

# Navy grills officers over death of civilian employee in Lagos

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By Naomi Chima

The Nigerian Navy has announced that it has initiated an investigation into the death of one Richard Onumaegbu, a civilian staff member of the Ministry of Defence assigned to the Laboratory Department of the Nigerian Navy Reference Hospital, Ojo, Lagos State.

In a statement signed by Commodore A. A. Adams-Aliu, on behalf of the Chief of the Naval Staff, on Thursday, the Navy disclosed that it has commenced an inquiry into the alleged involvement of suspects in Onumaegbu's death.

The statement revealed that the deceased was engaged in a confrontation with a civilian woman and some Navy personnel at the Navy Town barracks. Four days later, he was discovered dead in his office at the NNRH.

The statement read, "The Nigerian Navy is deeply saddened by the passing of Richard Onumaegbu and the circumstances surrounding his demise.

 Richard Onumaegbu informed the general public that the deceased was an integral part of the NN family as a civilian staff member of the Ministry of Defence attached to the Laboratory Department of the Nigerian Navy Reference Hospital, Ojo, Lagos State, since 2009, and he served diligently.

"On March 31, 2024, he was found lifeless in his office at NNRH.

"A preliminary investigation indicated that four days earlier, on March 26, 2024, the deceased was involved in a confrontation with a civilian woman and some NN personnel in Navy Town barracks.

"Consequently, all suspected personnel and the civilian woman involved in the previous altercation were identified and are currently under close custody."

It added that the Navy transferred the body of the deceased to a government for autopsy "as requested by the (deceased's) family."

"The NN also wishes to assure his family and the general public that all necessary measures are being taken to uncover the cause of his death, and any individual found responsible will be prosecuted in accordance with extant laws," the Navy stated.

Meanwhile, a TikTok user, UKen\_Studio81, who claimed to be a member of the deceased's family, earlier this week posted a video narrating the circumstances surrounding Onumaegbu's death.

The family source in the video claimed that he was killed by four Naval officers contracted by a young woman with whom he had a confrontation.

She alleged that the civilian woman frequently bullied Onumaegbu, calling him a "dog boy," and on that particular day, he decided to defend himself.

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She narrated that during the confrontation, the woman attempted to slap him, but he overpowered her and restrained her without assaulting her. He then demanded an apology from her, after which he released her unharmed.

She also claimed that the woman subsequently summoned five naval personnel, and four out of the five beat the deceased severely for seven hours, from 8pm on March 26 to 1am on March 27, 2024.

She added that despite the injuries sustained from the beating, the deceased went to work the following day, on Easter Sunday, and eventually succumbed to his injuries there.

The source called for justice, alleging that the deceased died as a result of the severe beating inflicted by the naval officers contracted by the civilian woman.

In the video, the woman said, "The person you are seeing on your screen right now is Richard, a civilian staff member of the Nigerian Ministry of Defence, where he worked for 15 years, dedicating his life to that ministry. He worked in the laboratory.

"Unfortunately, on March 26, 2024, Richard did not come home. His family and his sister, with whom he lived, were worried, unaware that Richard was being beaten, brutalised, and battered for seven hours. He was beaten from 8pm on March 26 to 1am on March 27.

“His only crime was that he loved taking care of dogs. One of his superiors was not present and had left his dog in Richard’s care. After work, as usual, Richard went to take care of the dogs.

“There is a particular woman living in the compound who always bullied Richard. Whenever she saw Richard, she called him ‘dog boy’. That day, he decided to stand up for himself.

“They had a disagreement, and the woman tried to slap him, but he defended himself, and being a man, he had the upper hand, but he did not harm the woman.

“Due to the altercation, Richard pinned the woman to the floor and demanded an apology from her before letting her go. Understanding that she had wronged him, she apologised to Richard, and he released her. He never laid a hand on her.

“Unbeknownst to Richard, the woman went and mobilised five Navy officers. They arrived and four of them, without listening to Richard’s side of the story, began assaulting him. They kicked him, punched him, and beat him.

“They beat him to the point where he was covered in sores and swelling. Unfortunately, on Easter Sunday, his family received a call that he had passed away.

“To demonstrate how much Richard loved the Navy and his job, despite his injuries, he still went to work and died there.”