

Gunmen burnt my nephew after forcing passengers to identify themselves — Uncle

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Yusuf Falke. Photo: Ayoola Olasupo.

| By Ayoola Olasupo

Yusuf Falke, the uncle of 26-year-old Uwaisu Sunusi, tells AYOOLA OLASUPO about the killing of his nephew while he was travelling to a market, the painful search for his body, and the family's call for justice

What is your relationship with the late Uwaisu Sunusi?

I'm an uncle to Uwaisu Sunusi, the person who was attacked on Monday, February 23, 2026, along the Bariki Ladi bypass. They were four in number who were killed that day.

Where was Uwaisu headed the day he was killed?

They were four in number, and almost every Monday, they used to go to Panshin Market for their legitimate business. They would go there to sell spaghetti and salt, and others would also go there to sell shoes every Monday.

Along the road, there was an incident that happened at Dorowa Babuji, a district in Bariki Ladi. The road was blocked, and then their driver decided to follow the bypass. On that road, they were seeing people carrying guns, and Uwaisu was among the people who brought out their phones.

At that time, he was online on *Facebook*, posting that road users should be careful and that Bariki Ladi road was not safe. He was even making a video to show what was happening. As they were going, there were two vehicles in front of them.

So, they saw some men carrying guns. They got to a place that looked like a checkpoint where people were being stopped. They would just wind down and ask who the drivers and the other passengers in the vehicle were. So, Uwaisu and the other people in the vehicle saw that the first vehicle was allowed to go, even when they didn't know the people inside that vehicle.

When it got to their turn, the armed men asked them who they were. The driver, named Nicholas, who was a Berom person, spoke with them and said, 'We are together.' Then, they asked him to wind down the glass of the back door. When they did, the armed men asked them who they were, and one of them said, 'We are Hausa.'

What happened next?

All of them were still holding their phones, and as I said earlier, Uwaisu was online. So, they collected their phones and shot Uwaisu. He was the first person to be shot. He was shot in the stomach, while they immediately dragged the others out of the car.

Before the ones in front turned to see what was happening, they heard gunshots. They had shot those ones, too. There was a boy, Abdulhallim, sitting in the front seat beside the driver. He was the one who shouted at the driver, 'Let's go, let's go.' That was how the two of them were able to escape with the driver, making three.

What kind of vehicle was it?

It was an army-coloured Detra; they escaped from there; I was the first person Abdulhalim called, and he told me what happened. He said they had shot Uwaisu down. Immediately, I called Uwaisu.

One of the gunmen picked up the call and said, 'This one has gone. We are finished with this one. We have already killed him.' After that, I asked him for the corpse, and then he told me that they had also prayed for him.

Did they bury him?

When they called me, we tried to go and look for the corpse. We went to Sector 2, STF, and they guided us to Bariki Ladi, Sector 4, to look for someone who would guide us in looking for the corpse.

With the help of the Commissioner of Water Resources in Plateau State, the chairman of the local government, the vice chairman, and some of our parents, who mounted pressure on the commander of Sector 4, Bariki Ladi, they made a very good effort, giving us the courage to go to the place where the incident happened.

When we got to the spot of the incident, we did not find any corpse there, but we saw the blood on the road and how it traced into a bush, where we trekked for more than three hours looking for the corpses. We had intended to even come back because we had wasted a lot of time searching for the corpse.

Along the line, we found the corpse in a very distant place inside a ditch. We found out that the corpses of our brothers had been burnt, and we also found gunshot holes on their bodies. They burnt them to ashes. Since we had no option, the soldiers and I packed the remains and took them back to the community to see what to do about it.

We called on the chairmen of the Jol and Bariki Ladi Local Government Areas, the Commissioner of Water Resources, and others, including our father, Alhaji Danjuma Falke, who made a serious effort to calm the situation. So, we carried the corpses to the central mosque of Bariki Ladi because at that time there was a crowd, and people had started calling for retaliation and reprisal.

That was when the commissioner and other people there decided that the crowd was too much and that it might lead to another thing. So, we ran to a cemetery, where we prayed for them and buried them.

The situation was the same when we got back to Jos because bringing the corpses to Jos would be a very big and serious issue, so we got back to Jos to calm the situation, telling our brothers and other people that everything was settled. We forgive, and there is no problem. We told them to calm down.

How did you identify Uwaisu's body inside the ditch since it had been burnt?

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He was my nephew. I raised him when he was young, and there is no way he can hide from me. Their heads were not scattered and burnt like that. One could detect the faces of almost two of them. There was one whose head was not even burnt, and then Uwaisu's head was not burnt either. We could identify him, and part of the shirt he wore was there too.

If anyone who knew him stayed with the remains, he or she would know that it was Uwaisu's body. I thought I needed to have a snap of the face and do a video call when prayers were being done for him, for his parents to see.

That was the only wish they had from me—to see the face of their son—so I had to do the video. I did not even believe that he had died until I carried the corpse in my hands. I could not believe it when they called to inform me about it.

How old was he?

He was 26 years old. Although he had yet to be married, all his other four siblings are married.

You mentioned that Uwaisu was on **Facebook** when they were attacked. Was he doing a live stream of the incident?

No, he was not on a live stream. There was a place they first passed through to relieve themselves where the road was blocked. He posted a video right there. He posted again that, 'This is what is happening. Bariki Ladi people should not take the law into their hands. They should be patient.'

After that, when they followed the other road, he made another post that Bariki Ladi people should not take the law into their hands. Inside their vehicle, he was telling Abdulhalim to look at the people moving about with guns, but Abdulhalim said, '*You too dey fear. What is happening that you're scared?*'

That was when he told him to do a video of the scene and asked him not to post it at that moment, but it was already online. After Abdulhalim called to inform me about what was happening to them, I called Uwaisu's number, and one of the gunmen who answered it said they had killed him already.

After we went to Bariki Ladi, I logged into Uwaisu's *Facebook*, and I saw a post on his account saying that Fulani had attacked Bariki Ladi and that users of the road should be careful. We found out that it was one of the people who killed him who made that post.

We suspected that it wasn't Uwaisu who posted that particular one. The reason why I am very sure of saying this is that I was the first person he called, and I spoke with him times without number. I also logged into my *Facebook*, where he got me to make that post, and I only made two posts.

Did you think the gunmen killed them because they were making a video of them, or because they declared themselves as Hausa?

What happened was that there was tension in Bariki Ladi along that road, in which there was a conflict between the Fulani and the people of Bariki Ladi. So, we actually know that this was a reprisal. Two Fulani people were killed, and on the following day, the Berom people were also killed.

However, our people were just passing by before they attacked and killed them. We believe the people who killed Uwaisu and the others were Berom. If Uwaisu and the other persons had said that they were Berom, they would have allowed them to pass because they allowed the first and second cars to pass without knowing the people inside. They didn't do anything to Uwaisu's driver because he was a Berom.

How are Uwaisu's parents currently coping with the loss now?

This loss is a very terrible thing to us. Since the day the incident happened, I've not been able to go to my workplace because I've been staying with his mother, consoling her. Whenever she remembers how

useful Uwaisu was to her, she would just start crying, but we are always telling her they had been destined to die that day.

It is not something we can forget immediately. But sincerely, it's not an easy thing for the entire family. Uwaisu had been the one taking care of the grandmother. He was the one feeding both the grandmother and his mother.

What position was Uwaisu among his siblings?

All of them are young. His siblings are ladies; he was the only son and the eldest child among them.

Do you think enough is being done to address insecurity in that particular area?

We are very glad, most especially, that the governor of the state made a very good speech that made us calm. We appreciate what he did. It was from his speech that we understood that the governor is for all and not for one party. We now understand that if things like this happen again, everyone will be concerned.

What would justice mean to you and your family in this situation?

The real justice we need is that the killers should be arrested and brought to book. We don't want a reprisal to happen. God, who created us all, values humans more than anything else in this world.

The truth is that we are Muslims, and we believe that God is the only Alpha and Omega. He gives life when He wants and takes it whenever He wishes. So, we don't expect any revenge from anybody.

| Ayoola Olasupo