

Four-year-old pupil killed in Lagos shrine, parents, others arrested

Published August 17, 2017

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The shrine

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Grief was the ambience of Ogbe Close, Iwaya, Yaba, Lagos State, on Wednesday, after a four-year-old girl, Faridat Sulyman, was found dead in a shrine at the back of her parents' apartment.

The victim was reportedly recovered in a pool of blood at about 8pm on Tuesday with a deep cut on her throat.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the girl and her two siblings – Fawaz, 11, and Roqeebat, 9 – had gone to a summer school in the neighbourhood at about 2pm while their mother went to a market to buy foodstuffs.

From the school, they reportedly went to an Arabic school. After closing at about 7pm, they went to observe prayer in a mosque and subsequently went to their mother's friend's shop around the school to wait for her.

Faridat, who was playing around the shop, disappeared shortly before the mother arrived to take them home.

They were said to be searching for her when the mother, Bunmi Sulyman, stumbled on her body at the shrine at the back of their apartment.

Blood traces of the deceased were seen at a makeshift beside the shrine when our correspondent visited the scene on Wednesday.

Policemen were also seen monitoring the scene of the crime.

It was gathered that the parents and eight neighbours had been picked up by the police for interrogation.

Bunmi, who spoke with *PUNCH Metro* at the Sabo Police Station, said she suspected that an elderly woman she had earlier sighted killed her daughter.

She said, "The woman and a girl came around 8am with palm wine, salt, palm oil and a hen she wanted to slaughter at the shrine. I don't know their names. After praying at the shrine, the woman called our neighbours' children, but nobody answered her.

"It is one Ola Sheu and Kazeem, who normally help her to do the slaughtering. She called people from our compound, but nobody responded. She later left. I suspect she came back in the evening.

"After searching for my daughter for about an hour without success, I decided to observe *Ishai* (8pm) prayer. I wanted to perform ablution at the scene when I saw traces of blood. I initially thought it was the blood of the hen. I shone my torchlight on it and discovered that the blood was much.

“I traced the path of the blood and saw my daughter lying beside the shrine. Her throat was cut. They covered her mouth so that she would not scream. I raised the alarm and her father, who had been at home since 7pm, rushed out. We took her to different hospitals, but she was rejected. She was confirmed dead on arrival at the Yaba General Hospital.”

Bunmi said although the owner of the shrine was late, his child, Lekan, worshipped there every year, adding that he usually used dogs to perform rituals at the shrine.

“Faridat was very smart and intelligent. She walked around the neighbourhood alone, but I never thought she would end up this way. She just finished kindergarten 1 and was given a prize for coming first in her class,” she added.

The state Commissioner of Police, Fatai Owoseni, who confirmed the incident during a press briefing at the Police Officers’ Mess, Ikeja, on Wednesday, said he had visited “the Ogun shrine.”

He said, “We have seen the tool with which that child was killed. We have taken about 10 persons into custody for interrogation, including the parents of the child. We are not saying categorically that they killed the child, but the 10 persons are being questioned. A preliminary investigation shows that there is actually an element of conspiracy in the matter.”

Meanwhile, Owoseni said one Ahmed Adeleke was responsible for an attack on a Cherubim and Seraphim church, Orioke Irapada parish, Agbowa, during which a worshipper’s head was smashed with a stone.

Our correspondent had reported that the victim was attacked after a vigil in the church on August 5.

The CP said the stone, three handkerchiefs, and a bloodstained white garment used by the suspect, had been recovered, adding that the suspect refused to confess to the crime despite the exhibits.

The suspect, Adeleke, who claimed to be a hairdresser apprentice, told *PUNCH Metro* that he was invited to the church by a colleague, Kehinde.

He said, “I live on Ojokoro Street, Agric, Ikorodu. I went to worship at the church that day and put my garment in a bag after the vigil. I was returning home when I heard people shouting *Badoo*. They beat me up. Kehinde was also at the church that day.”