

Abuja chief imam's son shot dead over land dispute

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Attahiru Abubakar. Photo: Family

| By Uthman Salami

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The family of Abubakar Yaqub, Chief Imam of the Kuchibuyi community in the Bwari area of the Federal Capital Territory, is in mourning after his son, Attahiru Abubakar, was allegedly shot dead by police officers during a land dispute in the area on Saturday.

PUNCH Metro gathered that Attahiru died instantly after being hit by a police bullet, while his elder brother, Abass, sustained gunshot wounds and is currently battling for his life at a hospital.

The FCT Police Public Relations Officer, Josephine Adeh, in a statement released Saturday, had stated that the police were responding to a civil disturbance in the area.

According to her, “The FCT Police Command received a distress call regarding a civil unrest incident stemming from a land dispute at Kuchibuyi community under Byazin Division.

“The Divisional Police Officers of Byazin and Kubwa swiftly mobilised to the scene and brought the situation under control. Arrests have been made, and the investigation is currently ongoing.”

Adeh stressed that the conflict was not instigated by the police, saying, “It is important to clarify that the issue is a communal dispute and not in any way related to the police.”

She also quoted the Commissioner of Police, Ajao Adewale, as saying, “The Commissioner of Police strongly condemns the actions of youths attacking police officers who were on a mission to restore law and order.

“Such behaviour will not be condoned, and firm action will be taken against anyone who attacks police or other security personnel responding to distress calls.”

However, members of the Kuchibuyi community have contested the police account, claiming that the incident involved indiscriminate shooting by the officers that resulted in the fatality and injuries, which the official statement failed to acknowledge.

Speaking to PUNCH Metro on Sunday, the deceased’s brother, Sanusi Abubakar, said their father, the Chief Imam, was also shot during the incident.

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He accused the police of acting on the orders of an estate manager attempting to forcibly grab community land.

He said, “There was one estate manager who wanted to take over a large portion of the community land without our knowledge. He arrived with some soldiers and vigilantes.

“Later, he called the police. After some boys blocked the road during the standoff, and it was seemingly resolved, police officers and the task force returned and started shooting at residents.

“My brother, Attahiru, was shot dead on the spot. My second brother, Abass, was also hit and is in the hospital. Our father, the Chief Imam, was also shot.”

A resident who witnessed the incident but requested anonymity for fear of victimisation corroborated Sanusi’s account in a chat with PUNCH Metro on Sunday.

“The police lied in their statement. They didn’t mention that three people were shot—two sons of the Chief Imam and the Imam himself. Attahiru died instantly from a gunshot to the chest while his brother is in the hospital in Bwari.

“After that, the police arrested about six young men they saw on sight. What happened yesterday (Saturday) was frightening, and they’re trying to cover it up. That same estate manager brought soldiers to the community just two days earlier.”

Photos seen by PUNCH Metro showed Attahiru’s lifeless body with a gunshot wound in the upper left chest, and another image displayed his body wrapped in cloth after the incident.

When contacted again on Sunday for clarification on why the statement didn’t mention the shooting and fatality, police spokesperson Adeh simply referred PUNCH Metro to her initial release and did not respond to further enquiries.

Attahiru’s death adds to the growing list of Nigerians, including women and youths, who have lost their lives in alleged incidents of police brutality.