

NEWS

Wife weeps as killer-cop tells panel detained husband died

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MRS Peace Leera broke down in tears as she heard for the first time from a policeman on Monday that her husband, Edward Leera, detained over a year ago by the police in Akwa Ibom State, had died.

An Assistant Superintendent of Police of IGP-IRT “D” Division, Itam, Uyo, David Ahmed Agbo, disclosed the sad news while testifying before the Abuja-based Independent Investigative Panel set up by the National Human Rights Commission to probe the activities of the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad and other police tactical units.

Agbo told the retired Justice Suleiman Galadima-led panel that the body of the deceased was deposited at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital mortuary in Rivers State.

The complainant in the case, Mr Confidence Leera, who is the deceased's elder brother, and had testified before the panel on November 16, 2020, was visibly shocked by the news of his brother's death.

Twenty-eight years old Peace wept profusely as Agbo broke the news to the 11-man panel.

Confidence had while testifying before the panel on November 16, 2020, told the panel that his brother, whom he claimed to be a repentant cultist, was arrested along with nine others by the Inspector General of Police Intelligence Response Team and was later released on August 17, 2019 on bail.

He said on September 14, 2019, ASP David Agbo demanded the sum of N3m to close the case against his brother.

He said his brother was subsequently found to be missing on November 1, 2019.

According to Leera, it was the third day on November 3 that Agbo called to inform the family that he had arrested his missing brother.

He said the family subsequently filed a fundamental rights enforcement suit for the release of his brother.

Leera said the Rivers State High Court on December 17, 2019 delivered judgment in favour of his brother and ordered that N5,000 should be paid for each day he remained in detention until his release.

He added that instead of obeying the court judgment, the police filed charges against his brother in court on January 20, 2020.

Leera said all efforts to ensure the release of his brother had been futile.

The respondents to the petition are, SP Martin Samuel; DSP Essien Edet, ASP David Ameh Agbo; IGP IRT, “D” Division, Itam, Uyo; Commissioner of Police, Akwa Ibom State and the Inspector-General of Police.

Earlier, at the Monday’s proceedings, the complainant’s counsel, Victor Giwa, adopted some documents and exhibits, including a copy of the petition and court order directing the production of the victim before the Rivers State High Court, which was violated by the police

Giwa also tendered documents which he said showed the transfer of N20,000 from the victim to Agbo, as well as other various withdrawals from the bank account of the victim after his (victim) debit card was seized.

In his response, Agbo’s lawyer, Gabriel Okpeta, informed the panel that he only filed a counter-affidavit opposing the petition on Monday.

The case was adjourned till January 11, 2020 for cross-examination and defence by the police.