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National

# Pandemonium in Imo as youth dies over alleged phone theft

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*Protesters and The Deceased*

- **Irate crowd set hotel ablaze, CP urges calm, orders probe, pledges to arrest all culprits**
- **Hotel owner arrested**

There was pandemonium in Umulogho, a community in Obowo, Obowo Local Council of Imo over the torture to death of a youth in the area, Ebuka Nwaneri. A source, simply identified as Mbakwe Chimezie, said the deceased was accused of

stealing a phone from a hotel in the community, belonging to a military officer deployed on a community patrol mission in the area.

The officer was said to have gone to the hotel, simply known as “Our Guest Hotel” owned by one Ibe Obasi, to have a relaxation and charge his phone. Later, it was discovered that the phone was missing, prompting the hotelier to allegedly invite the deceased.

The source said the late Nwaneri, was not caught stealing any phone, rather, he was said to have been sighted in the hotel earlier in the day. When the deceased eventually arrived at the hotel on the invitation of the owner, the duo of the hotel owner and the military officer, allegedly tortured him and later locked him up in a generating set house, where Ebuka died.

The death led to the crisis by the youths of the community who demanded that those accused of killing the deceased be brought to them for jungle justice.

They also set part of the hotel on fire in anger, carrying about the corpse of Ebuka in a wheelbarrow. But security operatives have taken the hotelier to their custody where investigations were going on. Some youths from the community were also arrested and later released.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, Aboki Danjuma, has deployed the Area Commander in charge of the Owerri Area Command, Mike Abattam, an Assistant Commissioner of Police, to forestall further breakdown of law and order. Spokesperson for the police command, Henry Okoye, in a statement yesterday, said Danjuma has ordered an investigation.

“The Commissioner of Police Imo State Command has directed the Command’s Complaint Response Unit (CRU) to carry out a comprehensive investigation into this allegation and ensure that justice is served.

Also, the President of the community’s youths association, Chinagorom Cyriacus Mmaduabuchi, has waded in, appealing to the youths for calm. In a statement on Sunday, he said: “The leadership of Umulogho Youth Assembly has condemned in totality whatever led to the murder of Nwaneri Ebuka.

“We also want to assure the good people of Umulogho that the perpetrators of this inhuman act must be brought to book at all means.

“We also want to urge all more importantly the youths to stay calm and not to take further action or take laws into their own hands.

“We want to assure the people that the leadership of Umulogho autonomous community at all levels are working so hard to arrest the situation more especially the ongoing massive arrest by the military.

“We finally urge the Nwaneri family more especially Mr. Udomba family to take heart, while we look forward to securing justice for our late brother.”

MEANWHILE, the Operatives of the Obowo Divisional Police headquarters in Imo State, have arrested the owner of the guest house, Ibe Obasi, 38, over his involvement in the death of Nwaneri.

Spokesperson for the command, Okoye, disclosed this in a statement, yesterday. He said that the state Commissioner of Police, Danjuma, had given the directive for the arrest of Obasi, who allegedly locked up the deceased in a generator room in the guest house for allegedly stealing a handset.

Danjuma, according to the statement, commiserates with the victim’s families, friends and relatives over the demise in such a manner.

“The commissioner of Police strongly condemns the cruel act and calls on the people of Obowo Local Council, particularly the residents of Umulogho to refrain from taking laws into their hands as the Command is on top of the situation and has commenced a thorough investigation to apprehend the suspects linked to the case of murder and bring them brought to book,” he said.

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Chinagorom Cyriacus Mmaduabuchi

Mbakwe Chimezie

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