

Dismissed trigger-happy cop remanded for killing Enugu musician

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| By Raphael Ede

| Okezie Nwamba and Chikeze Mba

The dismissed Inspector Joseph Ozonwanji, formerly of the Anti-Cultism Police Squad in the Enugu State Police Command, has been remanded in prison custody following his arraignment for the killing of a popular Ogene musician, Okezie Nwamba, also known as Igbo-Jah.

Ozonwanji was arraigned on Monday on one count bordering on murder before a Chief Administrative Magistrate, Enugu East Magistrate Court, Her Worship, Ngozi Edeani.

This development comes after Ozonwanji's orderly room trial, which led to his dismissal, was approved by the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Godwin Aghaulor, who oversees Zone 13.

The prosecution is being led by the Officer-in-Charge of the Enugu State Police Command, SP Justice Attah, and Emmanuel Ajogwu.

In a charge marked CME/614/2024, Ozonwanji was accused of unlawfully killing Nwamba by firing him with an AK47 Rifle, an offence that is punishable under Section 274(1) of the Criminal Code, Cap 30, Vol. II, Revised Laws of Enugu State of Nigeria, 2024.

The count reads, “That you, Ozonwanji Joseph, ‘m’, on 25th day of October 2024 at about 2010hrs at Anti-Cultism Police Squad, Goshen Estate Enugu in the Enugu North Magisterial District did unlawfully kill one Okezie Chikezie Nwamba ‘m’ by firing him with an AK47 rifle, which caused his death and thereby committed an offence punishable under Section 274(1) of the Criminal Code, Cap 30, Vol. II, Revised Laws of Enugu State of Nigeria, 2024.”

After the charge was read to the accused in the language of his choice, the presiding Magistrate Edeani ordered that the case file be transferred to the Department of Public Prosecutions for advice and that the suspect be remanded at the Enugu Maximum Correctional Centre.

Briefing newsmen after the arraignment, the Police Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Command, DSP Daniel Ndukwe, said the accused’s arraignment for murder was in keeping with the promise and determination of the Enugu State Government and the police to ensure that justice was done in the matter.

“It is important to inform our people that the Chief Magistrate has listened to the charge brought against the dismissed police officer and has asked that the case file be transmitted to the Attorney General of Enugu State to proceed from there and advise accordingly for the next line of action.

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“This is one trial we want to see happen. We are talking about a human life. Policemen generally have that responsibility to protect lives, but if, for whatsoever reason, any police officer misuses his firearm, the liability is on the person. That is exactly what has happened today. You could see the Enugu State Government and the police command in the state have done everything possible to ensure that justice prevails in this case,” Ndukwe stated.

Speaking on the matter, the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Kingsley Udeh, said his office would expect the file and act expeditiously.

“This is a matter His Excellency is determined to see to the end to ensure that justice is done to everyone involved. I also have his instruction to personally prosecute this matter as the Attorney General. This underscores the importance he places on it. And I will do exactly that. We will prosecute diligently and expeditiously,” he assured the public.

Meanwhile, Governor Peter Mbah has announced the award of scholarships up to the university level to the three children of the deceased musician, while also taking charge of the health of his sick wife.

This was announced by the Commissioner for Children, Gender Affairs, and Social Development, Mrs Ngozi Enih, during a visit to the home of the deceased with the Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Dame Ugochi Madueke, and the Chairman of Enugu North LGA, Ibenaku Onoh, on Monday.

“The governor, in his magnanimity, has awarded scholarships to the children to the university level. Secondly, the state is going to take care of the welfare of his widow going forward.

“This is a calamity to everybody who loves Enugu State and who is an indigene of Enugu State. The Enugu State government is on top of the matter and they are going to make sure that justice prevails in this matter.

“With me here are the children of the late Igbo-Jah, and the governor has promised them that he is not only going to take care of them from now till university but also promised to take care of their welfare,” she stated.