

• **Family accuses police of torture, cover-up**
 • **Corpse missing**
 • **It was a mob action — Police**

By **Emma Nnadozie,**
Crime Editor

THE circumstances surrounding the arrest of two young Nigerian traders based in Benin Republic by the Police in Lagos and the subsequent death of one of them, allegedly inside a police cell is now a subject of controversy. The two traders, Albert Okechukwu, 20, and Alex Ejimofor, 23, were reportedly clamped into the cell at the Festac Police division after they were engaged in a brawl with some commercial motorcyclists at Alakija bus stop, Lagos.

They were allegedly tortured till the early hours of the following day leading to the demise of one of them, Albert Okechukwu. His friend, Alex, who survived the gruelling torture, was taken to an Apapa Magistrate court the following morning where a criminal charge of conspiracy to steal a Bajaj Motorcycle was leveled against them. Meanwhile, the whereabouts of the remains of Albert is yet to be made known by the Police.

Unwarranted police action

Enraged by the sad development, family members of the duo, represented by Aguleri Youths, Lagos forwarded a

"The truth is that on that fateful Friday, March 17, 2017, Albert (now deceased) and Alex who were returning to Aguleri, Anambra State from their base in Cotonou, Benin Republic ran out of Nigerian currency (naira). And as many in their shoes would do, they promptly alighted at Alakija bus stop, Lagos and informed a commercial motorcycle rider, who came to transport them to Festac town, of their predicament as well as plan to quickly withdraw money from the nearest ATM terminal at their destination. The unidentified Okada boy agreed.

"However, misunderstanding later broke out when they were returned to the same Alakija Bus Stop instead of where they could board a bus to Onitsha at around 11.00 a.m. as the commercial

They continued beating them before eventually leaving them under the sun without food or water from noon till evening

motorcyclist refused to take them to their destination after



•IGP Idris Ibrahim

•The deceased

•The two friends

an exchange of blows between them and some Okada riders at the bus stop.

"The commotion quickly attracted the attention of traffic police officers at the Alakija Bus stop who promptly called Police Patrol Team. On arrival at the scene, the Police, out of their familiarity, called the commercial motorcyclist aside and after a brief conversation with them, decided to take the duo of Albert and Alex to FESTAC Police station without hearing their own side of the story. The duo objected to the police plan to take them to the station alone, insisting that the motorcyclist who

Police Officer reportedly wrote a statement, apparently based on what the motorcyclist told them and asked the two arrested passengers to sign. In defence of their fundamental human rights, the boys refused

to sign the spurious statements. This further aggravated the anger of the officers who then decided to punish them for their bravado. They continued beating them before eventually leaving them under the sun without food or water from noon till evening. Pleas by the two boys that they were innocent of the accusations fell on deaf ears. As nightfall approached, they were ordered to enter police cell and they demanded that they must explain to them why they were being locked up in the police custody.

"Infuriated, the police officers decided to tear-gas and beat them to submit to their whims. When

remains were later taken to an unknown place by the Police before proceeding to file a criminal charge against Alex Ejimofor still alive in a bid to cover up their tracks. According to the charge sheet OJ/33/2017, police claimed that Alex Ejimofor conspired with the deceased Albert Okechukwu, to steal Bajaj Motorcycle.

Brutal act against innocent citizens

"While, we are still at loss over what motivated the officers to perpetrate such brutal acts against innocent citizens, our investigation revealed that the Investigative Police Officer (IPO), Mr. Azeez and his team are used to such hatchet job and getting away with it. We, therefore, demand that those officers behind the killing of Albert Okechukwu and ongoing plot to convict Alex Ejimofor of crime he never committed, even without proper investigation, be quickly arrested, charged to court and brought to justice."

Meanwhile, Crime Alert learned that as soon as the case was blown open, family members of the