

Death By Military Might For Abuja Teen

The late Late Rabiya Kabir poses with her brother, Sabiu



By Adam Umar

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When the military intends to unleash its might on elements terrorising the country, Rabiya Kabiru, a schoolgirl in Abuja, certainly should not count among them.

But on one Wednesday in February, on her way back from school, a civilian truck carrying military weapons ran into her, her sister and a friend.

Her death is painful but the treatment her family has received from the truck owners and the military have left only bitterness in the family's heart.

On the afternoon of February 17 when Rabiya Kabiru, 16, left her school in Deidei, an Abuja suburb, she certainly did not think Nigeria's war on terror or the country's military might would catch up with her in the most unusual way.

Walking back home alongside her sister, Maryam Kabir, 17, and a friend and neighbour, Farida Muhammed, 14, the trio halted at a junction that would lead into their Tungan Wakili neighbourhood when a truck charged into the it at top speed.

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It was Rabiya who bore the full weight of the truck and by extension the full weight of Nigeria's war.

It was a weight too heavy for her body to bear. She was crushed to death on the spot. Her sister Maryam and their friend Farida suffered serious injuries, little Farida more so.

“There were other students who were standing along with them at the time,” a relative told *Daily Trust*.

“The truck came at high speed, hit a parked Toyota car, and the car ran over the victims.”

On behalf of the Army

The truck that caused Rabiya's death was a civilian vehicle transporting weapons to Zamfara on behalf of the Nigerian Army.

The relative said there were soldiers in two military vans escorting the truck.

These soldiers jumped out of the vans and cordoned off the accident scene.

They directed traffic away from Rabiya's corpse lying by the roadside, one arm severed, her upper body crushed.

Later, men of the Federal Road Safety Corps arrived and evacuated the corpse and the other victims.

“The FRSC officials immediately took the remains of the deceased and that of the other injured victims and conveyed them to a private clinic in Madalla, Niger State,” the relative said.

Later, Farida in a very critical condition was first transferred to the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, Gwagwalada from where she was referred to the National Orthopaedic Hospital in Dala, Kano State, where she is still battling to survive.

Luckily for Maryam, she has been discharged from the hospital and is now recuperating at home. She will have to do this without her sister who died that day by the roadside.

In the aftermath of the accident, the driver of the truck snuck away from the scene, even before the corpse was removed.

The soldiers arranged for another truck, moved their weapons into it and zoomed off to continue their mission.

Rabiat's parents haven't heard from them or from military authorities since the incident.

The truck driver

Rabiat and Maryam's father, Kabiru Abdullahi, is baffled by this and everything that has happened since.

"The truck driver fled the scene and left behind the vehicle before the police from Zuba Division went there and took it to their station," he said.

"I was able to get the contact of the vehicle owner and demanded he took responsibility for the treatment of the surviving victims.

"The man refused to oblige. Instead, he sent the driver to the police station to meet me, and told me to do whatever I wished with him."

The death of his daughter is painful. He has, as a Muslim, embraced the fact that he had lost her as God decreed it would happen.

But he has been shocked by the reaction of the driver, the truck owner and the military, from whom he has received not even a condolence message.

Their negligence and lack of response angered him and he took the issue to court.

On Monday last week, the truck driver, Zulqarnaini Danhajiya, appeared before a Zuba magistrate court where he was charged with causing death by dangerous driving, which is contrary to section 27 of the Road Traffic Act.

He pleaded not guilty to the charge and thereupon the magistrate, Ahmad Ilelah, ordered that he be remanded at the Suleja correctional facility until March 8 when the matter would be presented for mention.

Community in mourning

While Zulqarnaini remains in custody, his truck remains detained at the Zuba division, where our reporter saw it.

At Tungan-Wakili, where the late Rabiya lived until her death, the incident has thrown the neighbourhood into grief and left many people scratching their heads.

Bits of information about the incident are circulated by word of mouth — the weapons, including explosive devices, were from the Mogadishu Cantonment and were being shipped to Zamfara State, it has been claimed.

Some residents have wondered why the military would engage a civilian vehicle to transport the weapons.

Others raised concerns that, going by reports of alleged arms diversions to the wrong hands, there was a need to closely investigate the accident.

Yet others countered that this was a security strategy not to compromise the cargo. The military has since been hiring private contractors to help them move their cargoes for various reasons.

While the speculations continue, Malam Kabiru is wishing he didn't have to go to court when he should be mourning his daughter in peace and nursing the other one back to health, while Maryam, strapped in bandages, and mourning her sister is fighting to stay alive and trying not to remember watching her sister die as she herself lay bleeding on the street that Wednesday afternoon.

Army Deidei madalla military



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