

My baby didn't eat throughout the day her father was murdered – Wife of Ekiti man stabbed to death by Air Force official

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Late Lateef

Abiodun Nejo, Ado Ekiti

Felicia Salami and her husband, Lateef Salami were epitome of an ideal couple. With their three kids of between two and eight years old, they lived happily together in the city of Ekiti State, exuding modesty, love and peace. But all of those exciting moments came crashing recently when 42-year-old Lateef was stabbed to death by an Air Force man, Femi Taiwo, in Ado Ekiti – some distance away from the family's residence in the Graceland area, Oke Ureje.

Lateef had set out in the morning to fuel his Toyota Carina at a nearby filling station. That was after he and her wife bantered and had a good laugh. The father of three had promised his wife to return later in the day to resume the fun, unaware of the cruel fate waiting to befall her soon after.

He had reportedly asked the landlord of a house along his street to remove the barricade mounted on a section of the road, but the man refused. In the argument that ensued afterwards, the man's son, Taiwo, who is an Air Force official, reportedly dragged Lateef from the car and beat him up and

tore his clothes.

Not done, the military man allegedly stabbed Lateef in the back with a knife, leaving him for dead. The victim bled to death at a hospital where he was rushed to. “It is unbelievable,” the widow remarked emotively, as she began to share the sad tales the tragedy had left in the family. “I didn’t know that morning of February 13, 2019 was the last day I would see my husband,” she recalled.

“There was scarcity of fuel in some parts of the country including Ado-Ekiti that period. My husband woke up around 6am and after we cracked some jokes, he drove out to scout for fuel. After driving three houses away from our compound, he discovered that part of the road had been blocked. About two minutes after his departure, I heard a noise. I opened the curtain of my room to have a glimpse but when I could not see anything and the noise persisted, I went to open the window of the living room.

“I saw some people who gathered. Some of them were pointing towards the direction of our house. From the ensuing noise, I could identify the voice of my husband yelling. I rushed out through the back door. I met him on his way back home, his clothes had been torn. He was only in boxers. He was drenched in blood as he covered the back of his neck, where blood was oozing out, with his hand.

“I shouted, ‘what happened to you?’ he said it was the Air Force man who stabbed him. One of our neighbours on the street assisted and we took him to the hospital. I learnt the Air Force man dragged him out of his vehicle, tore his clothes and beat him up. It was when my husband was heading back home to change his clothes that the man stabbed him in the back.”

She said efforts to save the life of her husband at the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, where he was referred to, proved abortive having lost so much blood.

“While he was on the hospital bed before he died, I asked him what happened and he told me that he asked the house owner to remove the barrier on the road. He said he was beaten up by the Air Force man, who was the son of the owner of the house. I asked him why he didn’t drive away from the scene to avoid the ugly incident; he said they dragged him out of his vehicle. He said the Air Force man was heatless and brutal. I am still at a loss over how he could be killed over this trivial matter,” the woman explained.

Felicia said since the tragic death of her beloved husband, things had taken a terrible dimension in the affairs of the family. Describing her husband as “a loving and caring father,” the 37-year-old widow lamented that the incident had left in her heart a sore that she might bear for the rest of her life.

“Since his demise, things have not been as expected. It is a sad and traumatic experience for the family. Throughout that day, my two-year-old girl didn’t eat. It was a great loss for the family. When he left home that morning, I was expecting him to return in the evening to the warm embrace of the family, not knowing I would see him so soon on a sad note,” she added.

Felicia urged the police to get justice for the family by ensuring the Air Force official, who had been arrested, is prosecuted.

She stated, “We demand justice. According to the laws of this country, anybody that kills must be killed. Even the Holy Bible established it that anybody that kills with the sword must die by the sword.”

The younger brother of the deceased, Ismail Abdulsalam, wondered why the suspect was still in police detention at Police Headquarters, Ekiti State Command, Ado Ekiti, two weeks after he was arrested.

He urged the police not to sweep the case under the carpet. “I believe the killer ought to have been taken to court for trial,” Ismail added.

Speaking further, Ismail said immediately he was invited to EKSUTH where he saw his brother’s lifeless body at the Emergency Ward, he reported the matter to the police at Okesa Area Command.

He said, “Since the suspect has been arrested, legal process must begin to ensure justice for the innocent Nigerian he had killed and the family that his action had put into trauma. It is more worrisome that since the killing of my brother, none of the members of the family of the killer Air Force man has deemed it fit to visit us. This shows callousness of the highest order. We don’t even know whether there is still more to the killing.”

Since the event, the house, where the Air Force man perpetrated the crime has been deserted as the inhabitants are believed to have gone into hiding to prevent reprisal and perhaps arrest.

The spokesman for the Ekiti State Police Command, DSP Caleb Ikechukwu, while commenting on the incident, said the military man would be prosecuted when investigation had been concluded.

Ikechukwu said, “There is a procedure since he is a serving officer with the Air Force. We have written to them. We have written to their command that an officer of theirs was arrested with regard to murder.

“They will now reply us requesting us to transfer him to them so that they will try him and dismiss him and then return him to face prosecution. We have written to the appropriate authority.”

When asked to comment on the self-defence theory being bandied by the side of the military man, the police spokesman, said: “Whatever information he is going to give will be to his own favour because the other party is dead.

“But what we can substantiate now is that a weapon was used on the deceased and that led to his death. As it stands now, from our preliminary investigation, we can see that he used weapon – dagger, they call it jack knife – on the deceased and that led to the death of the deceased. He was confirmed dead at the hospital,” the police spokesman said.