

SOLDIERS KILL SHIITE MEMBER AT SULEJA



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Musa Abubakar, 28, had no premonition that last Sunday will be his last day on earth. He started the day normally like previous ones, but decided to participate in a procession that was organized by a **Shiite group (Islamic sect)**, in which he was a member at **Suleja town of Niger State**.

The procession called 'Muzzahara' by the sect members is an annual event of which Abubakar has taken part before in.

Weekly Trust gathered that at about 9 am of that day, the procession began with hundreds of sect members, including women and children walking on the old UBA road. The road is a major one and its temporal blockade by the procession caused traffic gridlock, which forced some motorists to disembark, while others parked by the side to wait patiently for the procession to pass.

A military van carrying armed soldiers was also stuck in the traffic jam and their driver tried to forcefully pass the road, but was resisted by the Shiite members. A mild misunderstanding reportedly ensued later between the soldiers and group members that led to Abubakar being shot on the chest.

The victim, who did not die immediately, bled profusely and was rushed to the General Hospital Suleja, where he died the following day.

Wife of the deceased, 22-year-old Adama Musa said since her husband is a member of the sect; she is also an automatic member. According to her, she took part in the procession and overheard some women saying that one Musa was shot and it did not occur to her that the person was her husband.

Adama said she overheard another woman from within the possession telling someone that it was Musa Abubakar, who was shot by soldier.

"It was at that point that it occurred to me that the person that was shot was my husband and before I could reach the scene where the shooting took place, my husband had been rushed to the hospital," she said.

According to her, at the hospital, she was told that her husband was operated upon and the bullet removed successfully.

"I was shocked the following morning when they told me he died following some complication resulting from the bullet wound that he sustained," she added.

She said there was presently no cause for alarm as her husband died as a martyr and she is grateful to God for the life she spent with him, which was well spent.

The woman said whenever a member of the sect dies; the group takes over automatically the responsibilities of their off-spring left behind. She said they will take care of his two-year-old daughter left behind.

She told Weekly Trust that she cannot say whether they will go to court as a family to seek redress or not, adding that such decision largely lies in the hands of their leader, as whatever what he decides stands.

The father of the deceased, Malam Abubakar Sadiq in Toto town of Nasarawa State, said at around 7 pm of that fateful Sunday, he received a phone call from his son's wife and was told that soldiers shot his son.

"The following morning, even before I could call to confirm how my son was fairing, I received a call and was told that my son had given up the ghost," the father said.

He said late Abubakar lived the better part of his life at Suleja under the care of his uncle and worked as a mason since he could not complete his senior secondary school.

"He could not continue with his education and opted to become a mason, which was his job till his death occurred.

Reacting to the killing, the sect's leader at Suleja, Hassan Adamu, said on phone that one of the soldiers from the patrol vehicle shot at their members, which led to a member's death after spending a night in Suleja General Hospital.

He said the incident happened on Sunday when an Army patrol van ran into the procession and challenged the sect members for unlawfully occupying the road. He said the soldiers shouted at his members to clear off the

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road.

"The group sought and obtained police permit to embark on the peaceful rally. The group has been on this annual peaceful procession for the past 15 years," he said.

According to him, their member was killed while they were on peaceful procession around IBB market of the town, adding that such possession are conducted annually..

He said after the shooting, the soldiers jumped into their van and quickly drove away.

The Deputy Police Public Relations Officer (DPPRO), Assistant Superintendent Richard Oguche, confirmed the incident, but said he is yet to have details of the shooting incident as investigation was ongoing.

Reacting also, Deputy Director, Public Relations of Nigeria Army Headquarters, Abuja Garrison Command, Lt Col. Omale Ochaguda, said the sect did not obtain permit from the police. He said if such permit was obtained, the police could have communicated to all sister security outfits in the area about the procession as it is the tradition.

He said contrary to some reports, the soldiers did not attack the sect members but instead it was the sect members who engaged one of the soldiers in a scuffle and in the process, a gun went off and a bullet hit one of the sect members, leading to his death.

The spokesman said the soldier in the process sustained an injury on his mouth and head, thought he was treated and discharged from the Suleja General Hospital.

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