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Day 21 Family Members Perished

05.28.2009

Tragedy recently struck the family of Alhaji Garba Na'nene Shanono of Kano State when 21 members of his family perished in a ghastly motor accident along the Gwarzo-Kano road. The sad incident has drawn a large army of sympathizers to the bereaved family. **Ibrahim Shuaibu** writes

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Monday May 18, 2009 would forever remain a dark day for Alhaji Garba Na'nene Shanono, a prominent contractor in Kano State, when 21 members of his family were wiped out in a ghastly motor accident. The accident occurred when the families were returning home after a visit to their relations in Shanono town, about 110 kilometres away from Kano city.

The sad incident occurred in Lambu Village along Gwarzo-Kano road when a bus in which the families were travelling, had a head-on collision and caught fire instantly. Eye witnesses said the accident occurred at dusk, making rescue operation difficult.

It took the rescue operation a long time to remove the charred and mutilated bodies of some of the victims. While many of them were seriously burnt, one toddler had survived the accident and the remaining survivors were taken to Murtala Mohammed Specialist Hospital Kano.

Members of the Na'nene Shanono who family, which perished in the sad incident included his senior wife, Hajija Dija, nine children and 10 other women among them were his in-laws, while the driver of the bus conveying them, Auwalu Magaji Gwarzo, popularly known as Auwalu Zankal also died and four other passengers died in the crash, bringing the number of casualties that night to 26.

According to an eyewitness, Mallam Murtala Saleh, the fatal accident occurred while the two vehicles were on high speed. During a visit to Alhaji Shanono in his residence, he was seen sitting among hundreds of sympathizers over the unfortunate incident. His younger sister, Hajija Ramatu, who was also involved in the unfortunate accident had sustained a fracture on her hand.

In an interview with reporters, the eldest son of Shanono, Alhaji Sani who lost his mother to the accident along with other family members, said that he had earlier visited the aunt in Shanono and that when it was time for the women to take their turn, the journey was conducted in separate vehicles to the village.

He explained further: "unfortunately we lost them," shedding tears while speaking with reporters, "I feel terribly bad about the accident having at the back of my mind also that God's time is the best, and we should pray for them because they are now martyrs from the way they died".

The Yan Alawa quarters of Gwale local government in Kano metropolis which is the family residence of the Shanonos had witnessed a large number of crowd who have been tramping there on daily basis for condolence over the unfortunate accident. Also, the Arewa Consultative Forum, Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Mike Okiro through the Commissioner of Police Kano State, Ibrahim Mamman Chafe, condoled the family and the entire people of Kano State.

The ACF condoled the deceased family through a press release signed by Mr. Anthony Z. Sani, while President Umaru Yar'adua also condoled the people of Kano State and Alhaji Shanono.

However, for the entire people of Kano State, it's a time of agony over the incident which shocked Governor Ibrahim Shekarau who drove directly from the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA) to register his heart-felt condolences to Shanono.

Alhaji Garba told reporters at his residence that what has happened to his family was a human tragedy and a 'test' on his claim to faith by the Almighty Allah. He explained that the earth-shaking calamity where 21 members of his family perished in one fell swoop is beyond him, and has since come to term with reality.

He said what happened to his family was a human tragedy, which perhaps, informed the entire people of the country to condole him by trooping to his house, adding, "to me, this is a rare incident, which like others come from Allah, and I have gone back to Him for mercy."

However, for Sani Garba, the only surviving son from his mother's side, stressed that he was shattered by the sad news describing the incident as one of the saddest moments of his life. Shedding profuse tears, he said that although he lost everything to the accident, he has however found 'comfort and solace' in Allah who not only dominates, but controls' the affairs of men.

The FRSC Sector Commandant in Kano State, Yusuf Garba confirmed the accident and condoled the families of the people that were involved in it. He also warned drivers to desist from high speed while driving on the highway.

Garba explained: "We marked the place where the accident occurred as a black spot, so many accidents had occurred at the very spot in the past because when motorists try to dodge potholes-ridden spot, they usually run into oncoming vehicles".

A cross section of people who spoke to THISDAY in Kano said the accident was very shocking and terrible not only to the family of Shanono, but to the entire people of the state, as it's the first time such a terrible accident would involve a single family in Kano State with that kind of high casualty rate.

Mallam Khalid Rabi Sarki a traveler along Gwarzo-Kano road told THISDAY that the road is bad and that it was high time that it was

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dualised to save lives. He explained further that the road is inter-state highway between four states of Kano, Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto. Sarki, who also attributed all the accidents along Gwarzo-Kano road to reckless driving by the commuters, explained that "it's a challenge also to the FRSC officials, VIO and other security agencies for allowing the drivers to be running uncontrolled." It was also learnt that a majority of Kano highways have become death traps for the commuters and passengers as passengers continue to die needless deaths daily even as others sustain life-threatening injuries.

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