

Police officer accused by in-laws of complicity in wife's death

■ I have no hand in her death, she died from an ailment —Husband

From Rose Ejembi, Makurdi

THE parents of late Torkwase Queen Awuna, have sustained the allegation that her death was caused by the frequent beatings and dehumanizing treatment (neglect and starvation) she got from her husband, Iorember Ade, a police officer under the Benue Police Command.

Father of the deceased, Pa Daniel Awuna, is still in shock while Torkwase's mother, Mama Mercy Awuna, is distraught. Torkwase, who was known to her husband's kinsmen as Queen Ade, fell in love and got married to Iorember in 2011. But shortly after, the marriage began experiencing some hiccups as it was alleged that the man, in addition to being a womanizer and wife beater, was also not providing food or other necessities of life for his wife and children.

Mama Awuna who spoke to Sunday Sun reporter in tears said that at a point she took up the responsibility of sending foodstuff to her regularly, from Adikpo in Kwande Local Government Area of the state to Makurdi, to sustain Torkwase and her children.

She recalled with pain that the worst part of the whole matter was that soon after they got married, Iorember turned her daughter to a punching bag and would beat her to pulp at the slightest provocation.

Mama recalled one day when Iorember went to the extent of locking up his wife in a police cell for days all because she fought and overpowered one of his girlfriends, who came to the house to pick a fight with her.

The 57-year-old grandmother, who cuddled the eight-month-old baby of her deceased daughter, while she narrated what led to her death, said that on November 3, 2017, Torkwase called her father but kept crying and so, could not explain what really happened to her.

She said immediately her husband, Torkwase's father told her about the development, she used her own phone, to call her daughter to know what was the matter, and Torkwase said amid tears that if she died, they should know that it was her husband that killed her.

"On hearing such comment from my daughter, I pressed further to know what was really the matter and she said after the food I sent to her finished, she asked her husband for money for food and he pounced on her, and beat her mercilessly," Mercy said.

Jolted by the revelation, she immediately left for Makurdi because she was not comfortable with the way her daughter sounded on phone. When she



•Torkwase with her three children

arrived Makurdi, Mercy learnt Torkwase was on admission at the police clinic.

Taking up the tale, she said: "At the police clinic, the situation became more complicated and my daughter was moved to the Federal Medical Centre, FMC, Makurdi. While she was being treated, the husband and some members of his family came and told me that what was wrong with her could be cured faster by a native doctor and I told them that all I wanted was for my child to be well again."

"I went home to prepare food for my child only to come back and find out that they had moved her from the hospital to the home of a native doctor somewhere in North Bank area of Makurdi," Mercy said.

While at the native doctor's place, she said Iorember abandoned his sick wife with her and would go for many days without checking on them to know whether they had eaten or not. As a result, both mother and daughter would go hungry for days.

To curb the starvation, she went back home in Adikpo to get some foodstuff. When she got back to Makurdi, she discovered that her daughter had again been moved from the native doctor's place back to her home even though her condition was deteriorating.

"When I saw her condition, I insisted that she must be taken back to the hospital. She was

drops rolled down her cheeks.

When Torkwase's parents tried to confirm the news, Iorember's family said it was not true. The distraught grandmother is deeply pained that since the demise of her daughter, the husband had never for one day inquired about his three children, who have been with their maternal grandparents, and had not even bothered to provide for their upkeep.

Taking the story, father of the deceased, Pa Daniel Awuna, 70, a retired Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) said he was at home on Christmas Day when some members of Iorember's family called him on phone to break the news of the death of his daughter to him.

"Before then, news was everywhere the previous day that she had died but no one told us. I asked them if they had fixed the date for her burial and they said they would inform me in due course. On December 28, 2017, they came again to inform me that she would be buried on January 13, 2018."

"I feel sad that she died after severe beatings by her husband and she did not have adequate medical care while alive. This is why the husband has to be cautioned, to serve as a deterrent to others, who are in the habit of beating their wives," Pa Awuna said.

When contacted on the phone, Iorember Ade, who debunked all the allegations made about him said the two families were already holding talks to resolve all the knotty issues surrounding his wife's demise stressing that his wife died of an ailment which her family was

aware of.

His words: "I did not kill my wife. There is nothing like that. Both families are already talking about this situation and I believe that everything will be resolved soon. She died of an ailment and they are aware of that. I did not kill her," Iorember said.

But Torkwase's brother, Pius Awuna, who also spoke with Sunday Sun on the phone, insisted that his sister died as a result of the internal injuries caused by the frequent beating she got from her husband. It was the injuries from the beatings that led to her being admitted into the police clinic and other hospitals before she died.

"They are claiming that she died of hepatitis, because one of my brothers had died of the same ailment in the past; they are now saying that it is hereditary. For example, if somebody had malaria but died in a road accident, can people now turn around and say he died of malaria and not the car crash? That is what the family of the officer is using as a defense for their son. Is that fair?" Pius queried.

Pius said he had suggested that an autopsy be conducted to absolutely ascertain the cause of death, but Iorember's family, he alleged, have been reluctant to allow this to be done, and instead are pushing for "Torkwase to be buried quickly to cover up their lies."

He added: "Tension is rising in Ajo, Ishagev-Ya, Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State, where our two families are residing. Something should be done now."



•Pa Awuna (right), Mama Awuna with Torkwase's last child