



## Corps member dies in auto crash after visiting mother who survived Hajj calamity

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### • *I want my other daughter redeployed from Kebbi—Father*

The joy of the family of Mr Lateef Lamina, a senior sales executive officer with New Telegraph newspaper, that the wife survived the calamity that claimed hundreds of lives in Mecca during the concluded 2015 Hajj, turned to sorrow recently when the daughter, a National Youth Corps Service (NYSC) member serving in Sokoto State, died in an auto crash.

The victim, Balikisu Omolabake Temitope Lamina, was said to have travelled home to rejoice with the family on her mother's safe return from the Holy Land and was returning to her duty post when the tragedy occurred.

The family was in a pensive mood when The Nation visited. The father could not hold back tears as he intermittently wiped tears from his eyes while narrating his last moments with the deceased whom he referred to as his 'hope'.

"My hope is dashed," he said. "Balikisu, my brilliant, promising and talented daughter who had passion for broadcasting is gone. The mother travelled to Mecca and came back successfully. When she came back, we were all happy that she survived the misfortune that happened during the pilgrimage. She (my late daughter) decided to come home to see her. She was given about four weeks to be away from her service post. Within two weeks of her stay with us, they started calling to say that her attention was urgently needed. She was serving at Rima Television in Sokoto and, at the same time, a top member of the press crew. When the call was coming, I started having premonition that something was about to happen. I kept praying for God to be in control. Her elder sister, Kadijat was also serving in Kebbi State.

"When it was time for her to go back, I followed her to Iddo where she was to take a bus to Sokoto. When we got there, I saw a Sienna bus that looked new, and we paid. We had an agreement with the driver that he would take her to Sokoto. She boarded the vehicle and we bade each other goodbye.

Instead of taking her to Sokoto as agreed, the driver dropped her off in Kaduna. As at 11.30 pm when we spoke, she was at Kau Motor Park. I wanted her to pass the night around the area but she said she had already got a vehicle and that it remained just two passengers for it to be full. Eventually, they got the remaining passengers and left. I wished her journey mercy, hoping to speak with her in the morning.

“At about few minutes past 4:00 a.m., my phone rang. When I answered the call, the caller asked if I was the father of Balikisu, and I replied in the affirmative. She went on to say that my daughter was involved in an accident and that she died on the spot. I became disconcerted and wished it was a dream. Unfortunately, it wasn't a dream. It was real. My daughter who I saw off the previous night, and spoke with few hours before the sad news came, had died in an auto crash. I was told that the accident occurred at about 2:00 a.m. in Zamfara.”

Balikisu's seating position behind the driver apparently limited her chances of survival, Lamina related. “A survivor said the vehicle conveying them had head-on collision with a lorry carrying cows. He said my daughter was sitting behind the driver and was trapped when the accident occurred and that she was the only one that died on the spot. Immediately the day broke, the mother gave me some money to quickly travel down there.

“As I was making the arrangement, my first child who is serving in Kebbi State said I shouldn't bother coming because she didn't want any unpleasant thing to also happen to me. She would make arrangement for the remains to be brought back. I quickly sent her some money to get a vehicle that would bring my late daughter's remains back. Along the line, the NYSC assistant director in Sokoto called to sympathise with me.

“He asked if as a Muslim I would want her buried immediately over there or would like to see her remains. I said I would like to see her remains. He then asked me to leave the responsibility to them. They actually brought her back in their vehicle and took active part in her burial. They also gave us N30, 000 to entertain guests that came, but we didn't do that because it is against our custom. I really commend them for their efforts.”

Although he would not accuse anybody of being responsible for his daughter's death, he said: “My pain as a father is that I did everything possible for my children not to be posted far away but it didn't work out. I have been working in the media industry for over 30 years and looking forward to seeing my highly talented and brilliant child who had passion to work in the media but bad government policies have made that impossible. My hope is dashed. I don't have university degree. I only managed to have diploma when I was working with Concord Press in the north. As poor as I am, I struggled to train two of my children in the university but the Nigerian factor has robbed me of my joy. I never liked the idea of travelling over a long distance because of NYSC. What is the big deal about the programme that I have had to lose my precious daughter because of it?

“Though, I don't want to believe that she was killed by anybody, but if they had not mounted pressure on her to return to her duty post, she would (not) have died. How could I have struggled to nurture my children to this point and the government took both of them to that distance? I know that if they were serving here that similar thing could have happened, but it would have been better if it had happened close by than in distant place.”

He proceeded to chronicle his daughter's academic exploits. “She was an avid reader and had her eyes fixed on her dream of excelling academically. She attended Ambassador Nursery and Primary School here in Ota. She had a rapid education as she moved from Primary Four to secondary school. She attended Iganmode Grammar School. Before she completed her secondary school education, she had written GCE twice. She later wrote SSCE. Before her graduation from secondary school, she applied for admission at UNILAG but she didn't get it.

“When she did not get admission at UNILAG, she proceeded to Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Ojeere for diploma in Mass Communication. Thereafter, she went for her Industrial Training at Raypower and performed brilliantly. In the process of doing that, she wrote JAMB again and passed very well. This enabled her to gain admission into University of Benin where she accomplished her desire of acquiring a degree in Mass Communication. She had passion for communication and was prepared to give her all to make a mark in the industry. When she was in her Year Three, she went to Television Continental (TVC) for her Industrial Training. Because of her outstanding performance, she was given the privilege of taking diction-related course at a communication outfit in Oshodi. When she was leaving TVC, she was showered with lots of gifts because of her excellent performance. She graduated with 2\1.”

Already traumatised by their 21 year-old's untimely demise, the beleaguered family have their plight further compounded by pressure from NYSC officials in Kebbi State that the elder sister should return to her base or attract stiff penalty.

The embattled father said: “Another frustration I am having now is that the elder sister who led the NYSC officials to bring my late daughter’s remains home is also being pressured to return to her duty post in Kebbi. With the terrible experience we had with her younger sister, we are scared of allowing her to go back. We are traumatised and filled with awe about allowing her to go back. No parent who had had this kind of distasteful experience would easily allow another child to embark on similar journey. If we allow her to go, we would be stone dead all through the period she would be on the road.

“Instead of understanding or empathising with us, the NYSC officials over there are threatening to penalise her if she fails to return within a stipulated period. I even called him to explain our ordeal to him but he rebuffed me. When she even went to notify one of the top officials that she lost her sister in an accident and would want to go with the vehicle conveying her remains, the man put obstacles in her path even when the bus was ready to leave and just waiting for her to join them. It is sheer callousness and I want to appeal to eminent Nigerians to help me facilitate the redeployment of my first daughter, Kadijat, who is serving with the Ministry of Finance in Kebbi State to a nearby place. There is no way we would have peace of mind if she goes back there. We have not overcome the shock we suffered and wouldn’t want our plight aggravated.”

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