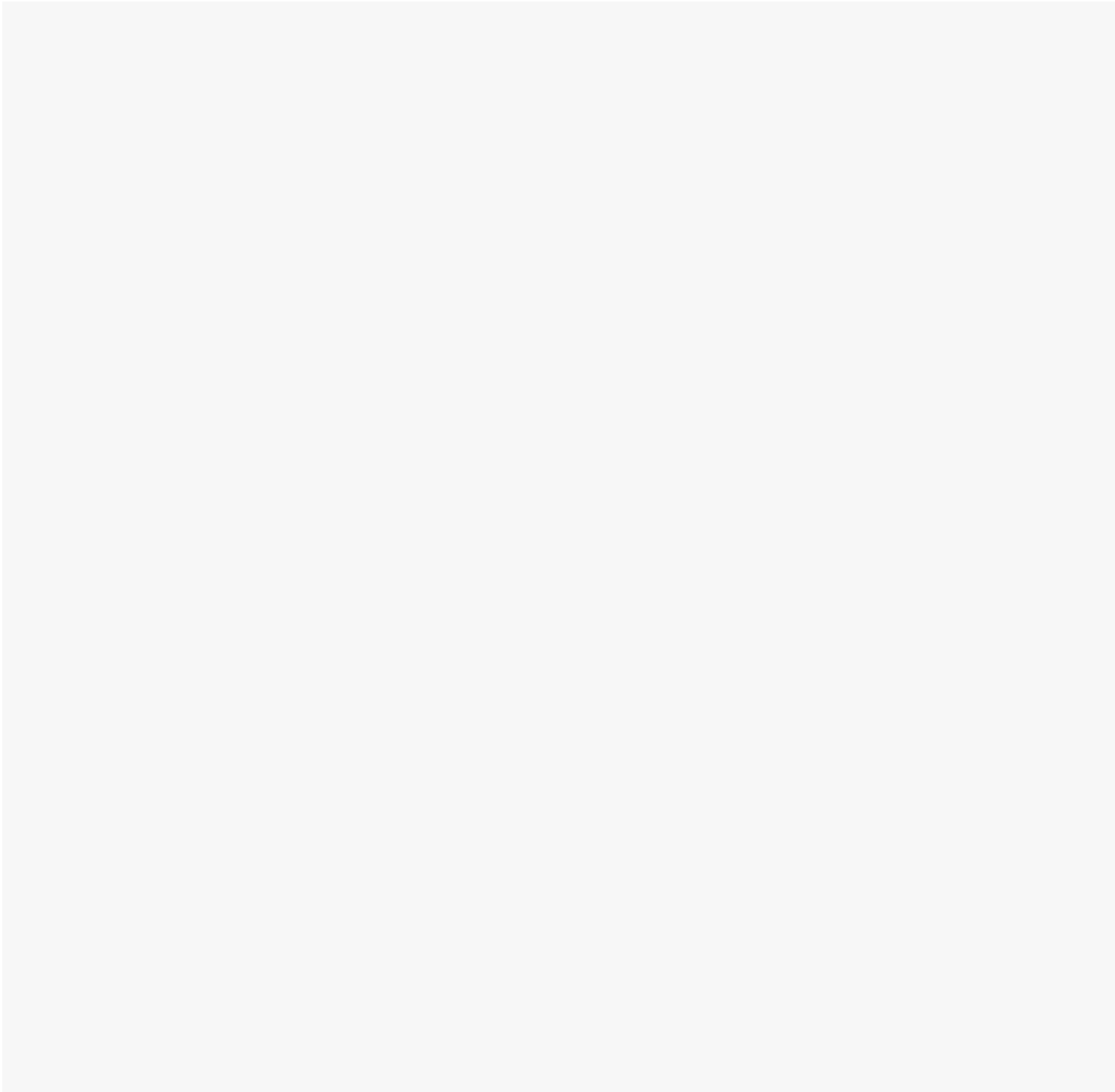


Mysterious deaths in Makurdi

▸ Controversy trails demise of three family members in one night ▸ Relations allege murder, as police await autopsy result

30th November 2019



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More than one week after three members of a family were found dead in their room in the Katungul area of North Bank in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, mystery surrounding their deaths is yet to be raveled.

Precisely on Friday, the 22nd of November, 2019, the corpses of Mr. Gregory Ndiyor, his wife, Linda, and that of their six-year-old son, Terkumaiwuese, were found in their room while their two-and-a-half years old daughter was found alive in the room.

Although, the cause of their death remains unknown at the time of this report, family of the deceased are accusing the owner of the house, one Mr. Friday Agbo, currently in police cell of knowing something about the death although neighbours and members of the community have expressed their doubts, arguing that he is incapable of committing such crime.

Neighbours say what they knew about the deaths

When *Saturday Sun* visited the 15-room apartment where the deceased used to occupy two rooms before the tragedy struck, no tenant was seen in the compound giving an impression that they may have deserted the premises. But the gate leading to the premises was not locked, giving access to anyone wishing to enter. Some neighbours who spoke with our correspondent disclosed that the tenants had only gone to their various places of work and would return later in the day.

One of such neighbours is Nura Umar, Commander of ‘Operation Shara’, an anti- cult group fighting cultists activities in Makurdi, the state capital. Umar who is next-door neighbour to the deceased said he was in his house that fateful early morning when he suddenly heard noise and sounds of wailing in the compound.

“Around 5am that day, I heard some noise and came out. I saw people in the compound sitting and crying. When I asked what was the problem, they said their co tenants died in their room.”

He said the co tenants told him that the family who would usually wake up at about 4am to sweep the compound were not seen outside as at 5am while their door was partly opened. Umar said the neighbours told him that on a closer look into the room, they saw the the man, his wife and son all on the floor, lying dead, while their

young daughter was not seen in the room. “It was at this point that the tenants raised an alarm while the landlord who also stays in the same house rushed to the police station to lodge a formal complaints about the incident.”

When the police arrived, it was gathered that their little daughter was found inside the room alive, hale and hearty while her parents and only brother were all found dead in the palour.

Umar who disclosed that, on examination when the police came to pick their remains, blood was seen oozing from the noses and mouths of the deceased adding that aside that, there was no any physical injury on their bodies which suggested strangulation or such violent death.

“Since the incident, the landlord has been detained till date. The man doesn’t have any problem,” he said. “The landlord knows nothing about their death. That’s why I’m calling on the state government to direct the immediate release of the landlord from police detention without any further delay.

“Their death is a very painful one but as a Muslim, we believe that such thing can only happen if God permits it,” he said. “We even gathered that based on the existing understanding between the landlord and the deceased, the former asked him to pay N1, 500 per room per month as against the N2000 which other tenants were paying.”

Also corroborating Umar’s narration, another neighbour, Ali Umar said both the deceased and the landlord were friends before they came to live in the compound some four months ago. Ali, however, ruled out the thinking that they may have been killed by generator fumes of anybody but suspected they might have died of food poisoning.

He said although, along the line, they started having problems bothering on issues of payment of house rent, they were able to settle that amicably adding that as a Muslim, such deaths are regarded as the will of God.

Next-of-kin expressed their views, allege murder

But when our correspondent visited the family house of the Ndyiors on the other side of North Bank, the family insisted their brother and his family were murdered. They particularly fingered the landlord of the house, disclosing that a few weeks before the unfortunate incident, Gregory had on different occasions told each of his younger siblings that if anything happened to him or any member of his family, his landlord should be held responsible.

They said the problem between their brother and his landlord had to do with tenancy fee which they alleged their brother had used in renovating the house before parking in. Greg’s immediate younger brother, Victor particularly said his brother had spent about N38, 000 to repair the two rooms before parking in sometimes in May this year after he struck a deal with the landlord to that effect.

He alleged that few months after his brother packed into the house, the landlord started demanding for tenancy fee against their earlier agreement that the money be used for the repair of the house. He said at a point, the problem degenerated to the extent that his brother told him that he was looking for money to pack out of that compound. “It got to a time that both my brother, his wife and the landlord were not on talking terms because of this problem and

my brother who was living in a flat before moving to the compound for financial reasons confided in me that he was planning to move out of that house because of his problem with the landlord.”

On how he got the news of the demise of his brother and his family, Victor said he was at home at about 6 o’clock that fateful morning when an unknown number called to inform him that there was a problem in his brother’s house and that he should come. “I quickly took a motorcycle and rushed to the compound. On getting there, I saw a large crowd and people told me that my brother, his wife and son were found dead in the room.

“I was also told that the landlord had rushed to the police to report the matter and had left a message that nobody should enter the room until the police came, but on seeing the three dead bodies and not knowing what had happened to the little girl, I rushed inside the room where I found her alive and I picked her.

“I was there when the police came to evacuate their bodies but all I could see at that time was a bruise-like cut on my brother’s leg. When the mortician checked after their bodies were deposited at the mortuary, there were cuts at the back of my brother’s leg, his wife’s back and part of their son’s body too.”

Victor disclosed that his elder brother was the Vice Principal of UBE school in North Bank while the wife had just completed her national service with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC).

Another member of the family, Rose Ndyior who could not control her emotions as she cried profusely told our correspondent that her brother’s wife, Linda, died with three to four months old pregnancy. Also, Richard Ndyior, another younger brother of the deceased who is said to be one of the first callers at the house that morning, said he noticed that there was a struggle before they were overpowered and killed.

“There was an iron fan which we saw bent with bloodstains on it. The door was partly still open. The incident might have happened in the midnight or thereabout because one of our cousins squatting with them said he saw him coming in from a journey around 6pm on Thursday and they exchanged pleasantries at the gate.

“Our cousin said he had left Greg’s wife, the landlord and the two kids in the compound while going out adding that after they exchanged pleasantries with Greg at the gate. He left the compound and went out only to return around 10pm and saw that their room partly opened.

“Our cousin who sleeps in a friend’s room within the compound said he didn’t go to close to Greg’s room that night because he thought they had purposely left the room partly opened because of the heat.”

He said by the time a co-tenant came out on Friday morning at about 5am, it was discovered that the room was still partly opened the same way it was the previous night but that they were all dead in their room and naked while their son’s body was found in between the legs of the man.

Asked if he had any issue with anyone, he said his brother confided in him that the landlord was having issues with him and that he wanted to pack out adding that, “he said if anything happened to him, they should hold the landlord responsible.” Daughter of the deceased who can barely talk by virtue of her age was seen playing around in the

compound and calling her brother's name consistently, a development which brought uncontrollable tears in the eyes of sympathizers. Also, parents of the deceased were both in a very sorrowful mood while sympathizers thronged their abode to commiserate with them.

Police state their position

Victor disclosed that an autopsy had already been carried out on the corpses adding that they are waiting for the result as at the time of filing this report. Our correspondent could not get to speak with the landlord as he was said to be in police custody while investigation into the matter is ongoing. Nothing incriminating is said to have been established against him yet but the police assured that they would issue public statement on the matter as soon as they are through with their investigation. It assured that it will be thorough and nothing will be swept under the carpet.

Giving this assurance when contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Catherine Anene (Deputy Superintendent of Police) said they are awaiting the result of autopsy to ascertain if the family were actually murdered or not, stressing that it is the autopsy result that would determine the true position of things and the next line of action by the police.



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