

Wedding Turns Bloody, As 'Soldiers' Kill 24-Year-Old Mechanic In Kaduna

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On Saturday, January 28, 2023, when the family of Malam Muhammad Abdullahi Mammada was celebrating the union of their children and grandchild, little did they know that grief was lurking in the corner.

Around 8pm on the fateful day, after the family had concluded all events for the wedding and were rejoicing with family and friends, suspected soldiers in army camouflage besieged the family home located in Rafin Guza, Kaduna North Local Government Area, and killed 24-year-old Ibrahim Muhammad.

Muhammad, a mechanic and Islamic aid volunteer, was shot while standing over his cousin, Fadila Ahmed, who had also been shot by the soldiers believed to have come from the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA).

Though Fadila, 18, is presently receiving treatment at the 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Kaduna, Ibrahim was not so lucky; he died on Sunday from the gunshot wound to his mouth.

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Daily Trust correspondent, who visited the family house last Thursday, gathered that apart from Ibrahim and Fadila, two other family members were shot and beaten; a bullet grazed Ahmed Ibrahim in the chest, while Khalid Muhammad was severely beaten allegedly by the soldiers.

Eyewitnesses at the family home told our correspondent that the soldiers, numbering five, came in an unmarked black Toyota Hilux vehicle.

The reasons why the assailants attacked the house are still sketchy, but the incident, Daily Trust gathered, could not have been unconnected to an altercation with a tricycle rider and a vehicle belonging to a senior officer allegedly serving in the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA).

Our correspondent gathered that earlier that day a tricycle rider brushed the vehicle of the senior officer at a narrow path owing to a gridlock caused by the wedding celebration at Malam Muhammad's family.

It was alleged that a misunderstanding took place between the Keke and the Hilux drivers, and the Hilux driver slapped the Keke man. Some friends of the Keke man, obviously not happy with the treatment of their friend, also slapped the Hilux driver back. The driver of the Hilux with NDA boldly written on it however left the scene after threatening that the action will not go unpunished. Later that day, the family house of where the wedding took place and alleged to have caused the gridlock, was attacked.

Rukayya Muhammad, late Ibrahim's 65-year-old mother, said they were not aware of any altercation between the soldiers and a Keke rider until after the incident that took place in her home, adding, "Our neighbours can testify that we do not engage in violence."

Recalling the incident, she said she used her hijab to hold in the blood that was gushing out of her son's mouth damaged by the trigger happy soldier's bullet.

Rukayya, a mother of 13, said: "It was supposed to be a happy day because I was celebrating the wedding of my son, my grandson and my co-wife's son, but it turned out to be a day of grief for me and my family.

"On that very day, all activities for the weddings had been concluded and the brides had been taken to their husbands' houses. Some of the groom's friends had organised a funfair in front of the family house and the merriment continued till around 8pm. We were about to say the last Muslim prayer for the day when we heard gunshots.

"At first we thought it was firecrackers, until we heard a second and third shot before we realised they were actual gunshots. We made our way to the gate of the house but it was crowded with people who had come to rejoice with us.

"After a short while, some people came into the house running and crying that Fadila, my niece, had been shot. I became confused and as I was trying to get to my niece, I saw my son, Ibrahim, his whole mouth was covered in blood. I later realised that he was shot. He was saying Umma, take me to the hospital, in Hausa. He pulled the curtain from my room and placed it on his mouth. I also took my hijab and did the same, but the blood could not stop coming out.

“When someone mentioned that Fadila had been killed, I let go of Ibrahim and went to see what had happened to my niece, there I saw that she had also been shot in the head. I was so confused and did not know what to do. We tried to hurriedly take them to the hospital but the road was choked with bystanders. Eventually we were able to get them to the 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Kaduna. The next day (Sunday), Ibrahim died around 1.30pm but Fadila is still there fighting for her dear life.”

On why they accused soldiers of the shooting, she said, “The man that came into our house chasing my son wore an army camouflage and eyewitnesses also said the others were wearing army camouflage. We have since reported the matter to the Rafin Guza Police Division.”

She said her son begged for her forgiveness before he died and told them not to take laws into their hands over his death but leave it in the hands of Allah.

She expressed concern over the way security operatives, who are supposed to protect the common man, end up killing her son without verifying their information. “Ibrahim was a good boy and that is why when I was crying over his death, people consoled me that he was in a better place.”

Ibrahim’s 75-year-old father, Malam Muhammad, a farmer, called on the government to investigate the killing of his son and ensure the culprits pay for the killing.

Recalling his last moments with his son, he said, “My late son was about to go out to meet his friends, who came to rejoice with the family on that fateful day and he insisted that we take a photo before he went out. I obliged him and we took that photo, unknown to me that would be the last photo I will take with him in this world.”

An indigene of Narayi in Kaduna South Local Government Area of the state, Malam Muhammad, said he moved his family to Rafin Guza from Narayi 10 years ago to escape from the crises that part of the state has witnessed in the past.

He described his late son as a blessing to the family. “He was always the first to round up his younger ones to go to the farm. He would always tell me his whereabouts and he had a good heart and open hands whenever he was buoyant.

“We are not rich people and we have no connections to help us, but I want the government to investigate what led to the death of my son and the people that were killed so that justice can prevail,” he said.

Telling her own side of the story, Bilkisu Hussaini, Ibrahim’s step mother, said at first, she thought kidnappers had invaded their home when she saw Fadila on the floor covered in blood.

“After I saw Fadila on the floor, Ibrahim came running; he hid in a corner in the house and came out when he saw his cousin Fafila on the floor, not long after, a soldier followed him holding a gun and fired a shot at Ibrahim. I did not see his face because he covered it with a face mask.

“The soldier was of average height and he was wearing a soldier’s camouflage. Before he shot Ibrahim, he looked round as if confirming that no one saw him and then he took the shot and left in the vehicle that conveyed them to our house.

“Ibrahim had been like a son to me; he was a peaceful and patient person and I pray that Allah grant him the highest level of paradise.”

The Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 1 Division Nigerian Army, Kaduna, Lieutenant Colonel Musa Yahaya, when contacted said, “The soldier is not from 1 Division. We have no problem with the residents of Rafin Guza and we have a very cordial relationship with them.”

The Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Major Victor Olukoya, when contacted, denied knowledge of the incident and said NDA does not use black vehicles.

“I am not sure why you think the soldiers are from NDA because the academy does not use black vehicles but if there is anything, I will let you know,” he said.

Confirming the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Muhammad Jalige, said the Commissioner of Police has ordered a full scale investigation with a view to arresting the suspects.

He said: “The police were informed about the incident. Tthe Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Rafin Guza had swung into action on the directive of the CP. Though the identities of the suspects are not clear, efforts are being intensified, patrols are being carried out and our operatives in the intelligence department have commenced investigation.

“The CP charged the people of the community to be very vigilant and report any suspicious person to the nearest police station.”