

PANORAMA

Family cries for justice as Nasarawa officials kill siblings, detain brother for complaining

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UMAR MOHAMMED writes on the killing of two members of the same family allegedly by officials of the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Scheme

Tears have continued to flow at the residence of the Alkalis in Lafia, Nasarawa State, following the tragic demise of two members of the family, Destiny, 17, and Patience, 20. The latter graduated from the Nasarawa State Polytechnic and was on internship with the Guaranty Trust Bank in the capital city.

Family members are still at a loss over the death of the siblings. Sadly, no satisfactory explanations have been offered by the authorities and this has been a source of frustration and anger for their bereaved parents.

The circumstances of the siblings' death are hazy, but according to reports, Destiny and Patience were on a motorcycle on April 26, 2020, when they were knocked down by officials of the Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Scheme for allegedly breaching the COVID-19 lockdown order.

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The motorcycle reportedly crashed and a keg of fuel being conveyed by the siblings exploded, burning the victims. Destiny died at the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia, while his sister was said to have passed away at the Federal Medical Centre, Makurdi, Benue State, 24 hours after.

The victims were buried at their parents' compound on April 29, 2020, amidst wailing and tears.

Narrating the shocking incident, the father, Mr Abdul Alkali, said his children went to buy fuel at a filling station and were returning home when the motorcycle conveying them crashed following an encounter with officials of the NAYES at the Diamond Bank junction.

Instead of taking the victims to hospital, the officials allegedly ran to the nearby police station to report the accident.

According to the retired deputy superintendent of police, he received a distress call that his children were on admission at the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia.

“The NAYES men ran away, but an eyewitness, who gave his name as Abdullahi Adamu said the officials caused the crash,” Alkali stated.

The grieving father said his son, Promise, who visited the NAYES office to lodge a formal complaint against the personnel, was detained for allegedly lying against them.

He stated, “I went to NAYES office and was told that their boss was not around; so, I went to see the Divisional Police Officer at the ‘A’ Division to let him know what happened. I saw a NAYES official tell the DCO that we were making false allegations against their men.

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“I told the DCO that the victims were my children and I identified them by name. I told the DPO that if he did not take up the case, I would do so myself. So, the DPO and the DCO went with me to the hospital, where they found that it was a serious matter.”

Alkali disclosed that Destiny died on April 26 before arrangements for his transfer to the Federal Medical Centre, Markudi, could be concluded.

“Destiny died before the ambulance that was meant to convey him to the FMC, Makurdi, arrived. I was asked to pay N35,000 to convey Patience to the FMC for proper medical care. I gave them the money and on April 27, the girl passed away,” he said in an emotion-laden voice.

The former policeman expressed anger over the loss of his children, noting that the deceased suffered burns.

“I feel so bad because the NAYES men hit the boy and his sister with sticks and ran away after they crashed. I saw my children completely burnt beyond recognition,” he stated.

A family member, Mrs Victoria David, said, “It is very unfortunate that these children were killed in cold blood. They were on a motorcycle when the NAYES officials hit them with sticks, resulting in the accident that claimed their lives.”

She said the mother of the victims, Christiana, had been inconsolable since the incident occurred, adding, “Christiana cannot talk; she is almost at the point of death. The children were like the eyes of their mother.”

According to her, the bereaved mother is hypertensive and there are fears that the tragedy may worsen her condition.

Victoria called for the arrest and prosecution of the NAYES personnel, whom she accused of masterminding the crash that claimed the lives of the siblings.

Speaking on the quality of care at the hospital, Promise explained that there were no doctors at the casualty unit of the medical facility where the victims were first taken to.

He decried the quality of medical care, adding that the workers at the DASH, Lafia, performed below expectation.

“How do you treat 93-degree burns with just Penta, paracetamol and normal saline?” Promise asked.

This, he said, explained why the family asked for referral to the Federal Medical Centre, where the victims could get better attention and care.

He said, “The hospital wrote a referral letter on April 27, 2020, and my brother was supposed to be referred together with my sister, but in the process, he passed away before the arrival of the ambulance.

“The ambulance took Patience to the FMC, where she died, and the two siblings were buried together in my father’s compound.”

But the NAYES’ General Manager, Abdullahi Maina, absolved his men of culpability in the death of the victims.

He said any of his men found guilty would be sanctioned and dismissed.

Maina stated, “The deceased were coming with Premium Motor Spirit on their motorcycle when they hit a vehicle and the keg of fuel exploded.

“In fact, I can lead you to the scene where the accident happened and also show you where my men were standing, which is about 40 meters away from where these young people crashed on the bike and got burnt.

“My investigation shows me that none of my men go after the deceased. The police and the Civil Defence operatives also confirmed this.

“Since the lockdown order and we were given the permission by the state government those to complement the efforts of the conventional securities, I instructed my men not to carry sticks or whips against any person, but to be strict in ensuring that enforcement was not be in jeopardy.”

But speaking with our correspondent, an eyewitness, Mr Ibrahim Adamu, who sells second hand clothes in the area where the incident occurred, said the unfortunate development occurred around Doma Road, near Diamond/Access Bank.

According to him, the victims were on a motorcycle while a state proclamation prohibiting private or commercial motorcycles from moving round the town as part of the measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19 across the 13 local government areas and 18 development areas of the state, was in force.

Adamu added that the two siblings met their untimely death when the personnel of NAYES went after them with the intention of apprehending them for violating the state government's order.

He said, "This was how the two children died: as they were conveying fuel on the bike, their crashing down ignited fire and they were burnt."

Also speaking with our correspondent in an interview, Mr Mike Usman Anzaku, who was at the scene of the incident, said the officials of NAYES in the state needed to be given a proper training, adding that most of them were illiterates who had no respect for the rule of law.

He added that the agency always manhandled the citizen of the state the way hunter manhandled animals in the bush whenever they were on duty. He noted that most of the officials collected bribes from people in the state without knowing the consequences of their action.

He said, "If adequate and proper training is not given to them the life of an ordinary citizen in the state is in danger. The officials of NAYES shouldn't have gone after the deceased having known that they were carrying fuel on the bike."

Commenting further on the calamity that befell the family of DSP Alkali, he called on the state government and the General Manager of NAYES to fish out the perpetrators of the evil act and prosecute them to serve as a deterrent to others.

He, however, urged the manager to warn his officials to desist from harassing the residents of the state, urging the state government to limit their operation according to the agency law, saying if adequate measures were not taken by the state government to check the excesses of the agency, one

could not predict what might happen to anybody in the nearest future.

When contacted on the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer, Nasarawa State Command, ASP Ramhan Nansel, simply said investigation was in progress.

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