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Unanswered questions on death of fulani suspects in Adamawa police custody

— 18th December 2016

■ Victims' bodies found in river

By BillyGraham Abel, Yola

DPO were found floating by the river bank of Kiri Dam in Shelling, Adamawa. And almost eight months, question about how the men mysteriously died have been blowing in the wind.

On April 30, 2016, the DPO Kiri Police Division, ASP M. Dass arrested four men, Buba Grema, Jauro Hampeto, Yusuf and Misa Bakari about 3am in their homes, on the grounds, as their families learnt later in the morning, that they were suspects in a murder case.

A day later, when Alhaji Kunuri who is the brother to one of the arrested persons, Jauro Hampeto and Malam Bakari, father to Misa Bakari, went to the police station to verify the reason for the arrest of their wards and to ask for bail, they were told by ASP Dass, that the arrested persons had been transferred to an unknown police holding location and may not return.

The following day, May 2, 2016, two corpses washed up at the banks of Kiri dam and were identified by the family as the bodies of Jauro Hampeto and that of Misa Bakari long dead, with their hands and feet bound together in what they claimed was a summary execution by the police. The bodies of the other two (Buba Grema and Yusuf) arrested alongside Jauro Hampeto and Misa Bakari whose bodies have been found, are yet to be accounted for, according to the family.

A week after the initial arrests and disappearance of the four men, the DPO ordered the arrest of Alhaji Kunuri, Alhaji Grema, Danlami Yahaya, Shagari Alhaji Kawuji, Modi Ori and Alhaji Zakariya Maiwuya, who are relations and friends of the victims.

Alhaji Kunuri, elder brother to one of the deceased, Hampeto, told Sunday Sun: "The DPO ordered me, Alhaji Grema and Danlami Yahaya our family friend to pay a fine of N250, 000.00, N200, 000.00) and N150, 000.00 respectively or be remanded indefinitely in police custody." Kunuri further said: "The DSP sent his men to arrest me and I was beaten mercilessly and spent one month treating myself. He later asked me to sell the cattle of my late brother and bring the money to him."

Mr. Abubakar Kolone, counsel to the family of one of the victims, who gave further insight said: "We have petitioned the Assistant Inspector General of Police for the zone, the state Commissioner of Police on the issue and no one is responding to the complaints.

"The lives of my clients have been threatened by this police officer. They are Nigerians and should be protected from extra-judicial killing." Kolone explained further, "the problem started for my clients in April this year when one Alhaji Gambo Abba was said to have been shot by armed robbers in his home at Shelling, but died from the impact of the bullet on his way to Numan hospital. I reliably gathered that the DPO immediately ordered for the corpse of the deceased to be returned to Shelling and buried instead of taking the body to the hospital so that doctors could verify the cause of the death. Forensics would have shown what kind of bullet was used to murder the deceased. It was the night after the death that these boys were arrested and killed in cold blood."

The Adamawa state Commissioner of Police, Musa Kimo, when contacted, referred the reporter to the state Police Public Relations Officer, Othman Abubakar who said: "The police officer in question has already been transferred from Kiri to the command headquarters in Yola, as the matter is under investigation."

He added: "The police is still investigating the issue and when it concludes its investigation, action will be taken. The police as a force cannot easily jump into conclusion without hearing all sides of the story."

Since the first arrest and cold-blooded killings of the victims on April 30, 2016, their relatives alleged that the DPO had been on a relentless drive to silence everyone in the full know about the incident.

Speaking on this, Alhaji Kunuri lamented, "I have been beaten and tortured by the police, our leader, Ardo Kiri was shot dead by gunmen, because he was the one leading the effort to find our missing children. The DPO and his men have continued to threaten our lives and property, and we have nowhere to go."

A terrified Kunuri pleaded that the DPO be transferred from the area. Investigation shows that there was no record detailing the arrest of the victims and subsequent transfer to any other police division.

After over six months since the incident happened and repeated written complaints on September 20, and November 2, 2016, Kolone said it was deeply shocking and disturbing that no serious action had been taken by the police.

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