

Our dad died in S' Leonean peace mission, bandits killed his son in police, another gunned down in Kebbi – Aleji, brother of policeman killed by bandits in Birnin Yauri

Adeniyi Olugbemi 1 July 2021

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Emmanuel Aleji and Late Sergeant Friday Aleji

Sergeant Friday Aleji died of gunshot injuries due to his bravery even when others beat a retreat in the gun duel with rampaging bandits, who stormed the Federal Government College, Birnin Yauri, and whisked away 94 students and eight members of staff of the school. In this interview with ADENIYI OLUGBEMI, the deceased's younger brother, Emmanuel Aleji, recounts how he lost his father and brothers to peacekeeping operations

how are you related to the late Sergeant Friday Aleji?

Sergeant Friday Aleji was my elder brother. He was born on June 16, 1986, in Enugu. We hail from the Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. My name is Michael Emmanuel Aleji. I was born 29 years ago in Maiduguri, Borno State. I am a 2016 HND holder of Estate Management from the Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State.

What kind of person was your late brother?

He was very passionate about his job. After joining the Nigeria Police Force in 2009, he had served meritoriously in Makurdi, Benue State; Niger State; Damaturu, Yobe State; and lately, Kebbi State. He was a kind of person that loved making friends and also loved assisting people around him.

What was your last conversation with him?

Our last conversation was a day before his death and our discussion was like he had a premonition of his death. He told me that he was in a dangerous area where intelligence report had reached them that the Federal Government College, Yauri, was going to be attacked and only three policemen were deployed to guard the students.

How did you receive the news of his death?

The new was broken to me by my cousin's son, who is an Air Force man. He called me from Imo State around 6pm on the red letter day. The shocking news brought back memories of how we lost our father and elder brother, Godfrey,



while on active service to maintain peace and order.

Has his corpse been interred?

No, his remains have not been buried (as of Friday). As I speak with you, the police authority has yet to formally contact or inform us about his death, but I know we have to be informed to enable us participate in his burial. We are still waiting; they have their way of doing such.

What are your expectations from the police authority?

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To us, we have taken his death as a national sacrifice. My only appeal is that in his honour, the police authority should do their best to provide those serving in the frontline theatre of war necessary ammunition to safeguard the lives of other officers and men on duty. The authority should also expedite action on doing the needful and ensure that the families and dependants of policemen, who die in active service, get the benefits due to them in cushioning the untimely departure of their breadwinners.

Is any of your siblings still in any of Nigeria's security outfit?

Yes, two of us (names withheld), are still in active service. I have a brother still serving with the Nigerian Police Force and a sister serving with the Nigerian Correctional Service. My brother is serving with the Nigerian Police in Abuja, while my sister is serving with the Nigerian Correctional Service, Kaduna State.

Are you also interested to continue your family tradition of national service by joining any of Nigeria's security outfit?

I am not interested in joining any of the security outfits, because those already gone are irreplaceable and those of us left behind are struggling to fill the vacuum left behind. With our father and two out of nine siblings already dead while in active service and another one still in service, I doubt if any other family can match this record. I think we have made appreciable and enough contributions to the security architecture of the country. According the late Corporal Michael Aleji's family due recognition and honour will not be asking for too much.

Can you recall your late father and siblings' service eras?

From the little I was told, our father, Corporal Michael Aleji, was in the Nigerian Army until he was deployed in Liberia in the year 1997 on peace mission. From Liberia, he was moved to Sierra Leone in 1998, where he was

serving till he met his untimely death in 1999. As for our elder brother, Corporal Godfrey Michael, he was serving with the Nigeria Police Force in Bayelsa State before he was mobilised to the CTU and posted to Plateau State in the year 2011. He was serving in Jos, where he was killed by bandits on February 26, 2016. Sergeant Friday Aleji joined the Nigeria Police Force in the year 2009 and served in Benue, Niger and Yobe states, before he was killed in Kebbi State.

The stories about accessing benefits of officers who die in active service in Nigeria's security outfits are mostly not palatable. What were your experiences in your late father and Godfrey Michael situations?

I can recall we got their entitlements. Coincidentally, my late brother, late Sgt Friday Aleji happened to be our late father, Corporal Michael Aleji's next of kin. When he started processing our late father's benefits, that same 1999, it was like hell because my brother always travelling to Jos two, three times a week and he did that for about a year before the army authorities later moved the process to Lagos State. As of then, we knew nobody in Lagos State, sometimes my brother, late Sgt. Friday Aleji, would sleep on the street and in a hotel when there was fund. Honestly, we felt for him so much because of the the risk of always being on the road.

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