

19-year-old suspect dies in Lagos police custody

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Gafar Ayoola

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There was anger at the Denton Police Division on Saturday after the family members of a 19-year-old barber, Gafar Ayoola, discovered that he had died in detention.

PUNCH Metro learnt that Gafar, who worked in the Otto, Ebute-Meta area of Lagos State, had come to the area on Friday to deliver a message to his aunt and to see some friends when he was arrested by a police corporal from the division.

Our correspondent gathered that the corporal, identified only as Taiye, took the teenager to the station and began to interrogate him over a robbery incident.

It was learnt that when the family members discovered that he had been arrested and detained, they came for him on Saturday and were told that Gafar had died in custody.

A friend of the family, identified only as Musibau, claimed that he came to the station on Friday around 2pm and saw the suspect while being tortured till he became unconscious.

He added that the boy later died because he was not given immediate medical attention.

He said, "Gafar resided at Bridge Road in the Otto area. He had come to see his aunt on Berkley Street at about 8am. Thereafter, he went to check on his friends around Otto bus stop. That was when the police corporal sighted him and invited him to the station.

"When I went to the station in the afternoon, the suspect was lying unconscious. The policemen thought he was pretending and abandoned him. By evening, he was dead.

"A policeman told us that when he began to gasp, the officers rushed him to Dunik Hospital on Kano Street where he died."

When *PUNCH Metro* got to the deceased's apartment on Saturday, an angry crowd of family members demanded that the police corporal who allegedly tortured their son to death must be dismissed and made to face trial.

The deceased's father, Sulaimon Ayoola, told our correspondent that the Divisional Police Officer invited him to his office and pleaded with him to accept the matter in good fate.

He said, "The DPO did not agree that my son was tortured. His explanation was that my son had cardiac arrest while in the station. He said I should leave everything to God and accept his death in good fate. But I want justice on this matter."

The aunt that Gafar visited on Friday, Lateefat Agoro, said, "It

was his mother that sent him to me. It was after leaving my place that the policeman arrested him. They said the police corporal claimed Gafar had abused him two weeks ago and he was going to deal with him. So, the corporal took him to the police station.

"On Saturday, I was called on the telephone that Gafar had died in custody. I was shocked. I suspect a foul play in this matter."

The deceased's mother, Latifat Ayoola, said, "There were about four persons with my son, but he was the only one who was arrested. My son was not an armed robber; he was a barber and he had friends in Otto. When we went to the station, they brought out a list of suspects, and his name was not on the list. That was how we knew that his arrest was not legal. Let the police say what they found on my son."

Our correspondent gathered that the family members had refused to collect Gafar's remains for burial, demanding that an autopsy be carried out.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, SP Dolapo Badmos, said the suspect died in a hospital shortly after his arrest, adding that investigation was ongoing into the matter.

She said, "The report we received is that barely some minutes after he was brought to the division, he complained of feeling ill and he was rushed to a hospital in the area. It was while he was receiving treatment that he passed on.

"The leadership of the command and the force are keen about the entrenchment of respect for human rights and abhors any form of torture. I believe that no officer will take that risk. However, the command has commenced investigation into the matter."

