

# 17-year-old girl, others battle gunshot injuries inflicted by soldiers

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Simi Danladi

***Friday Olorok and Afeez Hanafi***

Seventeen days after they were shot by soldiers attached to a military task force, *Operation Safe Haven*, three residents of Sopp community, in the Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State, are still battling to survive gunshot injuries inflicted on them.

Residents of the area said the Nigerian Army abandoned the victims in hospitals.

The victims are Danjuma Kazi, his son, Irimiya, and a 17-year-old girl, Simi Danladi.

It had been reported that the soldiers had engaged two residents – James Audu and Jacob Musa – to bail out dirty water from a well near their checkpoint in the neighbourhood.

It was said the men died in the well after allegedly inhaling some chemicals and their corpses were abandoned by the soldiers.

Our correspondent had reported that the residents trooped out to protest against the action of the soldiers and they reportedly responded with shooting.

The Youth Leader of the Community, Solomon Tam, who spoke with *PUNCH Metro* on the telephone on Monday said the victims were still in hospitals, adding that his efforts to get the team commander to intervene in the matter were unproductive.

He said, “The incident happened on **Thursday, October 19.** There is a checkpoint in the community mounted by men of *Operation Safe Haven*. The well was dug in 1989. The soldiers had called some youths to clean the well.

“On the day, they called James (Audu) and Jacob (Musa) to clean the well for them. The soldiers had already put some chemicals to kill any creatures in the well.

“The first person went in, but he could not come out. The other person went in to see what happened to his partner; he became trapped as well. They both died in the well.

“When the attention of the soldiers was drawn to the incident, they did not show any concern. The women in the community began to protest, asking the soldiers to save the two persons. The soldiers beat the women. The community head begged the soldiers, they abused him. Their commander promised to call the fire service personnel to rescue the men, but he never did.”

Tam explained further that the soldiers later went berserk and opened fire on youths who joined the women in the protest.

He said the soldiers shot three persons, noting the victims were in critical conditions at different hospitals.

He said, “The youths destroyed some of the soldiers property at the checkpoint. One of the soldiers wanted to shoot Danjuma (Kazi) and he grabbed him to prevent the shooting. About 20 soldiers descended on Danjuma and beat him up, saying he wanted to snatch the gun.

“A soldier shot him three times in his foot. When his son tried to intervene, another soldier shot the boy in the jaw. His jaw was shattered. He is receiving treatment at the Jos University Teaching Hospital.

“Danladi also protested against the shooting and a soldier shot her twice in the thigh. The victims were shot at close range. When he wanted to shoot Simi in the chest, I ran to him and begged him.

“He kicked her on the face. A lady told me that the soldier had wanted to befriend Simi, but she refused. Danjuma and Simi are receiving treatment at a hospital in Plateau.

“The Nigerian Army authorities are not doing anything. We have been going to their headquarters. The commander promised to visit the victims at the hospitals. As of today (Monday), he has not visited them.”

The head of the community, Pam Dachung, said he was alerted to the incident while he was away from the village. He added that he rushed to the scene but he could not prevail on the soldiers and the angry youths.

“There were a lot of gunshots from the soldiers. I had to hide somewhere. Three persons were shot and the soldiers’ vans were also destroyed,” he added.

The spokesperson for the *Operation Safe Haven*, Capt Umar Adams, stated that the residents had gone on the rampage, attacking the soldiers.

He said, “The girl was one of the casualties during the violent protests against our troops after they alleged that our troops killed two persons inside a well. They ganged up and started a violent demonstration during which they damaged the accommodation of our soldiers, their vehicles and even their checkpoints.

“Some youths came en masse and tried to disarm our soldiers. Our soldiers are trained and they know their mandate.”