

# Family seeks justice for factory worker tortured to death by police

Ihuoma Chiedozie, Enugu

**T**o members of his immediate family, Chibuikwe Edu's death is like a nightmare that they have not been able to wake up from.

The family is still trying to understand how the 22-year-old ended up in the cell of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Enugu, where he was tortured only to die just 10 minutes after he was rushed to the Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu, on May 18, 2016.

To compound the family's anguish, Chibuikwe's death was not even communicated to them, and his body had yet to be released by the police for burial.

The corpse was deposited at the morgue in the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku-Ozala, Enugu, without the knowledge of the family members, who are now crying out for justice.

Our correspondent learnt that the late Chibuikwe, a native of Ulepa village in Ntezi, a community in Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, was a factory worker with Intecil Products Limited, which is based in the Emene area of Enugu.

He was the last of the six surviving children of a widow.

The young man, said to be talented in football, relocated from Lagos to Enugu in 2015.

Advised by family members to stay back in Enugu, Chibuikwe took up a factory job in January 2016, as he waited for a breakthrough in his quest to become a professional footballer.

Chibuikwe was also seeking to further his studies, following advice from his family that it was better for him to combine academics with a possible career in football.

The factory job was supposed to be a temporary job - a means for Chibuikwe to raise some money to pursue bigger ambition.

Unfortunately, the temporary job led to his death, putting a permanent stop to his dreams.

According to petitions forwarded to the Senate, House of Representatives, National Human Rights Commission and other bodies by the deceased's family, an alleged theft in the administrative unit of Intecil Limited, the company he worked for, on April 29, 2016 led to his arrest.

The theft, which involved an unspecified amount of money, was said to have taken place while Chibuikwe and other workers were on duty.

However, Chibuikwe was at work in the factory as of the time the theft took place in the administrative offices.

A copy of the petition sent to the National Assembly, which was signed by the deceased's brother, Oliver Edu, and his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Orsu, was made available to our correspondent.

Explaining the circumstances of his death, the petition reads, "On April 30, 2016, Chibuikwe was invited by the Emene Police Division and after his statement at the police station, he was released because they found he was not involved in the theft. But the police detained one Sunday Oche, whom they suspected to be involved."

The family explained that the Executive Managing Director of Intecil Products Limited, Mr. Chinedu Arodiogu, then requested that the case be transferred to SARS, a police formation specialised in handling armed robbery cases.

Chibuikwe was promptly arrested again by SARS operatives when he reported to work on May 9, 2016.

Unfortunately, Chibuikwe never came out alive after his arrest and detention. Seven days later, he was rushed to ESUTH for complications which reportedly came from his torture. There, he died.

Chibuikwe's family members said in the petition, "On May 16, 2016, a SARS official, one Mr. Everest, informed us that, upon his investigation, 'the boy (Chibuikwe) is innocent but he should wait in the cell.'"

Elizabeth, the sister, added that when she brought food to Chibuikwe at the SARS detention



•Chibuikwe

facility on May 17, "she noticed bruises and scars all over his body, indicative of torture."

She added that during the visit, Chibuikwe confirmed to her that the SARS operatives tortured him to force him to confess.

Chibuikwe said he did not yield to the torture, Elizabeth said in the petition.

However, when the family members visited again on May 18, they were told that Chibuikwe was dead.

Since then, the family had been denied access to Chibuikwe's corpse, which had been deposited in the morgue at UNTH.

"On June 2, 2016, the family visited the mortuary but they were denied access to the body again.

"According to the mortician, Chibuikwe's body is labelled as 'armed robber' therefore no one could have access to it without police permission," the petition added.

The family members further alleged that the management of Intecil Limited and SARS are collaborating to cover up their roles in Chibuikwe's death.

The family has alleged collusion between the management of Intecil Limited and police over the murder of their son.

They said the company had yet to officially communicate to the family of Chibuikwe about his death.

In the petitions to the Senate, House of Representatives, National Human Rights Commission, the family has called for the prosecution of those responsible for the killing of their son.

They have also demanded an independent autopsy on Chibuikwe's remains.

The deceased's family insists that there must be an adequate compensation and a public apology from Intecil Limited and the police, while also demanding a befitting burial for him.

"The death of late Chibuikwe is a clear case of torture and illicit treatment and more worrisome is the fact that the young lad was completely innocent of the phantom claim against him," the family said.

The lawyer representing the victim's family, Andrew Nwokocho, told our correspondent that, if the petitions failed to yield the desired result, they would head to court to demand justice.

Officials of the NHRC, on June 2, visited Intecil Limited for a meeting with the Executive Director, Mr. Chinedu Arodiogu, and the Administrative Manager, Mr. Benjamin Oke.

In a memo to the Commissioner of Police, Enugu State, dated June 1, 2016, entitled 'An

appeal for your intervention: Torture and extra-judicial murder of Chinedu Edu by SARS, Enugu, the NHRC reported that, during the meeting at Intecil Limited, "both Mr. Arodiogu and Mr. Oke were very reluctant to discuss the alleged theft in their office apartment, the investigation by Emene Police Station and the involvement of SARS".

The memo, which was made available to our correspondent, was signed by the Zonal Coordinator of the NHRC, Barrister Uche Nwokocho, for the Executive Secretary.

According to the NHRC, the Intecil Limited management explained that an office was broken into in which a safe where millions of naira and recharge cards were stolen. They were not sure about the time of the day it happened on Friday, April 29, 2016."

Saturday PUNCH learnt that Arodiogu and Oke equally informed the commission that "the Emene Police Station identified one suspect, Sunday Oche, because some recharge cards kept in the safe were found in his possession. Suspect insisted that he picked the cards on the floor beside the broken safe".

The NHRC said in its report, "Mr. Arodiogu said the case was transferred to the SARS because he was not satisfied with the way the Emene Police Station was handling the matter. Mr. Arodiogu and Mr. Oke refused to say whether the application was made orally or in writing to SARS; and who the application was addressed to. They also refused to disclose who gave the 'statement' to SARS, based on which their workers were arrested.

"Mr. Arodiogu denied that both late Chibuikwe and Alphon Pius (a security staff of the company who was equally arrested) were tortured. He said that he was informed that late Chibuikwe died of brief sickness, and the injuries for which Alphon Pius was admitted in the hospital were self-inflicted because he attempted suicide in SARS cell."

From its findings, the commission also gave an insight into how Chibuikwe passed away at the hospital.

"In the wee hours of May 18, 2016, late Chibuikwe was brought to Enugu State University Teaching Hospital by SARS policemen. According to the nurse who attended to him, he was completely battered. His body was lacerated, and the bones seemed to have been broken at some points; but there was no gunshot wound on him.

"Before the medical treatment could be administered, less than 10 minutes after admission into the hospital, Chibuikwe died. The body was immediately removed by SARS and taken to the UNTH mortuary in Ituku-Ozala."

The commission therefore urged the Commissioner of Police, Enugu, to "liaise with the Commander SARS, and the Medical Director, UNTH, Ituku-Ozala, to ensure that an autopsy is conducted on the body of the late Chibuikwe, after which it should be released to his family for burial.

The NHRC also called for a "detailed medical examination and report on Alphon Pius, who was allegedly tortured to the point of death by SARS."

The National Human Rights Commission demanded the prosecution of "all those found culpable in the murder of Chibuikwe Edu and torture of Alphon Pius."

When contacted, Police Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Police Command, Mr. Ebere Amaraizu, said he would get back to our correspondent.

Meanwhile, the management of Intecil Limited has refused to speak on the matter.

When contacted on the telephone, the administrative manager, Oke, told our correspondent, "I don't have anything to tell you. Revert to our lawyer please."

But he dropped the call without disclosing the identity and telephone numbers or address of the said lawyer.

Oke later called on Friday and told our correspondent to get in touch with Intecil Limited's lawyer, Barrister G. Ekoh.

When contacted, Ekoh insisted that Chibuikwe was responsible for the theft in the company's administrative unit.

The lawyer said the money allegedly stolen from the company's safe was 'about N1million'.

He claimed that Chibuikwe was the one that hid the stolen cash.

Ekoh also said it was the Commissioner of Police, Enugu State, that transferred the case to SARS, following reservations expressed by the management of Intecil Limited over the way the case was being handled by Emene police station.

The lawyer said Chibuikwe's death was not as a result of torture. According to him, the young man became sick while in the custody of SARS and subsequently died when he was taken to hospital.

"He (Chibuikwe) was sick in police custody and he was rushed to hospital where he died. Apart from that, another suspect in the theft also attempted to commit suicide but he was also taken to hospital where he recovered.

"The other suspect was also charged for attempting to commit suicide, in addition with the theft," Ekoh said.

According to him, the court case involving the alleged theft is ongoing.

## I don't want to go to jail - Woman accused of bypassing IE meter

Kunle Falayi

**A**fifty-eight-year-old trader, Ejide Ogunmiluyi, currently facing prosecution before an Ijeda Magistrate's Court, Ikorodu, Lagos, over allegations of bypassing electricity meter in her house, went on her knees at the court on Tuesday, asking officials of the company to withdraw the case against her.

Ogunmiluyi, who begged to pay a heavy fine, officially levied as the company's punishment for meter bypass, said she would rather pay the fine than go to jail.

Saturday PUNCH learnt that according to company regulations, she would have to pay a fee for the loss of revenue in addition to another official fine.

Even though IE officials did not disclose how much Ogunmiluyi would have to pay at the end of the day, Saturday PUNCH

learnt she would pay between N250,000 and N400,000.

Even though a hearing was not held on her case that day, she used the opportunity to make her case directly to the company's officials.

It was later decided that she would have to pay half of her fine before the next court sitting on July 13.

Ogunmiluyi was accused of bypassing "a meter in her house at Millenium Estate, in order to cheat Ikeja Electric out of necessary bill payment, contrary to Section 409 of the Criminal Code Laws of Lagos, 2011."

She was also accused of costing the company revenue loss "amount of which had not been determined during her arraignment.

The spokesperson for Ikeja Electric, Mr. Felix Ofule, had told Saturday PUNCH that cases of meter bypass and electricity theft were worsening distribution efforts of the company.