

Family decries member's death in police custody

Posted By: Osagie Otabor on: July 28, 2015 In: News No Comments



•**Police: he died in 'mob action'**

The family of a 26-year-old man, Benson Obode, who was arrested by policemen from Lagos State on May 21, has decried his death in police custody.

It was learnt that Obode's body was deposited at the Central Hospital Mortuary in Benin, the Edo State capital, on the day he was arrested.

His family were unable to locate where the police took him.

A local radio crew, which travelled to Lagos and Abuja on several occasions, was told that the police in Lagos said Benson died from "mob action".

A member of the crew, Efe Osafamwan, narrated the crew's findings on air.

He said the police told it that they were investigating Obode's death.

The elder sister to the late Obode, Mrs Osawaru Izehi, said the family had travelled to Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt in search of where the police took their member.

She said the family was unaware that Obode had been killed.

The late Obode was arrested for allegedly buying a stolen car.

Mrs Izehi said her brother was innocent of the alleged crime, adding that she was at the police station on the day Obode was arrested.

She said she did not know that her brother had been killed when a policeman told her "minus one in your family".

The distraught woman said injuries on Obode's body showed that he was shot because there was a big hole on it, indicating a gunshot.

Mrs Izehi said: "My mother has been on the verge of death since we learnt about my brother's death yesterday (Sunday). Benson sells cars. He goes to Cotonou (Republic of Benin) to buy one car and sell with a little gain. At times, people sent cars from abroad and he helped them to market the cars. He had never been linked with any act of violence. He never told me he had any issue with anybody. They have been staying with me since our father died.

"Assuming he is a stubborn person, we won't take it like this. I don't know what to do again. We are tired; my mother is in my house and she is worried. Once she heard any phone call, she would jump to me to ask: 'What are they saying about my son? Yesterday, she said I should take her to Lagos. But to do what? She said I should just take her there. We are tired and confused.

"He (the late Obode) passed the night in my house and, in the morning, he swept the compound and

left for his apartment. I was later called that some people were holding him. When I got there, I saw his landlord and other people holding him down. I asked what happened and he said they said the police came to arrest him and that he did not know what offence he committed.

“Not long after, the policemen came back in a Toyota Highlander ash colour. They were wearing earrings and dreadlocks; if not for the police colour in their rifles, I would have doubted if they were real policemen. I asked them what my brother had done and they said I did not have any right to ask them questions. I begged that they should tell me, but they did not talk to me. One of them collected my mobile phone. I had returned home to dress up and went back to the state command. We saw the policemen and tried to talk to them, but they did not allow us to talk at all.

“We waited endlessly to see who could talk t us, but nobody did. We went to see Officer-in-Charged (OC) Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Edo State. He did not also attend to us. The policemen only told us that Benson (Obode) bought a stolen vehicle and that he is an armed robber. I was surprised.

“He stayed with me for a long time and he never took my money. If he did not have money, he would request from me and I would give it to him.

“But the policeman insisted that he was a thief and that they were scorpion of SARS from Lagos.”

Police spokesman Stephen Onwochei, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), said the matter did not concern the Edo State Police Command.

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