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Gabriel Daniel Agaba: Murder In A Police Station

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A teenager allegedly broke into a beauty salon. He is apprehended by some security guards and handed over to police. What happened thereafter is the kind of nightmare every family prays never happens to their members. DAVID ADUGE-ANI writes on the tragic turn of fate for 17-year-old Gabriel Daniel Agaba.

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"We don't waste that boy o," says 'Bullet' casually in a telephone conversation recorded by the Abuja studios of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and broadcast to the nation in the course of a recent network news. That magisterial statement by 'Bullet', a policeman attached to the anti-robbery unit of the Wuse Zone 3 police station put a final seal on the fate of a 17-year-old teenager, Daniel Agaba. 'Bullet' the policeman had lived up to his lethal sobriquet, shattering the thin hope the Agaba family held on to – that Gabriel Agaba was still alive and that the policemen at Wuse Zone 3 would have a change of heart and produce the boy alive and well since the family was convinced that the policemen had Daniel in their custody. Alas, it is a forlorn

hope. Gabriel will never come back home; his body is lying somewhere still unknown, lifeless, having taken the final fall from a hail of bullet pumped into him by a policeman going by that deadly moniker!

The journey into this extra-judiciary killing started for Daniel Gabriel Agaba on February 13, 2014 when the teenager left his family home in Kubwa, Abuja for Gwarimpa, Abuja. When he did not return after two days, his family became worried and launched a massive search for him. Members of the Agaba family fanned out into Abuja, calling at the police stations in the capital city one after the other, including the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station, Wuse where they were told that Gabriel was not in their custody.

After all checks at police stations in the city drew a blank, the Agaba family and friends of Gabriel began to resign to fate. One of the missing boy's friends was convinced that Gabriel was no more. Like any Internet-savvy youth of today, Gabriel's friend took to cyberspace, posting the obituary of his missing pal on facebook. Then began an unravelling of the extraordinary events that lead to the murder of Gabriel Agaba...

One Kennedy, who works in Stelgro Beauty Palace at House 797, Adetokunbo Ademola Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja called on the Agaba family informing them that he was shocked to read of Gabriel Agaba's death on facebook. According to the family, Kennedy knew Gabriel well because the deceased was fond of coming to Stelgro to get his tattoo done.

Gabriel's sister, Comfort Agaba, told LEADERSHIP Weekend that Kennedy also informed the family that at about 2am on February 14, 2014 Gabriel allegedly broken into Stelgro Beauty Palace and stole some money and other items. However, in the course of the alleged burglary, security men guarding a hotel cum night club, which shares the same building with the beauty salon, apprehended Gabriel and took him to Wuse Zone 3 Police station, led by the club's manager.

In the morning of February 14, the owner of the salon, Mrs. Stella Gross, the manager of the hotel/night club, Faruk Halilu and Kennedy visited the police station where Gabriel was being detained. It was also arranged that two police officers, one Corporal Kingsley and the other whose name was given as 'Bullet', both of the anti-robbery unit, Wuse Zone 3 police Station, including Gabriel should go to the beauty salon to inspect the scene of the crime.

LEADERSHIP Weekend also gathered that after the inspection of the scene of crime, they all returned to the police station, where Mrs. Gross' statement was taken by the police, before they were asked to go, leaving Gabriel in the custody of the police.

In the light of these disclosures, Kennedy and Agaba family members went to Wuse Zone 3 police station, where, to their chagrin, the policemen flatly denied ever detaining Gabriel at their station.

Comfort Agaba told LEADERSHIP Weekend that it was at this point that the family became convinced that something sinister might have happened to Gabriel in the custody of the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station while.

In a petition written by the family through their lawyer, Femi Funsho Mathew (Esq) and sent to the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), the family is appealing to the IG to use his good offices to cause the investigation of the matter in order to unravel the circumstances leading to the murder of Gabriel in the custody of policemen at the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station. The petition, written on April 30, 2014 with a reminder copy on May 26, 2014 called for a public inquiry and justice for Daniel.

In an interview, Halilu told LEADERSHIP Weekend that he was in the hotel when Gabriel allegedly broke into the salon through one of the air conditioner holes at about 2am on February 13, 2014. According to him, in his bid to escape, Gabriel entered one of the hotel rooms and was caught by some members of staff.

Gabriel was immediately set upon by some people on the hotel premises but Halilu intervened and saved the suspect from being lynched. The hotel manager confirmed to LEADERSHIP Weekend that he and two employees of the business took Gabriel first to the Garki Police Station where officer refused to accept him on grounds that the alleged crime was not committed within their jurisdiction.

Halilu stated: "It was in my presence that the officers on duty at the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station came and picked the boy from the Garki Police Station. In the morning of February 14, 2014 two police officers from Wuse Zone 3 Police Station in company with Gabriel Agaba also visited the hotel and the beauty salon to inspect the scene of the crime, before Gabriel was taken back by the police officers for detention."

Halilu disclosed that two members of staff of the hotel were equally arrested by the police from the station because Gabriel had accused them in his statement of being in possession of the money he stole from the beauty shop.

He told LEADERSHIP Weekend that he personally bailed the two employees, leaving Gabriel in police custody.

"After two days, I called the police officer in charge of the case, who is called 'Bullet'. Bullet told me that the boy was still in their custody because nobody had come to bail him. Since that time I have not heard any other thing about the matter, since I am not directly involved in the case, because the owner of the beauty salon where the crime occurred had reported at the police station," he said.

Also, the owner of Stelgro Beauty Palace, Mrs. Gross confirmed the incident to LEADERSHIP Weekend, saying that she was invited to the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station in the morning of February 14, 2014 after the crime was committed in her shop.

She stated that she wrote a statement at the police station on that day after the police had followed her, along with Gabriel, to inspect the scene of the crime, which was her shop. However, Mrs. Gross said she told the police that she was not interested in litigating the matter against Gabriel because "he was a small boy."

However when LEADERSHIP Weekend visited the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station, the DPO stated that the matter has been referred to the FCT command. He told our reporter, through his orderly, that he has no comment on the matter since it has been referred to the FCT police command.

However, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), FCT Command, Altine Daniel, claimed ignorance of the matter. "At the moment, I am not aware of the case you are talking about. So I don't have anything to tell you about it for now," she told LEADERSHIP Weekend.

The PPRO pleaded with the LEADERSHIP Weekend to give her more time to make inquiries before making the position of the FCT Command known on the issue.

LEADERSHIP Weekend obtained a telephone number which belonged to alleged murderer of Gabriel, the policeman known as 'Bullet' whose real names no one at the Wuse Zone 3 Police Station was willing to reveal. However, several calls put to the number went unanswered.

For now, all the Agaba family know is that Gabriel Daniel Agaba has been murdered by policemen in Wuse Zone 3 police station, even if they do not have a body to prove this. Nevertheless, they seek justice and closure from the IGP, the Police Force he leads and the government of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan for this extrajudicial murder of 17-year-old Gabriel Daniel Agaba.

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