

# I won't rest until my son's killers face justice –Father of Enugu final-year law student allegedly killed by policemen

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Andy Ugwu

*Mr Andy Ugwu is the father of a 27-year-old final-year law student of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Augustine, who was allegedly killed by policemen of the Anti-Cult unit in Nsukka, Enugu State. He tells **RAPHAEL EDE** his son was picked up at a bar and then executed*

*You accused a senior police officer and Chairman of Nsukka Local Government Area of killing your son, who was a final-year law student of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and that he didn't commit any offence. What happened?*

My son, Augustine Ugwu, went to a shop at Odobido Nsukka around 10 am with two of his friends. Not quite long after, the chief security officer to the local government chairman, whose nickname is Oliver Plaza, and six others came in a black vehicle with inscription – ‘Anti-Cult Nsukka LGA’.

They came out of their vehicle with guns and went to my son who was sitting with his friends. They started beating him, according to the owner of the shop.

The owner of the shop asked them what the problem was because Oliver is also his friend, and he told him 'if you come near me, I will kill you'. They continued to beat him with dangerous objects and later, they dragged him to their vehicle and took him away. People around thought they were going to the police station as they followed them but they didn't move towards the station. That is how my son's whereabouts have been unknown till today.

### ***Where were you when this happened?***

I was in my village when my daughter called me to say somebody called to inform her that Augustine was taken away by civilian anti-cult members, who are working under the supervision of the chairman of the local government, Patrick Omeje; and that I should come home. I said okay, but because of my commitment in the village, I sent somebody – a friend of mine – to go and look for where they kept my son. He went round and finally got to the anti-cult office along Enugu-Nsukka Road near Edobara. He met one sergeant on duty named Shedrack and upon enquiry, the sergeant said, 'Yes, the record shows that Augustine Ugwu was brought to the office but he has been transferred to Enugu.'

But as my friend was about to get into his car, the same sergeant rushed to him and said, 'Oga, I have contacted Enugu and they said he is not there.' That was when my friend became suspicious and very sad. He called me and said that I should come as the issue was beyond what he could handle. Then on Monday, April 27, 2020, I went to Nsukka and to the police station. On arriving at the station, I met with the divisional police officer and the divisional crime officer.

After narrating my ordeal to them, the DPO said since he was not in their office and since someone had told me he was taken to the Officer-in-Charge, Anti-Cult unit, I should go there and verify. So I went there and met with the Officer-in-Charge, called DSP Ochin Nnamadi, who said because of the coronavirus pandemic, they had been directed not take in suspects now. And while I was there, I saw a crowd and policemen where taking their statements; I became suspicious. So, I went back to the DPO to tell him about my encounter with the OC, Anti-Cult unit. Initially, he wanted me to go to Enugu and make a report since the officer was under State Criminal Investigation Department,

but I told him that he had to investigate the matter since it is there duty to do preliminary investigation. He reluctantly accepted the case and I made my statement. I strongly told them that I suspected the OC, Anti-Cult, DSP Ochin, and his men to be behind the disappearance of my son.

### ***Where did you go when you left the station?***

I tried to find the owner of the shop where my son was taken from, one Emeka Ogbu, aka 'Mikmik', at Odobido. He told me everything that happened in his shop; that he was surprised at the way they manhandled my son. He said he knew all of them so he started mentioning the names of the guys that came to his shop. I took him to the police station so that they could take down his statement as well.

On Wednesday, April 29, the chairman of the local government brought the guys under his supervision; they work directly under him and are called anti-cult. We met at the police station and I asked the chairman, 'Why did you recruit these people to terminate the life of my son?' Then he started begging me, saying it was something we could sort out. I asked if he would produce my son alive. He started begging before the Area Commander because we were at the Commander's office. I was mad and people started begging me. In anger, I left the station and went to stay across with some friends and sympathisers.

### ***What then happened after you left them?***

Not up to one hour later, the Area Commander released the same group of people to the chairman of the local government. I asked for the reason why they were releasing the suspects without even recovering their guns and visiting the scene. I'm a retired police officer myself so I asked if they were doing that to me because I was no longer in the system.

So I sent a text message to the Commissioner of Police to inform him about what was happening in Nsukka. But instead of the CP to promptly take action, he invited me to his office and asked why I sent the text message to him, and that he was not the investigation police officer.

Finally, he asked the OC, State CID to investigate the matter and report to him. Ochin, who is a DSP, is working directly under the supervision of the CP and because of that relationship, he was not serious about the issue. But the life of a final-year law student had been taken. When we went to

the office of the OC in-charge of the state CID who gave me an audience, he promised to look into the matter with a view to submitting his report soon. He consoled me and said I should exercise some patience.

I also informed the ACP, Ogarebe, but Ochin reports to all of them; he is somebody they call 'Odogwu', that is, strongman or untouchable. He worked with Ogarebe when they were in Government House. I know all these things because I was in the system. So I looked at the whole issue and wondered how they would just terminate the life of my son for no reason. No one has told me what my son did. Even if he was the one that created cultism in the whole world, at least he should have been taken to court and the proper thing would have been done.

***You said the police commissioner referred the matter to the OC, State CID, what has he done?***

When we left the CP's office, the man took over the matter. I wrote down my statement and the man who owns the shop where my son was taken away also put down his statement.

Ochin later came but I left him there. He didn't say anything in my presence. Even while we were in the CP's office, they didn't ask him (any question), they were giving him VIP treatment. It was only the OC, State CID who promised that he was going to ensure justice in the matter.

Just about three days ago, he called me and said they had found my son's corpse and it had been moved to another morgue. I have not set my eyes on my son but the man told me that after their investigation, they would call me to come and get my son's corpse.

I'm required to make an additional statement because when the state CID men came on Wednesday, May 6, to visit the scene, they called me. I followed them to where my son was picked up.

Everybody in Nsukka knows what these people do; they terrorise the town. All these people who claim to be civilian anti-cult group members were recruited to suppress political opponents. I have a close friend who is also an officer there, who saw everything. As time progresses, how they killed my son will be revealed.

That officer told me that before my son was killed, he said, 'Oga, take me to court. Do you see me with anything incriminating? I am a law student.' As he was saying that, one of the officers said 'your cup don full', and he shot him. He then told the others to also shoot him and they shot him in the head.

***It was reported that the civilian anti-cult unit shot your son before they took him away. What do you have to say about this?***

Yes. They first shot him at the point where they took him. One of them shot him in the leg before they dragged him away.

***Did you know whether your son had any encounter with them before then?***

I am telling you that the owner of the shop who witnessed the whole thing confirmed before the police and the Commissioner of Police that it was a bottle of beer that my son was taking and that he had not even taken half of it when they arrived. He said he did not even struggle with them.

You can go to the market at Odobido in Nsukka and find out from traders there what happened on April 23. If he had something incriminating on him, the police would have produced it.

***The chairman of the local government area said he gave you N1m which you requested to bury your son. He said you were pursuing it because you wanted to extort more money from him. What do you have to say about that?***

On what condition will he give me N1m? For what now? For asking them to kill my son or what? Can N1m bring back my son? Ok, let me give him N1m and kill his son so that he himself will know how it feels. He is talking rubbish. This is a local government chairman that people protested against with a coffin and hoped he wouldn't return to office but the powers that be brought him back and imposed him on the people. Is it not a childish statement that he is making?

***He also said in that report that you said you were not interested in the matter before the DPO because you knew your son was a criminal. What do you have to say to that?***

This is a fabricated story. If I'm not interested in the matter, why am I pursuing a case? If I collected money from him, why am I pursuing my case? This is just to deviate attention from the reality. He is the chairman of the local government area and he is using the allocation that he is supposed to be using for the development of Nsukka to influence the police with the hope that things will be swept under the carpet. The case has gone beyond Nsukka, so there is nothing he can tell me. I have worked in the police and I know the terrain. So what is he telling me? If I told the police that I was not interested in the case, why am I still going here and there every day? No matter what they say, at the end of the day, justice will be done.

***Do you know if your son was a criminal or a cultist as they have claimed?***

As far as I am concerned, I don't have that information. I sent him to school, I didn't send him to a cult school. They are only trying to divert attention.

***You said the corpse of your son was recovered, how far has police investigation gone?***

The OC, Anti-Cult unit, who initially denied that they took my son, later sent a distress signal to the police authority on April 29, that my son was brought to him, but that he was almost dead.

He said he died on their way to the hospital but didn't mention the hospital where a doctor confirmed him dead. He said he was in a morgue but didn't mention the name of the mortuary.

The police should already know that he is the one that killed my son. Why not mention the hospital that he took my son to? Is the hospital in Ghana or in Cameroon?

***You alleged that DSP Ochin is working directly under the state Commissioner of Police. Why do you think he is being shielded?***

When the matter got to Abuja and they called him, he started saying the matter should be given attention. He now knows I will not rest until justice is done. If I had not taken the case to other channels and if the group of human rights lawyers had not spoken out against it, they would have swept the matter under the carpet. I heard one of them in the Anti-Cult unit doesn't collect less than N500, 000 or more from any person suspected to be a cult member; I have people working in that

office. If you don't have money, they have a burial ground there where the person's dead body will be put. Try to go there and find out; there is a place they call burial ground there; that is where they kill.