

How soldiers killed my husband, donated his body to varsity's lab for experiment – 20-yr-old widow



- ***Demands justice against errant military officers***

- ***Corpse accepted for safe keeping, says varsity's spokesman***

September 7, 2024 was a black Saturday for the family of Mr David Achinya in Taraku, a community in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State. It was particularly so for Mrs Doosuur Achinya, a

20-year-old widow whose husband, Terhile Timothy Achinya, was cut down in his prime.

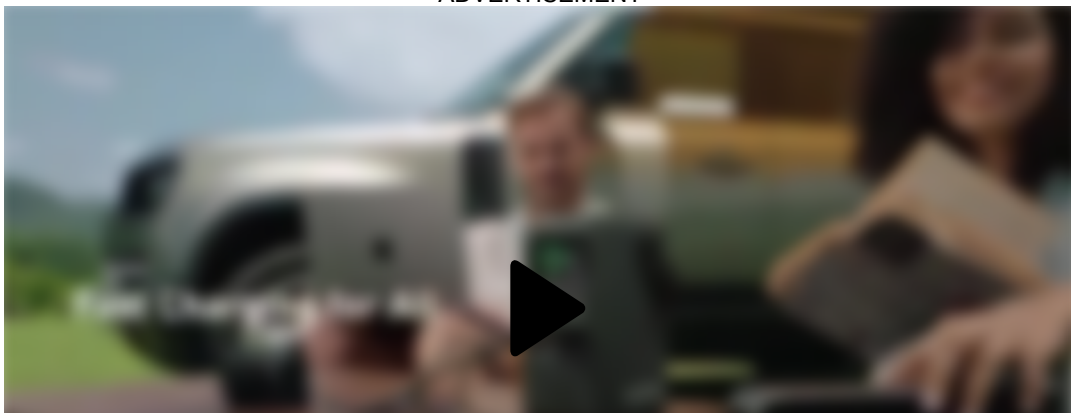
On that day, some soldiers attached to the security outfit Operation Whirlid Stroke, in Lafia, Nasarawa State capital, tortured to death the final year student of Isa Mustapha Agwai Polytechnic (IMAP), Lafia, after he was picked up by the military around 2pm on September 6 on his way to the examination hall.

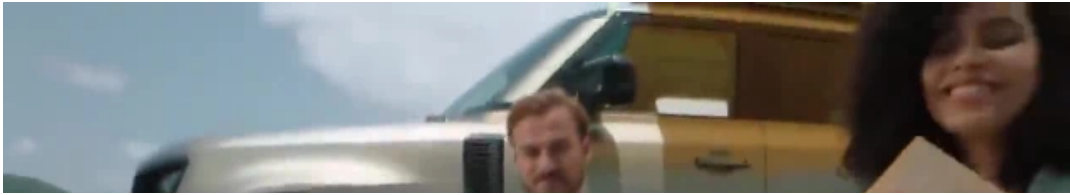
A friend and course mate of the late student, Olagundoye Favor, had given him a ride on a motorcycle on their way to school when the military personnel picked them up for reasons that remain yet a mystery, took them to their detention facility and subjected them to serious torture in the process of which Achinya died.

Achinya, a student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering was billed to graduate on September 9, but his dream of becoming an engineer was aborted two days before it materialised.

The development has ruined the life of his widow, Doosuur, and their two kids aged one and three.

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Embarrassed at the death of the student in their custody, the military officers led by one Captain Kaakara allegedly tried to deposit the corpse of the late student at Dalhatu Arab Specialist Hospital Lafia, but the authorities of the hospital rejected the corpse when the military officers could not produce a police report.

Olagundoye Favor was however admitted at the hospital and treated for the internal wounds he sustained from the soldiers' beating.

Following the rejection of Achinya's corpse at Dalhatu Arab Specialist Hospital, our correspondent gathered, the soldiers decided to take it to the laboratory of the Anatomy Department of the Federal University of Lafia (FULAFIA) where corpses are used for practicals by medical students.

Surprisingly, the lab attendants of the University accepted the corpse for their students' experiments without demanding to know the circumstances surrounding it. Doosuur, who has yet to come to terms with becoming a widow when she spoke with our correspondent, said she could not believe that all the hope that she and her husband had nursed about being successful in life had been dashed by his sudden death.

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"He was left with just a paper to complete his engineering programme when the soldiers killed him," she said.

"He had called me in the early morning of September 6 as he was set to go for the exams.

“He spoke to his two kids and assured them that in the next three days, he would sit his final and join them to celebrate his graduation.

“Little did I know that I would never see him again in my life

“Every day, his two kids ask after him, saying, ‘Mummy, when is Daddy coming back? Not knowing they will never see him again.

“My life is ruined and there is no hope for me again. The military officers have finished me.

“Killing my husband for no justification and leaving me behind with these little kids is too much for me to bear.

“Life will never be the same again.”

She said Achinya’s ambition was to complete his OND in Mechanical Engineering and proceed for his HND, but his dream of becoming an engineer was cut short by the errant soldiers.

“We could not achieve our dreams together as death snatched him from me unannounced,” she said.

“I wept bitterly because of the enormous things we planned to do after his graduation.



"I am depressed. The military officers have deprived me of peace of mind at the young age of 20, and I won't have peace of mind for the remaining period of my life.

"The killing of my innocent husband was a devastating blow.

"I have been waking up in the middle of the night to weep bitterly since my husband died. What is the future of his two kids?

"Who is going to train them? Who will take care of them? I have no means of livelihood.

“All along, our hope was that he would complete his OND and look for something doing before furthering his education.”

The distraught widow says all she wants is justice for her late husband. “I want the soldiers who killed my husband arrested and made to face the law. He did not do any wrong thing to them,” she insisted.

The murdered student also left behind aged parents who are also crying for justice in respect of the gruesome murder of their son.

The father of the deceased student, David Achinya, who described the incident as unfortunate, called on the authorities to make sure that the military officers involved are made to face the law.

FULAFIA faces public scrutiny

Although the Federal University Lafia (FULAFIA) was not involved in the torture and death of the student, the institution faces an uphill task to exonerate itself from the entire episode for the simple reason that its Anatomy Lab accepted an unauthorised corpse without any written document.

The Taraku community in Benue State strongly believes that the action of the lab attendant of the Anatomy Department was meant to prevent traces and create imaginary mystery.

The late Achinya, until his gruesome murder at the hands of the soldiers was a graduating Mechanical Engineering student of Isa Agwai polytechnic, Lafia.

The Nation investigation revealed that the deceased student was arrested on Friday September 6, tortured and killed on September 7. In a desperate move to cover up for the crime, his killers took his corps to the Dalhatu Arab Specialist Hospital Lafia where it was rejected because of their refusal to write a statement. Hence they donated the corps to the anatomy department at the Federal University of Lafia.

Investigation revealed that the deceased was whisked away by the military personnel operating under the auspices of Operation Wild Stroke with a certain Captain Kaakara (full name withheld) on arriving

the school premises on a motorcycle to sit his second to final examination alongside his friend identified as Olagundoye Favour .



•The late Achinya during matriculation

Barrister Ayiwulu Baba of the Principal Black Peak Chambers, Lafia and counsel to the victims had petitioned the Commissioner of Police in Nassarawa State over the murder of Achinya and also written to the military command alleging brutality against innocent people especially these latest victims.

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Speaking to our correspondent, the legal practitioner said: “What happened was that the military officers wanted to cover up for their actions, so they refused to take his body to a public or private mortuary. Instead, they took it to the anatomy department of the Federal University of Lafia.

“We had to trace the corpse to the specialist hospital here in Lafia alongside his father, and it was at the specialist hospital that we got a hint that we should go to Sandaji Hospital’s mortuary.

“When we got there, they said nobody was brought in there. Somebody again hinted us that he heard them saying they would take it to the university and that we should check there.

“I was reluctant because it sounded abnormal, but we decided to take the risk to go there only for us to discover the body of Timothy Terhile Achinya at the anatomy department, and it was shocking that they were already conducting examination (practicals) on his corpse.”

He explained further that the military personnel actually arrested Achinya with his friend Olagundoye on their way to the examination hall on the 6th of September 2024, and took them to their detention facility alongside five other students without any cogent reason. He said it was during the brutal torture in their detention that Achinya died.

Because they were kept in separate detention rooms, his colleague students were not aware that one of them had died.

Asked about the likely intention of such an unprofessional and unethical conduct, Baba said: “They did that to cover up the offence. His own friend who was arrested with him is still alive, although in the hospital.

“They did not even tell him that Timothy Terhile Achinya was dead. It was after his death that they transferred the matter to the police station. And they did not even tell the police that one of the boys was dead.

“It was shocking that they even marked Timothy Terhile Achinya’s corpse as an unknown person and a cultist. They did not even tag him as a student.

“This is somebody that was on a motorcycle going to the examination hall. They did not even deem it fit to report to the polytechnic where they picked him but went and dashed the corpse to the anatomy department of the Federal University of Lafia just because they feel he is a nobody.

“They felt they could cover up the crime, but unfortunately for them, we have uncovered the crime.”

Speaking on the legality of the conduct of the Federal University of Lafia, the lawyer said:

“Legally, the university jumped all the procedures of accepting corpses, because the body was not advertised. The university did not make any request for corpse for students of the anatomy department or any other department for whatever purpose.

“There was no record of unclaimed bodies anywhere, so how did the Anatomy Department arrive at accepting a corpse and commencing practicals on it?

“So, there was no legal backing to all that the university did. It is even strange that soldiers will bring corpse to the university and donate just like that. They did not have a corona order and it didn’t pass through the Court.

“What the university did was wrong, and I think they have a case to answer. I will write to them,” the legal practitioner said.

In his response, the Public Relations Officer of the Federal University of Lafia, Abubakar Ibrahim, said there was a corpse in the university anatomy department, but it was for safe keeping.

Family petitions IGP, CDS

The family members had engaged the services of a lawyer, Barrister Ayiwulu Baba Ayiwulu, who wrote a petition to the Inspector General of Police and the Chief of Defence Staff against act of culpable homicide. A copy of the petition was made available to our correspondent.

Our correspondent further gathered that based on the petition written by the family lawyer, the Chief of Defence Staff directed the military officers on Operation Wild Stroke in the state who were involved in the killing of the late Achinya to report themselves to the State Criminal Investigation Department of the state's police command to tell their own side of the story.

It was gathered that the affected military officers appeared and gave their statement, following which it was resolved that an autopsy be carried out on Achinya's lifeless body. The Autopsy was done on the September 22 by two professors of pathology and two medical doctors in the presence of the representative of the military, the police and the family lawyer.

A letter written by the family lawyer, Barrister Ayiwulu Baba Ayiwulu, to state commissioner of police requesting for the release of the lifeless body of Achinya for burial pending the outcome of the result was titled "Request for the released of the lifeless body of Timothy Terhile Achinya to the deceased family for burial and certified copies of related document from investigation activities".

It reads: "We write as counsel to Mr David Achinya of Taraku, Benue State of Nigeria herein referred to as our client.

"We write to appreciate your good office for the aid towards tracing the body of the deceased Timothy Terhile Achinya who died in the custody of military personnel of Operation Wild Stroke in Lafia, who illegally took him on his way to examination hall into detention AND serious torturing resulting to his being murdered before carelessly depositing his lifeless body by one Captain Kaakara at the Anatomy Department Laboratory of the Federal University of Lafia.

"We really commend the effort of your officers at the homicide department at the SCIID for the effort made in tracing the whereabouts of the deceased body on the 11th of September, 2024.

"Sir, having identified the lifeless body of the said Timothy Terhile Achinya, our client, who is the deceased's father, wish to have the body released to him for burial

“Our client further request that discreet investigation should be carried out in order to bring to book the facilitation and actors in leading to the murder of his son and to further request that a corona inquest be conducted as part of your investigation and all the necessary investigation documents and pictures taken by the IPO at the homicide department to be certified and made available to us.”

The late Achinya was buried on September 28 2024 at Oyomba Adaa, Taraku, Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State, after the Nasarawa State Commissioner of Police granted the request to bury the deceased IMAP student.

On September 25, 2024, a member of the House of representatives representing Gwer West/Gwer East federal constituency of Benue State, Dr Asema Achado, laid a petition on the floor of the House of Representatives against the military personnel of “Operation Whirl-Stroke” in Lafia for the culpable homicide of his constituent, Mr. Achinya, Terhile Timothy who before he was killed was a final year student of the Isa Agwai Mustapha Polytechnic, Lafia, Nasarawa State.

While laying the petition, which prays the House to conduct a detailed investigation into the murder of Achinya, Dr Asema Achado noted that the petition became absolutely pertinent, as it will ensure justice is done as regards his late constituent’s lost life.

“Mr. Timothy (Achinya) was allegedly and brutally murdered by personnel of the Nigerian Army attached to Operation Whirl-Stroke, Lafia Unit in Nasarawa State on September 7, 2024.

“The petition emphasised the pivotal role of military personnel stationed at Lafia, which should be devoid of unjust brutality, killings, and unlawful treatment of citizens and instead conduct well-organised operations following military ethics to protect lives and properties.

“The petition offered the following prayers to the Honourable House: Investigate the alleged brutality of the Nigerian Army leading to Mr. Achinya Terhile Timothy’s murder; curtail the alleged abusive excesses exhibited by some personnel to prevent future occurrences; reinstate the Nigerian military’s important role in safeguarding citizens’ lives and properties, and Conduct a thorough investigation to ensure justice for the deceased, Mr. Terhile Timothy Achinya.

“The House sympathised with the deceased family and directed the committee on public petitions to investigate and report back to the house within four weeks, ” the house resolved.

The National Association of Polytechnic Students (NAPS), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), the Student Union Government (SUG) of IMAP as well as the management of the Isa Mustapha Agwai Polytechnic Lafia have all condemned the act of the military officers and called for justice to be done.