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Zamfara Alleged Blasphemy: How 11 People Died In My House - Landlord

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Tell us about yourself

My name is Yusuf Tajudeen. I am living in Talata Mafara and I have lived there for up to 40 years now. In fact, I was born there. I am doing business inside Abdu Gusau Polytechnic, Talata Mafara.

For how long have you been doing the business there?

For about 15 to 16 years now

Can you remember what actually happened in Talata Mafara on that fateful Monday when your house was burnt down?

Well on that very Monday, around 6:30am, I took my



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family to my business centre. After that, I took my wife to the motor park in her

bid to travel to Sokoto State. When I returned to park my car at the Admin block of the Abdu Gusua Polytechnic, both the chief Imam (Mallam Yusuf) with the chief security officer of the polytechnic, popularly known as Major all came to me pleading that I should help them convey a corpse to the hospital.

Both Major and other students followed me. While on our way, we branched at the Nigeria Police Station, Talata Mafara and Major went and reported the incident. He told them that somebody was killed in the polytechnic at night therefore; they should please go and take the needed action on the matter.

Thereafter, the police asked us to take the corpse to the General Hospital, Talata Mafara and after I dropped the corpse at the hospital, I brought my car to the car wash to be washed because of the bloodstain. While, I was waiting for my car to be washed, I heard multitude of voices shouting aggressively saying they should kill him inside the car and kill him again.

When I inquired to know what was happening, somebody told me that, the crowd said, I carried a corpse of somebody that insulted Prophet Mohammed (SAW) in my car. But I never knew what was actually happening. I only accepted to carry the corpse because the institution's top respected personalities pleaded with me to help and do not forget that as a good Muslim I cannot refuse assisting. Secondly, that was where I am doing my business too.

After setting my car ablaze, they proceeded to my shop and later went to my house. Those that went to my house went there to steal, I do not know them neither do I know where they are. Though, I was told they were all from the town. However, they died inside the house.

Initially, I was told that about nine persons were set ablaze inside my house but just three days ago, I was equally informed that two other persons fell inside the well and died too. This therefore makes the number of deaths in my house to be 11.

The protesters were angry with you on grounds that you carried the corpse of somebody that blasphemed the Prophet. What did you gather from your investigation in the long run?

The information that I gathered about the boy who was killed on allegation of blasphemy was that, his name is Kasim Zubairu from Kogi State. He (Kasim Zubairu) was a Muslim before but converted to Christianity. I learnt that where he resided with his Muslim roommates, one of the Muslims used his (Kasim's) soap to bathe and he asked why they would use his soap without informing him.

They replied Kasim that even if he is killed, nothing would happen because he is a Christian. They said, after all, they would accuse him of blaspheming Prophet Mohammed (SAW).

And according to what I heard after the incident, they said, Kasim was killed and his killers said they would accuse him of insulting prophet Mohammed (SAW). That was what I gathered from the town that the investigation of the institution divulged. You can ask the Rector and all other committees put in place at the polytechnic for further details.

But, remember, there was no single Christian that was burnt in my house. All those that were burnt are people from the town who came to loot in my house. Let the whole world know that, the Zamfara incident was not a religious matter because those that were burnt in my house were all Muslims. They were not Christians.

I am a Muslim, and people know me in Talata Mafara, I do not know anything about the incident.

Where were you when the incident happened in your house?

I was locked inside the Admin Block of the polytechnic.

Has Talata Mafara recorded any of such incidents before?

Not at all. Never, never at all to the best of my knowledge. I have stayed in Talata Mafara for more than 40 years now and I have never seen nor heard of any such incident in Talata Mafara.

After the incident, what did the management of the polytechnic do about your predicament?

The management of the school spoke to me that I should cool down, promising that they are going to do something about the incident. Though, they have not called me. However, what I want is to let the entire Muslim Ummah worldwide know that, I Yusuf Tajudeen don't know anything about the matter. I do not know what happened. They just lied against me.

But did you know Kasim Yusuf that was killed on allegation of blasphemy before the incident?

I do not know him at all. I do not know Kasim Yusuf at all.

Does the institution not have Ambulance to convey such emergency corpse?

The school has an ambulance but I do not know what happened to it. All I know is that they just brought the corpse to me in the morning and pleaded that I should help them convey it to the hospital. And because I am doing my business right inside the institution, do you think it is possible for me as a good Muslim to refuse?

After reporting the incident to the police while on your way to the hospital, did the police delegate any of their officers to go with you?

Not at all. The police did not even care about it. I am still shocked that a matter of such magnitude was reported to the Nigeria police and they did not even take any action about it. The police did not even follow us to the hospital. But funny enough, some journalists went ahead to tarnish my cherished reputation even without making any effort to hear from me about what actually happened.

Seriously, Nigerian journalists should desist reporting without investigation because it is a bad omen to the noble profession. They are bent on ensuring that there is perpetual division in Nigeria through their reportage. I am appealing that journalists in Nigeria should endeavour to get their facts correctly before rushing to the press. Their refusal to tell the world the simple and honest truth endangers the nation.

But you said according to your investigation, that Kasim Yusuf, who later converted to Christianity was told that even if he was killed, nothing would happen because he was a Christian. Don't you think journalists took it from that angle and linked religion to the whole issue?

I can say that is true because even if somebody is accused of insulting or blaspheming Prophet Muhammed (SAW) the Muslims should please refrain from this habit of taking the law into their hands. Such a person should be taken to the court. I want the Muslims to remember that when Prophet Muhammed (SAW) was alive, he stayed with pagans, he stayed with unbelievers and all manner of people that refused to even believe or follow him but the Prophet never had issues with them. He recommended that issues should be taken to the court for justice to prevail not people taking laws into their hands to perpetrate crimes on something they do not even know anything about.

The issue of killings in the name of blasphemy, especially in Nigeria lately has become very frequent. What do think is the way out?

The way out is that, I am appealing to Muslims in Nigeria and the world that should somebody raise alarm on blasphemy against the Prophet; they should please refrain from taking any action that can lead to possible break down of law and order. Rather, they should report the matter to the relevant authorities. Let them take the matter to the court to judge it. They should not start concluding on what they do not even know anything about. Taking laws into their hands, which has the potential of leading to loss of lives, if not checked, has the grave consequence of eliciting agitation for succession in Nigeria. This thing about blasphemy happened in Kano, in Abuja, in Niger and now in Zamfara again. Why? Is it only in the north that people are Muslims? Supposing Prophet Mohammed (SAW) was born in the north, they will now say that only the northerners are Muslims. Imagine if you are a Muslim from the Yoruba axis, the northern Muslims will call you "Tubebe". If you are a Muslim from the Igbo axis, the northern Muslims will also call you "Tubebe." Why would they not allow others to practice the religion? Is it how it should be? It is not good. That is a bad idea. I want those taking the laws into their hands in the name of blasphemy to note that even the Prophet stayed with pagans, unbelievers and people of other religion but he never had any of such misunderstanding with them, rather they coexisted peacefully.

Your car, shop and house were all burnt down because you helped convey the corpse of a murdered student to the hospital. What do you think is the estimated worth of the loss you incurred?

Even if the federal, state or local government is to pay me 40 million naira, my loss is more than that. Because I cannot even remember some of the things, I have. Yes, because I know what my business is giving me and I know what I get. The house alone is more than 10 million naira and the properties inside, I cannot even remember them as it is now. Because, I have bought a lot of things in preparation for the marriage of my four daughters. I bought a lot things for them because the four of them are all graduates. I have six children in all and one wife.

Was any of your family members affected in the crisis?

I thank God that nothing happened to my family. They only burnt down my car, shop and house, my children's certificates, all our clothings and all that we have laboured for. All I have now is the cloth that I am putting on.

Was there any raw cash that you left in the house, which you can remember?

Yes, I was having about 500,000 naira cash in the house and my wife had about 400,000 naira or more before the incident. There were also other monies that were in the house, which I cannot even remember now. However, there was money in the house up to a million naira.

But was there further violence after the Monday incident?

Well, I cannot say since I left the town. But I learnt that a student was butchered and I saw it on the internet. Hence, the army took my family and myself out of the town.

Has the mangement of Abdu Gusau Polytechnic called you since the incident?

Yes, they called me. The chief Imam, Major and Rector all called to plead with me that I should be patient. They said they were the ones that caused this thing for me hence; I do not know anything about it. They are pleading with me that I should be patient.

What do you want the Nigerian security to do about the incident?

I want the Nigeria security, especially the police to please protect the lives of the innocent people. They should take appropriate action when there is such development and not wait for the army. Had the army not intervened in Talata Mafara, the casualty figure would have been more.

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This guy is a born liar. A school has an ambulance, they called you to come and convey a corpse to the morgue and because of your being 'a good muslim', you agreed. You didn't bother to ask how and why the victim died, or why they were not using the school's ambulance? You just jumped into your car because you are a good muslim? You are an idiot and an accomplice to the murder of an innocent student whose only offence was that he converted to Christianity and because you are a muslim and allowed to do business in the school, you were prepared to provide cover to the rector and the imam in a murder case. You should be arrested and prosecuted for accessory to murder.

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