

## NEWS FEATURE

# One Month After, Police Say Vanguard Journalist, Salem, Was Killed By Hit-And-Run Driver

- Claim Body Found In Wuse General Hospital Morgue
- NUJ, House Press Corps Demand Independent Enquiry, Autopsy

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The Nigerian Police on Friday in Abuja paraded a 29-year-old Ito Clement as the suspected killer of Vanguard Newspapers Reporter, Tordue Salem, a journalist covering the House of Representatives got missing on October 13, 2021 in Abuja at about 8pm on his way from work.

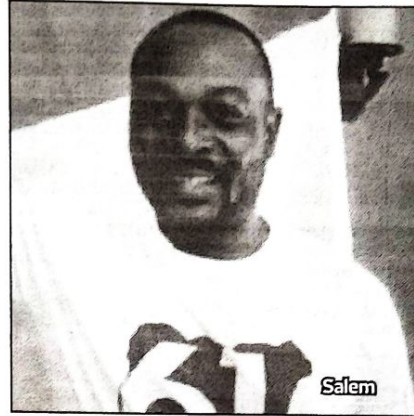
This was as the House of Representatives Press Corps, HoRPC has petitioned the Nigerian Union of Journalists, NUJ on the matter, demanding justice for their late colleague.

Tordue's disappearance elicited concerns from across Nigerians and corporate organisations including NUJ, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The NUJ, in response to the petition of the House of Representatives press corps, demanded that an independent enquiry be established and an autopsy carried out on the body to determine the date and time of his death.

Addressing Journalists on the incident at the premises of Intelligence Response Team, IRT located in the former Special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS, headquarters in Abuja, the Force Public Relations Officer, FPRO Mr. Frank Mba who was flanked by the Head of IRT, Dunji Disu, said upon interrogation, Clement, who is a commercial driver said he hit Salem around Mabushi/Wuse area of Abuja metropolis at about 10pm on the day of his disappearance.

He said the driver took off immediately and never reported the accident to the police.



Henry's movement was trailed up to BJ Gardens located somewhere in Garki close to old CBN. A young lady that had an interaction with him on the night of disappearance was located and detectives spoke to her.

From that point, investigators expanded their investigation by working on different suppositions and hypothesis.

"A major breakthrough was, however, made when following some digital and forensic leads, his phone, an iPhone 6 that had already been smashed into pieces was trailed and found in a garage somewhere in Mpape called 'Good Friends' garage.

"It was discovered that a text call was made from his SIM card and following detailed and intensive digital and forensic analysis on both his CDR and IMEI and the scrap phone, major arrest and breakthrough was made.

"One Ito Clement who happens to be a commercial driver in charge of a Toyota Camry 2014 model with registration number; BWR 243 DK was subsequently arrested.

"On interrogation, Ito Clement stated clearly that on the night that Henry Tordue Salem disappeared, he had a hit-and-run incident somewhere around Mabushi - Wuse interchange.

"That accident reportedly happened at about 10pm. The driver stated that after knocking down an unknown pedestrian, he did not stop and continued his journey and immediately ended up his activities that day. He drove his vehicle to 'Good Friends' garage where he normally parks his vehicle every night for a fee.

"At that point in time, his vehicle was already badly damaged. The windshield suffered a major damage. The image of the damage was retrieved from his phone. He parked his car and left it there and went away.

"The next morning when he arrived the garage, he found a phone broken and stuck in between the smashed windshield. The phone itself has already been smashed. He pulled it out and threw it away. But some other young person's playing in that garage eventually picked up that phone.

"Part of the components of this phone was allegedly sold off by the kids while they tried to make a text call with the SIM card.

"On the strength of this, detectives moved to the General Hospital that covers that area.

"Yesterday, the 11th of November, 2021, after a lot of painstaking search, a body believed to be that of Henry Tordue Salem was found at about 11:20am at Wuse General Hospital morgue.

"Detectives have already contacted the family members and this body has been positively identified by family members as that of Henry Tordue Salem.

"In addition to that physical and positive identification, detectives also searched the body of the late Journalist and these items were recovered: A Keystone bank debit card bearing his name; a Union Bank debit card bearing his name; an ID card issued by Vanguard Newspapers identifying him as Henry Tordue Salem and a staff; another ID card from the Nigerian Union of Journalists, a temporary ID card from the National Assembly identifying him as a member of the House of Reps, Press Corps."

**I Can't Answer For The Hospital On Why They Didn't Report To Police - Mba**

Asked who deposited the body and why the hospital didn't contact the police at the time, Mba said he cannot speak for the hospital.

He, however, attributed the gap to some administrative negligence, admitting that due diligence may not have been done.

The interface went thus: **Journalists:** Who deposited the body? Why didn't the hospital not report when an unknown body was brought to the hospital?

**Mba:** I can't answer for the hospital.

**Journalists:** Are there not people that should be arrested in this case?

**Mba:** As far as we are concerned, the basic message today is the fact that we have been able to find his body and positively identify him. We have the driver who will speak to you and explain further on what transpired.

He continued: "We will also be looking at other persons who were supposed to take certain actions as well as issues of negligence and failure of any individual to carry out their duties as responsible as he should. These are issues we will deal with after this case".

**We Arrested Another Suspect In Port Harcourt - Mba**

Mba, who admonished motorists on the need to report accidents also

revealed that another arrest was made in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of a young man of 25 years who had demanded for ransom in connection with the case.

"We appeal to all those in charge of automobile to see it as both civic and sacred responsibility to report every incident involving a hit on innocent road users. If you feel very strongly that the incident occurred at night in an unsafe place or you feel there is a chance of an angry mob descending on you if you stop; if there is any fear over your safety or the safety of their persons, the best thing for you to do is to go to the nearest police station and willingly, voluntarily and responsibly turn in yourself. Report the case, if you do it, you will just be helping to save someone's life. Perhaps, with a quick response, someone's life might be saved. It also gives you a sense of penance to go through the entire criminal justice system and lessen the trauma you suffer psychologically for accidentally knocking down another human being. If he had had that report properly made, we would have been able to solve this problem a long time ago.

"It will surprise you to know that we arrested one Prince Enehinyi, 25, in Port Harcourt. He is currently in one of our detention facility in Rivers State. Following the massive media activities around the disappearance of Henry Tordue Salem, this young man went to a bulk SMS platform, originated a message and sent it to Henry's family claiming to be a kidnapper who had kidnapped Henry claiming he is in hostage with him and demanded a ransom of N20m.

"Unluckily for him, the family worked very closely with us on this matter. We followed up on that and by the time we arrested this young man, it was clear to us that he will not immediately take us to where Henry was at that point in time. Once again, I advise citizens to be wary of people who come calling whenever people are in challenging situations. There are people who will merchandise every challenge or distress others are going through.

"On our part, we will continue to do everything humanly and operational possible to tackle all forms of crimes and criminality in this country. We will continue to work with relevant stakeholders, community leaders, the media and faith-based organizations

and government at all levels to deal with emerging crime trends in our country", Mba elaborated.

**How I Killed Salem - Commercial Driver, Clement**

On his own part, Clement also narrated the incident, saying he thought the person he knocked down was an armed robber.

He said the person hurriedly crossed the road as if he was being chased by some people.

The hit-and-run driver added that the spot where the incident occurred was notably notorious which made him not to stop.

He said: "On the 13th of October, I was coming from Jabi, going to Wuse Market. I was driving at 100kmph. After the Mabushi Bridge towards Wuse Market, I saw people rushing to cross the road. The first person crossed while the second person ran into my vehicle and was knocked down. But I moved on.

"The reason why I did not stop there was because I have been attacked there by robbers earlier in October.

"I told the policemen at the nearest checkpoint that I knocked someone down. Then, I went to park my damaged car. I had a serious injury in my hand. Truly, I didn't follow the advice by the policemen I met to report the case to the Wuse Divisional Police Station.

"Where I used to park my car, they know me as a taxi driver. The next morning, I called a panel beater to fix my car and found out that there was a smashed phone stuck in the windshield wiper.

"I thought it was an armed robbery who was chasing a victim that I knocked down so I left. On seeing the phone, I simply threw it away".

**H-RPC Petition - NUJ**

Meanwhile, leading the members of the House of Representatives Press Corps to the Secretariat of the NUJ in Utako, Abuja, the Chairman of the Press Corps, Grace Ike said that the body should ensure justice for Salem.

"We are here today to ask that the FCT Council Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) wades into this and see that justice is done for Tordue. It can be anybody. So, we must rise up to put a stop to it. We must rise and tell the international community and the whole world that journalism is not a crime.

"Just like the placards we had when we marched out to the police headquarters with promises here and there but all hope today is dashed.

"The House of Representatives press corps is here with the copy of the petition to Council", she said.

**We Demand Independent Investigation, Autopsy On The Body - NUJ/FCT Chair**

Responding, the Chairman of the Council, Comrade Emmanuel Ogbeche who picked holes in the police narrative demanded for an independent investigation and an autopsy on the body to determine how and when Salem died.

"Journalists and media practitioners in this country are endangered species. Nothing best reinforces that fear than the despicable manner which Mr. Tordue Henry Salem was murdered. I want to thank my colleague from the House of Representatives press corps for being proactive and in demand in for justice for our deceased colleague.

"We are not mindful of the circumstances that have led to this day. The guarantee I want to give to you is that we are going to hold the Nigerian government and Nigerian Police responsible for what has transpired."