

Death Of Maiduguri Resident Sparks Row Between Army, Family



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The Nigerian Army under the Theatre Command of Operation HADIN KAI and family members of a Maiduguri resident, late Abdulrahman Mustapha, have disagreed over alleged extrajudicial killing of the deceased.

While the Nigerian Army said preliminary operational indicators suggest that the incident could have underlying security implications, the family said the attempt to suggest speculative security

implications raises serious concerns and risks influencing the investigation's outcome.

Daily Trust reports that posts circulating on social media alleged that the deceased, Mustapha, popularly known as Abchin was shot and killed by suspected military personnel on March 22, at the Polo Axis near the Federal High Court, Maiduguri.

According to the posts, Abchin, who was reportedly unarmed, was returning from Sallah visit, when he was apprehended and fatally shot by the military personnel, describing the incident as an extrajudicial killing.

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The said post alleged violations of constitutional rights, lack of transparency, and improper handling of the deceased, calling for an independent investigation, accountability, and compensation.

But the Media Information Officer, Joint Task Force (North East) Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), Lt. Col. Sani Uba, said the Theatre Command regards the allegations as very serious and has accordingly initiated appropriate processes to establish the facts.

He, however, added that preliminary operational indicators suggest that the incident, which reportedly occurred at about 11:40 pm, may not be straightforward and could have underlying security implications.

According to him, a comprehensive and impartial investigation is currently ongoing to determine the full circumstances surrounding the incident, including compliance with the applicable Rules of Engagement and operational procedures.

Lt. Col. Uba added that initial findings indicate the possibility that troops may have encountered individuals consistent with a Boko Haram/ISWAP reconnaissance element or a sleeper cell operating within the area.

“This assessment is based on several factors, including reports that the individual in question allegedly attempted to snatch a soldier’s rifle, an action indicative of hostile intent and a direct threat to troops’ safety.

“Additionally, the individual was reportedly found in possession of multiple identification cards bearing different names from that cited in the petition, including a foreign identification card from the Niger Republic, which may suggest cross-border movement, possible infiltration, or the use of a decoy identity,” he said.

Uba further stated that the preliminary details remain subject to verification and should not be construed as definitive conclusions.

“The ongoing investigation will seek to clarify all aspects of the incident, including the sequence of events, the actions of all parties involved, and any relevant operational context,” he explained.

However, in a swift reaction, the family of the deceased expressed grave concern over the tone and content of the said preliminary narrative presented.

In a statement issued to newsmen by its counsel, Barrister Hamza N. Dantani, the family lamented that the attempt to suggest speculative security implications without conclusive findings raises serious concerns and risks influencing the investigation’s outcome.

“There is credible and verifiable evidence indicating that the deceased was apprehended alive, restrained with a military belt, subjected to severe torture, and subsequently shot, leading to his death.

“This sequence of events, if established, clearly points to an extrajudicial killing, for which no atom of excuse can justify or shield those responsible,” Barr Dantani said

He added that it was alarming that the alleged perpetrators reportedly took photographs of the victim themselves and shared them with certain contacts.

“There is also available photographic evidence showing the victim tied with an Army belt, visibly subjected to severe torture, before the same individuals took his pictures and ultimately

killed him,” part of the statement read.

The lawyer alleged that the “troubling development” raises strong suspicion of a premeditated act and suggests the possibility of a planned and sponsored plot to injure or eliminate the victim unlawfully.

According to him, late Abdulrahman Mustapha was a well-known, reputable individual with no criminal record.

“He was a breadwinner and a pillar of support to his family and community. His untimely death has not only devastated his family but has also shaken public confidence in the institutions charged with the protection of lives and property.”

He, therefore, said the family of the deceased are calling on the Nigerian Army, as a matter of responsibility and humanity, to visit the family of the deceased to condole with them formally.

“The soldiers involved in this incident should be immediately identified, invited, and subjected to due legal process in accordance with the law.

“The ongoing investigation must be transparent, impartial, and credible, with its findings made public. Any individual found culpable must be held accountable, regardless of rank or position,” he stated.