

Ten-yr-old brutally murdered after attending Tarawih prayers

Just when many people in Maiduguri were having respite from the grotesque stories of ritual murders that have become so common in the recent months, an even pitiful and more grotesque murder of a ten-year old boy in the city last Sunday has rudely rekindled the bad memories again.

Dahiru Hassan, a ten-year old Fulani boy, did not have any premonition of disaster when he insisted on going to attend Tarawih (Ramadan supererogatory) prayers last Saturday evening. His mother, Hajara, told Kanem Trust in an interview yesterday, that Dahiru would always want to follow his two elder brothers to the nearby Deribe Mosque in old Maiduguri.

On that fateful Saturday, the grieving mother added, Dahiru left home around 7.00pm after the breaking of fast. His brothers had earlier left to join prayers in the mosque. When they returned, Hajara asked after their brother but their reply was that they did not see him in the mosque.

Initially, Dahiru's mother and his brothers never thought there was a problem. He was not in the mosque alright, but they expected he would return home. Hours, however, continued to roll by without Dahiru returning. Deep into the night, his absence became a source of concern for the family.

By early morning on Sunday, Hajara, whose husband has traveled on a business trip to Lagos, asked Dahiru's brothers to go look for him. She was also on her feet, checking around their Fulatari neighbourhood near the Deribe mosque area for any information about her missing child.

By afternoon, Hajara was back at home tired and worried. There was still no information about Dahiru.

Not long after her return home, however, one of Dahiru's brothers came to tell her that an Okada man who saw him had told him that there is a body of a murdered boy lying at the neighbouring State Low Cost area that looks very much like him.

From Abdullahi Bego, Maiduguri

The family therefore went to the area. By that time, the discovery of the corpse around the Low Cost area was already reported to the police, who had gone to take the body to the State Specialist Hospital.

In a chat with Kanem Trust, Bulama Yakubu, the Jabbamari Low Cost Estate ward head said he was sitting in his house around 9.45am on Sunday when people came to report to him that a corpse was lying at an uncompleted building nearby.

Without wasting time, the ward head moved to the area, only to find scores of people gathered around the corpse. "I immediately proceeded to the Lamisula Police Station and reported. The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) asked two policemen to follow me to the scene. When we arrived, we asked a good Samaritan to help convey the corpse to the hospital", he said.

Bulama Yakubu added that he was revolted by the sight of the murdered boy, whose organs were



Dahiru's corpse dumped at State Low Cost area, Maiduguri

removed his entire private part including the groin area; they also removed his lips and some parts of his esophagus", he said.

Kanem Trust check at the Borno Police Command shows that the police have already opened investigations. The police spokesman, ASP Bashir Mohammed said preliminary findings showed that the boy could have been murdered at a location other than where his body was dumped because there was no trace of blood at the State Low Cost area location where the corpse was found. "It is very likely that the boy was killed elsewhere. Then those who did it took the body and dumped it at the place it was found", Bashir Mohammed said.

This seemed to tally with the fears that Hajara, Dahiru's mother expressed. In her chat with our correspondent, the deceased boy's mother had said that the boy does not usually walk around aimlessly. He was the type that always re-

mained around home. "I believe those who did this grievous thing did it as the boy was going to the mosque on Saturday night...because he went out of the house to the mosque", she said in grief.

Kanem Trust learnt that Dahiru's body was claimed by his family and buried according to Islamic rites.

As the family grieves over this unfortunate loss, so are residents of Maiduguri. The pattern of Dahiru's murder is like that of past victims of ritual murders in Maiduguri. In almost all the cases, the victims' throat and private parts were removed and taken away, in what many Maiduguri residents believed were for ritual purposes.

In the recent past, a boy called Mustapha, also ten-years old was killed and his throat removed. Before him, a 22-years old female student of the Ramat Polytechnic in Maiduguri was killed in a similar

way; her throat was removed and so was her breast.

At their height in the recent past, ritual murders in Maiduguri have become so common and worrisome that people took to the mosques and churches to pray for divine intervention.

In what appeared to be a practical answer to those prayers, the police five months ago napped a crippled who tried to snatch a 20-year old female secondary student called Jummai.

According to the police, the suspect, who was since charged to court along with several others he had implicated, confessed to being at the heart of a 'ritual ring' around the Borno State capital.

He reportedly told the police that he had supplied six persons to his sponsors but could not tell what they were doing with the victims 'supplied'.

His story shed more light on how the alleged ritualists operate. He even reportedly said that when the police saw expensive cars driving at high speed in the night, they should stop and search them at all costs because something might be amiss. It is not clear whether or not the police have taken any cues from the alleged confessions of the suspects.

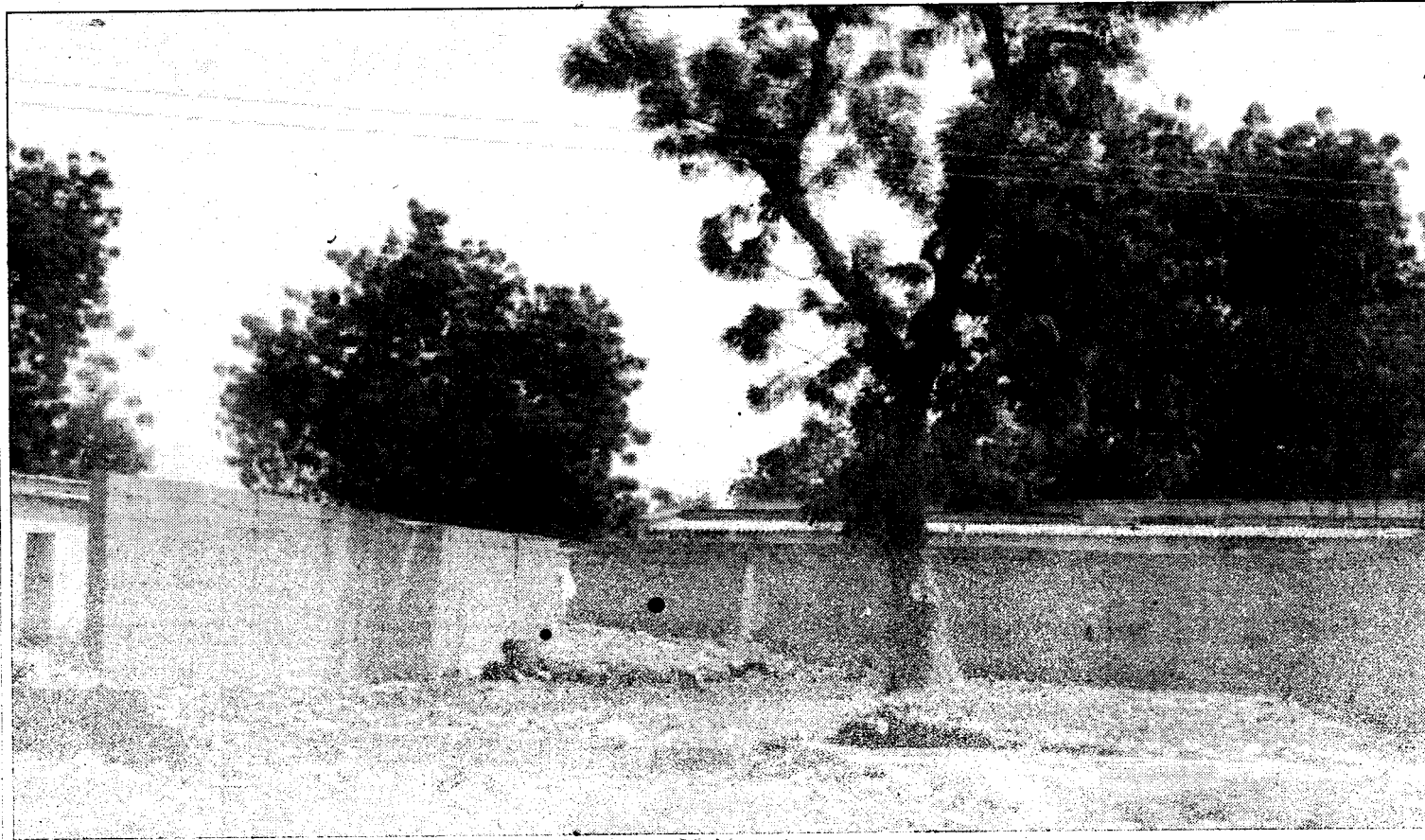
Not long after his arrest, however, students of Government College Maiduguri reported seeing people come to the school premises with expensive cars late into the night. On one occasion, a JSSI student called Samaila Umaru sleeping on his bed in the night was nearly snatched by those men. But he was lucky he woke up from his sleep and cried loudly when he saw unknown men carrying him. The people dropped him, went into their car and sped away.

Are the dark days of ritual nightmares coming back to Maiduguri again? This is a question that many Maiduguri residents would hope answered in the negative. Their hope, as Kanem Trust checks show, however, is that the security agencies would do whatever is necessary to hit back at those making life scary by their grotesque ritual attacks and killings.



Bulama Yakubu, Ward Head.

removed by those who killed him. "However, hard-hearted one could be, one would not help crying over the inhuman treatment meted to the boy. They killed him, and then



Location where Dahiru's body was found at State Low Estate area, Maiduguri