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'My husband still alive'

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BY OUR REPORTER ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

NATIONAL

• Wife, children of policeman allegedly killed by vandals optimistic of his return

By Chioma Igbokwe

As the search for the bodies of the four policemen allegedly murdered by vandals in Ikorodu area of Lagos continues, the family of one of the victims is upbeat that he is alive. Even in the face of palpable fear that the worse might have happened, wife of Inspector Yerima Yakubu, one of the missing men, remains optimistic that her husband would return soon.

In the early hours of Monday, August 31, 2015, on Ishawo Road, Ikorodu, Lagos State, some youths suspected to be pipeline vandals, opened fire on a police patrol vehicle in the area, killing the cops. The slain policemen were identified as Inspector Yerima Yakubu, Corporal Adakuro Peredigha, Sergeant Obi Chukwudi and Sergeant Okoh Endurance.

It was gathered that three of the deceased were attached to the Owutu Police Division, while one was from the Special Anti-Robbery Squad. Residents said the youths took away the corpses of three of the victims. When our correspondent visited Inspector Yakubu's home at the Ikeja Police Barracks, sympathisers were still trooping in their numbers. Inspector Yakubu (49), who hails from Ebiewakpi in Auch area of Edo State was married to Fatimah and they were blessed with five children, Rufiyat, Kafilat, Fatilat, Shafile and Mutairu.

His wife, Fatimah, fought back tears while sitting in the living room when Daily Sun called. However, she kept on calling her husband's name, insisting he was alive and would return to him. "I know that my husband is still alive, as he has not appeared to me. Let us go and beg the militants to release my husband to me and my children. I only shed tears of joy because I know that he is alive and would return to me," Fatimah asserted tearfully.

According to Fatimah, the police authority was yet to inform her that her husband has been killed. She said she learnt of the incident on the pages of newspapers. "The last time I saw my husband was on Sunday, August 30, before he left for work at about 5pm. The next day, we were expecting him to return around 10am as usual but he never came back. I called his number and none of them were going through. I then called his friend who assured me that the IGP was in town and that they were in Obalende providing security for him.

"I knew what his job entails, so, I was not bothered although I found it strange that he never called us to explain why he had not come back. I assumed that his phones could be bad."

The reality that her husband might have died dawned on her when a neighbour came to their house with a copy of a newspaper to console her over what happened to her husband.

"It was the next day – that was Tuesday – that I received calls from the village asking, how I was doing. Relatives that had never called the family for years, called to ask how I and kids were doing. It was then I knew that something had gone wrong. Later in the day, our neighbours, family and some of his colleagues started trooping to the house with newspaper publication that three policemen were killed in Ikorodu and my husband was one of them.

"I refused to believe the story and I thank God that the next day, the DPO called and said that I should not worry that my husband was still alive. He assured me that they were looking for him. I know he would be found; all I am asking is that they (vandals) should please bring him back to me. If it is possible, I am ready to go to the creeks and beg for the life of my husband. My husband to me and our five kids, is the greatest man in the world. I refuse to believe that he was killed; I know that he is alive and would return to me one day. Please stop crying over a man who is still alive," she insisted.

Yakubu's eldest child, Rukayat, also shared her mother's optimism that her father would return. Rukayat who is expected to resume at the University of Benin where she intends to study Accounting, wondered why sympathisers had concluded that their father was late. "He cannot just disappear like that. My dad is very much aware that school will resume soon. His life dream for me is to become an accountant and I reassured him two weeks ago that I would become an Accountant-General of the Federation in the future. He cannot just leave us like that; I assure you he would return to us."

Describing his father as a unique policeman, Rukayat said his father was gentle and could never take laws into his hands. "You will not understand how special he is; that is why all of us (children) are so attached to him more than our mother. He will return, I know that will return," Rukayat said confidently.

Also seen in the house was little Shafili who was yet to understand why so many people chose to visit their house and kept consoling her mother. Battling to eat the piece of meat handed over to her, Shafili reminded her mother of the need to allow her to go and play with her friends. "Let me go and play. I don't know why you are forcing me to sit down with you. I will report you to my daddy when he returns," she screamed at her mother who was trying to force her to hang around with them in the living room.

Amongst the early callers at the home of the Yakubus were Afemai Youth Club of Nigeria, Iluoreh Age Group and Agbaegbeobo women and sons and daughters of South Obie lyakpi, in Edo State, resident in Lagos.

At a joint meeting on the matter, the visitors assured Fatimah that they would do everything within their power to reach out to the militants for possible release of their loved one and brother.

The President of the Afemai Youth Club, Barrister Tony Dania, pleaded with the vandals to release their brother as he was not only a father but a paragon in his community. "He is such a peace loving person that most of the time, we wonder if he is a policeman. He is a simple, humble man and does not oppress people because of his job. He will be greatly missed if he does not return alive. We are calling on the police authorities to assist us in ensuring his safe return,"

Meanwhile the Lagos State Command has assured that it has intensified effort to guarantee the safe return of the missing policemen.

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