the ATM card was replaced when he made an attempt to make a transaction himself, when he noticed an error message on the ATM's screen. When he checked the card, he discovered that his ATM card was replaced with another one bearing 'Abubakar Umar' as the owner."

Umar said all efforts by his nephew to convince his employer thereafter, that he is innocent about the entire saga, did not work. "He then reported the matter to the vigilantes, who suggested that the issue should be delayed till Monday when the matter could be reported to the bank management for CCTV report, which is capable to disclose the person behind the transaction. But Usama



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was not satisfied with that suggestion, and reported the matter to the SARS operatives, who invaded our home at dawn last Saturday bearing rifles, and left with Auwal.”

Umar continued: “All efforts to get him bail thereafter, were unsuccessful, as the police would demand that all the five persons that handled the matter must be present, along with the complainant before anything regarding the bail could be realized. But that could not be possible, up till the time we were called by the police, on Sunday morning, to be informed that Auwal is dead.”

When the family got access to Auwal’s corpse, at the Suleja General Hospital, they said they discovered several injuries on it, which included one around his eyes, and particularly his face, some evidence of bruising on his back, one of his hands, and a leg. “We are of the belief that he was tortured to death by the SARS operatives,” said the deceased’s uncle.

The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of Suleja ‘A’ Division, CSP Lawal Shnkafi, confirmed the incident, but added that the deceased had sustained the injuries while he allegedly had attempted to flee detention through the window of the facility where he was held. He added that Auwal died at the hospital, after he was taken there for medical attention, but that could not be achieved as doctors were on strike at the time.

CSP Shinkafi said the case complainant was invited on phone thereafter, but that he never showed up. He said the five SARS operatives have since been transferred to the CID department of the state police command for investigation.

The deceased has since been buried, last Sunday, after a funeral prayer at the palace of the Emir of Suleja amid protests by youths from Unguwan Dan-Zaria, where the deceased came from. The angry youths alleged foulplay, and attempted to attack the home of Auwal’s master. The Emir, however, intervened and calmed them down, as confirmed by the DPO.

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