

Family, coy seek justice for fuel attendant killed by Air Force officer

From Abubakar Akote, Minna

The management of AYM Shafa Oil and the family of Yusuf Umar, a fuel attendant shot dead by an air force officer, have demanded justice for the deceased.

Daily Trust had reported that the fuel attendant AYM Shafa Filling Station at the Obasanjo Commercial Complex on Bosso Road, Minna, Niger State, was killed following a misunderstanding between him and some air force men who came to collect fuel for an official engagement.

A brother to the deceased, Mohammad Ismail, in an audio obtained by *Daily Trust*, debunked the report that the victim attacked the soldiers with a cutlass.

He said Umar only attempted to rescue his brother, Sa'ad, who was the manager of the filling station, when the officers started beating him after a minor disagreement.

He said, "Soldiers from the air force base usually come to get fuel from the station, but before coming their commander would have called the manager to let him know. This time, the commander didn't call to inform the manager that his boys were coming."

"The soldiers were in mufti when they came and the manager was about to perform afternoon prayers. At a point they called one of the nail cutters to cut their fingers. The boy wanted to snap the lighter to clean his scissors when the manager told them that it

was dangerous to do that.

"The soldiers got angry and started beating the manager. Thereafter, one of the soldiers brought out a cutlass from their Hilux and started going after the manager. It was at that point that the deceased, Yusuf, held the soldier and the soldier fell down. When Yusuf held him on the ground, he then told his colleague to shoot him. And his colleague shot Yusuf twice."

In a statement, the management of the filling station, while corroborating Ismail's claim, promised to take all legal measures to ensure that justice prevailed.

The statement reads in part: "It is also pertinent that we do not aggravate the current fuel scarcity, as well as assure the public, our employees, customers and stakeholders in the industry, that the safety of lives and property is our top most priority."

"While the investigations are ongoing, the brief information we can give to the public is as follows:

"The air force officers were at the station to get fuel for their vehicle. Our company has a relationship with the air force base in Minna and they have been buying fuel from the station with their official coupons for a while now. They were asked to hold on for confirmation from their office, which is the norm, and in the process they decided to get a manicure via a local vendor passing by."

"We all know the local manicurists use naked flame to sterilise their equipment,

which is dangerous in a filling station.

"As all our staff are trained to always strictly abide by our Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) standards, the manager informed the manicurist that he was not permitted to use naked flame in the station and would have to move out of the premises."

"The officers got agitated, beat up the station manager and shot Yusuf Umar who had come to the manager's rescue. He was shot twice at close range which led to his death."

The management further said it had already established contact with the law enforcement agencies and had started carrying out an investigation into the matter.

It assured members of the public and all stakeholders in the oil and gas industry that it would not relent in getting justice for the victim, while reassuring of commitment to the safety of lives and property in all its service stations nationwide.

Reacting to the incident, the Managing Director of a Minna-based Civil Society Organisation, Mind Ark Centre for Human Development, MD Abubakar, called for training and retraining of Nigerian security personnel on how best to relate with the civil population.

Abubakar was of the opinion that most military and para-military personnel lacked the proper understanding of the way to relate and deal with situations or misunderstanding between them and



■ The Late Yusuf Umar

civilians.

He said, "I think because of the haphazard recruitment that's being done now due to insecurity, most of the guys in uniform nowadays lack adequate orientation on how to manage misunderstanding between them and civilians."

"Most of them easily take issues personal and angrily react, using their uniforms to threaten citizens. So, I suggest military and para-military authorities should ensure that their personnel undergo training and retraining on how to manage misunderstanding, especially when it involves civil population."