

Echezona Okafor  
NNEWI

## Awkuzu SARS collected N.5m, still killed my son –Aged mother cries out

A 75-year-old woman, Mrs Nkiruka Ugochukwu, from Obosi in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State, has claimed that operatives of the now disbanded Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS) in Awkuzu, Anambra State, killed her son despite collecting N500,000 from the family.

She told *Sunday Telegraph* that her murdered son, Chimezie, was the family's breadwinner.

"Operatives of SARS in Awkuzu murdered my 32-year-old son, about one week after he returned from his base in Angola. He was a successful businessman based in Angola.

"What happened was that sometime in June, 2016, I fell sick, and was hospitalised. So, in July, he came back to Nigeria to see me, and to pay off my bills and also see his wife that resided in Asaba, Delta State.

"My son, Chimezie's journey to the land of the unknown started in a certain Monday, in the month of July, 2016. On that fateful day, Chimezie and his wife, who was eight months pregnant, were together at their residence in Asaba, when a person called him, and told him come to a certain place known as 'Summit Junction' in Asaba.

"Chimezie's wife was not comfortable with that invitation. She tried to discourage her husband from going; but Chimezie told her the call might be for something very important.

"His wife even went as far as seizing his car keys in an effort to keep him from going. So, he had to board a tricycle to meet the caller. On getting there, he met some men who told him they were police operatives from 'A' Division, Asaba. They handcuffed him and took him to the police station.

"Reaching the police station, he contacted his brothers to notify them of his whereabouts. When his brothers got to the station, they were told that it was SARS operatives from Awkuzu that actually wanted him.

"But after some days the SARS operatives still failed to show up; so, the police at 'A' Division, Asaba, invited us to take him on bail. No sooner that we go to the 'A' Division than some SARS operatives from Awkuzu arrived and took Chimezie away in our very presence. From that day, we started going to Awkuzu SARS to secure the release of my



son," she said.

Mrs Ugochukwu noted that neither the 'A' Division in Asaba, nor SARS operatives in Awkuzu told her the offence her son had committed that led to his arrest and detention.

She said it was only after about two weeks of his stay at Awkuzu SARS that they told the family that Chimezie had bought a stolen vehicle.

"We begged them to tell us the basis for their allegation or show us the stolen vehicle he was said to have bought; but they refused. I personally met the then Commissioner of



Police in Anambra, Sam Okaula, over my son's case; but he could not help.

"After about three weeks in detention, and persistent pressure from our family, Chimezie's Investigation Police Officer (IPO), one Inspector Uzor, told us to pay N800,000 as a condition for his release. We were able to raise N500,000, which we handed over to Inspector Uzor.

"It was only after receiving the money that he told us to go home, that Chimezie had sustained a bullet wound and that a doctor was treating the wound, after which we could take him.

"About three days later, they compelled

Chimezie to call his wife to bring his ATM card to SARS office. SARS operatives in Awkuzu used the ATM to withdraw all the money in Chimezie's account. The next day, they compelled him again to call his wife to bring his sports utility vehicle.

"That was also how they took Chimezie's private vehicle. About three days later, again, they compelled him to call all his drivers to bring all his buses. They said that would be the final condition for his unconditional release. He did so, and his drivers took 16 L-300 buses to the Awkuzu SARS office.

"After all these, we were of the hope that he would be released. As we awaited his release, we were shocked to receive a letter from Awkuzu SARS that my son did not survive his bullet wound. In that letter, which was not signed by anyone, SARS claimed that they fought hard to help him survive; but that Chimezie did not make it," she said.

She also recounted that when the family later called Inspector Uzor, Chimezie's IPO, on phone, he refused answering their calls, and when they went to SARS office to request for Chimezie's vehicles and monies they withdrew from his account, SARS operatives threatened them, and warned them never to set their feet in SARS office again.

Mrs Ugochukwu, however, said she was still doubtful that her son was dead, as prayer houses she visited were still reassuring that Chimezie was not in the grave.

"I took Chimezie's pictures to many pastors and prayer houses, and they all assured me that they did not see Chimezie in the grave. So, I am still hopeful that one day, they will release him from where they detained or hid him," she said.

The aged mother, who said she was battling from high blood pressure and other age-related sickness, further begged the federal and state governments to prevail on Awkuzu SARS to release her son, his property and money; as, according to her, she and Chimezie's young family had no means of survival.