

# Army Denies Alleged Secret Execution of Six Soldiers

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By Kingsley Nwezeh

Nigerian Army yesterday described as “fake news,” a trending report that the it secretly executed six Igbo soldiers in Abuja.

The report said the soldiers were secretly executed after a hasty secret trial at which they were denied legal representation of their choice.

A coalition of rights activists had alleged that it was informed of the shocking development by human rights lawyer, Mr. E R Okoroafor, who also alleged that he was denied the right to defend his client at the secret trial.

“We have received with rude shock and deepest dismay the Monday, 25th January 2021 secret execution of six Igbo Christian soldiers, attached to the Amoury Department of the Nigerian Army, Abacha Barracks in Abuja”, the coalition said while further alleging that

“the slain Igbo Christian soldiers; namely Prince Ukwuoma, son of a traditional ruler; Ebube Isaiah, Amos Azubuike; Ekene Ebere; Moses Anyim and Godwin Uchendu were secretly executed under the instruction of the former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen Tukur Yusuf Buratai (rtd), a day before he left office on Tuesday, Janaury 26, 2021.

"This shocking news was disclosed to us by ER Okoroafor, an international human rights lawyer, who is very conversant with the matter and was also contacted by one of the slain soldiers through his family to defend them in the trumped up charges, executed using hazy and clandestine military court martial.

According to the rights lawyer, "sometime in Sept 2020, an allegation of missing weapons was made at Abacha Barracks and it was immediately traced to a senior Colonel of Fulani-Hausa Muslim origin and instead of the COAS to issue query and sanction the Colonel, he exonerated him on the grounds of his tribe and religion.

"The COAS turned around and ordered for the arrest of 12 soldiers guarding the armoury, comprising six Igbo soldiers, three Yoruba soldiers and three Fulani-Hausa Muslim soldiers.

"In the end, the latter soldiers were shielded and exonerated under questionable circumstances and the six Igbo soldiers made to face secret court martial during which they were blocked and prevented from having access to their families and defense lawyers of their choice", it said.

The groups further alleged that "Okoroafor also told the coalition that his attempts to stand in for the Igbo soldiers were stiffly opposed and he was flimsily told by the Army's Legal Department that "civilian lawyers are not allowed to defend the accused soldiers except military lawyers.

"Their trial was totally shrouded in secrecy and never disclosed to the public through Army statements till date; likewise their constitutional right of appeal to Court of Appeal and Supreme Court, which was also totally denied. The persecuted and executed soldiers protested their innocence to the point of tendering their resignation in protest; all to no avail", it said.

But Army Spokesman, Brigadier-General Sagir Musa in his new style of debunking such reports, posted an online copy of the report on the army Wassap platform and stamped it "fake news".

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