

Friday, 10 January 2014

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'Where is Joseph Jack?'

Thursday, 09 January 2014 17:40 Written by By Wole Oyeade

Category: Metro

Hits: 26



- Activists to protest alleged killing of young man by SARS, mother's paralysis

- Police to investigate allegations

WHAT began as a mere civil case last September may soon degenerate into public protest and a showdown with the police in Lagos.

Such was the warning some human rights activists issued yesterday and if their threat was

anything to go by, public peace is at stake.

Their planned protest is not unconnected with the case of a 33-year-old Joseph Jack who got "missing-in-custody" of the State Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and alleged rough-handling of Jack's

mother, till she became paralyzed.

The mother, 55-year-old Evangelist Bose Bajulaye, was in the BT Ward of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) when The Guardian visited.

A medical attendant informed The Guardian that the patient had partial stroke and was really suffering. Her case may have been worsened with little medical help, as she had been abandoned in the hospital.

The Guardian gathered that Joseph Jack, suspected to have been killed, was the only surviving child of the union between Mrs. Bajulaye and a retired Justice, Bong Jack.

Joseph, a school dropout, who made livelihood from selling second-hand clothes (okrika) in the days of Yaba open market, “was also very rascally, and had been on and off in police-net.”

But this time, his issue had to do with a tricycle, which Joseph allegedly collected from a friend and sold for N150, 000 in September 2013.

Men of the Idimu Police Station, following a complaint, arrested the deceased. But the case was soon transferred to Berger Police Station, under Inspector Eme, the station's IPO. Apparently not satisfied, the aggrieved friend allegedly took the matter to the anti-robbery squad, upon which Joseph was transferred to SARS in Ikeja.

Leader of the human rights group, already mobilising for street protest, Darlington Ajitemisan, explained that Bajulaye engaged a lawyer to look into the matter following the SARS transfer, “but soon got information that his son had been killed.”

According to Ajitemisan: “The lawyer backed out of the case in October but she got another lawyer, who also confirmed that the boy was no longer in the cell,” he said.

Ajitemisan, a former prison chaplain said: “When you hear that kind of language, as a human rights activist, it spells doom. When they use words like “vegetable” or “the fish has gone to the water” for someone that is supposed to be in custody, I know what it means. That was the point when the mother came to me.”

The activists argued: “Till you are confirmed guilty by the court of law, you are presumed to be innocent, even if it a case of armed robbery. SARS has been doing all manners of things to alleged criminals in this state.”

“But this time, if Joseph Jack is not produced, we are ready to stage a demonstration that will lead to a revolution such that this country has never seen before. SARS cannot start killing people anyhow,” he said.

Matters got to a head last week, when Bajulaye, in company of her grandson, visited SARS.

According to David, the grandson: "My grandmother and I went to SARS last week Thursday, because she was afraid they had killed my uncle who was arrested four months ago. They shouted at her and dragged her out. But later that day, she slumped and became paralysed."

On how it happened, David said: "We were standing outside SARS, Mama said she was becoming very tired and could not see properly. She then sat on the floor. But as she sat, she fainted. Some people poured water on her but when she woke up, she could no longer stand on her own and some policemen brought her here (LASUTH)," he said.

Lagos Police Command on Wednesday, however, denied these allegations.

Lagos Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Ngozi Braide, told The Guardian that SARS had no knowledge or record of anyone by the name 'Joseph Jack'.

According to her: "I heard of the case and the allegations, on which we made our findings. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of SARS made me understand that the woman came to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, (Administration) and demanded that she wanted to see her son.

"On getting to SARS, they found that there was no one by that name, to which the woman just collapsed. Through the help of the Police, she was assisted to the hospital," Braide said.

The PPRO assured that the matter was under investigation and proper complaint would be taken to the Commissioner of Police.

"I was made to understand that the person was transferred from one station to another. I have, to this effect, sent letters to all the police stations. It is just unfortunate that no member of the family has come forward to make any complain and give information that can assist us in the matter," Braide said.