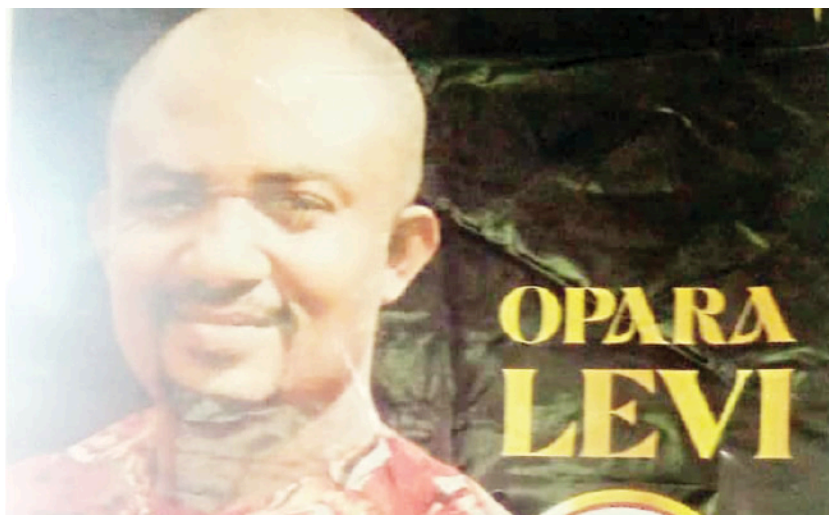




## Family seeks officers' arraignment over man's death in custody

27th May 2024



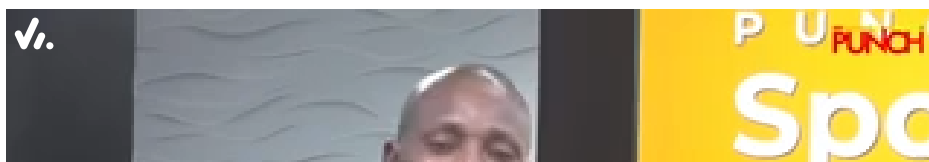
**| Chigozie Uzosike**

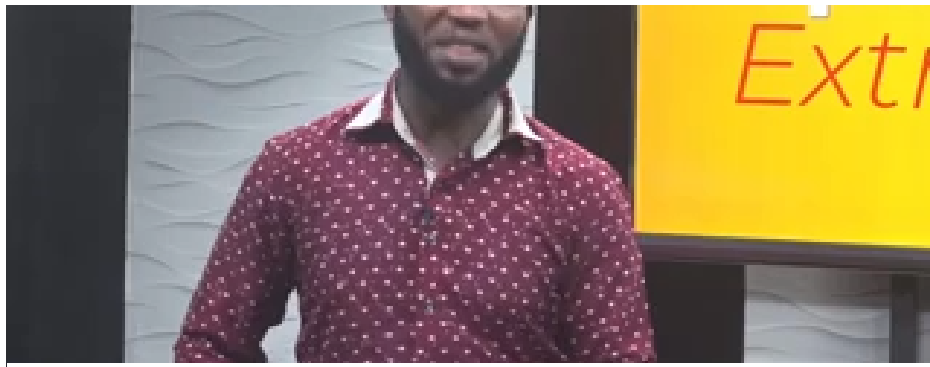
Following the alleged torture and subsequent death of Mr Levi Opara at the Tiger Base in the Imo State Police Command, the children of the late Opara have called for the speedy arraignment of the officers suspected to have been involved in his ordeal in detention.

The complainant, who is also the daughter of the deceased, Ihuoma Opara, who spoke on behalf of her siblings, noted that their late father aged 46, who hailed from Ezedibia, Emekuku in Owerri- North LGA, had a mere family misunderstanding with their mother, Mrs Chioma Opara, upon which the mother involved a police informant who took the matter to the police.

Subsequently, she claimed that the operatives arrested Opara on Sunday, October 15, 2023, and noted that when they got the information of the arrest, they quickly rushed to the police the next day with their family relatives, where they met their father hale and hearty. She said all efforts to secure his release to enable them to resolve the family issue failed as they were asked to come back on Wednesday, October 18, 2023.

In her words, "When we came back on Wednesday, we were shocked when the IPO and team leader notified us that my father who was never sick or suffering from any form of illness the day he was arrested was dead. On further inquiries, both the IPO and team leader informed us that he was at the police clinic but later changed and said his body had already been deposited at the Federal Medical Centre, Owerri.





"On arrival at the said Federal Medical Centre, we saw the lifeless body of our father, and on a closer observation, discovered that my father's body had several bruises as well as knife cuts on his neck which were hurriedly stitched either before or after his death.

"As against the wish of the police, the family fought by writing a petition to the Inspector General of Police demanding that an autopsy of the body be done with our consent and in the presence of our medical personnel. The scheduled autopsy which was to be carried out on Thursday, October 19, 2023, around 10 am was thwarted as the police refused to show up on the agreed day."

She further stated that the IG approved their petition and ordered the immediate arrest of all those involved in the murder as the matter was ultimately transferred to Zone 9 Umuahia.

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Furthermore, Ihuoma told *PUNCH Metro* that "the autopsy and toxicology on the body of the late Levi Opara were eventually carried out and the report produced, which showed that our father was starved, tortured and murdered."

"We sent the report to Assistant Inspector General of Police, Umuahia upon which the family requested the release of the mortuary tally to enable us to bury the deceased which was granted after much consideration and he was buried on December 15, 2023.

"After the burial, the family requested that the file be transferred to the office of the Director of Public Persecutions, Owerri, Imo state for immediate arraignment of all those involved in his death. The DPP made recommendations after a comprehensive evaluation of the police file sent to the Ministry of Justice by the Assistant Inspection of Police and recommended the arraignment of all those involved in the murder of my father. But until now, they are still delaying the arraignment of the police officers and those involved in the said murder."

Ihuoma also appealed to the Federal Government, IG and Governor Hope Uzodimma to intervene in the matter to ensure that all those involved in the death of their father were brought to book.

"We want the law to take its full course on the matter by arraigning all those involved in the case. The death of our father has left us devastated and we want the government to ensure that the police do not frustrate the arraignment of all those involved."

"My family is in total disarray and shocked at the wicked and gruesome manner in which my father was killed. And since the perpetrators have been identified, arrested, autopsy and toxicology conducted with the report submitted to all parties involved, which signified the conclusion of the investigation, I'm wondering why the police have continued to delay the immediate arraignment of those involved", she added.

The Police Public Relations Officer of Imo State Command, ASP Henry Okoye, could not pick up our calls nor get back to PUNCH Metro when a text was sent to him on the issue as of the time of filling this report on Sunday evening.

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