

'How Stray Bullet Killed My 14-Year-Old Niece'



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Muhammad Khalil, uncle to deceased Fatima Jibril Khalil whose life was abruptly cut short recently in Maiduguri when she was hit by a stray bullet while in her compound, gave an account of how his 14-year-old niece, was killed while inside her family home at the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH) quarters.

The incident occurred on Saturday, April 4, when the SS1 secondary school student of Zenith Academy, Maiduguri, was reportedly struck by a bullet fired by a suspected personnel of the

Civilian Joint Task Force, engaging in celebratory gunfire at a nearby wedding ceremony.

Khalil said, “She lived in the UMTH quarters with her family and was inside her home when the tragedy occurred. On that fateful day, they were to attend a wedding ceremony with her mother. So, in the morning she applied henna for her mother, elder sister and herself, joyfully preparing for a family wedding ceremony scheduled for the same day.

“She was later instructed by the mother to wash the plates they used for breakfast and get ready for the wedding. As she was washing the plates around 11:30am, she suddenly collapsed.

“When her mother rushed to pick her up, she noticed blood from her head, they thought she slipped and fell on something, and took her to hospital for examination. They told doctors that they suspected that she slipped. After an X-ray was conducted, a bullet was discovered in her head. It was then it was realised that it was a stray bullet that killed her,” he said.

Khalil described late Fatima as a very brilliant and jovial girl.

“She made the house lively whenever she was around. She was close to her parents and loved being nice to people around her. She was very creative and learnt the traditional henna art out of passion, which she applies on the feet and hands of her mother and siblings, especially during festivities.

He added that young Fatima had a dream of following the footsteps of her father, Dr Jibril Khalil, a Consultant Cardiologist at UMTH, by becoming a medical doctor. The 14-year-old was the third daughter of the Khalil's. She had an elder sister and brother, as well as two younger siblings.

Her mother has been inconsolable and hasn't stopped crying since the incident. When Weekend Trust visited, it was obvious she was still in shock and hardly spoke.

“She will be missed for the way she took care of the house and her siblings. She swept the house every morning, recited the Holy Qur'an and did other house chores before she left for school.

“Although, I don’t live in Maiduguri, whenever she got the opportunity, she called me on the phone to greet me. Our last conversation was when she called me and asked when I was coming,” Khalil recalled.

According to him, Fatima’s father, Dr Jibril Khalil’s last conversation with his daughter, was when she told him in the morning that they would be going for the wedding ceremony, and he told her to get ready as he would first report to office, and later return to take them to the wedding ceremony.

He said the family is asking the appropriate authorities to ensure justice is done and compensation is paid to the family.

He added that Governor Babagana Zulum had visited and condoled the family, and assured them that justice would be served.

“And we are optimistic because already about five people have been arrested in connection with the incident.

“But the government should also regulate the indiscriminate use of firearms, to avoid the recurrence of such ugly incidents in the future. The civilian JTF personnel should be well trained on the handling of firearms,” Khalil added.

Our correspondent reports that late Fatima was buried last Sunday, while the grieving family members and friends continue to demand accountability for what they described as a preventable loss.

Meanwhile, the Theatre Command of the Joint Task Force (North East), Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), has arrested five suspects over the unlawful use of firearms during a social event, which led to the death of 14-year-old Fatima

In a statement issued by the Media Information Officer of OPHK, Lt. Col. Sani Uba, said the troops of Operation HADIN KAI, in conjunction with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), arrested the five suspects at Ngomari general area.

“The incident occurred when vigilantes, later identified as members of an escorts team attached to the Chairman of a Local Government Area engaged in sporadic firing in the air during a wedding celebration at Umaru Musa Yar’Adua Teachers Staff Quarters.

“The reckless act led to the death of a young girl. The troops acted swiftly, traced and apprehended five suspects identified as Muhammad Hussaini (28), Abba Jiddu (25), Abba Kolo Mohammed (20), Ali Adam (20), and Nura Mohammed (18).”

Lt. Col. Uba added that the suspects were currently in custody and would be handed over to the appropriate authorities for further investigation and prosecution in accordance with extant laws.