

# Family accuses soldiers of torturing breadwinner to death

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Nigerian soldiers

***Ovie Okpare***

A 43-year-old man, Mr. Ajayi Oladele, has been allegedly tortured to death by soldiers attached to the 4 Mechanised Brigade, Benin-City, Edo State, for his alleged inability to repay N1.5m he reportedly borrowed from his friend, Mr. Kayode Adeosho, in January this year.

Oladele allegedly died on Friday evening at the Warri Central Hospital where he was rushed to for medical treatment after his health was said to have deteriorated.

*SUNDAY PUNCH* learnt that the deceased, a father of three, was arrested by the soldiers on May 8, 2017 in Warri, where he lived with his family despite pleas by his family that he had serious health challenges.

It was gathered that the deceased was denied access to his drugs by the soldiers even as his health deteriorated in their custody.

The bereaved family through their lawyer, Mr. Kunle Ogheneovo Edun, confirmed the development at a press conference in Warri on Saturday.

He accused the soldiers of deliberately killing the breadwinner of the Oladeles over a debt the family denied the deceased owed.

The lawyer further said Oladele was chained to a bed in the Military Hospital in Benin City where he was rushed to when his health condition became worse.

He said, “On May 8, Oladele was arrested by the soldiers. On their way to Benin-City, he pleaded with the soldiers to release him because he had a delicate health condition that needed the constant use of his special drugs. The soldiers refused and instead started beating him inside their vehicle.

“The soldiers claimed they acted under the instruction of the commanding officer of the 4 Mechanised Brigade. Upon arriving Benin-City, his health condition worsened and the commanding officer of the military intelligence in the Brigade said he would not be released until he pays the N1.5m.”

Edun added that an officer at the brigade, Sgt. Hassan Hassan, later called the family to tell them to come to Benin City and get the Ekiti State-born Oladele on bail.

“On May 12, our client and one Mr. Oladele accompanied with their solicitor decided to go to Benin-City where the Commanding Officer, T. A Yakubu, reeled out the story to them again. Yakubu said the doctors at the military hospital advised that Oladele be taken out of the hospital for his personal doctors to attend to him.

“The deceased was taken to his residence in Effurun where he spent over two hours before taken to Ekpan General Hospital. He was rejected there before he was thereafter taken to Central Hospital, Warri where he died 15 minutes later on May 12,” he stated.

A referral letter from the Military Hospital, Airport Road, Benin-City, signed by Dr. Eghaoje C and addressed to the consultant physician, Central Hospital, Warri, a copy of which was made available to *SUNDAY PUNCH*, indicated that Oladele had multi-level traumatic spinal cord injury as a result of the alleged torture.

Edun called on the authorities of the Nigerian Army to probe the killing to ensure that Oladele’s killers were arrested and brought to justice.

Also, the deceased’s wife, Esther, who could barely speak at the briefing, demanded justice and also called on relevant authorities to investigate the matter and bring the perpetrators to book.