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Family kicks as Nigerian singer dies in Police custody

By **Monday Osayande, Asaba**

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Paul Obukowho

An upcoming Nigerian singer, Paul Obukowho, has reportedly died in police custody in Delta State.

The Guardian gathered that the Rapid Response Squad (RRS), Delta State Police Command, Asaba, detained the 24-year-old singer who visited the RRS office to

inquire about his friend, Prosper Ejiro, who was arrested last Wednesday along the Redeemed Road off Okpanam, Oshimili North Local Council of the state at about 8:00 a.m.

The police, it was learnt, handcuffed Obukowho on both hands and legs, and threw him into the cell amid torture.

On Thursday night, he collapsed in the cell and was rushed to the police clinic.

The clinic could not handle his situation, so they referred him to Specialist Hospital Asaba.

Finally, he was referred to the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Asaba, but unfortunately, he passed on in the early hours of Saturday, at about 4:00 a.m.

According to a police source, the singer's friend, Ejiro, who he visited in Police custody before being detained, was arrested at random.

The Guardian gathered that he was walking in the company of a friend on Wednesday morning at about 8:00 a.m. when men of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) from the police headquarters in Asaba accosted and arrested him and his other friend unjustly without committing any crime.

Confirming the incident, Mr Godspower Obokuwho, elder brother of the deceased, said the RRS team arrested one Prosper Ejiro, 19, and Ejiro Obukowho, 22, both laundry workers, around Redeem Road, Okpanam.

He explained that the boys were on their way to work when the RRS officers stopped and searched them but nothing incriminating was found in their possession except the black camouflage shorts Prosper wore on that fateful day.

He said the Police claimed the camouflage pants were an offence as only security personnel are allowed to wear them and nobody else.

According to him, Prosper was subsequently arrested and taken to his residence for further search while Ejiro followed them on foot, as he was not allowed to enter the Police vehicle.

Godspower narrated what he called tragic murder: "The Police came to their residence, conducted a search but found nothing incriminating. Despite this, they still went ahead to detain Prosper.

“At about 5:00 p.m., the deceased and Ejiro visited the Police station to effect Prosper’s release, but upon their arrival, Obokuwho was also detained for hitting the Police car when they were at their home.

“From that moment, the deceased was subjected to extreme physical abuse.

“Three officers handcuffed him, stomped on him, hit him with wood on his knees, and used pepper spray on him.

“Prosper, who was forced out of the room, could hear his screams of ‘God help me’ as the officers continued their assault for simply asking for his brother’s release.

“The following morning, while still in Police custody, the deceased and Prosper were summoned by one of the officers, simply called Shepherd, who informed them that the deceased would be detained for five days.”

Another family source, who prefers anonymity, claimed that “the officers initially demanded N1 million, splitting it at N500,000 each for Obokuwho and Prosper’s bail.

But one of their family friends, Mr. Kelvin, and Prosper’s mother negotiated the bail.

Eventually, the officers agreed to accept N50,000 per person, totalling N100,000”.

He stated: “Obokuwho had, by this time, become completely unresponsive. He could no longer speak, stand, or even sit. A concerned junior officer attempted to assist by giving him glucose, but Obokuwho vomited immediately.

“Realising the gravity of the situation, the Police urged Prosper to contact his mother to expedite the bail process.

“While Prosper was making calls, a senior officer confiscated his phone, preventing him from reaching out to the family.

“As Obokuwho’s condition worsened, officers reluctantly decided to transfer him to the Police Clinic at B Division, thereafter transferred him to Asaba Specialist Hospital, before they finally landed at Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Asaba, where he tragically passed away.”

Reacting to the killing, the Young Nigerian Rights Organisation, led by Victor Ojei (Wong Box), expressed deep concern and outrage over the death of Paul Obukowho,

While condemning the alleged act of Police brutality, unlawful detention, and gross human rights violations, he called for a full-scale investigation into the actions of

the RRS officers involved in the unlawful arrest, detention, and torture to death of Paul Obukowho.

Ojei also called for the immediate suspension and prosecution of all officers responsible for the boy's death, and compensation for the family.

The activist “demanded a public inquiry into the systemic abuse and extortion tactics employed by the Delta State Police Command, particularly the RRS, saying the tragic death of Obukowho is yet another grim reminder of the unchecked brutality within Nigeria's law enforcement agencies.”

When contacted for confirmation, the spokesperson for the command, SP Bright Edafe, said that the deceased was arrested when the Police raided the notorious drugs depot at Okpanam Road, and he fell sick while in Police custody.

“When he was arrested, he fell sick the following morning. He was immediately taken to the Police Clinic for medication, but they couldn't manage the situation there.

“They referred him to Asaba Specialist Hospital (ASH), where it was diagnosed that the boy had low sugar, but the condition was beyond ASH.

“From there, he was referred to FMC Asaba, where he was placed on oxygen.

“The family even knew that the boy had that sickness because they were thanking the officer in charge (OC) of RRS for spending money on him.

“But now that he has died, they are changing the narrative as if they forget that the autopsy report will certainly reveal the cause of the death,” Edafe declared.

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