

How civil defence officer killed 8 children during Easter procession in Gombe

By Haruna Gimba Yaya, Gombe | Published Date Apr 24, 2019 5:07 AM

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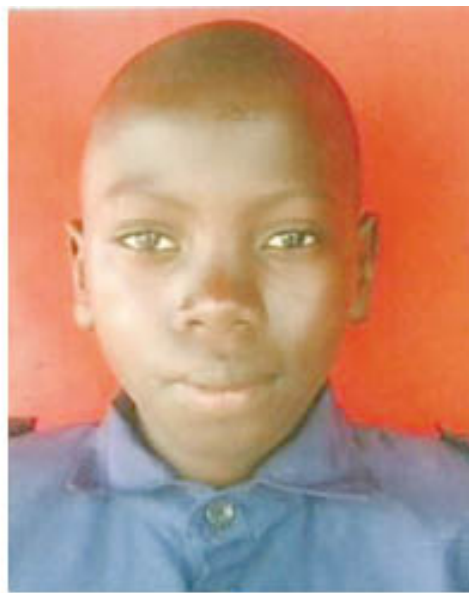
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■ Joseph Paul, 13, killed during the Easter tragedy



■ One of the deceased children, Irmiya Amos, 14

How civil defence officer killed 8 children during Easter procession in Gombe

On Sunday, April 21, tragedy struck when a vehicle driven by an officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, ASC Adamu Abubakar, rammed into a procession by the Boys' Brigade celebrating Easter, killing eight children and injuring 35 others.

Abubakar and his civilian friend, Murtala Hassan, were also killed by a mob. This was said to have doused tension and prevented a possible inter-religious

crisis in the state.

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According to witnesses, the deceased children who were from different ECWA churches in Gombe metropolis were on the annual Easter Rally late Sunday night, when the Civil defence officer in mufti and his civilian friend, all Muslims, ran into them around Alheri junction along the Biu road.

The Battalion of the Boys Brigade gave the names of the deceased as Jessy John, Irimiya Amos, Joseph Paul, Sunday Samuel, Ruth Samson, Paulina Yusuf, Keziah Amos and Joseph Daniel.

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One of the survivors, Joel Nanyak, 15, said the incident happened around 11:30pm when the NSCDC officer and his friend met their procession and had argument with their leaders.

“After arguing with the leaders of the procession, he was allowed to pass; however, he told us that he would come back and he made a u-turn, switched off his car’s light and rammed into the procession from behind.

“I was busy with the big bass drum. I only woke up to find myself on the road and was later told what had happened. My younger brother was killed”, he said.

He said the survivors got angry and “chased the civil defence officer and his friend, caught up with them and mobbed them to death.”

Daily Trust learnt that 13 people had fracture injuries; while 22 others with bruises and dislocation are still on admission at various hospitals.

A source said the late civil defence officer, popularly known as Ukasha, was attached to the Gombe State Government House where he had worked for over 10 years as a liaison officer of the NSCDC.

“He had also worked as orderly to then Commissioners for Education, Dr Habu Dahiru and Ahmadu Labilwa Madugu before he was posted to the Government House,” the source said.

Also, findings at the state NSCDC command revealed that late officer was an “unofficial” aide of the commandant, Hajiya Altine Sani Umar.

Those who knew him said he was a hot-tempered person.

He was alleged to have attempted to kill his girlfriend over a misunderstanding.

Contrary to reports that Murtala, killed alongside the civil defence officer, was a policeman, our correspondent traced his family house to Tudun Wada area of Gombe and was told that he was a civil servant in the Office of the Auditor-General for Local Governments.

People were seen condoling with his father Alhaji Hassan, a retired officer of the Nigerian Customs Service. However, all his family members declined comment.

The Commandant of the NSCDC, Hajiya Umar, said: “The driver involved in the unfortunate Easter accident was an officer of the Gombe command of the NSCDC. But he was not on official assignment when the incident took place.

“We have launched an investigation to find out what led to the unfortunate incident and we condole with the families that lost their loved ones.”

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police in the State, Bello Makwashi, said the incident was being investigated.

Makwashi said immediately after the incident, his men beefed up security across the state to prevent a breakdown of law and order.

Deceased children's families react

Mr Danjuma Paul, a father of one of the victims, narrated how his 13-year-old son was killed during the incident.

“It was an annual event where our children greeted their friends through a procession. On that faithful day, three of my children participated in the rally, but around 12 midnight, one of the returned crying and informed us that there was an accident and his brother died.

“I couldn't believe what I heard. I rushed to the hospital where I found his dead body lying on the floor. It was then I realised that my first son whom I had hoped to assist me at old age was no more,” he said.

Mr Paul, who works with at the Gombe Station of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), said his late son, Joseph, was a JSS 3 student of the

Universal College, Gombe.

“We called on the government to look into the record of people before they recruited them as security operatives,” Paul added.

On his part, Mr Amos Ibrahim, 54, said he lost his 14-year-old Irmiya.

“He was my fifth child and a JSS 3 student at the Army Barrack Secondary School at JSS 3. He is my favourite child and despite his young age, he used to advise me on certain issues and always consulted me before he partook in any activity,” he said.

Ibrahim lamented that no government official visited their homes to condole with them. He however appealed to the state government to ensure that justice was done and organise a state burial for the deceased children.

It was learnt that the Christian Association of Nigeria in the state was planning to conduct a mass burial for the victims.

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