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# ECHOES OF ENDSARS PROTESTS TRAGEDY

How hoodlums hijacked peaceful march in Plateau, killed widow, stabbed her son

From GYANG BERE, Jos

**SHE** lost her husband, some years ago, and was left with the task of fending for the children her husband left behind. All alone! Now, she is dead, killed by a bullet fired from the guns of the hoodlums who took undue advantage of the once peaceful #ENDSARS protest, to unleash mayhem on Plateau State residents.

If the 56-years-old widow, Jumai Joshua, had had the premonition that the protest would take her life, she, obviously, wouldn't have opened her shop, on Tuesday, October 20, 2020 at Kugiya Market in Bukuru, Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, in an attempt to make some money with which to take care of her family.



YOUNGER BROTHER: JOSEPH GARBA

## Son stabbed amid mayhem

But as fate would have it, the woman who travels every Tuesday to buy goods in the communities for sale decided to do so that morning before leaving it in the care of her 31-years-old son, Jeremiah Joshua, to travel to one of the rural areas to buy onions and tomatoes. Shortly after she left, the protesters stormed the area but somewhere, along the line, hoodlums hijacked the peaceful procession and began to loot and destroy shops in Bukuru.

Jeremiah joined others in hurriedly closing their shops, before he ran off in order to escape from apparent danger. But he never quite made it to safety before the hoodlums who invaded the market caught up with him, attacked and inflicted deep machete cuts on his back. On learning about the ugly development, Jumai called her younger brother, Joseph Garba, who sells electronic equipment at Gyeru market to take Jeremiah to a nearby hospital, as he was said to be bleeding profusely from the wounds he sustained during the savage attack.

Her brother reportedly left his shop and rushed to the scene, picked the young man and rushed him to ECWA clinic in Bukuru. There Jumai met them. He was treated and he later regained consciousness. Thereafter, Joseph went back to his shop, leaving behind Jeremiah, his mother and one of his sisters called Sheba, in the hospital to continue to attend to his needs.

## The futile search for x-ray diagnosis

But at about 4pm on that fateful day, the ECWA clinic authorities, noticing that the boy was in deep pains, recommended an x-ray test to enable them ascertain the level and extent of the wounds they were dealing with. Following the development, Jumai

again sent for Joseph to come take them to the place where the x-ray test would be done.

They arrived a medical laboratory diagnosis centre in Bukuru only to be told that they had closed for the day. They proceeded to Plateau Specialist Hospital, Jos but the story was the same. They said that their radiology department had closed for the day as well. They tried a few other places they felt they could get the help they needed. They include: Dr. Pam's Private Hospital; Bingham University Teaching Hospital, Jos and Faith Alive Hospital. It was the same early shutdown story owing to the tension in town.

Joseph returned to the ECWA Hospital at about 7pm with Jeremiah still bleeding and pleaded with the hospital authorities to place him on admission promising that arrangements would be made to carry out the x-ray test the following day. But they turned down his request. They were left with no other option than to go home that night.

## Hoodlums' attack and widow's death

But unknown to them, the hoodlums had taken possession of Gyero Junction on the Bukuru Expressway. The moment their car came within view, they started throwing stones at them in order to stop their journey. Joseph accelerated the speed of the car to escape from the scene but unfortunately another armed group of the hoodlums were said to have opened fire on the car while it was in motion and shot the widow on her head. They also shattered the windscreen of the vehicle and burst the tyre. Thereafter, the widow lay in the pool of her blood while Jeremiah continued to cry that they had killed his mother.

All the same, Joseph mustered up courage and continued to drive even with the burst tyre until he was out



WIDOW: JUMAI JOSHUA

of danger. On reaching what he considered to be some point of safety, he screamed for help and people came around to help him attend to the widow. But unfortunately she was confirmed dead on arrival at Plateau Specialist Hospital, Jos.

Her daughter, Sheba, was also hit by bullet but she survived. Jeremiah was taken home that night still bemoaning the death of his mother in addition to his own pains until the following day when he was taken to Jos University Teaching Hospital. Narrating how he narrowly escaped death, when the hoodlums shot at them sporadically that fateful night, Joseph said: "I have never seen anything like that in my life. This was one of my worst moments. I am alive today



THE LATE JEREMIAH JOSHUA

only by the grace and mercy of God; I think they wanted to condemn (kill, waste) all of us in the car."

Interestingly, the incident took place a few days after thieves burgled his shop and made away with electronic equipment worth millions of naira. He was yet to recover from the shock when the stabbing of Jeremiah and the unfortunate death of his sister happened.

## The breakdown of events leading to tragedy

Giving a breakdown of the events that led to the anti-climax, he said: "I was in my shop in Gyeru when my elder sister called me, to report that hoodlums who hijacked ENDSARS protests had stabbed my cousin in Kugiya, Bukuru. I rushed to the scene and took the boy to ECWA clinic in Bukuru for treatment. I stayed with him in the hospital for some time and then left back to my shop.

"In the evening, my elder sister called to inform me that the doctor said there is need for an x-ray to be done so as to know the level of injuries he sustained. I rushed back to the hospital and took him to a diagnosis centre. But on arrival at the place, the man in charge said he had closed from work owing to the tension in town and asked us to come back the following day. He added that if we cannot wait, we could go to Plateau Specialist Hospital, Jos University Teaching Hospital or Bingham University Teaching Hospital.

"I rushed to Plateau Hospital but the person in charge of the radiology department said they had closed and requested that we come back the following day. But because the boy who was inflicted with machete cuts was deeply in pains, I drove down to Dr. Pam's Hospital close to Plateau Specialist Hospital. But the gateman told us that they had closed. We drove from there to Bingham University

Teaching Hospital but we were told that we couldn't get the x-ray services we needed that day.

"We hurried to Faith Alive Foundation; the story was the same. They said they cannot do x-ray that day and advised us to come back the following day. I went back to ECWA clinic with the boy and told them that we couldn't get the x-ray done and pleaded with them to give him admission in case of any emergency in the night. We did that with a promise to carry out the x-ray test the following day. But they refused. It was at that juncture that the boy requested to be taken home that night noting that the pains had lessened.

"I agreed to take them home. But as we were approaching Gyero Junction, at about 7 pm, the hoodlums who were hidden from our view suddenly came out on the road and started pelting our car with stones. I speeded up to escape from the scene. But as we advanced a little, some of them opened fire on us. In fact, there were sporadic gunshots from different direction towards the car. It was in the midst of that confusion that a bullet hit my elder sister on the head. She was rushed back to Plateau State Hospital where she was certified dead. A bullet also hit her daughter on the lap.

"I thank God that some of us survived the shooting because the way those hoodlums opened fire on us, we thought that all of us were going to die. But only my elder sister died; three of us including Jeremiah who was stabbed, survived."

Following the outbreak of violence occasioned by hoodlums taking advantage of the peaceful ENDSARS protests, the Plateau State governor, Simon Lalong, declared 24-hour curfew to stop further destruction of life and prosperity. He noted with dismay how some hoodlums hijacked the protests to unleash mayhem on innocent citizens.