

Lecturer dies over ASUU, S'East governors' face-off

Emmanuel Obe, Awka

A lecturer with the Anambra State University, Mr. Romanus Edokwe, was killed on Wednesday in a motor accident on his way to attend a meeting of the Academic Staff Union of Universities at Igbariam.

Lecturers of the five state-owned universities in the South-East states have been on strike for three months while demanding for better salaries and improved funding of the universities.

Edokwe was a lecturer in the political science department of the ASU and was an active member of ASUU. He was on his way from Onitsha where he lived to the Igbariam Campus of the university when the accident occurred.

The local Chairman of ASUU, Dr. Jaja Nwanegbo said the late Edokwe was the first casualty to be claimed in the ongoing impasse between the state universities in the zone and their respective state governments.

But he said the struggle to better conditions at the university would continue in spite of the tragedy.

He said, "We are not deterred by the death of our colleague, if it takes sacrificing our lives for things to move well

in the university system in the zone, then we are prepared.

"He was a young and enterprising lecturer who was doing very well in the university here. It is very bad that this colleague died of a preventable death, which is accident.

"He was coming from Onitsha where he lived and had to board a commercial vehicle where he died along with other passengers."

Nwanegbo said Edokwe died because of the insensitivity

of government to the plight of its workers, saying that "If he was well-paid, would he not have been travelling in his own car rather than boarding a rickety bus to the school from Onitsha everyday?"

The Vice-Chairman of the union's chapter, Dr. Osita Chiayanam, also lamented that it was a shame that the South-East which used to pride itself as being ahead of other zones in education was now being left behind in providing university education for its people.

"If the governors are saying that they do not have money, they should consider the fact that some of the states among them are oil producing states, which receive jumbo allocation monthly, while others have various commercial cities whose revenue alone can run the state.

"If some states in the country can conveniently pay their lecturers despite having more than one university, our governors in the South East have no reason not to be able to do the same," Chiayanam added.

HURILAWS seeks abolition of death penalty

Kemi Obasola

A non-governmental organisation, Human Rights Law Service, has called for the abolition of death penalty.

The NGO urged federal and state governments to abolish the death penalty from the criminal and penal codes.

According to the organisation, death penalty is applied overwhelmingly in violation of international standards as it breaches the principles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "which states that everyone has the right to life and that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or

punishment."

HURILAW lamented that Nigeria had nothing to show for the inclusion of death penalty in its penal code, 'except clear proof that it is not an effective deterrent to crime'.

The group said, "death penalty is inhuman, cruel and degrading. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed a progressive increase in the number of crimes which carry the death sentence, without a corresponding decrease in the frequency with which such crimes occur."

The group berated the National Assembly for its failure to act on several attempts made by the Nigerian Bar Association and the Federal Ministry of Justice to amend the laws

governing administration of criminal justice in the country.

HURILAW added, "A number of bills such as the Police Act, Evidence Act, Criminal Procedure Act, Legal Aid Act, National Human Rights Commission Act and a host of others were sent to the National Assembly but the lawmakers failed to act on them.

"The death penalty today as applied in Nigeria raises more questions than answers: how often is it applied? Does it work? What category of people do we find most on death row? With the level of corruption in the police, coupled with allegations of confession obtained through torture can one say for sure everyone on death row is guilty?"