

Police labelled my brother thief, killed him in custody – Sister of Nasarawa electrician

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Donald Agbenge, a 37-year-old man, was allegedly tortured and killed in police custody in New Nyanya, Nasarawa State. His sister, Mrs Helen Gaadi, tells TOBI AWORINDE that the police are being economical with the truth

Your younger brother, Donald Apembi, recently died in police custody. How do you think he died?

He was my younger and he also had a twin brother, who is in Benue State. He was never into anything criminal. But to my surprise, the police beat him up. We didn't know when it happened. In the first statement they gave to me, they said they arrested someone and that after he died in the cell, they moved him out. They said they bathed

him, took him to one hospital and snapped a picture of him. They said the picture was taken around New Karu, Nasarawa State, and that they were looking for people who knew him. They said he was a thief and that he died in their custody.

So, the chief sent one man to go to the police station and the man discovered that it was Donald, his friend. He returned to inform my elder brother. So, we went there. When they saw that pressure on them, they said they saw him on the road, chased him and beat him up, and that they went to Keffi and Mararaba (Nasarawa) to get him admitted to hospital and that was when he died. I said, 'It is not possible. You people should tell us one thing that makes sense to us. We don't want you telling us one thing now and another thing later. We are not children.'

Are you saying after he was allegedly killed, the police took pictures of him and showed it around to determine his identity?

Yes, according to them. I am not satisfied with that kind of excuse. Donald was working in Nasarawa. He was an electrician working in a hotel in Nasarawa.

Did you find out where he was picked up by the police?

Yes, I went there about three days ago. That was in One Man Village. The hotel is close to Adehi Bus Stop. That was where he worked.

Did anyone see the police picking him up?

Nobody saw them. I went there to ask the manager the last time he saw my brother. He said he saw him on Sunday, September 6. He was at work. Tuesday, September 22 made it two weeks since he died. The police keep telling us different things. They said they caught him in the late evening hours. If you caught somebody in the late evening hours, would he have wounds all over his body and die in the cell? We are not children! Yes, he had wounds all over. We took pictures of him. His face was swollen and he had bruises all over his body.

At what police station did this happen?

The station is at New Nyanya, which is under Karu. So I won't accept what they are saying. I want justice.

What kind of person was your brother?

My brother was a gentle person. That man could not even hurt a fly. If you could ask his friends, they would tell you better. He was in the choir and was a youth leader in church. If you go to that hotel, they would tell you better. When I went there, everybody was crying.

Was he married?

He was not yet married and he did not have any children. He did not even have a girlfriend. His relationship was with God. That was all he knew.

How has his twin brother taken the news?

He is in the village. He is always asking, 'How are we doing?' Even last week, I was told that he even fell down and was not eating. It has been tough on him.

Have you buried Donald?

When it happened and they took my brother to the hospital, we went there. After that, we went out and the divisional police officer told his officers to carry my brother to the mortuary without even seeking our consent or calling us. We went back home to see what we could do. Then somebody informed us that the police were about to take him to the mortuary. And we asked the man, 'How would you take somebody to the mortuary without our consent?' He said the DPO said he should do so. I asked, 'How would you do that without informing us?' That was when my elder brother followed them to Mararaba. They put him there. So, he is still there. Recently, I told my elder brother to go and check to know the situation. He went there but they drove him out

and said the DPO was not around. They also blamed him for taking the matter to court. When my brother called me, I said he should just leave them.

What is your demand now?

They are not saying the truth. They gave us two statements regarding this issue.

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