

# Imo community cries out over citizen's murder, wants killer cops prosecuted

From GEORGE ONYEJIUWA, Owerri

**T**he people of Eziamaulu in Ihitte Mbieri Autonomous Community in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State are calling for the head of one Njamanze, a police officer, and two of his colleagues who allegedly shot and killed a youth of the community, Osita Amadi Onyechefulam, on September 29 this year, and branded him an armed robber.

The community has accused the Imo State Police Command of trying to cover up the heinous act of the killing of the 26-year-old by swiftly transferring the Divisional Police Officer of Orie Mbieri to an unknown station while Njamanze and his colleagues have also disappeared from the division.

They also alleged that the police authorities have refused to investigate the circumstances that led to the killing of Osita nor have they deemed it necessary to visit the family of the deceased.

The elder brother of the deceased, Vincent said that the untimely death of his brother was a terrible blow to the family as the deceased was his only brother and that since the death of their father who was also a police officer in 2002 that they have been responsible for the upkeep of their mother.

"I was devastated when I heard the news that some blood-thirsty policemen had killed my only brother and we want the police authorities to fish out the killer and prosecute him. It is unbelievable that the police who are supposed to protect the citizens are rather killing the people they are supposed to be protecting.

"How could the police claim that Osita was an armed robber when nothing was found on him and why did not the police take him to their station or to our Eze as he had requested, but instead they shot and dumped him on the road to die, so the police must fish out the culprit who has been identified to face the wrath of the law," he said.

However, when contacted, the Public Relations Officer of the Imo State Police Command, Mr Andrew Enwerem (DSP), dismissed the claims of the community as false, stating that no such case has been reported to the state command.

He pointed out that if as allegedly stated by the community that a police officer had mistakenly killed an innocent person that the people ought to have petitioned the state command for an investigation to ascertain the circumstances that led to the death of the young man.

He insisted that the allegation of extra-judicial murder by the community should be taken with a pinch of the salt.

Oriental News reliably gathered that on September 29, the deceased Osita, who was a building contractor and son of a late police inspector had gone to buy bags of cement at the industrial market to enable him complete the building project he was contracted to do.

It was further gathered that while at the industrial market he had decided to have a drink at Egenti Joint, where he was accosted by the three police officers from



Inspector General of Police, Abba Sulaiman

Orie Mbieri Police Division who branded him an armed robber and dragged into their patrol van.

It was equally learnt that he had pleaded his innocence and told the police officers that it must be a mistakent identity, requesting that they either take him to his community's traditional ruler to ascertain his proper identity or the police station.

But instead the three police officers descended on him, hitting him with the butt of their guns, and later handcuffed and whisked him away.

And rather than take the late Osita to the police station or his Eze as he requested, he was shot and dumped on the road side while still on handcuff.

But about three hours later when the policemen learnt that the youths of the community had got the wind of their action they quickly went back to the spot where they dumped him with reinforcement apparently to stave off any attack from the irate youths and took him to the Federal Medical Centre where he died 30 minutes later because of excessive bleeding.

Mr Ahaneku Chukwuyere, a commercial motorcyclist popularly called Okada, who witnessed the incident told Oriental News that on the fateful day he had the owner of the beer parlour as a passenger.

He said that on their way Mr Egenti told him that his younger brother had just called to inform him that a robber had been caught in his beer parlour.

The Okada man further revealed that when they got to the beer parlour he discovered that the suspected robber Osita was well known to him and he told the owner of the bar that it must be a case of mistaken identity.

"When we got to the industrial market where the joint (beer parlour) is located; when I saw the late Osita who they accused of being a robber, I told the owner of the place that he is well known to me and that he was not a robber. Even Osita pleaded with the police to either take him to the police station or the traditional ruler of his community but the three policemen simply handcuffed him and started beating him with the butts of

their gun, before they finally dragged him into their van and drove off".

He pointed out that on his way back to through the Akwakuma/ Industrial road when he later saw the same police van the deceased was no longer in their van, saying that he had thought that the police officers must have taken him to their station until a fellow commercial motorcyclists told him that there was a young man who has been shot dead and dumped on the road.

Corroborating what Ahaneku said, Comrade Onyema Ndubuisi, the Youth President of the community, said when the news filtered that the deceased had been arrested by some policemen at the industrial market where he had gone to buy cement to complete the work he was doing, some of the youths had gone to the Orie Mbieri Police station to know what offense he was being held for but did not find him there.

According to him, it was around 5:00 p.m they learnt that he had been shot and dumped on the road by the police.

"We later discovered that he was actually shot by one of the policemen called Ikechukwu Njamanze and he was still handcuffed and it was only when the police officers sensed that the youths have started protesting the brutal murder that the police mobilized their men who came in company of the Divisional Police Officer (SP Chijioke) and the Divisional Crime Officer (DSP Stephen) and quickly went back to carry him from where he was dumped and decided to take him to the Federal medical centre, Owerri where he died 30 minutes later.

He said that immediately Osita died because of excessive bleeding in spite of the three pints of blood he received at the FMC, the policemen who had brought him to the hospital abandoned him and ran away.

"It was the youths of the community who had to contribute money to settle the hospital bills and deposited his corpse in the mortuary," he said.

He insisted that the allegation of armed robbery leveled against the deceased by the police was false as it was just a cover up as the policemen never found anything incriminating on him nor did anyone from the community reported to the police that the deceased was a criminal.

"The same policemen who said he was an armed robber never took him to their station or brought him to the community because as the youth president we know who is a criminal in the community and whenever we get anyone we promptly hand him over to the police. We will not allow the police authorities to sweep this dastardly act under the carpet. We want the Inspector General to order the Imo State Police Command to investigate the circumstances under which Ikechukwu Njamanze and his colleagues shot and kill our member and to prosecute them," he said.

Also speaking, Comrade Ofoegbu Raphael, Community Government Council Youth Leader, Ihitte Mbieri vowed that the people would not rest until the killer of Osita was prosecuted no matter the antics of the Imo State Police Command in trying to cover up the murder of an innocent man.