

# YabaTech Cult Clashes: Agonies of elusive justice, accusations, denial

In recent times, several reports of killings and gunshots on the premises of the Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) have elicited concerns from a number of Nigerians. Despite assurances by the management of the school that calm has returned to the school, the tears occasioned by the ugly development are yet to dry. LADESOPE LADELOKUN writes on the need to get justice for the deceased and permanently tame the activities of cultists



Yaba Tech

**D**owncast! Distraught! Destabilized! These words describe the feelings exuded by Mrs. Yetunde Bello, when she accidentally stumbled upon an old receipt bearing the name of her murdered son, Korede, when he was a JSS 3 student of Federal Government College, Ijakin, Lagos.

Although, she withdrew her gaze in a breath on sighting the receipt tucked in the middle of a book to avoid memories of her late 23-year-old son flooding back, the damage done to her mood was instant. "If it has not happened to you, you cannot understand," her husband, Akorede Bello, told *Sunday Telegraph*.

According to Bello, ever since September 16, 2022, when gunmen suspected to be cultists murdered his first son in cold blood, no day passed without tears rolling down his cheeks and he had not spent more than two hours outside his house because he had to be with his depressed wife always. "Such thing hit women more than men. Even if it's a 9-month-old baby, they find it hard to get over it, let alone a 23-year-old young man. She's really depressed but God is taking control. My son was a child any parent would wish to have. He was an artist to the core. There was nothing he could not do. He was very talented. His death really affected my family. I cry every day since the day he died. I still cried yesterday when I remembered. As I speak now, nothing suggests the school has made any effort to arrest or prosecute the offender. Up till this moment, no one has called me from the school management, let alone visit me six months after the incident. Only his friends and course mates visited," the father of the murdered HND1 Graphics Design student lamented.

Based on advice by friends and well wishers to seek help from fetish priests to avenge the death of his son, Bello said: "I don't know what God wants to do with his death. If I really want to find out how my son died through traditional means, I would have done it but my religion would not permit me to patronise traditional rituals for the purposes of finding out his killers. Killing everyone directly responsible for his death. I cannot do that."

Although conflicting figures, ranging from one to six and more have been thrown up by the school management, students and media reports have the number of casualties recorded in cult clashes between August and December even as some stakeholders expressed worries about the safety of students amid what they termed unsettled murder cases and seeming elusive justice.

On September 17, 2022, *Sahara Reporters*



Mr and Mrs Bello

reported that no fewer than five students of the school were killed in one week in various cult clashes that it said engulfed the institution.

The online news medium also stated that some of the students alleged that Korede Bello was the fifth student that was killed by cultists in one week.

"Cultists have been terrorising the school and two students have been killed inside the school while the other ones were outside the campus.

"I can still remember one of them that died after people rushed him to the hospital. The same thing happened to my friend last year during our final year exams. He almost lost his life to one cult group like that on campus. The government should try and do something about Yabatech because it's becoming too much," a student alleged.

Also, in December 2022, according to reports, suspected cultists shot a former student of YABATECH dead on the premises of the school when undergraduates were celebrating their students' week.

## Blast from the past

As far back as 2014, top management staff of YABATECH were alleged to be members of various cult groups by some students expelled for cult-related activities.

In an interview with *Sahara Reporters* in 2014, two students expelled for cult-related activities had alleged that cultists were paid monthly stipends from the institution's coffers.

"I don't know about the Rector, but the Bursar belongs to the Alora, the Dean also an Alora, the former CSO was an Axe man but the current CSO is of the Alora too," one of the expelled

cultists, an Eiye Confraternity member had alleged.

## Terrorized by 'known gunmen'

An old student of YABATECH, who gave his name as Tola, berated the school management for failing in its responsibility to protect students.

According to the former student of the school, who is also a cousin to one of the students murdered on campus, Korede Bello, there is no record showing that perpetrators of the recent dastardly acts on campus have been captured or suspended or expelled from the school, stating that another student was killed 16 days before his cousin was killed on September 16.

"The September incident happened to someone close to me. When I heard about the incident, I rushed to the school the following morning because I brought the boy to the school. So, I know almost everybody. I went to the HOD's office but he was not on seat. I went to the office of Dean of the School of Arts, I asked him what was wrong and he said he was probably a cult member. I told him that's not the issue and I asked why someone would come to the school and shoot someone and go scot-free.

"And 16 days before my cousin's incident, one happened in the school premises too. And when we got to the security post, there was no record to show that investigation was ongoing on the previous one before this one happened. So, they feel relaxed that cultists were only killing themselves."

Raising concerns about the safety of students on campus, he called for the management of the school to be alive to its responsibilities.

After my cousin's incident, two incidents happened again and I have the videos. Two people were shot and they died. It means the lives of other students are not safe. What's the role of YABATECH in all of these? If you question the school very well, they know these people. During my days at YABATECH, they probably gave them money. Then, cultists operated outside campus and the school was calm. But this time around, after the change of the then rector, Kudirat Ladipo, cultists strike frequently.

"What I would say is that the management needs to be questioned. If they argue that the boy was a cultist and no record or evidence shows that, now, what about other people? If they could come into the school and shoot the young man in front of his department, definitely, if they can shoot other people, they can and they will go scot-free. To be honest with you, the security of the school is very poor. When you see security men holding guns at the gate, they only check how people dress. But when they search, they're conscious of who they search. They know some of them (cultists). They don't search them," he told *Sunday Telegraph*.

## No respite?

In a chat with *Sunday Telegraph*, the Governor of Graphics Design Department in YABATECH, who identified himself as Olayinka, said after the murder of his coursemate, Korede Bello, he heard gunshots on several occasions within the school premises, adding that the last gunshots he heard was when students were writing their examinations in February this year.

"What I can say is that after the incident that happened to my coursemate on September 16, 2022, we hear a lot of shootings on campus but I can't confirm if people died. When we were writing our exams in February this year, we still heard gunshots. You see, these things happen when an important thing is ongoing on campus. It could be when we are writing exams, convocation and signing out day," he said.

Corroborating Olayinka's position, Alimi Temitope, a Metallurgical Engineering student of the same institution said: "We have not recorded any incident this year but we've heard gunshots when we were writing our exams. But from September to December, I can say more than three people died. The last incident, I remember, was during the students' week when one person died after he was gunned down. Ideally, final year students organise parties after their final exams but the school cancelled it for safety purposes. I think the management was trying to prevent people from gathering to prevent attacks."