

Land tussle: Police fail to prosecute suspected killers of 65-year-old widow

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Acting Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu

Adelani Adepegba

Seventeen months after a 65-year-old widow, Madam Helen Okoro, was allegedly murdered for refusing to sell her land, the police have failed to prosecute the suspects indicted for the killing.

It was learnt that the 13 suspects, who were released after spending four months in detention, have been walking free since then.

Okoro was brutally attacked in Umuchiakuma, Abia State, on December 30, 2017, around 7:15pm by the hoodlums allegedly led by one Tony Ndu. The deceased reportedly sustained serious injuries and subsequently gave up the ghost.

The report of investigation by the Abia State Police Command sighted by our correspondent consequently established a prima facie case of murder, armed robbery and conspiracy against Ndu; Victor Okechi; Obaa Mgbo; Paul Ezeikpe; Peter Ikpo; Eze Bernard; Mba Okoro, Onyemachi Okey,

Chimezie Agwu, Uko Nnenna, Ire Moku, Ikpo Okorie and Ikpo Okechi.

The report which also listed the names of witnesses to the crime, recommended the trial of the 13 men for Okiro's murder.

Following the failure of the police authorities to prosecute the suspects, a non-governmental organisation, Initiative Against Human Rights Abuse and Torture, wrote a letter of complaint to the Abia State Attorney-General and Commissioner of Justice, Umeh Kalu, SAN.

The daughter to the deceased, Mrs Blessing Ephraim, told *SUNDAY PUNCH* on Friday, that the hoodlums attacked her mother for refusing to sell her ancestral land located in Umuchiakuma to Ndu.

Ephraim further stated that things took a curious turn when the case file was transferred to the Force Headquarters, Abuja, adding that nothing was heard about the issue again and the suspects were set free.

Following the development, the lawyer to the deceased's family, Maxwell Opara, filed an application for an order of mandamus at the Federal Capital Territory High Court, Abuja, on April 16, 2018, to compel the Inspector-General of Police and the Commissioner of Police in charge of legal department to prosecute the murder suspects.

When contacted for his reaction, the principal suspect, Ndu, warned our correspondent against reporting the incident.

He said, "My brother, I warn you not to write anything on this case. Please don't involve yourself in 'client and attorney relationship.'" He later ended the call.