

# 30-year-old man tortured by police dies in prison

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Uyamadu

## • Family seeks justice, petitions IG

### Oluwatobi Akindele

The family of a 30-year-old man, Emeka Uyamadu, has accused policemen attached to the Kabba Police Station of torturing him, which led to his eventual death at the Federal Prison, Kabba, Kogi State.

The family alleged that the policemen had accused Emeka of assault before a magistrates' court, which remanded him in prison.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered that Emeka had a disagreement with his brother, Chibuike, over the use of a motorcycle they both shared.

In the course of the disagreement, some soldiers reportedly intervened and handed the brothers over to policemen to resolve the dispute

The policemen took the brothers to the station and allegedly forced Chibuike to make a criminal complaint of assault against his brother before they could be released.

It was learnt that the policemen instructed the brothers to come back the following day to “close the case” with the sum of N40,000.

Their mother, Justina, said the policemen came to her shop the following day to pick up Emeka for failing to show up at the station.

The Anambra State indigene said her son resisted arrest on the grounds that the matter had been resolved, adding that he was subsequently apprehended and tortured.

She said, “On June 12, Emeka and his brother had a misunderstanding in front of my shop. Some soldiers were passing by and they handed the two of them over to the police to settle the issue. The policemen thereafter asked us to come to the station to write a statement; Chibuike said that he was not pressing any charge against his brother but wanted the matter settled amicably.

“We were told to come the following day to close the case, but my children decided not to go because they had already resolved the matter. The policemen showed up at my shop to pick up Emeka the following day.

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“They insisted that they must collect N40,000 to close the case and they started beating Emeka when he resisted arrest.

“They continued to beat him till he slumped and while he was on the ground, the policemen used their boots to kick him in the stomach and chest. One of the policemen, called Obasa, said he would deal with him and my son was forcefully bundled into the police van. He was detained in the police station till he was arraigned before the Chief Magistrates’ Court in Kabba.”

The 53-year-old Justina said Emeka was arraigned on three counts bordering on assault and injury at the instance of his brother, and resisting lawful arrest at the instance of the police.

She stated that the court admitted him to bail on the allegation of assault but suspended the ruling on the bail application on the allegation of resisting arrest till June 17, and ordered that he should be remanded in the Federal Prison, Kabba, till then.

Justina, however, explained that her son was already complaining of feeling unwell in his stomach as a result of the internal injury he sustained while being tortured, but his complaint was dismissed because the prison officials felt that he was pretending.

She stated, “Before he was remanded, he was already complaining that he was feeling unwell in his stomach but they said he was pretending. The following morning, I was called by a prison official that my son was becoming pale and coughing out blood. When I got there, I requested to take him to hospital but they said they had doctors and medical personnel.

“I insisted on taking him to hospital and I was directed to go and get a note from the magistrate. When I went to meet the magistrate, he told me that the prison authority was at liberty to take an inmate for treatment. When I went back to the prison, I was asked to go and buy some drugs, but they were not administered to him as well.

“On Saturday morning, I was called to come and see my son but on getting there, they didn’t allow me to see him because he was already dead. They said I should go and get a vehicle to convey him to hospital, but when I brought the vehicle with a driver, they said they had changed their mind and would rather take him in their own vehicle.

“They did not allow me to see my son till they got to the General Hospital, Kabba, and while they took him in, they did not allow me to see him. It was the hospital workers, who later made comments that the prison officials brought in a dead man while pretending that he was still alive.”

In a petition addressed to the Inspector-General of Police titled, ‘Re: Brutal and callous beating of Mr Emeka Uyamadu by the officers of the Nigeria Police, Kabba, resulting in his death in prison amidst gross negligence of officers of the Nigeria Prisons Service, Kabba’, the family requested the IG to order an investigation into the circumstances that led to the death of the Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State graduate, who just concluded his one-year compulsory service with the National Youth Service Corps in February.

The petition read in part, “This was how the woman lost her 30-year-old graduate to the police and prison authorities.

“To worsen an already bad situation, the prison officers said that the body of the boy would not be released until they obtained a document from the court and a medical report. The widowed mother of the deceased demanded to see the doctor’s report on the deceased before the release of the body to the prison officers but to no avail

“The body of Emeka Uyamadu is still with the prison authorities at the Kabba Federal Prison. The police and prison authorities have obtained the medical report on the deceased and have refused to make same available to the family of the deceased despite repeated demand.

“We cannot but strongly appeal to the Inspector-General of Police to set up a high-powered team to investigate this the murder of this young graduate.”

The Public Relations Officer, Kogi Command, Nigeria Prisons Service, Mr Nihi Sesan, however, said Emeka did not die in prison custody.

He added that investigation into the cause of death was ongoing.

Sesan stated, “The victim did not die in prison custody. Investigation into the matter is still ongoing and all the documents that are supposed to be submitted with respect to the event have been submitted to the national headquarters.

“When he was brought in by the police, he was checked, because there is always an admission board to check the health condition of an inmate. The day he was brought in, bloodstains were observed on his eyelid but he was fit to be remanded pending the adjourned day.

“The following day, he was complaining of a headache and the nurse on duty administered analgesic. But at night, when the prison warders realised that his condition was not improving, they had to take him to hospital for proper and further check-up and treatment, and that was where he died.

“If he died in prison custody, we will own up. We have a proper medical facility for emergencies and it is when we cannot handle the treatment that we take the inmate to hospital. It is so unfortunate that he died, but I believe that at the end of the day, everything will be resolved.”

When contacted, the Kogi State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr William Aya, said he would get back to our correspondent on the matter.

“I will have to call the Divisional Police Officer for him to check and give me feedback. As soon as I hear from him, I will let you know,” he stated.

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Aya had yet to get back to our correspondent as of the time of filing this report. Calls put across to his telephone were subsequently not answered.

When the Force spokesperson, Frank Mba, was contacted, he said he could not tell if the matter had been assigned, adding that every questionable death in police or prison custody was always subjected to investigation.

He said, “I have seen the copy of the petition, but I have no way of knowing whether the petition has been properly submitted to the IG, and also, I don’t have any way of knowing whether investigation has commenced or not.

“But, as a general rule, every death that occurs in police or prison custody is usually subjected to a corona inquest or an investigation to determine whether the person died of natural causes or of other external causes, and I want to believe that this will not be an exception.

“The complainant ought to have reported at the Kogi State Police Command. It is only when the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Lokoja, does not have the capacity to handle the matter that a petition can be sent to the Inspector-General of Police.”

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