

IN-DEPTH

Concerns as dreadful Kalare thugs return to Gombe

From Haruna Gimba Yaya,
Gombe

Residents of Iekadafari Quarters of Gombe metropolis in Gombe State were on October 20 thrown into confusion and mourning over the gruesome murder of a 58-year-old woman, Aishatu Abdullahi.

Daily Trust reports that the late mother of eight, popularly known as Adda Damori, was slaughtered in her matrimonial home that fateful Friday night, by a suspect later revealed by the police as an 18-year-old Mustapha Adamu Isa (Abbati).

According to the deceased's son, Muhammad Sani Abdullahi, the suspect allegedly called her on the phone while she was at a neighbour's house (Abbati's family house), and told her that she had some guests, so she went to see them.

Also, Late Adda Damori's daughter, Fatsuma Abdullahi, recalled her last moment with her mother, less than 24 hours before her death.

"We spent the whole night discussing with her a day before her death. She was treating an eye illness, so I wanted to revisit and see her, but then this happened. May Allah forgive her," she said.

The suspect, Abbati, who was apprehended by the Gombe State Police Command confessed to killing the woman.

He told newsmen that he was in Damori's room to take a spanner to fix a motorcycle brought to the mechanic's garage, which is located at the front of the house.

"It was my first time committing such a crime and I don't know what came over me to kill her because she was the mother of my friend. I found the knife in her room and used it to stab her several times and later slaughtered and left with the spanner," Abbati said.

The suspect also confirmed that he had committed the crime alone; without the support of anybody, stating that he only implicated Idris Abubakar Danjauro.

He said he had caused him to be sacked from the garage where they were working together, leaving him unemployed for one year.

A neighbour to the deceased, Malam Adamu Sarki, called on the government to do all possible to bring the suspect to justice, to avoid the occurrence of similar incidents in the future.

He said, "Such crime can only be averted when the perpetrators are paraded and punished publicly to discourage others from committing a similar crime. The government should take action and bring the culprits to book so that this will serve as a deterrent to others."



■ Suspected Kalare thugs

Daily Trust reports that Damori's killing is one of the numerous murder cases reported in the Gombe metropolis in the past four months, and they are mostly linked to dreaded Kalare thugs, who metamorphosed into phone snatchers.

For instance, on July 9 at about 2 a.m., a housewife bled to death after a suspected phone snatcher stabbed her with a knife in her home located in the Malam-Inna area in the eastern part of Gombe metropolis.

The suspect, Haladu Abubakar, who claimed to be a hunter trespassed into the house to steal, but when the woman saw him, he fatally wounded her and fled the scene, but was arrested hours later.

Also, on August 9, an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ibrahim H. Musa, was killed early in the morning by suspected armed robbers who invaded his residence in the Tabra area of Gombe Southern Bypass.

Neighbours of the late cleric, popularly known as 'Albanin Kuri', said the armed robbers fatally stabbed the deceased during a scuffle.

According to the neighbours, the assailants stabbed him several times after he refused to allow them to take his phone, money, and other belongings.

As a result of the outrage that followed the killing of the cleric and other criminal activities mostly perpetrated at night, Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya imposed a curfew in the Gombe metropolis from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m.

However, even with the said curfew imposed by the state government, these criminal activities continued unabated as the youths, mostly members of the dreaded Kalare thugs, unleashed their mayhem largely 'unchecked'.

Not long after the death of Albanin Kuri, on August 9, a young man was killed near old GRA by suspected phone snatchers, after he struggled to save his phone.

Also, on September 28, a groom-to-be had his hand cut off by suspected political thugs, who ambushed him, severed his hand, and took away his phone early in the evening.

On October 20, less than 48 hours after the killing of Adda, unidentified assailants fatally stabbed an NCE III female student of Gombe State College of Education, that time in Billiri Local Government Area of the State.

The Kalare started as a youth wing during political campaigns, when politicians hired and armed them to provide some kind of security during electioneering campaigns

Daily Trust learnt that the killers traced the student to her room in a private hostel located at the Zazzagawa quarters of Billiri town.

A resident of the area said the deceased who hailed from Baganje town of Billiri LGA was killed early Sunday morning by yet-to-be-identified persons, who fled the scene after killing the woman.

According to the Gombe State Police Command, from July to date, about 32 cases of suspected Kalare activities were recorded from various arrests conducted by men and officers of the command.

Our correspondent reports that Kalare thugs have for a long time become a nightmare for the people of the state, especially residents of the Gombe metropolis and its suburbs.

The Kalare started as a youth wing during political campaigns, when politicians hired and armed them to provide some kind of security during electioneering campaigns.

Mostly at the end of the elections and other political activities, like now, these thugs lose the patronage of the politicians that sponsored them, which means loss of funds to sustain their lives; hence they resort to all sorts of crime, ranging from armed robbery, banditry, culpable homicide to rape.

To check these, the administration of former Governor Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo in 2011 outlawed the Kalare thugs and introduced a re-orientation programme to rehabilitate and make them useful to society.

Under the programme, over 4,700 repentant Kalare thugs were trained and engaged as traffic, environmental, and ward marshals as well as education corps.

The administration through the state's Ministry of Youth also launched an empowerment programme christened 'G-Hope', where 5,000 youths are paid a N5,000 monthly stipend.

According to the Commissioner of Youth then, Malam Farouk Yarma, the programme was a form of poverty alleviation and also a means to checkmate youth idleness which makes them prone to commit crimes.

"Apart from the G-Hope, regular and educational marshals, which were all domiciled under the Gombe State Agency for Social Services, we had a partnership with the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), where over 7,000 youths were trained on different vocational skills.

However, when the administration of Governor Yahaya came to office in 2019, the over 4,000 marshals engaged by the Dankwambo administration were sacked overnight.

Therefore, the majority of them being 'repentant' political thugs, returned to their old habits, a development some residents of the state attributed to the rates of crime being experienced recently in the state.

In February 2022, Governor Yahaya flagged off training for the first batch of 500 youths under the Gombe State Security, Traffic and Environmental Corps (GOSTEC) Programme.

The GOSTEC personnel were embedded with the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in an operation code-named: 'Operation Hattara'. However, analysts are of the opinion that a lot needs to be done, considering the recent cases of killing and phone snatching.

They linked current high unemployment rates, lack of empowerment programmes, and drug-related issues to the rising figures of crime in the state.

Responding, the Director General of Press Affairs at Gombe Government House, Ismaila Uba Misilli, said the state government is committed to taking comprehensive measures to address youths' restiveness and combating crime and drug-related issues.

"This the administration intends to achieve through improving the prospects of the state's young population through promoting economic growth and enhancing the overall well-being of the citizens.

"One significant initiative by the governor is the establishment of the GOSTEC. This programme has successfully engaged 500 young individuals in activities related to environmental management, security, and traffic control.

"By providing these opportunities, the state is not only addressing unemployment but also enhancing public safety and environmental sustainability," he said.

Misilli added that Governor Yahaya had established the Ministry of Internal Security and Ethical Orientation, which he said plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of security initiatives and promoting ethical values within the populace.

He said, "The government has prioritised skill acquisition programmes aimed at equipping young people with valuable skills that can lead to employment and entrepreneurship. The governor has also distributed empowerment items to the youths such as KEKE NAPEP (tricycles), to empower individuals to generate income and become self-reliant.

"Recognising the importance of education and healthcare, the government has also taken steps to recruit graduate teachers and healthcare personnel, not only to improve these critical services but also to create job opportunities for educated individuals in the state."

The director general added that the establishment of the Muhammadu Buhari Industrial Park, which is expected to generate thousands of job opportunities for the youth, will create value chains that will reach every corner of the state."