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Rivers mechanic's murder: Court remands dismissed cops

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A Chief Magistrates' Court sitting in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, on Tuesday remanded four dismissed police officers for the alleged murder of a mechanic, Chima Ikwunado, who was tortured to death in the custody of the Eagle Crack Squad attached to Mile One Police Division.

The ex-cops had arrested Ikwunado and his friends on December 19, 2019, and tortured them for three weeks after labelling them cultists and armed robbers.

They were released a few days later following a directive by the state Directorate of Public Prosecutions.

Following several agitations and petitions, the Rivers State Police Command on Monday announced the dismissal of four of the eight police officers involved from the force after an orderly room trial which found them culpable.

The four dismissed cops, Mr Ayogu Fidelis, 42; Mr Eke Chibuzor, 36; Mr Egbunefu Felix, 32; and Miss Rose Georgewill 30; were subsequently arraigned on seven counts bordering on murder and conspiracy.

According to the police prosecutor, R. Queensoa, the offences are punishable under sections 324, 319(1), 320, 335 and 351 of the Criminal Code, Cap. 37, Vol. II, Laws of Rivers State of Nigeria, 1999.

The Chief Magistrate, Promise Iroanya, however, declined jurisdiction on counts 1, 2 and 3, and transferred the case file to the DPP for legal advice.

The matter was adjourned till September 8, 2020.

Speaking to newsmen outside the courtroom, counsel for the nominal complainant (family of the deceased), Chinyere Lawrence, said out of eight previously indicted police officers, only four were arraigned.

He said, “From the time we were briefed, we wrote to the police on January 7, 2020 and complained that several police officers were involved in torturing Chima Ikwunado to death.

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David Abuo, counsel for Fidelis and Georgewill, accused the media of pre-empting the court against his clients.

He said, “What has been happening, especially on the radio, is that the fourth defendant (Rose Georgewill) was accused of fondling with the private parts of the deceased and she has not even had the opportunity of defending herself.”