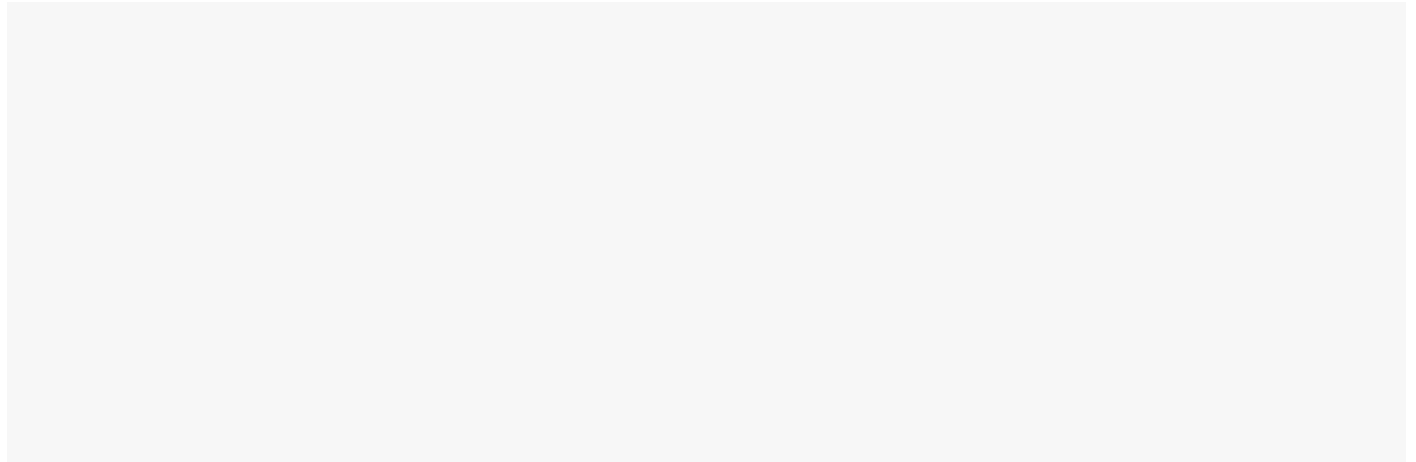


# Ripples over mechanic allegedly tortured to death by Rivers policemen

•Nigerians demand justice •He died of excess sugar in the body-Police

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**By Rosemary Nwisi, Port Harcourt and Nicholas Kalu, Abuja**

Nigerians are demanding justice in the case of a Port Harcourt mechanic , Chima Ikwunado, said to have been falsely accused of robbery and tortured to death by the police.

Four other young men described as Chima's friends who were similarly arrested and slammed with the same allegations are languishing in prison.

The police denied killing Chima.

They said autopsy showed that he died of 'high sugar level.'

The five men were arrested on December 19, 2019 ostensibly for driving against traffic in the city by officers from Mile One police station.

The police ,according to a man who claimed to be the owner of one of the cars being test driven by Chima,demanded bribe from the boys who said they had no money on them.

He said that the police proceeded to search the boys only to find various sums of money.

His story which was shared on Twitter had generated over 11000 angry reactions as at 4pm yesterday.

His account: "I gave my car to my usual mechanic to fix AC Gas on the 19th of Dec 2019. Called him several times on the 20th and did not get an answer. I decided to visit his shop physically at Ikoku to find out that my car and the mechanic are nowhere to be found. I asked fellow mechanics around and one said he saw when the mechanic was driving one way and he suspects that he might have been apprehended by the Police. My mind came down a bit after hearing this.

"I started visiting Police Stations in Port-Harcourt one after the other making enquiries until I got to Mile 1 Police Station and I saw my car parked in front of the Eagle Crack Police Division(a.k.a E-Crack). I felt relief thinking that the Police is my friend, I was totally wrong. I presented myself quickly at the front desk to say that the car belongs to me and I want to know the reason it got to this place. I was shocked to be pointed a gun by one of the officers and I was asked to leave before I get shot. Wow.... I wondered what crime I could have committed to present myself as the owner of my car. But I had to leave before I get shot.

"I got to my house and was drafting a strategy to attack this issue. It was exactly 2hours later when I noticed a knock on my gate. I opened my gate to see a young man who introduced himself as 'Obinna the brother to Chima'. Chima is the name of my mechanic. He asked me my name which I told him and that he was directed by his brother to meet me. So I asked him quickly if he knew the reason for the arrest. He said Chima told him that he and his boys were testing two cars, 3 boys in a Camry and 2 boys in my car, after doing some work on them. The traffic in Port-Harcourt around that time was terrible and they decided to drive one way.

"The police apprehend them and asked them for money. They offered an amount which was not comfortable for the Police officers. The eyes of the Police officers were completely red looking for money to solve their Christmas matters as this usually happens during the Christmas festive period in Nigeria. The police officers immediately changed the case to robbery, accusing the boys of robbing the two cars.

“The officers asked the boys to raise their hands and searched their pockets. They found money in each of the pockets of the boys. According to Obinna, N97,000.00(ninety seven thousand naira) was found on Chima, N50,000.00 (Fifty thousand naira) on one of them, N16,000.00(Sixteen thousand) on another etc, totally over N150,000.00(one hundred and fifty thousand naira) in their pockets. In the minds of the Police officers; (we cannot afford to loose this money we have seen physically in their pockets. Our Christmas is guaranteed a success if we can obtain all the money). Which indeed they achieved.

“Hand cuffed all of them, took their money and their telephones and arraigned them to the Police Station. Getting to the station, hung this boys upside down in fan hooks and started brutality on them with various weapons. The youngest of them which is only 19yrs was almost at the point of death and accepted to confess whatever they ask him to say. He started making false confession about my car, he agreed that my car was rubbed and that, the car belongs to a lady and that, they jumped into the ladies compound, broke the glass of the car, opened the door and used a master key to start the car. Broke the gate and drove off.

“This was the information I got from Mr. Obinna. At least I know the reason why my car is there. So I made contact with the Nigerian Air force Base who sent 2 soldiers to accompany me in my next visit. The two soldiers arrived my residence and accompanied me.

On arrival at the Mile 1 E-Crack Division, the IPO in charge of the case was very rude to the air force soldiers, insulting them saying that this is purely a civilian case and a case of robbery. The soldiers got angry and asked me if they can start beating up the police officers, I calmly told them not to do so as it will make matters worse for the innocent boys in police custody. So I left with the officers. I then called the Air force Commander and updated him on current status, he asked me if I had copies of my car papers, I told him I would get them and revert to him accordingly.

“I searched in my house for the car papers and did not find. But I remembered that my driver was the one who renewed the papers not up to 2months back. So I asked my driver for the papers and he informed me that he forgot the original and photocopies inside my car. I asked him to call the man at Inland Revenue to print copies. I got the copies and contacted the Air force Commander again to let him know that I have the papers.

“The Commander joined me to the Police Station on 23rd of Dec 2019. We met the Commander of E-Crack, I noticed the name on his uniform as Benson. The Air force Commander introduced himself and introduced me as his brother. Mr. Benson called the IPO of the case to come and narrate the story. The IPO explained how the boys jumped into a lady’s compound, broke the glass of the car, used master key to start the car, broke the gate and drove off. That they, the police officers apprehended the boys at the point of sale. That the boys were communicating with the buyer from Aba and that one of the boys has already confessed to the crime.

“After hearing this, at first I was wondering if it was some Nigerian movie the man was narrating or was he talking about my car? The E-Crack Commander now asked the IPO to bring the boy who made the confession. The boy was brought in after 2mins limping seriously with smelling wounds. The E-Crack Commander now asked the boy to tell the truth that no one would torture him. The boy now started talking by saying that he is only an apprenticed under his boss ‘Chima’, that the car belongs to Chima’s customer, that he made the false confession because he was tortured almost to the point of death, at this point, he stretched his arms with handcuffs towards the commander showing him the smelling wounds.

“The E-Crack Commander now asked the IPO to return the boy. I now told the E-Crack Commander that I have copies of my car papers here which I got from the Inland Revenue today as my driver forgot the original papers as well as the photocopies in my car, is it possible for the IPO to check my car, get all the papers in it and we compare with what is in my hands. The E-Crack commander agreed and sent the IPO to get the papers.

“After 3mins, the IPO came back and said there were no papers in the car. Well, I have copies right in front of us, I asked the commander if the copies I am presenting can be verified, and he concurred. I left the station with the Air force Commander.

“On the 30th of December 2019. I returned to the police station and met the commander to verify if my presented documents have been verified. He called the IPO and the IPO confirmed that the documents are authentic. The commander now asked me my full name and I told him. He says that the name on the papers bears the same surname but different first name, why is this so? I explained that, the first name and second name on the car papers belong to my younger sister. He insisted that I must

bring her to the station. So I called my sister and picked her up at her office and brought her to the station. I presented her to the commander.

“The commander asked how long she has been using the car and she confirmed that it is over 2yrs. He asked the IPO to release my car as well as the second car which was an old model Camry. Before leaving his office, I asked about the boys because I still have an unfinished business with my mechanic. He asked me how long I have known the mechanic, I told him that I have known the mechanic for more than 4years and that the mechanic fixes all my cars. The Commander now told me that he is investigating a case of cultism against all the boys. I wondered in my mind how a case of charged “Robbery” could change to cultism. I had no choice other than to leave the station with my car. On the 2nd of January 2020, I got a call from a barrister saying that he was engaged by the families of the boys in custody. That he has spoken with the Commander with regards to the case. That he was shocked to know that the commander was now working as a commander in that division as he has long known him. That in fact the man is his friend. He continued by saying that the commander told him that the case is a bad one, his boys have over worked. Speaking in pigeon saying “de case don spoil, my boys don over work” The Barrister did not understand. The barrister kept on insisting until the man opened up to say that my mechanic ‘Chima’ is dead. He was tortured to death.

‘The barrister now asked him where the corpse is. The Commander says that he does not trust him enough to reveal that kind of classified information. That the best thing he can do for the remaining four boys, is to look for a small charge to charge them, so that as soon as they get to the court, bail will be granted easily. He asked the barrister to come the next day. According to the barrister, as soon as he left the police station, the Commander immediately charged the boys to court that same day on the charge of my car robbery and cultism. After hearing this from the barrister I again thought, the police had released my car to me after verifying that it is my car and I never told them that my car was ever robbed, why did they still charge the boys for my car robbery? I later found out the answer which I will say shortly after. As I write this story, the remaining four boys are in prison custody with wounds getting rotten and smelling. Chima that the police killed is tagged as ‘At Large’. The answer to my question came out when the families of the deceased visited the court to see a copy of the charge sheet confirming that the police wrote on it that the owner of the car, which is supposed to me, confirmed

to them that his car was stolen as described. I have never made such a statement anywhere. My car was never robbed.

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“The families of the boys visited the prison in Port-Harcourt to see their loved ones and insisted to take photographs after seeing the wounds of some of them excreting water and decayed substances. The prison warders said each photograph will cost them N15,000.00 (Fifteen Thousand Naira) each. The families not being able to afford the money, left the prison sobering.

“At this moment of my life, I and my family members are very scared of the police. I wanted to send my brother out with my car, immediately I realized that his drivers license is in process. I got scared and did not engage him anymore, because if police can take a life because of “one way driving”, then it means they can take a life for not having Drivers License and many more.

“As I write this message, my wife is beside me shivering and saying that I should make the message anonymous, for fear that I could get killed by the police for making it public.

“Please if I get any mosquito bite, you know who is responsible.

“I came to know that the deceased mechanic got married just six months ago and that his wife is a few months pregnant.

“Again, the families of the 5 boys are in abject poverty and could not even afford lawyer fees to follow up the case. What a shame.”

The complainant gave the names of the other boys as: Victor Ogbonna, Osaze Friday, Ifeanyi Osuji and Ifeanyi Onyekwere.



Discussion about this post

