

Gutter corpse: Parents of 17-year-old suspect foul play

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FIVE days after it was pulled from a gutter in Kano, the report of the autopsy on the body of the 17-year-old boy is stool being awaited.

No one appears to know how the corpse got there, or whether the boy was alive when he fell in, but the police, who were called to the scene, retrieved and took it to the hospital for medical examination to establish the probable cause of death, before handing the remains over to the parents to perform the last rites.

Despite the delay in release of the medical report, residents of Gandun Albasa community in the city of Kano are yet to recover from the shock of the incident.

The 17-year-old Ashiru had disappeared two days before his body was found lying in the gutter. He was said to have left home in the afternoon of Saturday, 17th July, 2010 when his mother sent him to buy okra with which she would use to cook soup; he never returned from the errand. Tellingly, however is the information that neighbours provided that Ashiru suffered from epilepsy, and had occasional seizures.

The deceased's mother, Halima Baita with tears flowing freely, told Weekly Trust that she was not really keen on any medical report on late son's probable cause of death. "I am praying hard for the soul of my son to rest in peace", she said. She said she never had peace of mind since the Saturday Ashiru didn't return home. "I was heartbroken, members of the family and even neighbours when Alhaji didn't return to bring home the okra I sent him to buy. Everyone was really disturbed and went out in search of him thinking that he might have been attacked by his ailment, epilepsy, but all in vain, his father then reported to the police", she said.

She said they had to restrict his movement in order to watch him closely because of his condition. "His movement was restricted so that we could monitor his health condition; in fact, that was the reason his father opened a kiosk for him in front of the house and that was where he spent most of his time", she narrated.

But she hinted at a possible cause of death other than a fatal seizure. She described the injuries noticed on the corpse when it was brought home for the final rites to be performed before it was conveyed to the grave yard as horrifying. "We noticed

that he had a cut on his head as well as a broken arm and leg. He also bled through his mouth and we are suspecting that his tongue must have been plucked out. The corpse was looking really terrible; it was swollen; his clothes were torn out, as if with a blade. My only concern is that Allah grants him Jannatul-fid'daus", she wailed.

His father, Alhaji Baita Jiddah Kura, said he was convinced that his son was murdered by "wicked persons" but added that he had left everything in the hands of the Almighty. "I know he suffered epilepsy for long but I am sure it was not the cause of his death. He never had any attack recently. I am certain that if it were the sickness that struck him, he would have been brought home because he is very popular in this area and anytime he had the attack, he was rushed home.

"It is obvious, at least to me, that it



LATE Ashiru

was not his illness that brought him to this gutter because the greengrocer's from where he was supposed to buy the okra is not far from the house. He just finished washing his clothes when his mother sent him and he disappeared. This is heartless, my dear boy was killed; I know he was killed by some wicked persons".

He, however, said he had submitted everything to God and prayed that the soul of his son rest in peace. "I am accepting the tragedy as God's will and therefore submit everything to Him. My prayer is for his gentle soul to rest in peace and may the Almighty take vengeance on those behind this heartless act", he said.

Late Ashiru was described as very friendly and generous to anyone

he met. This a family friend, Mohammed, confirmed. "Alhaji was a very friendly boy to everyone and he was very popular because of his skin colour which happened to be very fair since he was albino. He interacted very well with everyone and even spent lots of time with elders. We all knew about his illness and therefore rushed him home anytime he got an attack. It's really unfortunate he died a mysterious death but Allah will surely not spare the people behind his death", he said.

Tsidi, an aunt to late Ashiru, also spoke on his relationship with family members. She said she was traumatized when she heard that he was missing. "Alhaji Fari was a unique child, disciplined and upright. He was ahead of his peers and related very well with all his relatives. When I heard that he was missing, I was traumatized. I,

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then, rushed from Kura where I stay to the house a day after he disappeared but he was still not found only to hear that some boys passing by discovered his corpse in a gutter, killed by some undesirable elements", she said.

Even the elderly are not left out as they described the death as unfortunate and a loss to the community. The 80-year-old Ward Head of Gandun Albasa, Alhaji Abdu Maiunguwa who is also a friend to Ashiru's grandfather, spoke to Weekly Trust on the issue saying, "this is the first time such a mysterious dead occurred in this area during the 60 years I have been ward head".

"We have over the years had countless cases of deaths, but certainly not this way, some youths have in the past lost their lives to clashes among themselves. It is really touching and pitiful that we experienced such this time around. The young man was really everywhere, he was very jovial and obedient to elders" said Maiunguwa.

Men of the Kano Fire Service rescued the corpse from the gutter. Kassim Musa, commander of the service, told Weekly Trust that there was a cut on the boy's neck and suggested it indicated that he was struck with a sharp object on the neck. He also said the cause of the death can only be ascertained based on the awaited medical report.

However, what remains uncertain, days after the incidence is the delay in issuing the medical report which was supposedly going to give a clue on what had probably been the cause of Alhaji Fari's death. Five days after the incidence, the Kano State Police Public Relations Officer, SP Baba Mohammed Azare who also confirmed the incident said investigations were ongoing as the police awaited medical report from the doctor that examined the corpse.



ASHIRU'S body lying in the gutter before arrival of the men of the fire service