

# Tribute to my wonderful son – Uthman Suleiman Ibrahim

**C**an I ever forget a day like this two years ago - 15th October 2019? The day I lost my first child Uthman.

I still find it difficult even after two years to imagine that death has separated us for good my Uthman and I won't be able to see you grow into a full man to carry on from where I would stop when my own time is up in this world.

The day, I recall was a Tuesday. It started like any other working day for the family, we woke up in time for the early dawn prayers, we went to the mosque with late Uthman whom we also call Khalifa and his younger brother Abdallah for the Fajr prayers. Afterwards, we came back home and they continued with the preparations for school while I was getting ready for office.

At about 7.15am we were all set. I was seated on the sofa in the living room and Uthman, standing outside, said to me through the open sliding-door "Daddy Bye-bye, I love you and have a nice day." How was I to know that fare-well was farewell "for good" because the next time I saw him, there was no life in him.

At about 3.15pm, my wife's called hysterical, I could hardly understand what she was saying. The only thing I was able to hear or make sense of was "Khalifa accident a school kazo da sauri!" which can be translated to "Khalifa had an accident in school come quick!"

I drove out of the office premises only to realise I wasn't even sure of where I was headed. I called her back a number of times but no response, I then received a call from an unknown number asking me to come to the Accident & Emergency Unit at the National Ear Care Centre, which was the nearest medical facility to my son's school.

My heart kept pounding as I fiddled with the phone trying to reach my wife. What could have possibly happened to my lovely Uthman - my first child born on the 12th of March 2008? From the first moment I saw him after he was born, my heart was filled with love and I felt a strong instant bond between us.

As I drove into the hospital premises, I noticed a large crowd at the entrance of the Accident and Emergency Department. Upon getting closer, I realised it was my wife seated on the ground with strangers surrounding her. My heart skipped a beat.

Upon reaching where my wife was, she held my hand and said "Khalifa" I then asked "Khalifa ya mutu ne?" (Is Khalifa dead?) but she had no answer as she and everyone there just kept long faces. I started sensing the worst may have happened. I quickly said a short prayer asking Allah SWT to make it easy for us.

I hurried inside the building, hoping for the best. As I opened the door, the doctor observing him was shaking his head, signaling there is no sign of life in my Uthman. From that moment on, the

meaning of life and the perspective in which I see it changed forever. The doctor asked, "is he your son?" I shook my head in affirmation and he said "I'm sorry your son is gone". With those words, my knee gave away as I instantly knelt down by the bed where my son's body laid, held his cold hands and said a prayer for him, closing his eyes and staring at him for what I know would be the last time.

Afterwards, I stood up, walked to where the Doctor was standing in the room and asked him what happened? He said he was told it was an accident but has no details. He explained that the cause of death could probably be a broken rib that pierced through his heart. He held my hand and placed it on the broken rib. Apart from that, his body looked perfect without even a bruise.

I covered his face with the bed sheet used in covering him and headed outside where my wife and a whole lot of other strangers waited.

As I reached where my wife was, I looked at her not having the slightest idea of how to tell her that she will never see the first fruit of her womb again. I took her and drove a few blocks away and broke the news to her when she was a bit calm.

She pleaded that we went back to the hospital so she could see the body of her son and pray for her.

We conveyed the body in the ambulance and preparations were made for his funeral prayer and interment in accordance to Islamic teachings.

It was touching to see the large crowd that turned The crowd was quite huge, especially for the death of a 12-year-old child.

It was until around 11pm when the crowd in our house began to lessen, before I got the chance to ask my wife what happened.

She told me that when she went to pick him up after she had closed from work, she sighted him playing football with other students as he saw her, he ran into his class to pick his bag. The street on which the school was located is quite narrow, so she usually makes a 3-point reverse with her car by driving partially

into the school gate, then reverse a little bit onto the street then head back into the direction she came from. On that day as she reversed onto the street, she heard a nudge on her car suggesting she had hit some object so she instantly stopped and came out of the car to see what she hit. She discovered that it was a motorcycle parked by the edge of the street, the motorcycle owner standing nearby quickly picked his bike from the drainage where the bike fell in, she apologized to him and all seemed fine. At that point she went back inside the car to continue reversing and clear from the road only to hear that she had hit something again. She now came out again thinking that what is it this time? Upon reaching the rear of the car she saw a boy lying motionlessly in the ditch, then she screamed for help shouting that please people should please come and help her as she has hit a child. When the child was brought out, she then saw him holding a familiar school bag and wearing familiar shoes she then shouted his name "Khalifa"! Those that pulled him out seeing his condition immediately put him in the nearest car offered by a parent whom has also come to pick her children, my wife joined them in the car to the hospital. What probably happened as we figured out later was that when Uthman came out of the school holding his bag, he must have seen the mild accident involving the motor cycle that happened moments ago, so instead of entering the car to join his mum he went to the rear of the car to see what happened, at that point his mum was back inside her car to continue reversing not knowing he was standing right behind the car, she inadvertently knocked him down into the concrete drainage leading to a fatal fall.

I know it is very easy for parent to extol

Uthman, I would like to tell you that we miss you beyond words but we are consoled that you are in a better place and we are praying that you shall intercede for us on the day of judgement. I would also like to let you know that your siblings are doing fine and coping with your absence even though it is hard for them

the virtues of their children, but with all sense of modesty I would like to mention a few things that sets Uthman apart that made him so endeared to me. Uthman hardly gets

involved in any fight or arguments with his peers in school or at home. One of the first thing one would notice about him are his manners. If one spends a little time with him, you will find it difficult not to notice his manners. Several times we get accosted by other parents, especially in his primary school asking us "are you Uthman's parents?" and usually passing a pleasant remark about him afterwards. In the mosque where we pray, he made it a habit that after prayer, he goes around to meet the elders within the congregation and kneel down to greet them saying "Assalamu Alaikum" some of which I don't even know or haven't made acquaintance with.

A friend told me that the Imam eulogised my son and said the parents of this child should not be mourning but should be pleased that they trained the child well and In sha Allah on the day of judgement when Allah will ask parents to account for how they trained their children his parents would have nothing to worry about. These are the kind of words that really console us from this painful loss.

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Lastly, I would like to let you know that Allah SWT has blessed us with another baby boy whom we have named after you in your loving memory. He shall celebrate his first birthday in a couple of weeks in shaa Allah.

Bye-bye my son, you shall forever remain in our hearts.

Please say a line of prayer for my Uthman.



UTHMAN  
2021