

UK-based Nigerian accuses brother-in-law of killing sister, alleges police frustrating probe

Olamide Francis 16 August 2021

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Eucharia

A United Kingdom-based Nigerian businessman, Romeo Ozoagu, has expressed displeasure over the delay in police investigation into his sister, Eucharia Okonkwo's death, and is accusing his brother-in-law, Ignatius Okonkwo, of alleged culpability in the death.

Romeo told *PUNCH Metro* that Ignatius, a resident of Sixth Avenue, FESTAC Town, Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State, was arrested and detained by the police for the alleged murder of his wife, but was freed without an investigation.

Romeo said he was in the UK on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, when he received a call from Ignatius that his 55-year-old sister had died without an explanation as to the cause of death.

He said he immediately sent his cousin, Ezenwa, and his younger brother, Hillary, to visit his sister's house, but they were not allowed to see her remains and Ignatius did not take them to the mortuary, where he deposited the corpse.

He said, "My brother-in-law, Mr Ignatius Okonkwo, who lives on Sixth Avenue, FESTAC, Lagos, called me around 7.03am on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, to inform me that my sister, Eucharia Okonkwo, was dead. I live in London. I had spoken to my sister three days before that day. I immediately called my younger brother, Hilary Ozoagu, and cousin, Ezenwa, to visit my sister's house to verify the information, because I was still in shock. On Thursday, they met Ignatius to find out what really happened.

“He told them that it was raining heavily overnight and he went to his wife’s room to check if the windows were closed. The people I sent requested that he take them to the mortuary, where the corpse was deposited, but he refused. I then instructed my brother to report the case at the FESTAC Police Station.”

It was gathered that before policemen got to his apartment, Ignatius had allegedly absconded.

Romeo added that the case was also reported at the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Pantí, Yaba, but the suspect was nowhere to be found when policemen from there visited his home.

He said Ignatius remained in hiding for 22 days with his location discovered to be somewhere in Ogun State and later Enugu State when the police tracked his phone, adding that he was shocked when the police asked him to provide vehicles and logistics for them to apprehend the suspect in Enugu.

Romeo said Ignatius was arrested by policemen from the SCIID when he returned to Lagos to apologise for absconding.

He stated, “The FESTAC DPO arranged for some policemen to go to Ignatius’ house and get him arrested. On their way, one of the police officers, who is his close friend, sent him a text message to escape through the fence. After this, my brother reported the case at the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Pantí, Yaba.

“When officers from Pantí came to the place to arrest him, he had locked his gate and switched off his phone. He was nowhere to be found for 22 days. We paid the police to track him; his first location was in Ogun State and later Enugu State. Policemen at Pantí were not as helpful as they wanted us to provide logistics, including vehicles, to apprehend him in Enugu.

“He was advised at Enugu to return to Lagos and meet with Hillary, my brother, so that they could go to the mortuary and see my sister’s corpse. He called Hilary and apologised for initially fleeing. Hillary invited him to his house in a bid to settle the matter and alerted the police of the arrangement. That was how he was arrested.”

Romeo added that he saw the suspect in police custody when he got to Nigeria on May 27, but that Ignatius was released on the same day and was rearrested and taken into custody on June 15.

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He stated, “I arrived in Nigeria and went to the police on May 27 to see the suspect and demanded an autopsy to determine the cause of my sister’s death. The police said I couldn’t make that kind of demand. Meanwhile, we were unaware that Ignatius had been secretly released from Pantí. One of the things

that surprised me was that my sister's doctor, Declan Nwaigwe, who pronounced her dead on the day he visited the house, said she had been dead for 48 hours before he got there, meaning that my sister died on Sunday, April 25, 2021.

"One of my sisters at FESTAC saw Ignatius in the neighbourhood and called me to ask if the case was over. I told her that nothing of such had happened and that he was supposed to be in police custody. He was rearrested on June 15."

The 59-year-old businessman told *PUNCH Metro* that the case was eventually transferred to the Zone 2 Police Command, Onikan, Lagos, on May 15 at the request of his lawyer, but things became more complex when the police demanded that he should pay all the mortuary, transportation and autopsy bills before an investigation into the matter could be concluded.

He told our correspondent that he declined the request, adding that the deceased's husband should bear the mortuary cost since he deposited the corpse there.

Romeo stated, "I asked the police to tell Ignatius to pay for keeping the corpse in the mortuary. I even offered to split other bills with him, but he refused. He said I must pay the entire bills because I was the one who brought the case to the police and that he would only pay the mortuary bill if I agreed that the corpse would be buried without an autopsy.

"The police were also telling me to settle all the bills if I wanted an investigation into the case, because the government didn't have resources for such. They are frustrating me. The police have refused to investigate the case or charge the suspect. I need all the help I can get."

When *PUNCH Metro* contacted Ignatius, he did not take his calls and had yet to reply to text messages sent to his mobile telephone.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Zone 2 Command, Hauwa Idris, said the case had been transferred out of the command.

"The case is not in Zone 2. The AIG has ordered that it should be taken back to Panti, where such cases are being investigated," she said.

The Lagos State PPRO, Adekunle Ajisebutu, declined to speak on the matter, saying the zonal PPRO had the final say.

"Talk to the zonal PPRO. Her reaction is enough," he simply stated.

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