

How 100-level UNIBEN student was gang-raped, murdered inside church

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Omozuwa

- **Police in search of culprits, say no one is volunteering information**
- **Obaseki orders police investigation into death of student**

The management of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) yesterday confirmed the death of one of its students, 22-year-old Miss Vera Uwaila Omozuwa, who was gang-raped and clubbed to death by yet-to-be-identified persons. The incident took place inside the Ikpoba Hill branch of Redeemed Christian Church of God, in Benin City, Edo State.

The victim was beaten on May 13, where she went to study. She died on May 31, 18 days after, at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital. She was 22 years old. It was gathered that the Ikpoba Hill branch of the church where the incident occurred was on Sunday morning set ablaze allegedly by angry students of the university.



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The 100-Level student of the Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Life Sciences of the institution, was said to have gone to the church to read when her assailants pounced on her and hit her with a fire extinguisher after raping her.

News of her attack was first published in the newsletter of the Students Union Government (SUG) of the university. According to a source, the church security officer had gone to collect keys to the church from its keeper when he was told that there was someone already in the church.

“He got to the church only to find the girl in critical condition and in a pool of blood with the blood-stained fire extinguisher near her. He ran back to inform the keeper and his wife, who went to the church to meet her lifeless.

“After careful observation, it was noticed that she moved her hand and she was immediately rushed to the hospital. It was at there that she revealed she was reading alone that night when the unknown men came into the church, beat her, raped her and hit her head with a fire extinguisher. They left her dead,” the source explained.

The member of the university SUG who pleaded anonymity explained that the victim was beaten to a pulp and later died at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), where she was rushed to for treatment on Saturday night. The Guardian investigation revealed that the victim died at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital on Saturday after all frantic efforts to save her.



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The university, in a statement on Sunday, said it shares in the pain of the family of the victim. While commiserating with the bereaved family on the loss of their dear daughter, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Salami, prayed God to grant her soul peaceful rest. The Vice Chancellor then used the opportunity to call on students of the institution and indeed all young people to be wary of the company they keep and the places that they visit.

A statement endorsed by the Public Relations Officer of UNIBEN, Dr. Benedicta Ehanire, noted that losing a child at this time compounds the hardship brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. “We believe that at this time when the pandemic has created so much concern to everyone, losing a child compounds the present situation. We share in the pain of the family. It is expected of the management to take some action. In this regard, a delegation is being sent to commiserate with her family,” Ehanire said.

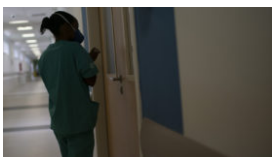
Meanwhile, the police in Edo State said they are searching for people who might have witnessed the assault that led to the death of the student. “As at the day of the incident, she was in a coma, so the police could not obtain a statement from her on what happened,” the police spokesperson in Edo, Chidi Nwabuzor, said yesterday.

“It is unfortunate that no person is coming out as an eyewitness to give an account of what happened,” he added. Nwabuzor, a deputy superintendent of police, said the victim’s father, Johnson Omozuwa, who reported the incident to the police, is “a hearsay witness” because he was not at the scene of the crime. “He couldn’t tell us who the suspects are.”

Nwabuzor added that the police operatives have spoken with the people in the branch of the church where the late Omozuwa was attacked, but that all of them denied being there when the incident happened. The police spokesperson said they cannot conclude that Omozuwa was raped by her attackers until a medical report is out from the hospital she was taken to.

The Edo State governor, Godwin Obaseki, has, however, ordered the police to fish out those responsible for the brutal killing of Omozuwa. In a statement, Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Communication Strategy, Mr. Crusoe Osagie, said Governor Obaseki has mandated the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other relevant security agencies to fish out the culprits, who perpetrated the dastardly act and bring them to justice. The governor is deeply saddened by the news of the death of Miss Vera Uwaila Omozuwa.”

The murder of Omozuwa has attracted outrage from Nigerians on social media. “I used to be afraid of chewing gum inside church or stepping in with dirt on my shoes but nowadays people have the guts to go in there to rape and kill?” One Twitter user (@staarrgirlll) commented. “The evil men will never go unpunished,” she added.



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