

Brother of man who died in NDLEA custody decries cell congestion

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By Christopher Oji

Younger brother to 29-year-old, Kenneth Ayogu, who allegedly died inside the cell of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Kaduna State, has called on the agency's boss to look into the issue of cell congestion.

The deceased was arrested by officials of the agency at Narayi in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) of the state, for allegedly being in possession of pentazocine injection, and few days later, when family members, who were not aware of his whereabouts, traced him to NDLEA cell, they were shocked to be told that his body was in the mortuary.

Spokesman of the family, Michael Ayogu, alleged that he was tortured to death and efforts they made to carry out a postmortem were thwarted by officials of the agency and the police.

However, NDLEA debunked their claims and stated that the suspect was arrested alongside his brother and a neighbour over a drug offence, and they were all in the same cell when he took ill. They further said he was promptly taken to the hospital where he later died, adding that they were denied efforts to carry out a postmortem.

However, his brother who was arrested in company with him and later released, Chinonoso Mathew, 26, at a press conference in Lagos, called on Brigadier General Buba Marwa to look into the issue of cell congestion, as it may have caused his brother's death.

He said: "We were more than 70 suspects in a very small cell with poor ventilation. So many people were made to stand up for the whole day as there was no space to sit down, and some had been there for months and had arrogated authority to themselves. The size of the cell is about 12 by 12 and more than 50 to 70 suspects were kept like stock fish. When you sit down, you open your legs, another person will enter, everybody is taken out individually for interrogation from the cell.

"In the cell, Kenneth complained about his chest and at one point, he started running high. That was on the 15th evening. At one point, he was talking to himself and calling the name of someone I didn't know, and he kept on muttering that he would deal with the person when he comes out of the cell. At one stage, he started convulsing and we called the attention of NDLEA officials, but nobody responded."

However, NDLEA Director, Media and Advocacy, Mr. Femi Babafemi, said the autopsy result would soon be out and that there was no need for all the stories being peddled by the deceased family. "They should be patient for the autopsy result to be out," he said.