

editorial

That Kubwa murder

THE story is as bizarre as it is distressing: a young lady was allegedly killed by her co-tenant over such a trivial issue as spreading clothes on an improvised local hanger. That was the tragic lot of Salamatu Yunusa, a 19-year-old who was reportedly stabbed to death by her co-tenant at Byazhin in Kubwa town of Bwari Local Government Area of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, last week. According to reports, the deceased met her sad fate on Tuesday, March 19 during an altercation with her co-tenant identified as Immaculate Chukwudi. Salamatu had accused Immaculate's son, David Ikebuahu, a seven year-old, of spitting into a bowl of water she had stored in the compound where, as a secondary school student, she resided with her elder sister, Bilikisu Yunusa. And then the unthinkable had happened.

Recalling the incidents that led to the tragic outcome, Bilikisu said she had intervened in a matter involving another tenant, a pastor whom the suspect asked to pack his clothes off the hanger while they were still wet. Her words: "I saw the pastor packing the clothes that he had washed, even though they were yet to dry and when I tried to find out why, he simply told me that it was the suspect that demanded it. I commended his decision, only for the woman to come out and threaten to deal with me, accusing me of being involved in the matter. She brought out a knife later around 10 pm and continued to make noise in the house." The following morning, however, the situation degenerated as the suspect's son allegedly spat in the water Bilikisu had fetched, a development which was said to have provoked the deceased into emptying it all on the floor. The suspect then allegedly got a bowl filled with water and drenched the deceased with it.

Sadly, the deceased was still dealing with this assault when the suspect drove a knife into her chest. She was reportedly rushed to the Kubwa General Hospital for medical attention, but it was too late. The doctors on duty certified her dead. According to the FCT police command, the matter is still being investigated and the suspect will soon be charged to court. The victim, Salma, was buried last Wednesday at her hometown in Ajagwunu in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.

This story is, to say the least. It is horrendous, dispiriting and distressing. The death of the victim in this case is extremely painful. It was totally needless. If reports by eyewitnesses are to be believed, it was her sister, Bilikisu, who had initially been accused by the knife-wielding suspect of being involved in the matter of clothes drying that involved her (the suspect) and another neighbour. The suspect in this case, who seemed to have treated her

co-tenants with utter contempt, not only had the temerity to order a co-tenant to take his clothes off the improvised clothes hanger even though they were still wet, she also threatened the victim's elder sister, Bilikisu, with a knife over a matter that was ordinarily trivial, and in all probability, she (Bilikisu) could have suffered a calamitous fate following her probing questions about the actions of the unnamed pastor whose discretion most probably prevented another tragic episode in this case. What would have happened if he had asserted his right to use the clothes hanger as a co-tenant lies in the realm of the unknown, but there is a distinct possibility that it could have been ghastly. Because of Immaculate's vengeful and horrific action, an innocent young soul lies in the grave at the moment, a crude blow to her family and friends who have to live, for the rest of their days, with the reality of losing a loved one in the most absurd of circumstances. No anger justifies murder under any circumstance. Now that murder has been committed, has the murderer won the argument she was so passionate about? Has she not become tainted for life?

True, there is tension in the land and seemingly trivial matters can quickly precipitate crisis. In this regard, it is not impossible that the situation to which Immaculate reacted was rooted in anger over certain personal frustrations. However, citizens need to mellow down. They owe themselves the bounden duty of not allowing whatever socioeconomic pains they feel to lead them into taking precipitate, criminal actions with sad consequences. As we have said time and again, murder cannot be justified under any guise. If the suspect felt personally affronted by the deceased or her sister, she could have reported the matter to their landlord or some other authority in the area and if the matter was one they could not resolve. She would have been well within her rights to take the matter to the police, or even approach the court of law to seek redress. The fact that she did not take this socially acceptable pathway speaks to the dysfunctionality of her existence and the depraved values to which she subscribes. If reports in the media are anything to go by, the suspect has a bloated sense of self-worth and is vengeful, uncouth and irascible. If every tenant in the affected house or street had been like her, would she have been able to live in that environment? Who gave her the authority to cut short another person's life just to satisfy a depraved craving?

The police must ensure a thorough, painstaking investigation of this case in the interest of justice, and to serve as a deterrent to would-be murderers. Crime without consequences can only breed anarchy.