

- 3 months after raping pregnant wife to death, killer herdsmen butcher husband in Plateau
- Agony, trauma of their 2 kids left stranded

Nothing could be more tragic for these kids. Age: eight and five years respectively, three months after herdsmen allegedly raped and killed their six-months pregnant mother, fate dealt them an even crueler blow by having their father, their only source of comfort and hope after their mother's death, butchered by the same herdsmen who killed their mother.

Now, they are left without mother and father. And, as eight-year-old Ayuba Wakili Jnr and his five-year-old sister, Rikwe, surrounded by sympathising relatives, hurdled together to think about their future, you should understand why the faraway look that you see on their faces is, indeed, more than a look into the air around them. It is the look of kids who had no other hope in life, kids who cannot say what the future now holds for them in the light of losing both parents at the time they needed them most.

How they lost their mother – and the aftermath

The first time news about their family made the headline in *Saturday Sun* edition of July 20, 2019, it was to announce the tragic death of their pregnant mother who had gone to take some food to her farmer husband on Monday, July 15, 2019. But while they were on the farm discussing and cracking jokes as couples wont they were attacked by marauding herdsmen. While their father narrowly escaped death, their mother was not so lucky as she was caught, raped and allegedly murdered by the pursuing, bloodthirsty herdsmen.

In light of threat by the herdsmen to launch further attacks of such nature on the largely agrarian community, the natives had vowed then, in the *Saturday Sun* story, not to go back to farm, until the issue of security was sorted out by government. This was even as Wakili, the man at the centre of the tragic drama, called for justice by getting the evil perpetrators promptly arrested and made to face the wrath of the law. Asked what he wanted, he said: "I want the security men to fish out those behind the killing of my wife. I won't forgive them for what they did. They must pay for their evil and wicked action."

The man who expressed fear of living the rest of his life in painful memory of that Black Monday, called on government and international community to urgently intervene else many people will lose their lives during the farming season. He said the incident has created fear in people and added that most people would not want to go back to their farms for fear of being killed. "I narrowly escaped death and you are expecting me to go back to the farm without security?" he queried when asked if he would like to go back.

The pain of losing a father

But three months after he made that vow on the spur of the moment, while emotion over the cruel murder of his wife was still boiling over, he swallowed his words and went back to the farm, in Hukke village, on Friday, October 11, 2019. He was, apparently, egged on by pangs of hunger, and the need to provide for the two kids left behind by his wife. But this time around he was not as lucky as he was the other time when he was attacked in company of his wife.

Sources said that the man who did not know that the herdsmen were still hunting for him, was ambushed and hacked to death, while returning home, by men suspected to be the same herdsmen who killed his wife in cold blood, some months earlier.

The children that he and his wife left behind are now orphans who don't know what to do or who to take their pitiable case to. Life has become meaningless to them as they are struggling to survive. They are currently staying in the house their father built pending the time a decision would be taken to either have them move in with one of their relatives or have some relatives move into the house to take care of them.

Remembering previous deaths

Incidentally, their father's killing occurred four days before the neighbouring community of Nkiendonwro commemorated two years memorial for 29 of their people allegedly murdered by gunmen in a classroom at LEA Primary School Nkiendonwro. A statement by Publicity Secretary of Miango Youth Development Association, Zango Lawrence said the community is yet to recover from the ugly incident.

“We are peaceful and law-abiding citizens of Nigeria. We are not in any way out to undermine or sabotage the efforts of the Nigerian military which is doing its utmost in securing our communities but want to express our worries, complaints, demands in relation to the killing of 29 people of our community (men, women and children) who were massacred in cold blood, while they took refuge from their attackers in a classroom at LEA Primary School Nkiendonwro, Miango District of Bassa LGA in Plateau State on 15th October, 2017,” he said.

“It is two years since this incident which affected our people psychologically and socio-economically. Many are still traumatized, and displaced. Beside the killings, 34 houses and two churches were burnt, academic activities stopped and their only means of livelihood were destroyed.

“We are calling the attention of the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Minister of Defense, Chief of Army Staff, Senate President, Speaker House of Representative, Plateau State Governor, Speaker Plateau State House of Assembly to call for the arrest, detention, investigation and courtmartial of all uniform personnel that were involved in the drastic act of that day.

“They should also be subjected to criminal prosecution according to the law of Nigeria. After the investigation, report should be published and justice must be done. Compensation needs to be given to all the affected victims. Government should do more efforts in protecting lives and properties of rural communities.

“After the Nkiendonwro genocidal attack, 44 more communities have faced different forms of attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen in Irigwe chieftdom, Bassa LGA of Plateau State. A total number of 377 persons have been killed, houses, schools and churches burnt and farms were destroyed. Individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, international organizations etc should please come to our aid as we are overwhelmed and this is not a road we can travel on our own.”

Thinking about the uncertain future

That is the same thing that Wakili's kids appear to be saying: that, without father and mother, the future is not a road they can travel on their own. Today, without the father who acted as both parents to them when their mother was killed some months ago, the kids' agony is even made much scarier by the turn of event. They are left in a helpless and hopeless situation, with nobody to care for them. Little wonder they wept helplessly and bitterly when their father's body was brought home for burial. His death has brought pains and agony, not only to them but to the entire Ancha village and Maingo community.

Sources said that after the burial, some of the relatives stayed back for one or two days. But when it was time for them to go, the children started weeping when reality dawned on them that their parents are truly no more and that they are going to be left alone to their fate. Their cries were said to have put their relatives in a fix on whether to go and leave them in the house, all alone, or take them away with them while abandoning the house.

Since after the burial on October 13, 2019, the old women among them have been sleeping in the house pending when a decision would be taken on what to do. Wakili was said to have been ambushed, abducted and killed that fateful day while returning from his farm in Hukke. He had no other means of survival apart from farming which is the predominant occupation in the agrarian community. Following the murder of his pregnant wife, the 30-year-old man was said to have been living a painful life. Neighbours said there were times he would lock himself up in his room and weep uncontrollably with his children because his wife, said to be the pillar of the family, is no more. With him now gone, life is certainly going to turn into a tale of uncertain future for the kids he left behind.