

Lockdown: Soldiers kill 300L UNIJOS student

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May 15, 2020 Musa Pam



...victim, only son of senior security officer

- Lalong orders immediate probe

Soldiers have reportedly killed a 300 Level student of the Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, Rinji Peter Bala (20).

Bala was reportedly shot and killed by soldiers attached to Operation Safe Haven on Zaria Road on Tuesday, Jos, Plateau State.

Investigations showed that Bala's father is a senior security officer and the victim was his only male child.

Bala's killing came barely four months after Ropvil Dalep Daciya, a 200 Level Biology Education student of the University of Maiduguri (UNIMAID) and a native of Plateau State was murdered by Boko Haram. That incident occurred on January 9, 2020.

It was learnt that Bala's killing occurred at Sector 1 Headquarters of the Operation Safe Haven near Zaria Road, Jos, after he was arrested with six others for allegedly violating the lockdown order.

The deceased was picked up about 7p.m. in his neighbourhood at Hwolshe in Jos South Local Government Area.

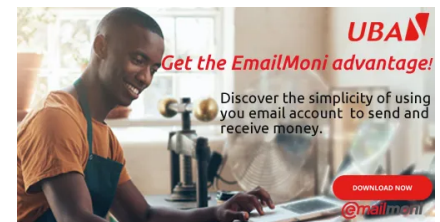
Governor Simon Lalong has expressed shock and sadness over Bala's murder.

The governor also ordered the immediate probe of the killing.

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Lalong, according to a statement issued by his Director of Press and Public Affairs, Dr. Makut Simon Macham, directed that thorough investigation be carried out to unravel the circumstances surrounding the killing of the young man.

The governor vowed that those found culpable would face the law of the land.

He said: "Already, a security officer, alleged to have been involved in the incident, has been taken into custody for further investigation."

Lalong appealed for calm and commiserated with the family of Bala.

Meanwhile, the Senator representing Plateau North Senatorial District who is also the Deputy Chairman, Senate Committee on Defence, Istifanus Gyang, has also called for the immediate probe of the killing of the student.

In a statement issued by his media aide, Musa Ibrahim Ashoms, the lawmaker urged the state Police Command to thoroughly investigate the killing of Bala, "a young man with high prospects and great potential".

Gyang said instances abound of reports of extra-judicial killings across the country where trigger-happy security personnel, acting outside of clearly defined rules of engagement, terminated the lives of citizens with reckless abandon.

The senator said he was aware that all arms-bearing personnel of the military and para-military agencies were expected to exercise due diligence and extreme caution in handling the weapons in their possession with the ultimate intention to secure and safeguard the lives and property of citizens.

He said: "Any abuse and misuse of arms by law enforcement agents that results in the killing of law-abiding citizens becomes unacceptable and the perpetrators must be made to face the full wrath of the law to serve as a deterrence."

The lawmaker, however, condoled with the parents and family of the late Bala and prayed for the repose of his soul.

However, the Military Task Force known as Operation Safe Haven has expressed regrets over the unfortunate killing of Bala by its personnel.

The Media Officer, Operation Safe Haven, Major Ibrahim Shittu, expressed this in a statement in Jos yesterday.

He said: "About 10p.m. on 12 May 2020, information was received on the activities of suspected armed robbers and cultists operating around No 18th Street, Jos South LGA of Plateau State. The report revealed that the criminals took advantage of the lockdown and curfew to perpetrate crimes.

"Consequently, Sector 1 patrol troops of OPSH swiftly responded and arrested seven suspects, which were immediately moved to the Headquarters of Sector 1 for preliminary investigation.

"Thereafter, five out of the seven suspects were cleared and asked to leave the premises. Unfortunately as they were leaving the premises, one of the personnel on sentry duty mistook them for escaping suspects. Thus opened fire on them, which led to the death of Mr. Rinji Bala.

"However, a thorough investigation is ongoing to unravel the circumstances surrounding the incident.

"Meanwhile, the MOPOL 'personnel' involved in the incident has been arrested and detained accordingly.

"Operation Safe Haven has condemned the sad incident. Representatives of OPSH have also visited the parents of the deceased to commiserate with them. OPSH also assures the general public of justice."

Also a group, Plateau, Our Heritage, expressed grief over Bala's death.

The group said it would no longer fold its hands and tolerate citizens being harassed, molested and killed innocently.

In a statement jointly signed by its Chairman, Hon. Alex Kwapnoe, and Convener, Hon. Ayuba Pam Dangwong, the group said it was deeply saddened by the unprofessional action of the security agent which led to the demise of Bala in his prime.

"It is with unimaginable grief and heavy hearts that we receive with the rudest shock the untimely death of our young promising son, Mr. Rinji Peter Bala, who was murdered in cold blood by a security 'personnel' attached to Sector 1 of the Special Task Force (STF) codenamed Operation Safe Haven on Tuesday 12th May, 2020 in Jos, Plateau State."

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