

How SARS killed, seized my brother's corpse, woman tells Abuja panel

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A lady, Mrs Doris Idedia, on Wednesday, narrated before the Independent Investigative Panel on allegations of human rights violations by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS, how her younger brother was extra-judicially killed in 2016 while he was in custody.

Testifying before the Justice Suleiman Galadima-led panel, Mrs Idedia, said her late brother, Festus Idehen, died on September 6, 2016, after he was severely beaten and denied food by a team of SARS operatives headed by an Inspector of Police officer she identified as Kingsley.

She told the panel that the deceased sustained various degrees of injuries as a result of a mob beating that SARS operatives gave him after he was arrested in Kaduna while on his way to pick their brother-in-law.

Narrating her story to the panel, Mrs Idedia stated that she was with her deceased brother on September 3, 2016, at their residence in Kaduna and she was cooking noodles for him when at about 5 pm he received a call from his wife's younger sister, one Onyekachi Sunday.

According to her, "As he went to the junction with his car to pick his brother-in-law because he relocated from where he was staying before, he saw a Golf car chasing him.

"He thought it was kidnappers so he accelerated and veered off to another route.

"Yet the occupants of the Golf car were still chasing him. At a stage, my brother came out of his car and started running to avoid being caught.

"Throughout that day, a Saturday, we did not see him again. My mother said we should wait till Sunday to make a report at the police station.

"The following day, my brother's wife received a call from an unknown number and I picked the call, only for the caller to inform me that my brother was in the hospital."

According to her, on getting to the hospital, they saw that the deceased was covered with a bandage.

"I then asked my brother what happened because I saw that he had injuries all over his body.

"My brother narrated what happened to him to us.

"My brother informed us that he was running when Inspector Kingsley started shouting thief, thief and mobilised people to catch and beat him to a pulp.

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“As of that time he was narrating this to us, Kingsley was not there.

“He said Kingsley accused him of stealing the car he (deceased) was using. My brother said he did not steal the car but bought it from Onyekachi, his in-law. Onyekachi also confirmed that he was the one who sold the vehicle to my brother.

“Kingsley was angry when he came and saw us and asked who told us that my brother was there.

“My mother told him that it was someone who called her and told her that they saw her son in the hospital.

“Kingsley then said they wanted to take my brother to Abuja for treatment. My mother and the doctor treating him protested that they could not take him in such bad condition he was in, but Kingsley insisted on taking my brother to Abuja.”

Mrs Idedia told the panel that the SARS operatives dumped her late brother in their vehicle facing up, while they conveyed her to Abuja.

She said it rained that very day with the deceased seriously drenched.

The Complainant alleged that on reaching Abuja, the SARS operatives did not take her brother to the hospital as Inspector Kingsley promised, but took him straight to their cell.

She said despite several calls her mother placed on the number Kingsley gave her, he refused to pick the calls, but only called on September 6, 2016, the day Festus died, asking them to come to Abuja.

“When I came to Abuja, he had already died by then. I didn’t see my brother. It was the nurse taking care of him at the cell who informed me that my brother really suffered a lot in the cell, that he didn’t eat anything and was not taken to any hospitals for treatment,” she added.

She said it was the nurse that pointed out the vehicle her brother was kept.

“When Kingsley saw me, he asked me to join the vehicle.

"Kingsley asked me to enter the vehicle, that my brother was being taken to the hospital. I called my brother by his name but he did not answer me.

"We took him to the police clinic but they refused to accept him, saying he was dead.

"But Kingsley insisted that he was alive and said we should go to Asokoro General Hospital.

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"When we got to Asokoro, they could not take my brother out of the vehicle. The doctor came to see him in the vehicle and said he was brought in dead.

"He pointed to the mortuary and said we should go and deposit the corpse there", the witness stated as she wept uncontrollably.

She told the panel that after her brother's death, the family asked Kingsley to release the corpse for burial but he refused.

"He refused to release the corpse to us and said that if he releases the corpse, we would go and make a case".

"My brother suffered a lot. From that Saturday to that day he died, he did not eat anything. He was supposed to be in Canada; he had proceeded his visa," she added.

She told the panel that several efforts her family made to get justice, including visiting the Inspector-General of Police as well as writing a petition to the Senate President, failed to yield any positive outcome.

Asked what she wanted, Mrs Dedia said the family was demanding for justice for the murder of her brother whom she said was the manager of IMAX Furniture in Kaduna.

She also requested for N200million compensation for her family.

Meanwhile, counsel to Police, Mr Godwin Ijioma, sought for time to enable him to get in touch with the said Inspector Kingsley whose surname was not disclosed, so as to find out what really happened.

The matter was subsequently adjourned to December 15.

Similarly, the panel adjourned to December 2, another complaint involving alleged denial of access to justice and confiscation of properties filed by Mr Gabriel Ofoma against one Inspector Iliya Dangseddi of CP monitoring unit.

It was adjourned for cross-examination of the complainant and for Police to produce two other policemen who were with Inspector Iliya Dangseddi the day they collected land title documents allegedly belonging to the complainant.

Another complaint of an alleged threat to life brought by one Abdulsalam Husseini was struck out by the panel after the complainant said he was no longer ready to continue with the matter.

The panel also struck out a petition on the alleged extrajudicial killing of one Uchenna Emmanuel Dike.

Counsel to Dike's family, Mr Maxwell Opara had before the petition was struck out, told the panel that Police forced his clients to pull out from the hearing.

Opara said: "Ordinarily I would have applied to withdraw based on the information given to me by my client.

"But I want it on record that this investigation has taken another dimension and the issue of witness protection should be considered.

"We have in the past 48 hours, seen cases of withdrawal of petitions by Complainants.

"At about 6 pm yesterday (Tuesday), my client that the corpse of his 17-year-old son was still in the mortuary, told me that police called and asked him not to come that they will buy him a car.

"I asked him to meet me yesterday evening. After a long discussion, after which I made him understand that this matter is not only about him, but that the death of his son led to the destruction of a customary court in Dutse .

"After our discussion, he agreed to be here today. But I was surprised this morning when he called and told me that his kinsmen said he should be careful of Nigerian Police and that he should withdraw and leave everything to God."

At this juncture, the panel chairman, Justice Galadima, told the lawyer that there was nothing left but to terminate hearing on the matter since the Complainant was

not willing to proceed again.

Responding, Opara said: "Having taken the hint of the panel, may I humbly apply to withdraw the petition in line with the complainant's instruction."

His application was not opposed by Police lawyer, Mr K. O. Egbuchua.

The petition was accordingly struck out.

The panel adjourned to December 16, another petition of the alleged extra-judicial killing of one Obinna Jonah by the defunct SARS in Abuja.