

Family Alleges Negligence as Another Boarding Student Dies in Anambra

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

As controversy continues to trail the death of a boarding student of Downen College, Lagos, Sylvester Oromoni, another boarding house

student of St. Michael's Boys College, Ozubulu, Anambra State, Master Chimdalụ Onyekwulufe has reportedly died.

Onyekwulufe, a JSS 2 student of the school, aged 11 was

said to have died as a result of negligence on the part of the school management, who allegedly refused to call his parents to pick him up after he took ill.

It was a pitiful sight at Uzoakwa, Ihiala, Anambra State, where the deceased boy was buried as family members and neighbours wailed when the child was interred in his family

compound.

The parents of the deceased, Prince Cornelius and Ogochukwu Onyekwulufe who spoke to journalists during the burial of their son said even when the student's health had deteriorated, the school management insisted that he must remain in school to finish his examinations before he would be released, saying the decision was the reason for his death.

The student had reportedly died on December 17, 2021, nine days after he was picked up by the parents from St. Michael's Boys College.

This was after a cousin to the deceased borrowed a phone to alert the parents that the boy was ill and that the school management was not ready to release him until he finished his exams.

Onyekwulufe said: "My son, Bright Chidalu Onyekwulufe died out of negligence on the part of the school. He was sick and they refused to tell us. It was my son's cousin that borrowed a phone to call his mother to inform us to come and pick Bright that he was dying."

"He told us he has been the one backing him from the school hostel to the classroom every day, to sit for exams."

"Even after the call, I reached the guardian of my son, but he lied to me that the boy was okay and that it was nothing serious. I insisted on coming from Port Harcourt, Rivers State where I live to pick him, and they insisted it was nothing serious."

"When I insisted I must see him, I was surprised the boy looked so bad that he was already

dying. I asked the guardian if this was the boy he said was alright, but he did not answer. Now I have lost my only son," he cried.

However, the principal of St. Michael's Boys College, Rev. Fr. Romanus Ike Muoma, has denied that the school management delayed the release of the student to his parents.

Muoma who spoke to THISDAY in his office during a visit, said: "The boy was seen here in school moving about with other students, days before his father came. What we have here (college) is not an auxiliary nurse, but a qualified nurse from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, Nnewi, and we pay heavily for his services."

"The boy was diagnosed with malaria, and was immediately put on treatment, and afterwards he was okay. When it was found that the boy was ill again, it was the guardian that called the parents to come and take him."

When told that the deceased's cousin who had called the parent to alert them of the illness was punished by the school for doing so, Muoma said the boy was only made to kneel for some minutes, saying it was against the rule for students to call parents as calls are only made from a central point by the management.

Onyekwulufe's family has however indicated its interest to pursue justice for their son. Mr Ben Onyekwulufe, older brother of the deceased boy's father, said a petition had been sent to the Inspector General of Police, Alkali Balwa, stressing that the family would stay at nothing until justice is served.

Three Nigerians Among Eight Suspected Pirates Freed in Denmark

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Three suspected Nigerian pirates who were arrested after surviving heavy gunfire from a Danish frigate last November have been freed by the authorities in the country.

The three were among eight suspects who allegedly attacked a commercial vessel in the Gulf of Guinea last year, killing four people, while one was seriously wounded.

The fourth, who was injured and had his leg amputated appeared in court in Copenhagen at the weekend, where he was charged with the attempted manslaughter of Danish soldiers.

However, the three other suspected Nigerian pirates picked up by a Danish frigate at the same time and who faced the same charges were freed after Denmark said it failed to find a country in the region to take them.

The three, who had been detained aboard the frigate Esbern Snare in the Gulf of Guinea, were put to sea in a small dinghy, an inflatable rubber boat, with enough food and fuel

for them to reach safely to shore, after the charges against them were withdrawn.

"They have no relation to Denmark, and the crime they have been charged with was committed far from Denmark. They simply do not belong here, and that's why I think it's the right thing to do," Danish Justice Minister, Nick Hækkerup, said in a statement.

The frigate, which deployed off West Africa in October, intervened in an alleged attack on a commercial vessel the following month, killing the four pirates and taking another four suspects on board the frigate.

According to the Danish Armed Forces, Denmark has since failed to find a country in the region to agree to take the four, a Reuters report indicated.

The fourth surviving suspect, who was taken to a hospital in Ghana was later brought to Denmark for prosecution because he could not safely be released at sea due to his medical condition.

The suspect pleaded not guilty to attempted manslaughter of Danish soldiers. His lawyer Birgitte Skjodt was reported

as telling broadcaster TV2 that she asked for the charges against her client to be withdrawn, as was done for the other three suspects.

Prosecutor Karen Moestrup Jensen for Denmark's Special Crime Unit (SCU) said the investigation into the incident would continue.

Denmark deployed the frigate to the Gulf of Guinea to protect shipping amid heightened security risks from pirates last year October.

The waters have been a piracy hotspot for years, but incidents have decreased since national authorities stepped up security efforts aided by foreign naval ships.

During their capture, the armed had stated: "No Danish soldiers were injured, but five pirates were shot. Four of the pirates died. One was injured."

The authorities in Denmark stressed that the Danish forces fired warning shots, and the pirates immediately fired back. "The Danish soldiers acted in self-defence and returned fire," the statement said.

At the time, Danish Prime

Minister Mette Frederiksen told a news conference that the soldiers' intervention had "probably prevented concrete pirate attacks against vessels in the region."

The head of the federation of Danish ship owners, Anne Steffensen, praised the intervention, saying that: "The presence of Danish soldiers is absolutely necessary and, even if this appears harsh, piracy has a price."

After the shooting, the pirate ship sank and the eight pirates were brought aboard the frigate, where a seriously injured one of their number was treated, the statement added.

The Danish navy had said they spotted a fast-moving vessel carrying eight suspected pirates near a number of commercial ships.

The incident took place in international waters, 25 to 30 nautical miles south of Nigeria's territorial boundary, a spokesman noted, saying that the motorboat, spotted by a helicopter deployed by the frigate, was carrying equipment associated with piracy, including ladders.