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Another Assassination at Benue University

Written by Sam Adzegeh, Kaduna

Monday, 04 May 2009

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Cultists operating at the Benue State University kill a professor, the second of such assassination in a few months

The activities of secret cults are currently threatening academic and social activities in the Benue State University, BSU, Makurdi. Between April 20 and 24 this year, academic and social activities were disrupted in the university as lecturers resolved to stay away from lectures following the brutal murder of one of their colleagues.

Gwa Jande, a professor and lecturer in the law department was shot dead at about 8.30 p.m on Monday, April 20, at a popular relaxation spot known as Resta Plaza located directly opposite the university. He was in the company of two friends. Witnesses disclosed that the three friends were having a quiet chat when a young man, believed to be a student, walked up to them and shot Jande in the face at close range. He was then said to have ordered the two others to lie down on their faces and thereafter, proceeded to rob them of their handsets and cash amounting to about N10,000. Another witness told *Newswatch* that the young man told the law professor, "You don fuck up too much," before gunning him down.

The killing of the law professor gave rise to a number of theories concerning the motive behind the murder. One theory claimed that the killing was politically motivated. Jande was said to have been penciled down for a top political appointment by the Benue State Government. Those who believe in this theory alleged that the professor must have been eliminated by a person or group of persons who saw him as a rival for the position.

Another theory suggested that the lecturer must have been eliminated by student cultists who may have failed his course or courses. One common factor that is, however, agreed upon by the two schools of thought is that the killing must have been contracted to a student cult member, many of whom are alleged to be hired assassins. Samuel Jinadu, spokesman of the Benue State Police Command, confirmed the murder of the professor and disclosed that the police were not restricting their investigation to any particular theory. "We are considering a wide range of possible clues in our investigations. We hope that the extensive dragnet being used by the police to investigate the crime would soon produce positive results and unravel the mystery in due course," he said. He said no arrests have yet been made in connection with the case by press time last week.

The lecturer's assassination brought to the fore a problem which the university authorities had been grappling with over the years but had played down. In July last year, some persons believed to be student cultists stormed the house of David Yongo, a lecturer in the History department, at about midnight and shouted at him to come out of the house. They said they had come specifically for him and fired several rounds of ammunition into his house where he was hiding with Chinwe, his wife, and children. After about 40 minutes, Yongo succeeded in running into the bush and escaped. The attackers later shot his wife dead as she tried to run for safety with Faeren, her son. They also shot the four-year-old boy in the leg.

Yongo told *Newswatch* that he strongly believe that his attackers were student cultists who might have failed his courses since they made no attempt to enter the house. He also said nothing was stolen from the house. The lecturer is reputed to be a non-sense individual who insists that students take their academic activities seriously. Police, last week said they had arrested eight persons in connection with the incident and had charged them to court for armed robbery. Jande's killing is the latest high point in the series of violent deaths on the campus, Raphael Amokaha, president of Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, BSU branch, confirmed that several lecturers had been attacked or harassed by student cultists. "Definitely there have been threats to some of my members. I know that the Deputy Dean of the post graduate school had two bullets mailed to him. A female lecturer in the department of Religion and Philosophy was also harassed, and so on and so forth."

Recently another lecturer in History department received a chilling text message on his mobile telephone which said, "Yongo was not warned. You have the privilege of being warned. You should be careful." In another incident, unknown persons broke into the office of one lecturer and vandalised his belongings. They also left him a note which warned him to be careful in his activities. The office of the Deputy Dean, Students' Affairs, was also burnt down recently, ostensibly to destroy answer scripts stored in the office.

Amokaha explained that in most cases, those who participate in such activities are students who have problems with their academic endeavours. He said that the



Yakubu
Mohammed

activities of campus cults had served to demoralise lecturers as there is no longer the zeal to work. "You can't help feeling that the next time it could be you. You may not even know that you have a problem with somebody" he told *Newswatch*.

Akase Sorkaa, vice-chancellor of the university, said in a recent interview that the school has a zero tolerance attitude towards cultism. He denied the existence of secret cults on the two campuses of the university, insisting that his administration had developed an intricate network of security that could easily detect the existence of any such groups.

The ASUU president pointed out that the university only pays lip service to security issues. "They may express zero tolerance for secret cults in principle, but have they been able to implement it in practice? The answer is an emphatic no. There is no will power to stop it. As at now, as far as security on campus is concerned, there is still a lot of room for improvement."

Ciboh Rodney, a lecturer in the department of Mass Communication, also confirmed that there is tension among the lecturers as no one is sure of his security. "All you can do is to continue to do your work and pray that you have no quarrel with anyone."

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