

# Delta bloodbath: Tension as Okuama leader dies in military detention

Dele Ogunyemi, Warri

OKUAMA community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State has been thrown into mourning as the community President General, Pa James Achovwuko Oghoroko, one of the community leaders arrested by the Nigerian military since August 2024, was said to have died in the military detention.

Pa Oghoroko reportedly died in military detention on Wednesday "following torture and alleged inhumane treatment".

The sad news of the death of Pa Oghoroko was revealed by leaders of Okuama at an emergency meeting held on Thursday in the community where it was also revealed that another Okuama leader in the military detention, "Pa Dennis Okugbaye, is presently battling with a life-threatening ailment in the undisclosed military facility".

Meanwhile, the sad news of Okuama community President General has thrown the entire Okuama community into sadness and mourning.

Angry community youths were seen wearing long faces as they discussed the tragedy.

It will be recalled that Pa Oghoroko, the President General of Okuama community, was arrested between August 18 and 20, 2024 alongside Prof Arthur Ekpekpo, Chief Belvis Adogbo, Dennis Okugbaye, Pa Anthony Ahwemuria and Mrs Rita Akata, and all of them had remained in unknown detentions since.

The arrest followed the killing of 17 military officers who were on a peace mission in the community on March 14, 2024.

In August, the community filed a suit marked FHC/WR/CS/84/2024, to challenge the arrest of the community,

seeking N100m "for their illegal detention".

The community had earlier, on the heels of the demolition and destruction of Okuama community after the killing of 17 soldiers, approached the Federal High Court, Warri, through their lawyers led by Chief Albert Akpomudje (SAN) and others, to seek redress.

The community through their lawyer filed Suit No. FHC/WR/CS/41/2024, FHC/WR/CS/42/2024, and FHC/WR/CS/42/2024, which were later consolidated.

At its last sitting on November 20, 2024, the Federal High Court adjourned the bail application of the

arrested leaders to December 9, 2024 to hear the motion.

However, before the return date, one of the claimants, Pa Oghoroko, was said to have given up the ghost on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, in military detention without being charged to court since their arrest in August.

Reacting to the news of the death of Oghoroko, the lead counsel, Chief Albert Akpomudje (SAN), said, "It is disturbing news."

Akpomudje said he "will meet with the family members and his team to know what steps to take next."

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## Farmers association opposes Senate bill criminalising maize export

Daniel Adaji, Abuja

**T**HE All Farmers' Association of Nigeria has criticized the Senate's recent passage of a bill to criminalise the export of maize, which includes a minimum one-year jail term for offenders.

In an interview with *The PUNCH* on Thursday, AFAN Chairman, Ifraimu Dauda, called the bill "ill-conceived," arguing that farmers should have the right to sell their produce wherever they receive

the best price.

The Senate, on Wednesday, approved the bill during plenary.

The legislation, which originated from the House of Representatives, prohibits the export of unprocessed maize in quantities of at least one metric ton, introducing penalties that include fines or imprisonment.

The bill states: "Any individual who exports,

facilitates the export, induces another person to export, or attempts to export unprocessed maize—whether in grains, on cobs, fresh, or dry—in large commercial quantities is guilty of an offence."

Dauda contended that the restrictions would negatively impact commercial farmers, who rely on export opportunities for profit maximisation.

He noted that while