

Enugu's mystery death

May 20, 2020 KENNETH OFOMA



Residents of Enugu capital city are yet to come to terms with the mysterious death of a man, his pregnant wife and three other children at their home in Amaokpo, Nike, Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The tragic death has thrown not a few people including relations and well wishers into confusion and agony as KENNETH OFOMA reports from Enugu

Presently the major hope of solving the riddle behind the death lies with the surviving son, who is still lying critical in the hospital; and the autopsy report, which for inexplicable reasons are yet to come out due to financial obligations. The family of the deceased man is now calling for help to raise money required for autopsy.

They also need money to pay for series of costly medical tests to save the life of the young boy as demanded by the doctors treating him. Whereas police were said to be requesting for N120, 000 to enable them pay for the autopsy, the medical doctors are demanding N120, 000 for a test that will be conducted in Lagos to determine the kind of chemical substance in the boy's body as well as another N35, 000 for neuro scan. But the family does not have the money hence the delay.

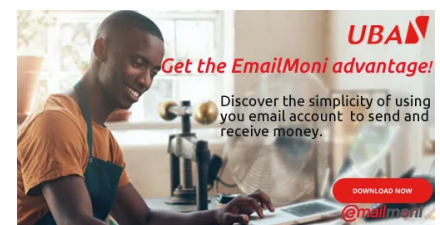
The tragic incident took place on Monday, April 27th night in their family house. But the dead bodies remained undiscovered till Wednesday April 29. However, the bodies were eventually evacuated on Thursday April 30. The man of the house identified as Dominic Onyekwere Chukwumalu of Eziowelle, Idemili Local Government Area of Anambra state, it was gathered, went to sleep on Monday night with his family, but they were discovered dead on Wednesday morning save for a 10-year-old son who was rescued unconscious.

The bodies of the five deceased members were said to be peeling off and swelling up, an indication that they might have died of a chemical substance or generator fume. But it



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was reported that there was no generator near the interior of the building.

The generator they had was usually kept on the top of the decked building. It was also gathered that nobody knew of their death. It was a friend who worked with late Mr. Chukwumalu, a building contractor who was worried that he was not picking his calls for an appointment they had on Tuesday, who now contacted the younger brother to the man's wife.

The younger brother to the man's wife said that he too had been trying to reach them on phone unsuccessfully for a day or two but he didn't attach much meaning to it. Two of them now decided to visit the family in their house which was a bit isolated in the neighbourhood. On reaching there, they found the house locked but his vehicle (a mini-truck – Dyna) was parked outside.

They moved closer and peeped through the window glass only to discover that the family was lying down dead in one heap as the late Chukwumalu was said to have held his family together as if they were praying.

They had to force one of the windows open to gain entrance. It was further gathered that the incident attracted the neighbourhood, who gathered money together to bring out the corpses. But first, health officials from the local government were said to have visited to decontaminate the rooms to avoid infection or chemical inhalation in case the house was sprayed with chemicals.

Some of the early visitors to the scene, are the police at Abakpa Nike, the Chairman of Enugu East LGA, Hon. Alex Ugwu and the UN Rescue Mission that went to the place on Wednesday evening.

It was further gathered that in the process of bringing out the corpses that one of the man's children, Arinze, 10, shouted "Jesus" and was later rushed to University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, UNTH, Ituku-Ozala, for treatment. He was said to be in coma and on ventilator (Oxygen) for the first three days at the intensive care unit. It was when he regained some life that he was transferred to the children's ward. But his condition is still unstable.

Investigation by New Telegraph revealed that security was built around the surviving but unconscious boy. Only his grandmother and younger sister to the deceased mother were allowed to care for him. Every other person was barred from seeing him apart from the medical personnel. Speaking to journalists on Thursday April 30 at the National Orthopedic Hospital, Enugu, where the corpses of the deceased family members were kept, the South East Zonal Commander of the United Nations Rescue team, Emmanuel Okoye said that somebody informed them about the incident that a man and his family was killed and they went to the scene.

Okoye said that they helped to evacuate the corpses to the mortuary since the police was nowhere to be found at the time the rescue team went to the scene. When contacted, the Chairman of Enugu East Local Government Area, Hon. Alex Ugwu said that late Chukwumalu was a good person and wondered how he would die in that manner. He attributed his death to a possible food poisoning since there was no generator to suggest that it could be as a result of fumes from exhaust fumes.

"When I heard about the incident, I alerted the police and the Ministry of Health to take charge. It was when the officials of the Ministry of Health were trying to evacuate the corpse that one of the man's children sneezed and was discovered to be alive and was rushed to the hospital," he said.

The police later took over the investigation. But as at the time of filing this report, there was no clear information on their findings so far. When contacted, the police spokesman, Daniel Ndukwe Ekea, said that the press will be informed when the autopsy reports were out or when they were able to get information from the boy.

Investigation by the New Telegraph further revealed that the wife of the man and his children had visited her mother (their grandmother) where they were staying due to the forced COVID-19 holiday. The woman's mother resides at Ugbene 1, in Abakpa also in Enugu East LGA. However, it was reported that their father brought them back on Monday.

Even his wife who was braiding her hair at her mother's house couldn't finish up the braiding and was planning to return to her mother's house on Tuesday to finish up, only for death to strike on Monday night, the very day they returned to their house. "The children and their mother were with their maternal grandmother on a holiday.

Their father brought them back that Monday and in the night this thing happened. We don't know the reason they were brought back," a neighbour told New Telegraph on condition of anonymity. When contacted, a younger brother to the deceased man, Ugo, said the surviving boy was not yet speaking.

He said that doctors informed them that they were just trying to stabilise him. "They (doctors) said proper treatment will be administered when the autopsy result is out and other tests carried out and they are able to determine the type of chemical spread on them," he said.

He also stated that the family is running around to raise money for the autopsy. He said that his late brother's Club members were trying to help. The family has therefore appealed to Nigerians for financial help to save the only surviving child in the hospital. The younger brother of late Chukwumalu, Ugo who spoke to New Telegraph lamented the condition of Arinzechukwu.

He said that doctors at the hospital were demanding for N150, 000 to carry some medical text on the boy but his family could not afford it. According to him, the doctors were also demanding for another N35, 000 to carry out brain investigation on the boy.

"I am calling on good spirited individuals to come for our help to save the little boy, he is all the family got now." Ugo also disclosed that police were yet to conduct autopsy on the deceased family because there was no money.

"The police are demanding that we pay N120, 000 before the autopsy is conducted." From what Ugo was saying, it could be inferred that the family thinks there was possible foul play in the death of the man and his family through possible chemical spray. But they were consciously waiting for police investigation. He also said that police are in custody of the deceased man's phone while the family of the wife is in custody of his wife's phone.

He added that since the family of the woman was the first to enter the building after the boy was rushed to the hospital, they took away some items, possibly for safeguard. On his part, younger brother to the deceased wife of the man, Paul, collaborated that they were yet to get the autopsy result and that the boy was yet to gain full consciousness in order to speak. When asked whether there was a preexisting misunderstanding between the deceased man (his in-law) and his wife or wife's family, he said there was none. He also dismissed insinuations that the man could be a member of any cult group.

"The man was not known to be in any cult. He was a peaceful man and a gentleman who minds his business," he said. When asked whether they noticed any forced entry into the building or whether the rear door to the building was unlocked, he said he could not say

with exactitude. According to him, on the day they went to the house and discovered the dead bodies there was confusion particularly when the 10-year old boy was discovered to be alive. He said that all attention focused on the boy as they rushed him to the hospital.

He said that when he returned to the building after taking the boy to the hospital, he discovered that the rear door was locked but that he wouldn't know whether it was one of the sympathisers who rushed to the house that locked it when they took the boy to the hospital or whether the door was originally locked. Indeed, Enugu people are waiting to know what happened to the family. The suspense and tension are growing.

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