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'Kill me too, I've nothing more to live for'

Posted By: [Olatunji Ololade](#) On: October 13, 2018 In: [News Update, Saturday Magazine](#)



—Plateau farmer whose nine family members were wiped out by gunmen

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HIS plight is such that many would not wish even their sworn enemies. A week after he lost his first born, gunmen invaded his home in Jos, Plateau State, and wiped out nine members of his family.

Now, 54-year-old Kogi Audu desires nothing but death, preferably by the same gunmen responsible for the death of his beloved wife and children. Narrating how the attack was carried out, Audu, said: "The attackers came at about 7 pm on a Thursday evening. I survived only because I was not at home when they came.

"Earlier in the day, I had worked on my farm just behind my house. By 6 pm, I got tired and decided to close for the day. Then I thought of strolling out to a relaxation centre. But while I was relaxing, my phone rang and I noticed that it was one of my neighbours that was calling me. I picked the call only to be told that some gunmen had invaded my house and killed all the members of my family.

"I thought it was a joke. I just thought that someone was playing some pranks on me. I never believed that in just 30 minutes after I left home, such a calamity would befall my family, so I ignored the call. But 10 minutes later, a friend ran to me with the news that all my family members had been killed. I said what sort of joke was that? But my friend insisted that it was not a joke.

"I still could not believe the story. I said well, maybe someone needed my attention at home, let me just go back. But by the time I reached my house, I saw my people lying in pools of blood. Initially, it appeared like a bad dream. I saw the bodies of my wife, my children, my mother and my son's pregnant wife all lying lifeless. I was confused because I could not believe that such a thing was possible.

"I asked my neighbours what happened, and they told me that some people came with guns, killed them and ran away. I simply asked my neighbours to take me to where the gunmen were so that they would also kill me, because I have nothing more to live for."

Asked what he thought the government could do for him in respect of what had happened, he said: “I have nothing to say. I have nothing to tell the government, because there is nothing they do that will bring my family back. They are dead, they are buried, and they are gone forever.”

Asked what he would do if he saw the killers of his wife and children, he retorted: “That is exactly what I am praying for. If I see them now, I will ask them to kill me also so I can join my family members wherever they are. That is just what I am looking for. And if you see them, tell them I am waiting for them to come and finish the job they started. I don’t want to live anymore. I cannot live with the agonies of this attack.”

In the second compound where three members of a family were killed, the only surviving 63-year-old Asabe Sunday said: “My 25-year-old son, Moses Sunday, my 26-year-old daughter, Blessing Sunday, and my husband, Sunday Dankura, were all killed by the gunmen. The gunmen terminated our 47-year-old marriage just like that. At the moment I have to relocate from the compound because I’m scared of staying alone.”

In Audu’s household where nine people were killed, three persons survived the attack miraculously, namely Audu himself, his second born, Miss Blessing Kogi, and his cousin, Fidelis Aweyi. It so happened that while the head of the family strolled out to connect with friends where they normally hang out in the evening, the cousin, Fidelis, just stepped out of the house to buy something from a nearby shop.

The third survivor, Blessing, an undergraduate of the University of Jos, had the most miraculous escape as she was right inside the room where nine people were killed. Why the bullets failed to hit her remains a mystery.

Recalling the ugly incident, she said: “I was together with my other brothers having our dinner in the parlour at about 7 pm. Initially, there were seven of us in the room, but two other family members, who were sent to bring food from a close family house, joined us

in the room and were all chatting and eating. All of a sudden, some unknown persons burst into the room without knocking. Two of them were carrying guns.

“The gunmen ordered us to lie down and all of us obeyed the order. Then one of them started shooting at us one after the other. I shouted ‘Jesus!’ three times. As they were shooting at us, they shot at me twice but the bullets did not hit me. I lay motionless, pretending that I was dead.

“Believing that they had killed all of us, they went into the rooms and killed my grandmother. After a while, they came back to the room where they were to confirm that we were all dead, but before they came back, I had rolled under the bed. Thinking that all of us had died, they left and disappeared into the rocky hills.

“It was when sympathisers came to the compound to see what had happened that I came out of hiding.”

Blessing added: “My father only escaped because he left the house before the gunmen came. Everyone in the house was killed except myself who miraculously escaped. Those killed included my mother, Talatu, my grandmother, Kende Audu, my late elder brother’s wife, Blessing Lucky, her son, Majesty Lucky, and three of my younger ones, Jonathan, Ishaya and Ruth. There were also three of my cousins, Dorcas, Sunday and Izimi.”

Audu recalled that two days before the incident, they had noticed the presence of some suspected herdsmen with some people in military uniforms loitering around the field behind their house. “When the community members approached them to find out what their mission was, the military men told the community that they were helping the people to search for one of their sons who got missing while grazing cows at the foot of the hills. missing behind our house, we should know about his disappearance. So, they vented their anger on us even when we knew nothing about their missing son. I don’t know if anyone told the suspected herdsmen that my family should be held responsible

Translate » g child. They just targeted my family and killed all of them.”

Audu had lost his eldest son, Lucky, in an ambush in which gunmen killed four persons in August. Lucky's widow, Blessing, and her only son, Majesty, were among the nine family members killed in the last attack.

One killing too many

Audu and members of his household are victims of the killings that have become a recurrent issue in Plateau State, particularly in the northern senatorial zone of the state where jungle justice is the only conflict resolution mechanism the people seem to embrace. Here, killings are used to resolve killings, and the more government takes steps to bring the killings to an end, the more the killings that are carried out.

In the first three years of Governor Simon Lalong's administration, there had been a respite in the frequency of tribal and communal attacks. But not a few observers believed that the peace that existed during the period was that of the graveyard, considering that there was bottled up anger and suppressed hatred all over the northern part of the state.

Security analysts have argued that the cessation of hostilities in those three years was only a mark of respect for the new administration. "The people affected had suspended hostilities in the hope that justice would be done by the new administration, but they returned to their trenches when they realised that the hope of justice was nothing but a pipe dream," one analyst told our reporter, preferring anonymity.

Investigation carried out by our reporter revealed that the recent attack was typical of the killings that have taken in Plateau State in the last decade. Survivors of the attack, who are of the Irigwe tribe in Bassa Local Government Area, are unanimous in their belief that the killings were carried out by suspected herdsmen. They alleged that it was a reprisal attack by the men who had lost a teenage herder about four days earlier. followed the trend of violence in the state. Once a herder's life or the life of a cow is

Translate » reprisal attack on people follows. Three days before the last attack, the

herdsmen community in the state had announced the disappearance of their 14-year-old boy named Sama'ila Muhammed while grazing cattle. The boy was said to have got missing in the area where the recent attack took place.

As usual, the case of the missing boy was said to have been reported at the Divisional Police Station in Bassa Local Government Area. With the efforts of security agencies, the lifeless body of the missing boy was said to have been found the next day. From that moment, an attack was anticipated. It therefore did not come as a surprise when three days later, some gunmen in black dresses stormed the premises where the boy was found and unleashed terror.

The gunmen unleashed terror on three homes, including that of Audu where nine people were killed. In the second home, the gunmen killed two, while in the third home, they killed three, bringing the number of deaths from the attack to 15.

As if they were not satisfied with taking 15 lives, they made attempts to kill three more people but the targets were lucky to escape with gunshot wounds. In the twinkling of an eye, the gunmen vanished into thin air.

The attack on the three families, which led to the death of 15 persons, almost set the entire Jos city on fire. Youths, who could not tolerate the killings, erupted in violence on Rukuba Road. They blocked the road and unleashed terror on road users in anger for the killings.

Before security agencies could respond, many innocent lives had been lost. The only security measure that could bring a halt to the widespread violence was a curfew the state government imposed on the state capital.

Although relative peace has been restored in the capital city, it is difficult to say if the cycle of violence in the state is over for good. Even the security agencies would not give

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ance. Only recently, the Irigwe and herders in the same Bassa Local

Government Area signed a peace agreement to stop killing one another. The two ethnic groups have been involved in ethnic and religious violence since August 2017, leading to loss of lives and destruction of farmlands, livestock and other properties worth billions of naira.

The peace agreement, which was coordinated by the commander of the Special Military Task Force, code-named Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), Maj-Gen Augustine Agundu, came exactly one year into the internal conflicts in the locality. The agreement was reached after a peace parley convened by the task force commander, which lasted for four hours at the OPSH Headquarters Jos.

The herders side was led into the meeting by the state chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Alhaji Nuru Muhammed, while the Irigwe community leaders were led by the Bra Ngwe Rigwe, Chief Ronku Aka.

In his opening address to the two parties, Gen. Agundu said: "I appreciate your response to the meeting. It shows we are all interested in peace in our land. But I want you to realise that you have shed enough of blood on the Plateau, and it is time to give peace a chance.

"This conflict is man-made, and it is we men that should sit down and resolve it. A lot of innocent people have died in this conflict and no one is gaining anything from the conflict. We should consider those who died in the conflict as sacrifice for peaceful coexistence."

After a four-hour meeting behind close door, the leader of the herdsmen, Alhaji Nuru Muhammed, and that of the Irigwe, HRH Rev. Ronku Aka, had a joint press conference revealing the points of agreement, saying: "The meeting was an opportunity to express our deep point of disagreements, and it is also an opportunity to resolve those disagreements. In a nutshell, we have resolved to cease fire, because we have

Translate » one another.

“There will be no more attacks in our communities. If there is any further attack, it will be considered as a criminal act, and the person that carries out the attack must be fished out and treated as a criminal. There will be no further farmer, herders clash as it used to be because of this parley today.

“Having reached the agreement as leaders on behalf of our people, we are going back home to inform our people to embrace the other party and see them as member of the same community. In addition to that, we are going to organise several programmes of integration like sporting activities, festivals and so on.”

The peace agreement, which was entered into on August 11, could only last for one month. Shortly after it, reports of pockets of killings and rustling began to filter out from among those who signed the peace agreement. The recent killing of 15 members of Irigwe families was one incident that made nonsense of the peace agreement between the two warring tribes.



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