

Yusuf's wish was to become a soldier, protect Nigeria –Brother of Gombe teenager killed over food

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Abubakar Abdullahi

One Abubakar Abdullahi, 17, of the Idi Quarter, Gombe, was recently arrested by the police for fatally stabbing 15-year-old Yusuf Suleiman following a dispute over the sharing formula of Masa (rice cake) gift. The police said a long knife believed to be the murder weapon was recovered from the suspect. Auwal Abubakar tells CHIMA AZUBUIKE how the incident occurred and the pain his brother's death has brought to his family

Your brother, Yusuf Suleiman, was recently stabbed to death, how did you hear about his death?

I'm a 200 level student of Islamic Studies, Gombe State University. It was my younger sister who was there that called me. Yusuf was stabbed in two parts – his stomach and chest region. Immediately the sad occurrence occurred, she ran to me to narrate what happened.

What came to your mind when you heard about his death?

I could not believe that he was stabbed for no reason. What immediately came to my mind was that nothing must happen to him. He must not die. When we got to the spot, he was still alive but was very weak so we took him to the hospital.

Did you know the teenager who allegedly killed him? I know the boy really well. We stay in the same neighbourhood. Unfortunately, he had said he would kill Yusuf.

So what did you do after he said he would kill your brother?

We did nothing because we thought it was a joke. It was Yusuf that told us that Abdullahi (accused killer) said he would kill him but unfortunately we dismissed it. We never reported the threat to the police.

Some people are wondering why he was stabbed over food. Was Yusuf starving when he was alive?

No, he was not starving. There is a place for alms giving. There is a woman who regularly gives Masa (local food) free to people every Friday. So on that day, Abdullahi's brother was given food and he returned for another serving when others had yet to get any. It was then Yusuf exposed him for having collected before and that he should allow others collect. Abdullahi's younger brother, Khalifa Abdullahi, then left to tell his brother, Abdullahi.

The infuriated Abdullahi then came with his knife and stabbed Yusuf the in the stomach and chest region.

What do your parents do?

My father is a cap washer; he washes local caps called Hula for a living.

Was Yusuf a pupil or working?

Yusuf was a senior secondary school one pupil of Government Day Secondary School, Gandu, Gombe State.

Can you remember the last time you saw him before he was stabbed?

The last moment was memorable; he was full of life. He radiated happiness. Yusuf looked cheerful as always. Right from 6am on that day when we went to the mosque together to when he left home later that day, he looked happy.

What happened the last time you saw him?

It was in the hospital. Right from the moment I arrived at the scene of attack to the time I took him to the hospital, he was in a calm state.

What was the last statement you said to him or that he said to you?

Suddenly, I became brave. I reassured him that he would not die. I told him Allah would help him and that all would be well. The last statement he made was: "Brother Auwal, Allah is great." He recited a line in the Koran.

What did he want to become in future?

He wanted to become a soldier when he became an adult.

Do you believe that he will get justice?

Yes, I believe we can get justice. I hope the government will ensure justice is done.

What kind of justice do you want for him?

It is spelt out in the constitution that you must not kill. But in this case, the culprit is a minor; he should be held till he is of age and then face justice.

If you had the power to pass judgment on the suspect, what would be your judgment?

I would wish him to face the consequences as the law stipulates. But we will want action immediately.

How have your parents been dealing with his death?

As you know, it is not an easy thing to lose your child, especially a promising one. We have put the matter in the hands of Allah. My mother has been shedding tears ever since. Yusuf had six siblings – two males and four females. We have been carrying on, although it has not been easy. I have been doing my best to console my siblings.

What kind of child was he?

He was an obedient son to our parents. He was a humble brother to me. He was friendly, kind, diligent. I can describe Yusuf as someone who had a promising future. He had a dream of becoming a soldier to protect the territorial sovereignty of Nigeria. He was kind; he did not like injustice as you must have observed from his action and from the entire episode that led to his untimely death. He could not keep quiet while someone who had got a share of Masa get more when many others had not got any.

Did you ever think he would die at such a young age?

Never! It never crossed my mind that Yusuf would die in this manner, let alone at this age. He was healthy and peaceful. May Allah reward his deeds!