

# NEWS PLUS

## A family's agony: How policemen murdered our son

• Powerful man in our community masterminded Christopher's killing, says deceased's uncle

BY EMMANUEL OGBAJE.

**F**or the Alabike family of Ndikpa community in Umuze, a town in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State, the events of September 6, this year, would never be forgotten in the years and decades to come. The sudden arrest of a prominent member of the family, 35-year-old Mr. Christopher Alabike, by men of the Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS) from Awkuzu at about 2pm from his family home on the sad day and the immediate aftermath of that arrest, would remain indelible in their minds for ever.

Mr. Alabike was arrested for allegedly being part of a group of youths from the community that carried out the demolition of a fence built around some plots of disputed land.

An elder in the family, who claims he's being sought by the "conspirators," told the reporter that the family had been passing through hard times since Christopher's arrest.

"My brother was beaten mercilessly by policemen, who came to arrest him from his house on September 6, this year. He was seated outside his compound

when he was arrested, beaten and dragged into the police van that took him straight to the police station in Awkuzu. The beating continued when he got there during the interrogation process. While he was still there, members of the community made trips, asking for his release. We also did the same. But we were never allowed to see him. We were always turned back and we were denied the opportunity of seeing him.

"He became sick due to the condition he was subjected to. When we asked to provide him with medical treatment since the police couldn't provide him with any, we were denied access to him in person and he was also denied the use of his drugs. His condition deteriorated so much he died right in the hands of the police, who arrested him. Till date, as I speak with you about this, I haven't set my eyes on my brother. I didn't see him in the police cells while he was in their custody, neither have I been allowed the luxury of even seeing his dead body. I believe that my brother was tortured to death, right in the hands of the policemen, who came to arrest him," said the man who pleaded anonymity.

He also explained what led to his brother's arrest. According to him: "My brother was accused of bringing down the wall of fence around some disputed plots of land in the village

along with some youths. Even the youths have come out to deny this on his behalf. They said he was just used as a scapegoat."

He accused a powerful indigene of the community (names withheld by us) of being the mastermind of his family's ordeal.

"This young man specialises in selling other peoples' lands to notable men in Anambra State. They commission him to either develop it or fence it on their behalf. He has sold some land and fenced it as usual. But some youths in the community that could no longer stomach the tyranny of this young man, got themselves together on the fateful day and brought down the fence, which was already being built around the land. This led to the arrest of some youths in the community, including Christopher Alabike. But the man is connected to the high and mighty, so he could not be called to order. Even the traditional ruler of the community, Igwe Promise Eze, had tried repeatedly along with other members of his council and the elders of the community to bring this man to order, all to no avail."

The older Alabike asserted that members of the family could no longer sleep with both eyes closed. "As I speak with you, my life is in danger. This particular man was the one that brought policemen, to arrest our brother in his house, along with two of his friends. They are currently



• Alabike

after me. Ndikpa community is still boiling because we don't sleep in our houses at night, neither can we move freely like before. No one can challenge this man. If you speak, he will harass you with the soldiers that always move with him. He is untouchable because he has people in high places that cover up his crimes for him. He is very popular in the village. Everyone knows who he is. We, the family, are helpless. We have been begging the police; please, release his body to us. Let us bury our brother, let us bid him farewell as he goes to meet his ancestors. But the police have repeatedly refused to heed our pleas," he says.

Widow of the deceased, Mrs. Lucy Alabike, and his two-year-old son, Master Echezona Alabike, are slowly learning how to cope after the sudden demise of the family's breadwinner.

"What I have now is not life," she told the reporter in slow tones, tears cascading down her cheeks. "The police took my husband away alive, but now, he is dead. I haven't seen my husband since the afternoon of the day he was arrested. My question now is, where is my husband? Where is the father of my son?"

The community, it was gathered, had dragged the police to court on the issue. But the Alabike family insists that the body of the deceased must be released for immediate burial. The reporter learnt that the community had contacted officials of the state government over the matter, with the latter allegedly promising to ensure resolution of the crisis. "But up till now, we haven't seen any government official," the older Alabike informed.

When the reporter called at the police station in Awkuzu to inquire from them about the case, no officer offered to volunteer any information. A police sergeant, who did not want his name in print, as he was not authorised to speak on the matter, admitted that the deceased was dead. He said the police had received a petition with reference number cb/7000/2n9/um/vol.60/202 dated 6/11/2014 from the family.

For now, all is not well at Ndikpa community in Anambra State. And for the Alabike family, all cannot be well until the body of Christopher is interred and the killers of the young man are arrested and brought to justice. According to Lucy, wife of the deceased, "only then would the tears stop running."

## Eyewitnesses narrate how bank robbers killed police officers, others