

CP orders probe as Rivers family accuses vigilantes of killing son

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Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Joseph Mukan

Dennis Naku, Port Harcourt

The family of one Princewill Ogbonda has accused a vigilante group in Igwuruta, Ikwerre local Government Area of Rivers State, of killing their son after he was arrested over alleged kidnapping.

The younger brother to the deceased, Lucky Ogbonda, told journalists in Port Harcourt on Tuesday that Princewill and one Peter Opurum were arrested by the Onelga Security Peace and Advisory Council over a month ago on allegation of kidnapping, adding that they were still missing.

Lucky said eyewitnesses told him that the OSPAC members took his brother and the other victim to a soothsayer, who told them that they were guilty of the crime, adding that the vigilantes shot them and took their bodies away.

He called on the state Commissioner of Police, Joseph Mukan, to prevail on the vigilante group to produce his brother dead or alive.

Lucky stated, “They made a wild allegation against my brother that he is a kidnapper together with one Peter Oporum. They started beating my brother with all sort of weapons and they locked him and Peter up. They went and called a soothsayer to do what they call ‘Bible return-return’, which pronounced my elder brother and Peter Oporum as kidnappers.

“The OSPAC Commander ordered one of his boys to shoot both of them and immediately they called OSPAC Aluu and they took away the body of my brother. From that November 21, 2020 till now, we have not seen him and we have not heard from him. We don’t know if both of them are alive.”

Lucky expressed dismay that despite being aware of the incident, the police had refused to make any arrest after the initial attempt to apprehend the Igwuruta OSPAC Commander and his members were resisted.

“If the DPO is having difficulty arresting the OSPAC members in Igwuruta, he can call the Commissioner of Police for reinforcement. The OSPAC office in Igwuruta is open. They are there boasting that nothing will happen. I suspect a foul play on the part if DPO,” he added.

Speaking on the incident, Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association, Port Harcourt branch, Prince Nyekwere, advised the victim’s family members to write a formal petition to the police and the association.

Nyekwere noted that as much as he commend the role of the said vigilante outfit in fighting crime in the state, the law did not allow it to kill anyone.

He stated, “Nobody, including the police, OSPAC or anyone for that matter has the right to kill anybody over any crime unless and until that person has passed the due process of law and found guilty by a competent court with jurisdiction and the proper punishment meted out to the person.

“So, people should play within the rules and the law of the land. The vigilantes are actually supposed to support the police in gathering information, but you cannot take somebody and be the judge, the prosecutor and the executor. No, the law does not allow that.

When contacted, the “state Police Public Relations Officer, Nnamdi Omoni, said the command was aware of the incident, adding that the CP had ordered an investigation to unravel what really transpired.

“Yes, we are aware and the CP has ordered an investigation into the incident. The matter is currently at the State Criminal and Investigation Department. At the end of the investigation, I can assure you that the findings will be made public,” Omoni added.