

# Family kicks as Rivers mechanic dies in police detention

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Map of Rivers State

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The family of a motor mechanic at the Spare Parts Market in Ikoku, in the Mile 2 axis of Port Harcourt, Chukwudi Abraham, and the Rivers State Police Command are on a collision course over his death in detention at the Octopus Strike Force Unit.

While the family alleged that Abraham was tortured while in detention at the police unit following his arrest, the police said the suspect was a kidnapper and a cultist, debunking the claim of torture.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Grace Iringe-Koko, in a statement in Port Harcourt on Saturday, said the deceased was implicated in a case of kidnapping, armed robbery, and cultism.

Iringe-Koko disclosed that the deceased was involved in the abduction of a businesswoman in the Diobu area of the metropolis on September 7, 2023, saying the victim was held captive for one week and was released after her family paid a ransom of N3.5m.

She said the police held a meeting with the parents and spouse of the deceased who were accompanied by two of their family's legal representatives where they agreed that the family would participate in the autopsy to determine the cause of his death.

The statement reads, "The Rivers State Police Command is aware of a press conference held on May 23, 2024, by a member of the civil society organisation regarding the death of one Okereke Abraham Chukwudi, who was a suspect in police custody. The Police would like to inform the public that the deceased was implicated in a case involving Kidnapping, armed robbery, and cultism.

"This relates to the kidnapping of a female business tycoon (name withheld) in the Diobu area of Port Harcourt on September 7, 2023. The victim was kidnapped by five gunmen and taken to a hideout in Elechi waterside. The kidnappers were armed with AK-47 rifles, a pump-action shotgun, and locally-made pistols. The victim was held captive for seven days and was released after the victim's family paid a ransom of N3.5m."

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Meanwhile, the father of the deceased, Okereke Abraham, at a joint press briefing with the Rivers State Civil Society Organisation said his son was not a criminal, saying months after his arrest the police denied keeping him in their custody, but that his remains were found at the University of Port Harcourt.

The distraught man stated, “On January 11, I was at Choba and was called that my son was arrested. I thought it was a normal arrest not knowing there was something behind (it). My son is a mechanic.

“His younger brother said I should not worry that he would come back. Two days after when I went to the Octopus Unit, they chased me (away). I started going from one police station to another, with my son’s wife and his younger brother.

“I contacted human rights to inform them. So after three days, the police brought my son to his shop and searched everywhere but they didn’t see anything. They took him back. When I went back to the Octopus, they didn’t even allow me to enter the place again. So I went back to human rights who promised to follow it before I heard that they had killed my son.”

While fighting back tears, he appealed to the Rivers State Government to come to his aid.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the State Civil Society Organisation, Enefaa Georgewill, faulted the police over their handling of the case.

Georgewill expressed sadness that even after the mechanic's arrest, the police didn't make any effort to contact his wife or any family member.