

## Naval ratings torture guard to death for stealing jewellery

Published [August 10, 2019](#)



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A security guard at a residence on Gabriel Okoyi Street, Ikate-Lekki, Springbay Estate, Lagos State, Bitrus Peter, has died from injuries he reportedly sustained in the hands of two naval ratings.

The 29-year-old man was reportedly beaten up by the naval ratings and two security guards on the order of one Seun, a tenant at a house manned by Peter.

*City Round* learnt that Seun accused the deceased of stealing a piece of his jewellery and invited the naval officers attached to a landlord on the estate to probe him.

It was gathered that Peter led the naval ratings to a man he sold the necklace to for N40,000, but the man also claimed to have resold it for N100, 000. The money was said to have been recovered from the man.

Afterward, the naval ratings and two of the estate guards stripped Peter half-naked and descended on him heavily in Seun's presence.

He reportedly went unconscious when one of the officers booted him in the head.

Peter's younger brother, James, who is also a guard in one of the houses on the estate, told our correspondent that he got wind of the incident from a friend and he rushed to the scene.

He said the assailants and Seun ran away by the time he arrived there, adding that he and a relative rushed Peter to the Lagos Island General Hospital where he later died.

The native of Tafa Balewa Local Government Area of Bauchi State is survived by a wife and a five-year-old girl.

James stated, "The incident happened on Saturday, July 20, 2019, around 2 pm. I was at my workplace when somebody came to inform me that two naval ratings and security guards had beaten my brother to stupor. They accused him of stealing jewellery. I learnt one of the naval men used his boot to hit him in the ear and he became unconscious. He died at the general hospital the following day around 2 am.

“I don’t know the names of the naval officers, but they are guarding a man on this estate. I can identify them if I see them. I even saw one of them on Thursday morning.”

Our correspondent obtained some photographs revealing when Peter and the person he sold the jewellery to were being tortured. In one picture, Peter rolled on the floor as one of the officers raised his leg to kick him. In another picture, the buyer was forced into a mud inside drainage.

*City Round* also obtained a short video showing the faces of the naval ratings, with one of them counting the money reportedly collected from the buyer.

A relative of the deceased, Gambo Yalwa, said the case was reported to the police at the Ilasan Police Division and was later transferred to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Yaba.

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He stated that operatives of the SCIID had arrested the two security guards while the naval men and Seun were at large.

Yalwa recalled, “He was a security guard in a house on the estate and he lived there. According to what I learnt, he was accused of stealing a piece of jewellery. The complainant (Seun) invited two naval men and security guards on the estate and they started beating him. He took them to where he sold it and the buyer was arrested. I learnt he sold it N20, 000 to the man. The man, in turn, sold it N100,000.

“Seun stood by as they beat him to stupor. They inflicted cuts on his back. The doctor also said he had internal bleeding. His younger brother works in the same estate. He became aware of the incident when his brother had already collapsed.

“Some policemen followed us to the house around 8am on Sunday, July 21. We met the landlord, but Seun was not around. The two security guards were later arrested.”

Peter’s uncle, Mr Timothy Yakubu, said the family wanted the perpetrators arrested and prosecuted.

He said, “Up till now, the naval men have not been arrested. I learnt they stripped him naked before beating him. I was at SCIID office on Wednesday and was told that the autopsy report was out. We are trying to get a human rights lawyer who can help us to pursue this case.”

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP Bala Elkana, confirmed to our correspondent that a murder case was reported to the police by the deceased’s family.

He said, “One James Peter reported that on July 20, 2019, around 2pm, he saw two yet-to-be-identified naval men and three security guards attached to Springbay Estate, Ikate, beat up his elder brother, one Bitru Peter.

“He stated that when the said Peter became unconscious, his assailants left him. They rushed him to the hospital and he was later confirmed dead on July 21. His body was deposited at the hospital mortuary for autopsy. The police are making efforts to arrest the fleeing suspects.”

A text message sent to the Command Information Officer, Western Naval Command, Lagos, Commodore Tom Otuji, had yet to be replied to as of the time of this report.