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Police arrest Abia director for death of 10-year-old maid

MARCH 20, 2015 : STEPHEN UKANDU 10 COMMENTS

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Onuoha; Ngwakwe

| credits: Stephen Ukandu

The Director of Administration representing the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources in the Board of the Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission, Mr. Christian Onuoha, has been arrested by the police for the mysterious death of his 10-year-old housemaid.

The victim, Anurika Ngwakwe, was allegedly found unconscious in Onuoha's car in his house at World Bank Housing Estate, Umuahia, on Tuesday, before she was rushed to the hospital, where she was confirmed dead.

Speaking with *PUNCH Metro* on Thursday, the father of the victim, Mr. Chinenye Ngwakwe, a security man with the state's Ministry of Finance, said he wanted justice for the death of his daughter.

The 49-year-old said the wife of the accused, Precious, who is also a member of staff of the Ministry of Finance, had been mounting pressure on him to find a housemaid for the family.

He said after much pressure, he finally took the couple to his village at Owoahiafo in the Obingwa Local Government Area of the state on January 2, 2015, where he had intended to recommend a housemaid to them.

Ngwakwe said he decided to entertain the couple in his house before taking them to meet the proposed housemaid.

According to him, while the couple were in his house, his daughter came out from her room to welcome them, adding that the couple suddenly developed interest in her.

He said, "They said they liked her and would prefer to take her. When my wife and I asked Anurika whether she would like to follow them, she said yes."

He said he was shocked that his daughter died in mysterious circumstances less than three months after she was handed over to the couple, who he said, had promised to train her.

The father of the victim said he was contacted on the phone on the fateful day by the wife of the suspect.

"Immediately I got to their house, I was told that my daughter had been rushed to a hospital. When I got to the hospital, I saw my daughter on oxygen mask lying naked on the bed and bleeding from the mouth and her private parts.

"When I asked them what happened to her, I was told that she locked up herself in the man's car and was found bleeding with bruises in parts of her body. While I was there, the man told me that he was going back to

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his house and I said I would stay with her because she was my daughter.

"The man bought dry gin and gave me to drink, but I rejected the drink and threw it inside the hospital's dustbin. He left us and went back to his house.

"Later in the night, she was removed from the oxygen, but blood kept coming from her private parts with whitish substance.

"A nurse, who also observed it, shouted, 'What did they do to this girl?' At that point, the doctor called Onuoha on the phone to explain what happened to my daughter."

Ngwakwe explained that when finally the accused showed up the following day, the doctor asked him to take the girl to the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, saying he could no longer handle the case.

It was learnt that when the girl was finally brought to the FMC, doctors at the hospital insisted on having the medical report of the doctor that attended to her at the first hospital.

The father of the victim stated that before the doctor's report was brought, the authorities of the FMC invited the police, who arrested the suspect.

The father called on the government to prevail on the accused to "explain what happened to my daughter".

He added that the suspect's wife had boasted at the hospital that money would be used to "settle the matter".

PUNCH Metro learnt that the matter was being treated as suspected rape by the family.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Geoffrey Ogbonna, said the suspect was still being detained, adding that investigations into the matter had commenced.

He said the cause of the victim's death could not be established until the result of the autopsy was released.

He said, "It is not clear whether rape or ritual killing was the cause, but the autopsy result will guide the police in their investigations.

"The car, in which the victim's body was discovered, is owned by another person. The owner will be arrested. The matter cannot be swept under the carpet."

Meanwhile, the state government has ordered the immediate removal of the suspect from ASOPADEC board.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Dr. Anthony Agbazuere, who announced this at a press briefing on Thursday, said the measure was taken "given the nature of his alleged crime".

He said that the state Civil Service Commission had also been directed to "take necessary action."

Agbazuere said, "Section 358 of the Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Nigeria says the punishment for rape is life imprisonment. Since the victim is dead, the issue of murder comes in and the penalty for such offence is death by hanging."

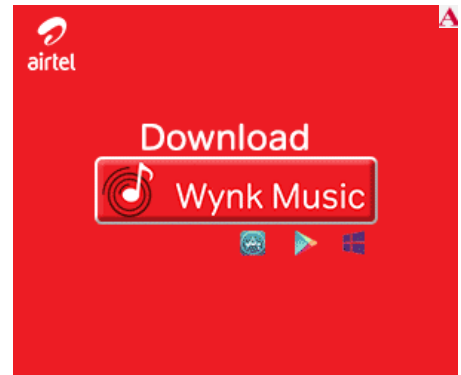
Similarly, the International Federation of Women Lawyers had indicated interest in the case.

The Secretary of the Abia State chapter of FIDA, Florence Egwuonwu, said the organisation would ensure justice was done.

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