

For paying N3m out of N10m ransom, kidnappers killed my 30-year-old son – Olayinka, Kwara herder

Tunde Oyekola 29 May 2021

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Alhaji Hussein Olayinka

*A cattle herder in Egosi town, Oke-Ero Local Government Area of Kwara State, Alhaji Hussein Olayinka, narrates to **TUNDE OYEKOLA** how kidnappers took his two sons away and killed one after he paid N3m ransom*

What is your name and occupation?

My name is Alhaji Hussein Olayinka. I am a Fulani by tribe. I'm a native of Ilorin, Kwara State. I have a cattle farm at Egosi in the Oke-Ero Local Government Area of the state. I live at Gaa in Egosi. I have settled in the place with my cows and my family for a very long time. I have lived in the place for over 40 years.

We heard that you and your two children were kidnapped by some people; how did it happen?

It was the fifth day into the Ramadan fast. We had just finished the evening prayers. I was in my hut together with my family – that would be around 8.30pm. We heard some noise from the neighbouring huts; we didn't know what was happening. Suddenly, I saw some men, numbering about five, they entered my hut and they spoke in Hausa. The meaning of what they said was that: "This is the person that we are looking for." They asked me, "Where is your wire?" But I told them that I didn't have any wire because I didn't know what they meant by wire. It was later that I understood that it was phone that they were referring to as wire. They started beating me and my two sons. They were dragging us on the ground and threatening to kill us. I begged them not to kill my sons, and that they should kill me instead. After dragging me on ground for some time, they abandoned me when they got to a school but took my two sons away.

What are the ages of your two sons?

One of them was Saheed. He was about 30 years old and he was married to two wives and had children. The other one is about 19 years and he has yet to marry.

What happened after they took your sons away?

As I was begging them not to kill us, they said that I should go and bring N10m. I told them that I had never seen such a huge amount of money. Later, they abandoned me on the school premises and they took my two sons away together with my phone. They later called one of my children's phone numbers, which they didn't see when they were torturing us. They told me to make available N10m ransom if I didn't want them to kill my two sons. They also asked my sons to speak with me and plead with me to pay the ransom within three days. They were communicating with me in Yoruba and they also spoke Hausa language fluently.

How many days did your sons spend in the kidnappers' den before their release?

They were with them for nine days.

Did you pay any ransom before they were released?

Yes, we paid N3m out of the N10m they demanded, but they released the younger one alive while they told me to come and take the corpse of the older one.

How did you pay the ransom?

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They told us to bring the money to a place, which was far from where they kidnapped us. They also warned us not to bring policemen, threatening they would kill my sons if they sighted any policeman with the person bringing the ransom. The person who took the ransom to them went on a motorcycle; they took the money and told us to go and meet my sons somewhere else.

Did you know that they would kill one of your sons?

I didn't know that they would kill him since we had paid them the ransom. Although, they were threatening that they would kill them if the N10m they demanded was not paid in full, we were begging them to reduce the amount, which they refused.

What happened after the payment of the ransom?

They called me to go and meet my son in a place very far away from the place where we live. They also told me that they had killed one of them since I refused to pay N10m. I didn't believe that they had killed my son until I saw his corpse. My son was shot in the stomach. They shot him from the side and the bullet entered from one side and came out on the other side.

What was your reaction when you saw your son's corpse?

I was sad. The act was callous and wicked, particularly because I already paid them N3m to save the lives of my sons. I know that everything is in the hands of God. There is nothing I can do but I know that Allah who is the ultimate judge will take revenge. The N3m ransom I gave to them was borrowed from friends and relatives, but they still killed my son.

Did you report the case to the police?

Yes, we reported the incident at the police station.

What do you want the government to do for you?

I want people to know that we, Fulani herdsmen, are also victims of kidnap. We have been living with the Yoruba for a very long time and we live with them peacefully. Now, some youths have been destroying our properties, killing all our animals, destroying our farms and stealing our money under the pretence that Fulani men are kidnapping their men. This is not true. Those that kidnapped me and my sons did not speak a single word of Fulani language. They were speaking Hausa and Yoruba language fluently. Since this thing happened and people burnt down our houses and killed our cows, we have not seen any government officials come to visit us. I want the Federal Government to probe all these injustices being perpetrated against Fulani herdsmen and bring those behind them to book. The government should also design ways of compensating those whose properties were destroyed and they should find solutions to the security problems in the country. As I am speaking with you now, some of our people are in detention at the police station in Ilorin, while some are in hiding, running for their lives and could not go about their normal businesses.