

## Police, group differ on alleged maltreatment of junior officers in Umuahia

From Gordi Udeajah - Umuahia

A HUMAN rights advocacy group, the Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Centre (RULAAC) and police authorities in Umuahia have disagreed over alleged inhuman treatment meted out to junior officers under their command by some senior police officers.

Executive Director at RULAAC, Okechukwu Nwanguma, had raised the alarm that Acting Inspector General of Police (AIG), Ene Okon, in charge of Zone 9, Umuahia, ordered the arrest of one Sergeant Ugochukwu

Ukaegbu and three other members of a police team attached to the Anti-Cultism Unit of the Abia State Police Command.

RULAAC noted that the officers were arrested and detained based on a complaint by a woman, Joy Chima, said to be a friend to the AIG, alleging that the team demanded money from her to release her tricycle (Keke), which was snatched and used for robbery.

It said: "Based on this complaint, the AIG ordered the detention of the officers. They have spent two weeks in detention till date. RULAAC sent

a message to AIG Okon last week urging him to respect the due process rights of the officers.

"Police officers are human beings and are therefore also entitled to the enjoyment of human rights.

"You cannot detain an officer for two weeks without trial. No law or police procedure permits that. Today, a senior officer at Zone 9, who is not happy about the 'wicked and unlawful conduct of AIG Ene Okon' called again to remind us that the officers were still being detained and abandoned in the cell on the AIG's orders, and urged us to inter-

vene."

The group said it called AIG Ene Okon and inquired about the legality of the indefinite detention of the police officers and his response was that 'they are police officers and subject to disciplinary procedures.'

RULAAC also said it had sent a petition to the Police Service Commission against AIG Ene Okon for his oppressive and arrogant exercise of powers.

But AIG Okon described the issue as an internal matter being appropriately addressed by police authorities in line with the police subsisting modus operandi.

## Police family disagree over death of suspect in Bauchi