

1 Anambra driver dies in police cell, corpse missing



• Ikenna

Deji Lambo

THE family of a driver, Ikenna Udu, have accused the police at the State Criminal Investigation Department Annex, Awkuzu, in the Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State, of torturing him to death.

The victim's wife, Mary, alongside her in-law, Chioma Aniebonam, and her husband, Sunday, while lamenting Ikenna's death, said efforts to retrieve his corpse had proved abortive.

They further alleged that the police, upon realising that Ikenna had died, buried him without their knowledge and refused to disclose the location of his corpse.

PUNCH Metro gathered that Ikenna, his wife and children, alongside his brother, Chidubem, parents and some friends, were at home in Abatete, in the Idemili North Local Government Area of the state, when armed policemen stormed the premises around 4am sometime in September 2022.

Ikenna's wife, who spoke to our correspondent on Monday, said the policemen arrested four persons, including Ikenna and Chidubem, adding that they whisked them away to an undisclosed location.

The mother of four said, "It took us up to one week before we were able to know that the policemen came from Awkuzu SARS (SCID Annex). When I took food there for Ikenna and Chidubem, the policemen collected it on their behalf.

"It was on the second attempt that the policemen told me Ikenna and Chidubem had been remanded in the Onitsha Custodial Centre. So, I visited the facility to see both of them, but surprisingly, it was only Chidubem I saw. When I asked after my husband, Chidubem told me he was dead."

Ikenna's sister, Chioma, explained that her brothers were arrested after a neighbour alleged in a petition that the duo, alongside two others, stormed his house with weapons and robbed him of his property.

Chioma's husband, Sunday, said when family members visited the man that wrote the petition against his in-laws, he demanded N1.5m for settlement.

Sunday, however, said policemen

at the SCID Annex demanded N200,000 to release his in-laws on bail, adding that they were planning to raise the money when Ikenna died.

He said, "The house where Ikenna and Chidubem lives and the building of the man that claimed they robbed him, is separated by a fence. How will they rob him? I know they can't do such a thing. Both of them were arrested last month but Ikenna died in police custody as a result of torture.

"The police didn't inform us that Ikenna had died; what we just heard was that they charged them to court. We also gathered that another person was used to represent Ikenna in court and they were all remanded in prison. But when Chidubem informed us that his brother died in police custody, we returned to the SARS office in Awkuzu to demand Ikenna's corpse, and they started acting shady."

In a bid to get justice, Sunday said the family secured the services of a lawyer, Chike Nonyelu, who petitioned the SCID Annex in the Oyi Local Government Area of the state regarding the matter.

Sunday said, "The police later told us that Ikenna's corpse had been buried. I visited the Awkuzu SARS with a friend who knew Ikenna, to demand his corpse, but the police refused me entry.

"My friend was allowed to enter because he knew some of the policemen; he went in to confirm Ikenna's corpse, but he said the corpse that was dug out was that of another person. He said the corpse they dug out had no tongue, breast, and private parts.

"We complained but the policemen pursued us out of their office. I want the world to know about this story because I have never seen that kind of a thing before in my life."

Nonyelu, when contacted, confirmed that members of the Udu family instructed him to handle the defence of their sons, Ikenna and Chidubem.

He said, "I have applied to the Chief Magistrates' Court, Ogidi, where they were said to have been arraigned. I am yet to obtain a certified copy of the record of proceedings of that court. I am hopeful to get them by Thursday."

Contacted on Wednesday, October 26, for a reaction, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Ikenganyia Anthony, told our correspondent to send a text message for a reaction, but refused to make a comment.

Ikenganyia, when contacted again on Monday, October 31, he told our correspondent to send a message, but had yet to respond as of the time this report was filed.