

A neighbourhood in Suleja town

# 3 Dead As Teenage Romance Tears Community Apart

Suleja in Niger State recently was thrown into a state of confusion as people scampered for safety after three youths were killed in broad daylight over a dispute that has a deep root in romance, youth unemployment and criminality. **AGBO-PAUL AUGUSTINE** (Abuja), reports.

**S**uleja has seen deaths of humans but nothing like the death of three youths on Monday November 21, 2016 murdered in broad day light after a dagger was used to pull out the intestines of one Usman Garba Babangida leading to the murder of the two alleged assailants in a mob attack.

Babangida, believed to be in his early twenties was a phone dealer and repairer, popularly known as 'TBB' was stabbed to death over a brawl over a teenage dancer he fell in love with.

The deceased had to hold his intestines in his hands as he gasped for breath before a helpless public.

The immediate reaction of the angry youths against the attacker on the busy Suleja-Madalla-Abuja road further shocked the city.

The incident brought back the sad memories of the days of Boko Haram terror on the city. Eye witness account had it that the number of weapons loosely in the hands of hoodlums is alarming and capable of destroying the city if not checked.

The horror got many onlookers in shock as the two suspects were butchered like animals and displayed on the Emir's Palace roundabout. Legs, hands dismembered as the jungle justice was quick like

a horror movie.

The confusion that arose from the killings by the rival gangs almost degenerated into a free for all war, forcing the city authority to call the military after the Police were over powered by the irate youths.

Markets were shut, schools and other shops closed as the raging rival groups took over the streets and threatened revenge attacks on each other, creating an atmosphere of panic.

In the heat of the situation, the military were forced to call for reinforcement after one of its Hilux vans was stone bombed by the rampaging hoodlums.

Initial report had it that phone theft was the reason behind the fracas. The dealer, according to eye witness account had it that the deceased pursued the suspect who was already fleeing the scene.

The suspect was said to have stabbed one of his captors in order to flee the scene but was caught and mobbed by irate youths who eventually beat him to death along his collaborator who earlier fled from the scene on a motorcycle.

But, revelations from investigation by LEADERSHIP Weekend revealed a different story behind the fracas.

The killings was the height of the bitter and long rivalry between one of the deceased

(Babangida) and a local Kingpin popularly called 'Alabouncer'.

Alabouncer is said to be a notorious thug in the city and the pocket of a prominent politician who serves as a thug during political campaigns. He runs a club house called by the locals as Gidan Drama (House of Drama) around Rafin-sanyi area of Suleja metropolis.

The makeshift structure is a cynosure in Suleja where even the high and mighty in the city have been alleged to be fans of the divas who entertained guests on a daily basis..

The teenage dancers are said to be mostly between the ages of 14 and 22 years old.

The teenage dancers are said to poses scintillating dance steps that are erotic of which the operators used as basis to make money from visitors.

The Dance House charges between N100 and N200 as gate fees to watch various dances of Northern origins performed by young male and female artists.

LEADERSHIP Weekend further discovered that the house is also a safe haven for illicit drugs including Indian hemp, marijuana and cough drugs abuses and others.

The late Babangida according to findings by LEADERSHIP Weekend was a well-known personality at the theatre. "Whenever he comes here, people used to hail him 'TBB' and he displays cash", said

Kabiru Kala a trader around the Rafin-sanyi area.

Sources told LEADERSHIP Weekend that trouble started when one Aisha, acclaimed to be the most beautiful diva in the House and a goddess of erotic dance fell in love with Babangida

"Her dance can make a decent man become uncomfortable, she has a way of bringing the animal sense in a man and make him lose control of himself.

"She is a goddess of dance and nobody knows where a teenager like that got that talent from. Her performance is so tantalising and can melt a heart in minutes, everyone likes her", a shop owner said.

Aisha was said to have fallen in love with Babangida and often lose interest in entertaining guests whenever he is around the theatre house.

The situation, the source told LEADERSHIP Weekend, had slowed down revenues for the business and the operator (Alabouncer) became worried over the development.

In spite of several warnings to Babangida to stop the distraction, fell on deaf ears hence, a plot was hatched to put a stop to the 'show spoiler'.

Alabouncer was said to have ordered two youths from his base to eliminate Babangida after failing to adhere to

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warnings to leave Aisha.

The two assailants were said to have called the deceased on the phone to meet them at Dawaki area along the busy Suleja-Madalla-Abuja road.

After a few conversation, arguments ensued between the two, then stabbing to death of Babangida by one of the assailants gushing out his intestines and took to his heels.

The assailants realising his deeds, ran for escape and was pursued by youths and caught about 200 meters down town and was mobbed to death.

His accomplice had escaped earlier to the theatre to brief their boss of the mission. The angry youths trailed the second man to the house and mobbed him to death in a graphic manner, dumped his remains in the trunk of a car and displayed at the Emir's Palace roundabout where the remains was further cut into pieces.

LEADERSHIP Weekend also learnt that the rampaging youths were angry that the late phone dealer was an indigene of the town and a talented phone technician that has helped not a few to recover even stolen phones through his skills.

The Niger State command Police Public relations Officer, (PPRO) DSP Bala Elkana confirmed the incident, adding that two wounded victims rushed to a nearby hospital later died.

The Police spokesman said the stolen handset had been recovered from the victim by men of the force and appealed to the relations of the victims not to resort to reprisal as the

police were sorting out the situation.

As at the time of writing this report, Suleja remains in a fluid state with the military fully in charge of the crisis area with partial curfew of between 8pm to 6am still in place.

Confirming the incident to LEADERSHIP Weekend, the Commanding Officer, 102 Guards Battalion of the Nigerian Army located near Suleja, Lieutenant Colonel Saidu Tafida said his base was contacted about 15:00 hours on Monday, November 21 over a theft case resulting to violence.

The narrative of the Commanding Officer was not different from the first information that filtered out.

He confirmed that his officers first came under stone attacks from the irate youths but his soldiers applied maximum restraint to avoid further casualty.

"We responded with a quick response team and have been patrolling and conducting stop and search in the affected areas and a curfew is in place from 8pm to 6am.

"Youths should be law abiding and lack of employment should not be an excuse for violence", he said.

He added that he has contacted the traditional and political leadership of Suleja including the Emir of Suleja, Mallam Mohammed Auwal Ibrahim, who explained the situation to him and was happy with the operations of the military.

He also said his office is in synergy with other security agencies in the area including the vigilante group to restore

normalcy to Suleja.

"Based on assessment, the curfew will be gradually lifted but the military presence will be maintained", Tafida maintained.

We are worried with our unemployment rate -Suleja LGA

The proximity of Suleja to Abuja, the nation's capital has created a new frontier of challenges to the local government authority. With cheap accommodation in the city and low cost of living, the city has attracted more dwellers in recent times.

As the population continue to swell so is the social problems. This according to the council's director of social development, Haruna Garba, has put a strain on the operations of the local government.

According to him, the biggest challenge of the LGA is the problem of youth unemployment which is at a dangerous level.

The number of youths without jobs in the council is worrisome and partly responsible for the rise of violence in Suleja, he maintained.

Garba told LEADERSHIP Weekend that the theatre house started like a drama place where youths come to showcase their talents. He however dismissed it as insignificant as "there are several social places in Suleja".

"The LGA is trying its best at addressing the security challenges and has taken its cry to the state and federal governments.

"The number of Police Stations and Divisions in Suleja is grossly inadequate as the entire Police in Suleja is not more than 500", Garba said.

He said the council recently visited top government officials in Abuja to ask for more investments in Suleja to create jobs.

He lamented that Suleja has become a hidden place for criminals who often shuttle between Tafa community in Kagarko local government area of Kaduna State and Dei Dei community in Abuja.

According to him, Suleja has become a transit point for criminals who are largely non indigenes.

It is not uncommon to find youths smoking all manner of hard drugs around the busy Minna road in the metropolis unchallenged even by the Police.

The situation has grown to a dangerous level as some traders lamented that they are being intimidated by some of the gangs into giving them money or their shops be shutdown.

It will be recalled that the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), recently put the nation's unemployment rate at 13.3 percent in second quarter of 2016, up from 12.1 percent in the three months to March, reaching the highest since 2009.

The number of unemployed persons rose by 12.2 percent to 10.644 million, employment barely rose by 0.06 percent to 69.04 million and labour force increased 1.78 percent to 79.9 million.

It however stated that youth unemployment increased to 24 percent from 21.5 percent.

Past records of state by state unemployment rate in Nigeria has continuously placed Niger State among the first 10 states with huge burden of unemployment in the country.

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