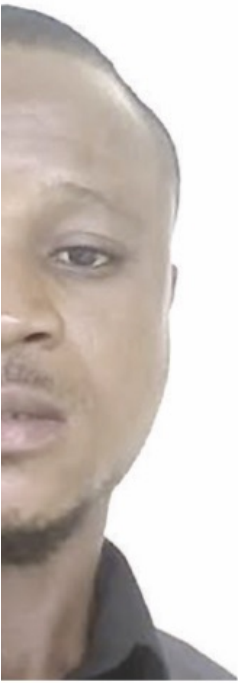


How Dubai returnee was shot dead by vigilante

5th April 2023



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•The place where Mbakwe was killed

From **Okey Sampson**, Umuahia

An atmosphere of gloom and despondency pervades Umuosuru Nkwoegwu-Okaiuga community in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, following the brutal murder of one of its promising sons.

Izuchukwu Mbakwe, 29, was mindlessly shot dead by a vigilante guard attached to De Choice Eatery, based in Umuahia, the state

capital, on Sunday, March 26.



•The late Izuchukwu



•The place where Mbakwe was killed

Izuchukwu, a few years back, travelled to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in search of greener pastures. When things did not work out the way he had planned, at the prompting of his family members, he came back to Nigeria in December last year.

On his return, Izuchukwu began fresh moves to travel out again but this time to another country where his fortunes could be better.

As a young man who always wanted to place his hands on things for a living, at his request, his elder sister was said to have secured a job for him at De Choice Eatery, Umuahia.

Immediately he started work, the Nigerian parlance of “monkey dey work, baboon dey chop,” set in. The young man was said to have worked from December 2022, when he got the job to March 26, when he died, without receiving any salary. In fact, it was the demand for his salary that allegedly led to his untimely death.



•Prof. Mbakwe



•The late Izuchukwu's mother

Daily Sun gathered that Izuchukwu went to work that fateful Sunday like any other day, but had no inkling that it would be his last, as he did not come back alive. He was allegedly shot dead by Ernest Udemezugo, 48, a member of the Abia Vigilante, aka Bakassi Boys, attached to the eatery.

Izuchukwu's uncle, Prof. Roy Mbakwe, who narrated how the young man met his death, said: “They were six from their mother, three boys and three girls, and that boy happened to be the last son.

“He came back from Dubai last December, on the request of the family and when he came back, his senior sister got the place he was working.”

Prof. Mbakwe said that someone called Izuchukwu's elder brother on phone that Sunday to notify him of the incident. He said that it was Izuchukwu's elder brother that called him by 8.30pm to inform him that his brother was shot dead and he was at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Umuahia.

The deceased's elder brother, according to Prof. Mbakwe, came home some minutes past 9pm and relayed what happened to them.

“The true story”, according to Prof. Mbakwe, “was that they (De Choice Eatery management) were owing him five months' salary; he pleaded with them, ‘Please, give me some money so that I will be coming to work,’ as requested or demanded by the management of where he was working, that he had exhausted what he had.

“As he demanded the money, the auditor of the company called the security man to take care of him,” alleging that “he is the man we have been suspecting that took our Nokia phone.”

In a teary voice, Prof. Mbakwe continued: “The security man started beating him left and right and later shot him. This happened around 3pm and they left him under heavy rain and in a pool of blood, they left him there.

“It was the police on patrol who came to buy something there that saw the Bakassi (Vigilante) man scaring people away, so that they don’t know what was happening, that disarmed him.”

Perplexed at the level of man’s inhumanity to man, Prof. Mbakwe went further: “They left the boy there, in a pool of his blood, in water, doing nothing and it was then the police carried the Bakassi man and the boy to CPS, Umuahia, before he was taken to FMC, naked, finished.”

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Although the man at the centre of the raging storm has been arrested by police, Mbakwe said he and the entire family would want the law to take its full course.

“This is a murder case and the culprit should be brought to justice, because the person killed was not a goat or fowl,” he declared.

If Prof. Mbakwe who served as Izuchukwu’s father, since the deceased’s biological father died in 2017, was saddened over the young man’s death, his mother, Mrs. Uzoma Mbakwe, was completely devastated. The traumatized mother of six was said to have shunned food since the incident.

When this reporter went to see her at the family house in Umuosu, the traumatised woman was weeping and wailing all through, asking where her son was. “Oh! My son, my son, where are you, where did you people keep my son? I need to see you right now.”

The woman could not be consoled, insisting the only consolation anybody would give her was to bring her son home alive.

Izuchukwu’s gruesome murder has elicited reactions from various quarters. Youths from the deceased’s community marched on the streets of Umuahia, protesting the killing of one of their own.

In their statement condemning the killing, their leader, Kingsley Megwara, said the youths were of the view that, since law enforcement agents were handling the matter, their people should “exercise maximum restraint.”

Youths from Umuosu equally issued their own statement. In the statement by Mbakwe Ikedichi, the youths called for the arrest and prosecution of all those involved in the death of Izuchukwu.

“We call for the arrest and prosecution of the organisation and all those involved in the murder of our brother. Nothing short of capital punishment or life imprisonment would be acceptable to the family.

“We also call for the disbandment of all groups involved in thuggery and criminal behaviour in the name of maintaining the law; the closure of all De Choice outlets until they conduct an open and comprehensive workplace reform,” the Umuosu youth demanded.

In its reaction, the management of De Choice Eatery said they were pained over the incident. The company said the management never at any time authorized the Abia State Vigilante Service officer to shoot and that they were extremely shocked and devastated by the horrible turn of events.

“Our organization is in no way connected to or responsible for the actions of this individual. We are committed to peace, unity, and the betterment of our community, and we strongly condemn any form of violence that threatens the safety and well-being of its members.

“We are grateful to the law enforcement agencies for their swift action in apprehending the vigilance group member responsible for this and we have full faith that justice will be served. We extend our deepest appreciation to all those who have worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of our community,” the eatery said in a press release.

The Abia State Police Command, which confirmed the incident, said that the suspect was custody. The command’s public relations officer, Geoffrey Ogbonna, said: “The erring vigilante officer has been arrested and his firearm recovered while the remains of the deceased have been deposited in the morgue for preservation.”

Ogbonna added that the command condemned the unprofessional conduct of the vigilance security agent and commiserated with the relations and friends of the deceased over the loss.

He further said that the state commissioner of police, Mustapha Bala, appealed for calm from the public, urging them to eschew violence or resort to self-help, since justice must prevail in the course of the investigation.