

Four months after, justice not in sight over abduction, murder of Anambra man

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Late Vincent Amakili

- Deceased's family, community petition IGP, accuse police of complicity, shoddy investigation
- Widow wails: How will I cater for the six children he left behind?

By Dickson Okafor

Since October 28, 2024, grief settled on the people of Umego Village, Awgbu in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, when one of the illustrious sons of the community, Mr. Vincent Ejike Amakili (a.k.a Nwajimma Egbu Agu), was abducted and then killed by a suspected notorious gang.



Mr. and Mrs. Amakili'

The bereaved family, disillusioned by what in their view smacks of shoddy investigation and seeming complicity by the police, has fired off a strongly worded petition to the Inspector General of the Police, appealing to him to direct the Anambra State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, to conduct a thorough investigation in the case, bring the culprits to justice, and give the widow and children of the deceased as well as the community a closure.



Wife and some children of the deceased

The discomfort and displeasure of the immediate family and kinsmen was heightened after a key suspect in the alleged murder case who had been in custody was released in questionable circumstances. According to the family of the victim, the man was then escorted by policemen to the family compound of the deceased, four days after the burial of the victim.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the petition by the family, the reporter gathered that the Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) in-charge of Zone 13, Ukpo, AIG Godwin Ndidi Aghaulor, had assigned the case to the Homicide Section for proper investigation.

Tragic chain of events

The chain of events that led to the sad incident began on the night of October 28, 2024, about 11.00pm, when the late Vincent Ejike Amakili drove up to the gate of his compound, where he was abducted by yet unidentified persons.

Recalling what happened at the time, younger brother to the victim, Chukwujekwu Amakili, who is fondly known to his friends as 'Ngige' told the reporter that he was in his room when he heard the horn of his elder brother outside the gate of the compound. He said that Uchenna, son of his late brother, ran out and opened the gate for the father to drive in. As Vincent was driving in to park the car, he asked the son whether Chukwujekwu had come home and the son answered in the affirmative.

Just then, Chukwujekwu said further, he heard Vincent asking, "Who is flashing this torchlight"? Within seconds he heard Vincent shouting, 'Ngige, Nigige come oh, come oh, they want to kill me oh'. In response, Chukwujekwu said he quickly opened the door and saw Vincent running towards his left, but his brother did not know that some members of the gang were waiting for him in the direction he ran. They caught and held him on the ground.

Chukwujekwu said when he pointed his own flashlight in the direction where they held his brother, he noticed that a member of the gang wore a face mask, but he saw his two eyes. As Chukwujekwu ran towards them, they pointed a gun at him, he said. Upon sighting the gun, he ran into the nearby bush, while his brother continued to scream for help, alerting those in the neighbourhood.

He noted that as Vincent continued to scream for help, the abductors began shooting sporadically for almost 30 minutes, but nobody came to his rescue. From where he was hiding, Chukwujekwu said he contacted the vigilantes in the community by phone.

He said that it took about one hour before the vigilantes could respond. When the operatives came, he said he accompanied them to the spot where Vincent was held by the abductors. By then, they had escaped with him, but his brother's shirt was seen. The operatives went a little farther into the bush and saw Vincent's singlet which was stained with blood.

Chukwujekwu recalled further that the operatives traced the footsteps of the gang that night up to Nanka, a nearby town. There they met with vigilantes from Nanka, who they had earlier alerted, to inform them about what happened in Umego village. Unfortunately, he said Nnaka vigilante security operatives stationed at the secondary school near Ezinano told them that they did not see the killer gang.

On getting back to Awgbu from Enugu Nanka, Chukwujekwu said he appealed to the vigilance group to accompany him again to Nanka to further search for his brother, but after searching the whole bush they could not find Vincent.

Chukwujekwu said he went to Eke Awgbu Police Station to report that his brother was abducted by unidentified persons.

After making the entry, he said a member of the vigilance group called to advise him to also head to the State CIID Awka, which is under Zone 13 Ukpo, to report that his brother was missing.

Video, voice message implicate suspect

Chukwujekwu said that the vigilantes went to Awgbu Police Station, to provide information but were referred to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (SCIID). At SCIID, the operatives handed over a phone seized from one of the suspects, which they said contained recorded voice notes between him and a member of the village who Chukwujekwu alleged to be the principal suspect (real name concealed and hereinafter referred to as Suspect 1).

According to Chukwujekwu, the voice message said: *"Even sef, them shoot am at close range, I don't know whether he go survive."* To this, the alleged Suspect 1 replied: *"Let him die, every dead body has no address. The wahala of the guy dey too much."*

After listening to the voice message, Uyah Effiong, the investigating police officer (IPO) assigned to the case, reportedly asked the vigilantes if the voice message was connected to the report Chukwujekwu previously made that his brother was kidnapped. They affirmed that it was linked to the report. They

further informed the IPO that the owner of the phone was being held in custody at Eke Awgbu Police Station.

As gathered, the vigilantes were directed to produce the owner of the phone at State CIID Awka, as the phone had become part of the evidence. Upon evaluation, it was discovered that the voice message was made the same night the abduction and alleged murder happened.

IPO Uyah while talking with Chukwujekwu regarding the voice message asked if his brother had any problem or was in dispute with anybody. He said there was none to his knowledge. When the police in Awgbu brought the owner of the phone, he allegedly confirmed ownership of the phone and affirmed that the recorded voice was his, and stated that he was telling the person what happened that night. The police then moved him to Awka.

Chukwujekwu said he wanted to follow them to Awka to make a statement, but that the police asked him to come the next day. When they interrogated the alleged Suspect 1, he claimed that Vincent trespassed into his family's land. In his own statement, Chukwujekwu debunked the claim about land, and explained that the issue was that a plantain plant belonging to his family leaned on the fence between their compound and that of the suspect.

He said that the suspect had threatened that he would kill Vincent and take his phone because Vincent had similarly made a video recording of the alleged Suspect 1 threatening him.

Chukwujekwu said he tendered the evidence of a copy of the video recorded with Vincent's phone. He reportedly told IPO Uyah Effiong that what happened to his brother was exactly what the alleged Suspect 1 threatened would happen.

Chukwujekwu further revealed that the IPO demanded money from the family to enable him obtain the call logs of the suspect and members of the gang from the MTN office in Awka.

Victim's corpse found

For several days after the incident, many people had passed through the place where it happened and nobody had noticed any strange object. Chukwujekwu said when he and some kinsmen accompanied IPO Uyah and his men to the scene, they saw something inside a cement bag.

Upon closer examination, the kinsmen found the partly decomposed body of the late Vincent inside the cement bag.

The entire village trooped out when members of Amakili family and neighbours loudly wailed with grief-stricken voices over the gruesome murder of Vincent.

Later, the body was deposited at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, Nnewi. The police insisted that autopsy must be conducted to know the cause of death. The autopsy was done at Adazi Mortuary and the result confirmed that Vincent died of gunshot wounds.

Twist in the case

Twists arose in the case when the family members were about to leave the mortuary, it was gathered. Chukwujekwu told the reporter that IPO Uyah pulled him aside and asked about a certain young man to be known as Suspect 2 (real name concealed). Chukwujekwu said he knew nobody who bore the name, and wondered what connection the said person had with the case.

The IPO said that an informant (identity concealed) made a report that the said Suspect 1 allegedly killed Vincent. Chukwujekwu said that the IPO told him that the alleged Suspect 1 had disclosed to the police that he, Suspect 1, shot Vincent with his gun. The revelation, Uyah said, made Suspect 1 the chief culprit and for that reason had to be fished out.

Members of Vincent's family began making inquiries in the community, and learnt that the suspect hailed from another state in the South-East. He once resided in Nanka but later moved to Awgbu, but had disappeared from the compound where he lived.

When Chukwujekwu and the family eventually traced Suspect 1 to his parents' home, they informed IPO Uyah on the phone, who contacted the Divisional Police Officer, Eke Awgbu Police Station, ASP Asadu Uchechukwu Onyekachi, to secure approval for the arrest, which was granted. Upon his arrest, he was taken to the State CIID Awka.

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During interrogation, the suspect denied telling the informant about the shooting of Vincent. He claimed that he was sleeping that night when he heard gunshots. He said that he called the informant on the phone and told him that some people were shooting in the neighbourhood, and he did not know whether the chairman was the target. Suspect 2 said the informant told him that the chairman travelled, noting that Nwanjinma (the fond name people called Vincent in the area) could be the target. At this point, Suspect 2 said the informant directed him to lock the gate.

However, after listening to Suspect 2, the IPO said that the story had changed but the informant insisted on what the suspect had previously told him. But Suspect 2 strongly denied the informant's account.

With the assistance of the mobile network, the police tracked Vincent's phone to Nanka before it went off the radar. After three days, a signal from the phone was picked up by the network at Awonmama in Imo State, but the policemen from Awka said they could not go there for fear of unknown gunmen. Later it went off the network completely and had not sent any signal again since then, prompting the IPO Uyah to conclude that the sim might have been destroyed.

More twists and turns

The IPO Uyah also claimed that the voice message in the phone of the alleged Suspect 1 had been deleted. Also, the voice message that was transferred to Uyah's phone also suddenly disappeared just as it vanished from the phone of the alleged Suspect 2.

However, under further interrogation, the second suspect changed his statement, and claimed that he was at the beach when he heard the gunshots. The family wondered why the statement of Suspect 2 changed within few days after he was brought to the station. This development led the Amakili family to believe that the IPO must have been compromised. Three times at the Adazi mortuary, IPO Uyah confirmed to the Amakili family that Suspect 2 told him that the gunshots were fired at close range, only for him to deny his earlier statement.

Petition to IGP Egbetokun, Governor Soludo

Disturbed by the seeming show of compromise, the family resolved to cry out to the Inspector General of Police, noting that they had lost faith in the manner the case had been handled by the Anambra State Police Command.

In a petition written to IGP Egbetokun by the law firm of N. Abumchukwu Okoye, Esq, who is counsel to the family of the deceased, the family implored the police boss to promptly intervene and direct the police in Anambra State to conduct diligent investigation, to unravel the circumstances surrounding the killing. In addition to seeking justice for their son, the family passionately appealed for protection, disclosing that the chief suspect had threatened to wipe out the entire family.

Chukwujekwu's family also appealed to Governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo to help them urge the IGP to uncover those who killed his elder brother.

Meanwhile, the State CIID Awka promised to hand over the case file for proper police prosecution. But surprisingly, Chukwujekwu said he learnt few days later that the IPO had released the two suspects even when investigation was still ongoing to unmask those who murdered his brother.

He said the person who informed him had expressed his reservation to the IPO Uyah, saying that what he did was wrong and risky because murder cases are not handled in that manner.

According to Chukwujekwu, IPO Uyah Effiong claimed that he was ordered by his superiors to release the suspects.

Until the filing of this story, he said that the IPO had not called the family or taken any calls from them. Meanwhile, the major suspect, he said, has been at large since he was released. Chukwujekwu condemned the police for mishandling the case.

Victim's wife speaks

Widow of the deceased, Mrs. Chidiogor Amakili, narrated that a notorious gang allegedly led by Suspect 1, had been terrorising Awgbu and the neighbouring communities.

She said that her husband had no issue with anybody or family, but recalled that when he was erecting a fence at the boundary in front of their house and the family house of Suspect 1, the suspect came out and started recording a video of her husband as the work was going on.

She said that her husband also brought out his own phone and began recording him too. Chidiogor said that Suspect 1 then threatened that he would kill Vincent with a gun. She recalled that the suspect said to her late husband: "I will kill you with a gun. Dead body no dey run. I will shoot you and collect your phone; after all dead body no dey run."

Corroborating the account of Chukwujekwu, she said that the day her husband was murdered, he came back from work and was parking the vehicle in his compound, not knowing that members of the gang were hanging around with guns waiting for him. The moment he came back, they abducted him.

Late Vincent and Chidiogor were married for 18 years and were blessed with six children. She described her late husband as a unique man with a good heart, who until his death was a dedicated community leader, good to those around him and never sought trouble.

She expressed frustration over the alleged “conspiracy of silence” and inaction from the Police Zonal Command 13, with headquarters at Ukpo, which has shown manifest reluctance to find out those who killed her husband. Chidiogor said she was totally dissatisfied with the way the police had handled the investigation into the murder of her husband.

Chidiogor called on the Inspector General of Police and the Commissioner of Police, Anambra State Command, to unravel the truth and uncover those who killed her husband and bring the culprits to book.

She noted the demise of her husband has incapacitated her. “How am I going to cater for the six children he left behind,” she lamented.”

The son of the deceased, Mr. Uchenna Amakili, recalled a particular moment of what transpired that night his father was abducted and murdered.

“When they held my father on the ground, he was shouting for help. Before my uncle could come out I had run to the other side. One member of the gang turned and asked, ‘who is there’ and I answered, ‘it is me Uchenna.’ Then, I asked the man what my father did to them. He cocked his gun and pointed it at me. I ran and hid behind a tree as they started shooting.

“My mother called me to come back and allow my uncle to alert the villagers. I still ran to the road to see if there were people that could come to help rescue my father but there was nobody.”

He said he took the short cut to get to the vigilantes and told them what was going on. He said they followed him to the house and went into the bush with Chukwujekwu to search for his father, but they could not find him that night.

Uchenna went emotional while describing his father as a man of the people, one who carried people along. He stressed that his father was a very good man, hardworking, caring and kind, not only to his family, but to those around him. He said his father had no issue with anybody or family.

Suspect's father speaks

When he spoke with Sunday Sun, the father of Suspect 1 (name concealed), countered the allegation that his son killed Vincent Amakili. He acknowledged that there was a land dispute between his family and the family of the deceased, but said it could not have led to Suspect 1 killing Vincent.

He urged the State CIID Awka, Anambra State Command to do thorough investigation and fish out those behind the murder of Vincent. He categorically denied that his son might have been responsible for the alleged murder.

Also commenting on the unfortunate incident, Mr. Izuchukwu Nkwonta, youth leader of Umego village said he was in Awka where he resides and not in Awgbu on the night of the abduction and subsequent murder. He condemned the murder of Vincent whom he described as a committed son of the soil.

He said it was regrettable that some hoodlums cut short the life of one of their illustrious sons. He assured the Amakili family that the youths in the community were working hard with the police to uncover the identity of the perpetrators.

Also speaking, Chairman of Umego Village, Chief Onyedika Chukwuewi, said since the incident occurred, the entire village had been in mourning. He said Vincent was an amiable young man whose contributions to the community were huge.

More bizarre twists

The deceased's family claimed they were shocked to see Suspect 1 in the murder case, who was supposed to be in police detention, appear with police men from Zone 13 Ukpo, four days after the burial of Vincent with a letter inviting the only surviving brother of Vincent to the Zonal Command. The letter accused the deceased's brother of malicious damage, conspiracy, stealing, and acts likely to cause a breach of peace in the community.

Some kinsmen wondered whether the invitation and allegations were a ploy to stop family members from seeking justice in any police formation in the state, given that Zone 13 Ukpo is the highest police formation in the Zone.

When contacted on the phone, Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Tochukwu Ikenga, said that efforts were on to find out those who abducted and murdered the victim.

His words: “We are already working on some clues given by the family of the deceased to possibly unravel the truth and arrest the killers. Any further development shall be communicated.”

He acknowledged that the Command received a report that Vincent was abducted and killed when he came back from work, near his compound at Umego Village in Agwbu, Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State on October 28, 2024.