

Taskforce accused of torturing father of 5 to death

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Members of the Rivers State Taskforce on Street Trading and Illegal Motor Parks and Road Congestion, Rumuokoro branch, have been accused of torturing a father of five children, Mr. Simom Ihuarulam, to death.

The accusation was made by the widow of the deceased, who



Late Simom Ihuarulam

had since run to the Executive Director of Human Rights Social Development and Environmental Foundation, Mr. Justine Ijeomah, to help her seek justice.

A letter addressed to the state governor, Nyesom Wike, by the human rights activist, dated March 24, 2023, stated that the deceased was killed on March 12.

He explained that the murder of Ihuarulam was brought to the human rights group by his distraught widow.

According to the woman, her husband, a commercial bus driver, on the morning of March 12, 2023 was about his business as usual around the Rumuokoro axis, when operatives of the State Taskforce on Street Trading and Illegal Motor Parks/Road Congestion as led by the head of the Rumuokoro team, forcibly removed his bus battery and pulled out the valve of his tyres. They then took the battery to their office, situate opposite Emmanuel Anglican Church at Rumuokoro.

Ijeomah said: "It is the complainant's brief that when her husband went to the office of the taskforce operatives to demand the battery and inquire to know

his offence, some of the operatives of the taskforce pounced on him and beat him up on the grounds that he had the effrontery to come and demand his battery. While the officials were beating Simon, he collapsed and lost consciousness.

"When the operatives saw that Simon had collapsed, they rushed him to a nearby hospital for treatment. But due to his critical state, the hospital referred them to the University Teaching Hospital (UNIPORT), for treatment. It was while he was admitted to the hospital that he went into a coma and oxygen was administered to him."

The human rights activist said that a few hours after, the bus driver died due to complications from the injuries inflicted on him through torture and maltreatment by the operatives.

"There were injuries on his head and entire body showed that he was battered with dangerous weapons. The co-members of the deceased's transport association began protest immediately and shut down all transport activities on the said day which crippled commercial activities," said Ijeomah.

He stated that this same issue was within the public domain and was broadcasted by a conventional and unconventional media houses in the state.

He recalled that to calm the situation, the matter was immediately reported to the Special Area Divisional Police Headquarters at Rumuokoro, Rivers State and later they transferred same to the homicide department at State Criminal Intelligence Investigative Department (SCIID), Rivers State Police Command.

Meanwhile, members of the deceased's bus drivers association are still demanding justice to be done as they are ready to continue with the protest until justice is served in this matter. They also issued a four-day ultimatum against the State Government to do something about the welfare and upkeep of their deceased member's immediate family or face further protest.

Ijeomah thereafter gave the state government 48 hours from the date of the receipt of his petition to investigate the proprietary or otherwise conduct of these operatives involved in the dastardly acts and devise means on how the

young distraught family of the deceased left is faring because of his death.

Ijeomah also added: "Note that the deceased left behind his wife and five children who are now suffering the painful exit of a husband, father, and breadwinner. Further, note that failure to comply with these demands will leave us with no other option than to seek to relieve from the court of law as soon as possible."

When our reporter reached to the Chairman of the Rivers State Task Force on Street Trading and Illegal Motor Parks, Felix Nwadike, to know the culpability of the officials of the agency in the murder of Simon, the chairman replied thus: "The matter you are referring to is under investigations at the Homicide Section of the State Criminal Intelligence and Investigations Department (SCIID). Contact the Police for detailed information."

Our reporter contacted the Rivers State Police Public Relations Officer, a Superintendent of Police, Grace Iringe-Koko, but she responded that she was not aware of the matter.

Ekiti Police Command arrest 5