

(International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law, Onitsha Nigeria, 19th of March 2016)

Testimonial Accounts Of The Victims' Relatives:

- Sunday Nweke (31) is the younger brother to late Citizen Michael Nweke. He is a businessman based in Asaba, Delta State and hails from Aguekka Village in Ekka Community of Ezza North LGA of Ebonyi State. He disclosed as follows: “my late elder brother’s name is Michael Nweke, 37years of age (married). He was killed by soldiers at the Onitsha Head Bridge in the afternoon of 17th of December 2015. Before his death, my late elder brother was a private security guard working at a Catholic Revered Sisters’ Convent at Nkpor in Idemmili North LGA of Anambra State. He lived at Nnewi, but stayed temporarily at the Convent because of his job. My late elder brother was a peace loving man and our family’s breadwinner. He was an ardent member of IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) in Obosi Zone and supporter of Igbo rights agitation”.

“On 21st of December 2015, I was called by Mr. Solomon Igwe, my brother’s friend and his fellow IPOB member from Obosi Zone and he told me that my brother was nowhere to be found after he joined other IPOB members from Obosi Zone in the afternoon of 17th of December 2015 to jubilate from Nkpor to Onitsha Niger Bridgehead over the announcement of the Court same day, releasing Nnamdi Kanu. He said his IPOB members were gathering for their normal meeting when the news broke out and out of excitement those who had arrived for the meeting including my late elder brother; went into celebration and jubilantly marched from Nkpor to Onitsha-Enugu Expressway and headed toward the Niger Bridgehead where the soldiers at the Bridge on sighting them opened fire on them; killing many and taking some of those killed away. He said since then, he had tried my brother’s line but to no avail and that he suspected he might have been shot and taken away by soldiers. He said he went late for the meeting and discovered that other IPOB members including my late elder brother had left to celebrate the court ruling. He said by the time he went to join them at the Bridgehead, soldiers had already opened fire and shot many of them; but he could not find my late elder brother among those lying dead and critically injured on the spot”.

“On account of this, thorough searches were organized by IPOB members, me, my extended family members and members of our community resident in Onitsha. We went to several places including River Niger where we hired divers to see if my late brother was killed and thrown inside the River. We also went to hospital mortuaries known to us in Onitsha and Awka and reached out to soldiers and police personnel known to us, all to no avail. The searches continued until 15th of February 2016 when Arinze; another IPOB member called me and asked me to come immediately to the Onitsha General Hospital with my late brother’s live picture. I hurriedly got there and behold, I saw and identified my late brother’s corpse in between two others. We were told by a mortuary attendant, who pleaded anonymity that some soldiers of the Onitsha Army Barracks, accompanied by some police personnel from the Onitsha CPS brought and deposited them on 21st of December 2015 and warned them not to disclose or release them to anybody”.

“We pleaded with them to release my late elder brother’s corpse to us to be taken home for burial. They vehemently refused, but later agreed after much persuasion. We took and buried him in the evening of 11th of March 2016. My late brother’s killing was heartless and his death is irreparable. His killers must not go unpunished”.

- Frank Chijioke Nwankwo (29) is the elder brother to late Citizen Peter Chukwuma Nwankwo (26). Mr. Frank Chijioke Nwankwo is married and hails from Amaokpo in Nssakra Omege Community of Ezza South LGA of Ebonyi State. He is an Onitsha based businessman. Mr. Frank Nwankwo disclosed as follows: “my late younger brother’s name is Mr. Peter Chukwuma Nwankwo. He is my only brother and was killed at age of 26. Before his killing by soldiers, he lived at Ezenwankwo Street in Ugwuagba Layout, Obosi while I reside at Awada Layout. My late younger brother before his death was a businessman and a member of IPOB in Obosi Zone. On 19th of December 2015, Mr. Moses Michael (my brother’s friend) came to my shop and told me that he had not seen my brother since two days (17th of December 2015) after some soldiers stationed at the Onitsha Niger Bridgehead shot and killed some IPOB members jubilating over the Court order releasing Nnamdi Kanu from detention and I told him that I have been looking for him since two days too and that his phone line rang severally but stopped ringing. We reported to IPOB members known to us and they also confirmed searching for him and others.”

“We also joined in search of him, which took us to several places including River Niger and even native doctors. The search continued until 8th of February 2016 when one Arinze, an IPOB member called me and asked if Peter Nwankwo was my brother and I said yes. He asked me to see him. Out of fear, I did not go to see him; until he traced and came to my house on 12th of February 2016 around 9.30pm. He later asked me to come with him to meet other IPOB members; that they got information that corpses of their members killed and taken away by soldiers in Onitsha on 17th of December 2015 were later brought and dumped at the Onitsha General Hospital. Our attempts to get the mortuary section of the Onitsha General Hospital to allow us come for identification were abortive until 9th of March 2016, when I went in company of my uncle, Mr. Sunday Njoku and some IPOB members to the Hospital with my late younger brother’s live picture and his corpse was identified. Arrangements were made and we were able to persuade the mortuary attendants for my late younger brother’s corpse to be released for burial. On 11th of March 2016, we took him and buried him in our community. The death of Peter Chukwuma Nwankwo is tragic and will disturb me forever. Apart from being my only brother and sibling, our parents are both dead”.

- Grace Onyinyechi Kanu (28) is elder sister to late Citizen Mathew Ndukwe Kanu. She is a civil servant and a resident of Obosi. She hails from Ndiodo Community in Akanu-Ohafia LGA of Abia State. She disclosed as follows: “my late younger brother’s name is Mathew Ndukwe Kanu (25yrs). He lived in the next street close to mine in Obosi and was into artisan business. He was also an IPOB member in Obosi Zone and one of their coordinators”.

“In the night of 17th of December 2015, one Uche; an IPOB member from Obosi Zone called my step-brother, Ikechukwu Ibe Kanu and told him about the killing by soldiers later in the same day of some IPOB members jubilating at the Niger Bridgehead over the Court order, releasing Nnamdi Kanu and that his younger (step) brother, Mathew Ndukwe Kanu participated in the jubilation match being one of the coordinators. When I returned later that night, my step-brother told me everything. We were advised to go to the Multicare Hospital in Omagba Phase 11, Onitsha to check if he was among those rescued by sympathizers and taken to the Hospital for emergency attention”.

“We went to the Multicare Hospital on 18th of December 2015 as directed and advised but we could not identify him among the critically injured. Later we were told to check his name and corpse among four other IPOB members killed by soldiers same day whose corpses were recovered from the scene; yet he was not among them. We organized several searches including sending two of my late younger brother’s friends to River Niger to see if he was killed and dumped inside the River; all to no avail. The searches continued until 11th of February 2016 when we got a call from an IPOB member requesting for our urgent presence at the Onitsha General Hospital with a live picture of my late younger brother. We got to the hospital where we identified his corpse lying in its mortuary section”.

“The mortuary people (attendants) informed us that he was among the three murdered IPOB members brought and deposited on 21st of December 2015 (four days after the killing) by some soldiers of the Onitsha Military Barracks, accompanied by some policemen from the Onitsha Central Police Station (CPS). Further efforts to take his corpse for burial after the identification were abortive. We begged and persuaded the mortuary attendants for weeks until on 12th of March 2016 when we made arrangements and succeeded in taking his remains home for burial and he was buried in the evening of same day. My late younger brother, Mathew Ndukwe Kanu was the only male child out of six of us and my widow-mother, before Mathew’s killing, sees him as reincarnation of her late husband. His killing and death will never get off our memories and will remain a recurring sadness.”