

**INTERVIEW**

# **I feel hopeless after Boko Haram's bomb killed my son, deformed me, wife, daughter – Borno IDP**

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**DOGARA BITRUS**

*Thirty-year-old Malum Umara is an internally displaced person in Gajiram, Borno State. He tells **DOGARA BITRUS** that his world has been shattered after a Boko Haram bomb killed his five-year-old son and deformed him, his wife and daughter*

***What is your name and where do you come from?***

My name is Alhaji Malum Umara. I am 30 years old. I come from Gajiram in the Nganzai Local Government Area of Borno State.

***What happened to you?***

I sustained injuries from a bomb explosion that affected my house in Gajiram. My wife, my daughter, Fatima, and I were all injured on the same day by the bomb that was dropped in our compound.

***Who dropped the bomb in your compound?***

It was an attack on our community in Gajiram by Boko Haram insurgents. The insurgents attacked Gajiram on the evening of Thursday, January 14, this year while everyone was either at home or within the neighborhood. Except for some people who travelled out of

town, almost all the villagers were around. I know this because everyone in the village knows everyone else and we do check on one another always.

### ***How did it really happen?***

That day, I came back from my petty business and sat with other men at our majalisa (relaxation area), chatting when we suddenly saw young boys running towards us, shouting 'Boko Haram!' We immediately dispersed and ran into our houses. It was already night and my entire family was in the house when I got in, so I just locked the doors and we went to bed. Later in the night, around 11pm I heard something drop on the roof of my house and then fire erupted in the entire compound, resulting in the death of my son, Asheik, while my wife, my daughter, Fatima, and I sustained varying degrees of injury.

### ***What did you do then?***

After the insurgents had left, everyone came out and my neighbours saw how badly my compound was burnt. They rushed to check on us and that was when they discovered my late son's body; he was killed by the explosion. The neighbours went to bury him and then rushed my wife, daughter and me to the state specialist hospital here in Maiduguri.

We were given bed spaces in the hospital and the chairman of our local government area came almost immediately to check on us. When the chairman was leaving, he gave my wife, my daughter and me N10,000 each, making N30,000. But as soon as he left the hospital, the health personnel on duty that day convinced us to give him the money for safe keeping and we did, only for him to disappear. We have not set eyes on that health worker again. He went away with

our N30,000.

### ***Did you complain to the hospital officials about it?***

Yes, I kept asking of him but they all said they didn't know him. But I think the workers in that hospital have a habit of cheating their patients and robbing them of their money. During the multiple explosions that rocked Maiduguri last week, the governor came and sympathised with the survivors; when leaving, he gave us N10,000 each and he also gave our caregivers N6,000 each while the security personnel were given N5,000 each.

But after the governor left, the health workers slashed the N10,000 given to the patients to N6,000 and instead of N5,000, the security personnel were given N1,000 each. I believe it is their stock-in-trade in that hospital.

***For how long were you, your wife and daughter in the hospital?***

We stayed in the hospital for 40 days.

***Did you pay any bills?***

To the glory of God, we were treated for free; the drugs too were provided free but we fed ourselves and that was the major challenge. I had on me only N20,000, which I saved from my petty business. For the 40 days that we were in the hospital nobody gave us any form of financial assistance. Until the governor came and gave us the N30,000, it was just that N20,000 that my wife, daughter and I depended on.

***What kind of petty trading were you doing before the incident that landed you in the hospital?***

I was selling fresh fruits and vegetables in Gajiram. I also engaged in farming to feed my family. But since this incident, I have not been able to do any business neither have I been able to go to farm. That is my biggest challenge now. I don't have any means of livelihood now that I am on crutches, my wife is deformed, and my daughter too is on crutches. I will not be able to do anything with my life for now. So, how do I feed my family? And I have other dependants that look up to me – my aged parents, my late elder brother's children, six of them are dependent on me for their daily upkeep. My two surviving sons, Faruq, 14 years old, and Bukar, 12 years old are there too. They are all in Gajiram.

***What are your plans to start life again after the setback?***

You see, I am first of all an IDP from Bakassi village near Gajiram. We were displaced from Bakassi village by the Boko Haram terrorists, who persistently attacked us until we finally fled the place. We came to Gajiram and have been living as IDPs ever since. When I was in my village, I was into full-time farming; I was into both rainy season and dry season farming. But when we were displaced from my village and we got to the IDP camp in Gajiram, then I started this petty business since I could no longer actively engage in farming like I used to. But we were managing and surviving, then the bomb explosion.

My brother was killed in one of the attacks in Bakassi and that was why his children are in my care. But this unfortunate incident is threatening our lives because I don't have anyone else to turn to for help. That is my biggest challenge. My wife is deformed, and my daughter is badly injured. This is the time for me to shoulder my responsibilities and be the man but I am not also in good health condition; this is my biggest challenge. I am struggling to come to terms with the fact that I cannot provide for my family at this point in time.

My daughter, who is just five years old, is in severe pains. She is in a critical condition of health, she cannot go to school for now, she cannot play with other children neither can she do anything at all. She is just there; it is a serious source of concern for me.

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