
Order hospital to release body of our son for burial, family pleads with judicial panel

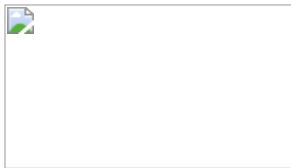
By Gordi Udeajah,
Umuahia

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The family of a butcher, Friday Ikenna, who was allegedly killed by a soldier on May 5, 2016 in Aba, Abia State, has urged the state Judicial Panel on Police Brutalities and Allied Matters to order the Abia State University Teaching Hospital, Aba to release his body for burial on compassionate grounds, as the family cannot afford the hospital's N350, 000 mortuary bill that accumulated for four years.

The family further urged the panel, headed by a retired Chief Judge of the state, Justice Sunday Imo, to order that N50 million be paid to late Friday's siblings for their upkeep, including granting his underaged children educational scholarships.

Friday's nephew, Christopher Ukaegbu, while testifying before the panel, said one Oluchi Egbendu had called him about 3pm on that fateful day to report Friday's death, adding that Friday's colleagues and neighbours who staged a peaceful demonstration along some streets in Aba carried his body along.

"When I went out and accosted the crowd, I identified the body as that of Friday, my nephew. It was at this point that Police officers appeared on the scene, sprayed tear-gas to disperse the crowd and thereafter took the remains of late Friday to Abia State University Teaching Hospital Mortuary, Aba.

"After two weeks, we visited the Aba Police Area Command to demand the release of his body for burial. It was during this visit that we heard that the soldier that shot Friday was in Police custody and that the Police were investigating the matter."

According to Ukaegbu, the state Commissioner of Police directed the Aba Area Police Command to do the needful, adding that despite the advice of the Police Command, the hospital insisted on the payment of the N350, 000 accumulated mortuary bill before the body would be released.

"Since we don't have that kind of money, late Friday has not been interred for over four years and allegedly, the soldier that killed him has not been prosecuted in any court in Nigeria, neither has the Army commiserated with their family," he explained.

Before adjourning the matter to Friday, February 9 for cross-examination of the petitioner, Justice Imo directed that another hearing notice be served on the respondent, who was said not to have appeared before the panel.

