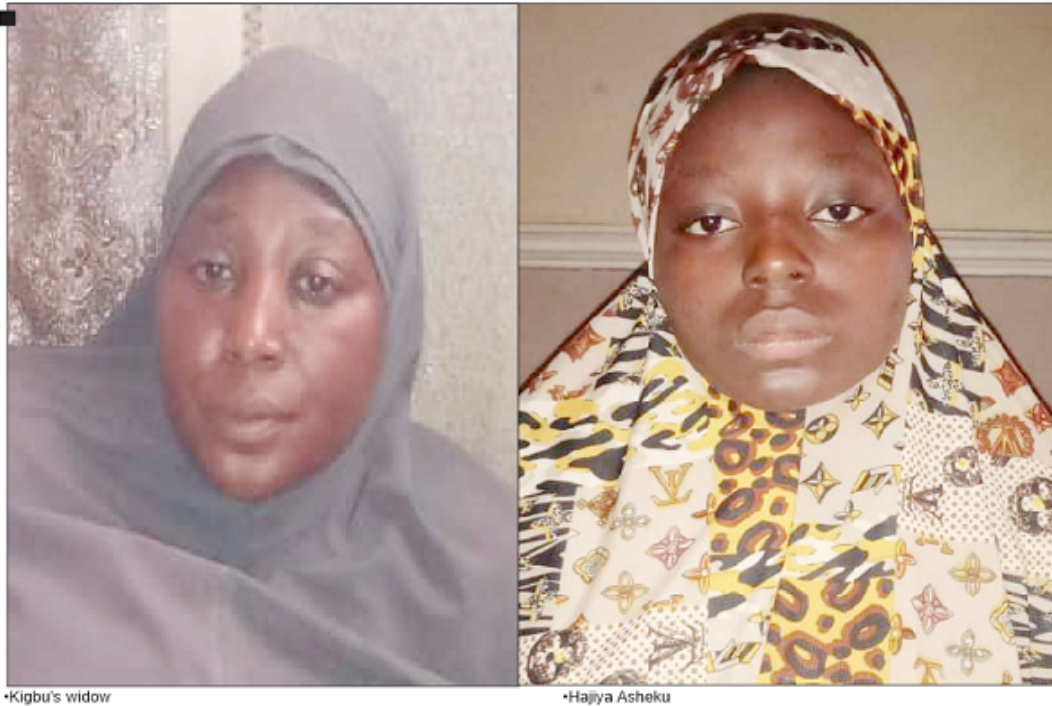


'My father surrendered himself to gunmen as they were pumping bullets into our toilet hideout'

...Daughter of murdered ex-NPC commissioner relives horror night with assassins

By Linus Oota, Lafia On Jun 11, 2022



Upon a visit to the country home of Zakari Umaru Kigbu, a former federal commissioner with the National Population Commission (NPC) assassinated by gunmen on May 28, it was easy to realise that his death amounted to losing a gem and life support for members of his immediate and extended families.

The gloomy faces and the sober mien that pervaded his country home in Azuba Bashayi, Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, were proofs that his family was shattered by his death.

The gunmen had also kidnapped one of his sons, 22-year-old Umar Musa Anzaku and one of his relations Hadiza Zakari, who is about 30 years old. The duo was kidnapped after Kigbu was killed and all the phones in the house were collected except the one belonging to him, which he was said to have used in making calls to the police before he was killed.

Aged 60, the retired Air Force officer was until his death a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, Isa Mustapha Agwai Polytechnic, Lafia (IMAP).

According to one of the sympathisers who thronged the family house upon learning about his death, the deceased lecturer was the sole breadwinner of the family of six because his wife had no job.

As tears flowed freely from family members and friends and neighbours battled to console the deceased's widow and children, our correspondent was not spared of the outflow of emotions, especially when his 29-year-old daughter, Umaru Hajiya Asheku, tearfully narrated how her father was killed by his attackers.

Asheku said: "I am the fifth of Zakari Umaru Kigbu's children and his only daughter.

"On that fateful day, I was in the parlour of our house with my father, mother and siblings, watching a programme on the television.

"While we were watching the TV, my father and mother went into their room to sleep. Some of my siblings also went in to sleep, because the incident happened around 11pm

"I was left in the parlour with one of my brothers who was transferring some files to his computer.

"Suddenly, we heard a gunshot in our compound. One of my siblings immediately ran to lock the kitchen door leading to the backyard.

"Some of us ran into our father's room to hide while others went to hide in our mother's room.

"The criminals, who were fully armed, forced the entrance door open and were coming straight to our father's room.

"When my father noticed that they were coming towards his room, he told all of us in the room to go out and hide in the store.

"The attackers tried to break his door but they could not because it is a strong door, so they began to search for us.

"When we noticed that they could easily find us in the store, we went into our mother's toilet to hide while praying that God should help us out of the situation.

"They kept searching for us in the house and they were wondering where we could be.

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"While they were searching all over the house, they heard us whispering in the toilet where we were hiding.

"They then asked us to come out or they would break down the door and shoot all of us.

"Because we were scared, we refused to come out, so, they told some of their members who were standing outside to shoot us through the toilet window.

"So, they started shooting but we were all bending down while they were shooting.

“As the attack went on, my father made several attempts to call the police and the military to come to our aid but he did not get a positive response.

“So, he had no other option but to come out of his room in order to protect us, and that was when they shot him.

“When we heard the gunshot, we all rushed out and saw him on the ground in a pool of blood.”

Asheku said the attackers were four in number, adding that she did not know whether the attack was politically motivated.

“My father was very close to politicians but we don’t know the reason for the attack,” she added.

“When the attackers came that night, they were shouting that we should open the door because the days of my father were over.

“They said they must kill him before leaving the house that night

“When they shot him and we all came out and saw blood all over the place, he looked at us passionately but could not speak because he was already weak. Minutes later, he died.”

Asheku said her father was “a very easy-going man. He always prayed for all of us to be successful in our chosen careers.

“He also prayed for extended family members and friends. He taught us how to forgive those who hurt us.

“My father was a good man. He wanted my siblings and I to finish from school and get good jobs so that we can be independent.

“His plan was for us to become financially stable in the future so that we can also help the underprivileged in society.”

She said it had not been easy for the family since the unfortunate incident of the 28th of last month.

“We have all been crying since the incident. Our father was shot dead in our presence. The pains are unbearable and our future looks blink because he was the sole breadwinner of the family as my mother is not working,” she said.

Also speaking to our correspondent, a former minister of information and 2022 PDP governorship aspirant in Nasarawa State, Labaran Maku, said the late Kigbu was his friend and political ally

Maku said: “We met many years ago in Lagos State. We were quite young then but we supported each other and lived happily.

“At that time, he was working with the Nigerian Air Force. He later left the job and we both returned to Nasarawa State.

“Since our return, he had served as president of our cultural group, the Eggon Cultural and Development Association. He also worked with the state owned Isa Mustapha Agwai Polytechnic in Lafia and he served as the National Population Commission as the federal commissioner in Nasarawa State. military using his secondary school certificate. But after that, he acquired two different degrees in Mass Communication and Law.

“He was waiting to go to the Law School while he was also studying to be a PhD holder at the Nasarawa State University in Keffi.”

Maku further said he was pained that for close to two hours when the criminals were to break into his house, Kigbu tried calling the police and the military but they were not able to rescue him.

He said: “Some people went to report at the police station in the area and the police sent only two personnel who came with just one gun. But when they noticed that the criminals were fully armed they went back and left Zakari and his family in the situation.

“What surprised me is that his house is not far from the road in Azuba Bashayi, Lafia North Development Area.

“By the time the military arrived, he had already been killed and they took two of his children away.

“My prayer is that God Almighty should accept his soul and grant him eternal rest.”

The former minister described the late Kigbu as a man of peace.

“He loves God so much. Anytime we met, he always spoke about living a good life that would make God happy.

“He was very concerned about how he lived with people. He was not a trouble maker.

“He never slept at night with anger in his mind. If anyone offended him, he always forgave the person before going to bed at night.