

Abducted boy, 7, found dead after N1m ransom failure

From Misbahu Bashir, Kaduna

A seven-year-old boy, Amar Baba Ali, who was abducted from his house in Rafin Guza, Kaduna by his cousin has been found dead and buried in a heap of sand near the River Kaduna because his father could not pay the N1 million ransom demanded by the kidnappers.

The decomposing body of the boy who was kidnapped on November 2 was exhumed yesterday by police detectives while three of the kidnappers including the boy's cousin, 20-year old Musa Aliyu, were arrested. When Amar's body was removed from the sand, his hands were tied to his back and his mouth was filled with used polythene bags. He was later re-buried by his family.

Initially, the kidnappers requested for N50,000 ransom, but increased it to N1.5 million. They later reduced it to N1 million after three days of intense negotiation by telephone with the victim's father, Baba Ali, a car dealer in Kaduna.

Ali told *Daily Trust* that his son was kidnapped by his nephew, Aliyu, popularly called Abba, from his house and taken to an uncompleted building where he was killed.

"The day he was abducted from my house, Saturday November 1, his mother had gone to Kano and I had also gone to my car stand at Umuwar Shanu. I left the children, who were five in number at home and when I came back in the afternoon, the older sister, Mama, told me that Abba had taken Amar out and both were not yet back. She said Abba came with his friend and left him outside. He ate and spent some time with the kids talking and when his friend was tired of waiting he sent someone in to call him. But instead, Abba gave his mobile phone to his friend and told him to go until later. He then asked Amar to escort him outside and they left," he said.

He said at that point he did not suspect boy was kidnapped and concluded he would be brought back home safely by his cousin.

"I left for work again and when I came back around 5pm, Amar wasn't at home. I told the children to go to Islamiyya (Islamic school) for evening lessons until I returned from work. I closed around 9pm and went home. I was told the boy was not yet back so. I went to my brother's house (Abba's father) and informed him of what happened. We called Abba and asked him about the boy and he said he knew nothing about his whereabouts. We searched all uncompleted buildings at night together with Abba but we did not find him and in



Where the victim was hidden



Murdered boy



Where he was buried by kidnappers

the morning I reported the matter to security agencies including the police.

"On Sunday evening someone telephoned me saying they had abducted my son but that he would be released if I gave them N50,000. I said I was ready to pay that amount instantly and even requested to know the mode of payment. The person who called then told me to hold on for while that he would get back to me. He called back on Monday and said the money had been increased to N1.5 million. The phone number they used earlier was 08084423621. I told him I could not afford that amount and he said I was not ready to fetch my child from where he was hidden.

"Again, they phoned me on Tuesday with a hidden number and told me that the money was reduced to N1 million and I said I couldn't pay that. They kept sending me text messages. But on Sunday, one of the kidnappers called me and said my son was dead but I and if wanted to know his kid-

nappers and killers I should collect the phone of Abba and check all the text messages sent. So, I went to my brother's house and sent for Abba. When he came I collected his phone and searched the sent messages and to my dismay, all the texts I received originated from that mobile phone. I asked him of the whereabouts of my child, he said he was actually the one who abducted Amar and that he was dead. I informed the police and he was arrested. He took them to where they hid the boy and where he was buried. The body was exhumed and buried again yesterday."

A police source said the victim died a day after he was kidnapped (Sunday) and was buried on Monday at about 2am by Abba in the heap of sand near the river. He said the cause of his death was still being investigated, adding that he was likely starved to death, bitten by a snake or other poisonous reptiles, died of cold or even hit with an object because there was trace of blood in his mouth. Another source said one of the kidnappers said they planned to use the ransom buy a Honda Civic car. The building where the boy was hidden is just adjacent to a deserted police office and not

far away from where he was buried. Abba's father, Malam Aliyu, told *Daily Trust* that his son was arrested over the incident and he had confessed to have kidnapped the boy.

"I pleaded with him several times to avoid bad peer groups but he did not listen," he said.

Police Commissioner Olufemi Adenaike confirmed the arrest of some of the kidnappers and said police were still looking for more people to arrest.

"We have arrested some of the kidnappers of the seven-year old boy, unfortunately the boy had died. We are still looking for others," he said.

The Ward Head of Rafin Guza Mai Unguwa Ya'u said the case was the first kidnap incident in the area and the entire community was shocked over the death of the boy. He said the area experienced frequent clashes of rival gangs but there were no kidnappings.

"The ward heads and the Sarki (chief) will meet later to discuss how the situation could be addressed," he added. He said he was not aware the child was abducted and got to know about it after the body was exhumed. Hundreds of mourners including women and children yesterday gathered at the late Amar's family house to sympathize with the family.

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