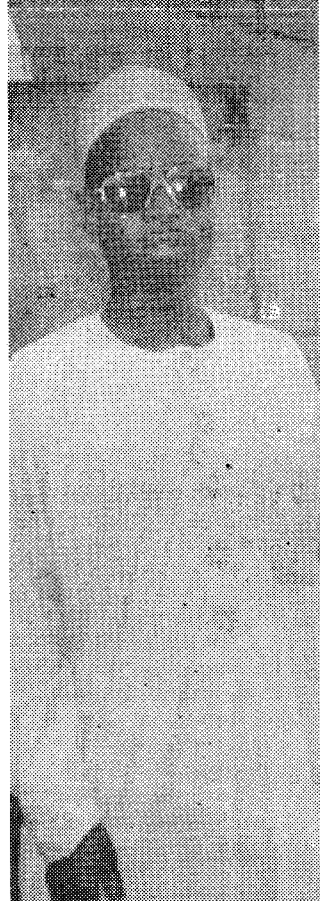


Ritualists strike again, killing this 5-yr old girl on errand to buy firewood



●Late Aisha Saminu



●Mallam Mohammed Saminu, bereaved dad

●Residents blame police for wave of ritual killings

By Sikiru Abdul-Raheem,
Katsina

THE town of Funtua in Katsina state, was once again, Monday 10th July, 2006 thrown into mourning as dare devil ritualists struck and killed a five year old girl, Aisha Muhammed Saminu.

It could be recalled that it was only last month in Funtua that the ritualists killed a 12 year old girl Hafsat Ahmed in a similar circumstances.

Like Hafsat, the only remains of Aisha found dumped at a swamp behind Funtua main water tank, Dutsen Funtua, were her head, two hands legs and her clothes which were found in a polythene bag

According to her father, Mallam Muhammed Saminu, Aisha on the fateful day was sent to buy firewood across the road from their 78, Bakori Road residence. She did not return from the errand. He noted that as anxiety over her whereabouts persisted, he and his relatives formed themselves into a search party to discover her where about.

Mallam Mohammed Saminu added that it was in the process of searching for her that news filtered to him that her head had been discovered in a swamp behind Dutsen Funtua.

"Since it has happened to our beloved and innocent daughters, we as Muslims have left everything in the hands of God. We shall continue to pray to Allah to expose the killers of Aisha, my daughter", the father wailed.

Katsina State Police Command had through Deputy Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Aliyu Musa confirmed the incident.

Alhaji Musa said the Funtua ritual killing is worrisome and the command has launched a manhunt to uncover the perpetrators of such dastardly and inhuman acts. He assured the public that the command would not rest until the perpetrators were brought to justice.

The father of the deceased, Mallam Muhammed Saminu averred that the N10 given to Aisha to purchase firewood with was also found in the polythene bag.

This development rendered useless the arrest of firewood sellers in the area by the Police, though they did not secure their freedom until they were allegedly made to pay a bribe of N11,000 before they were released by the police in Makera-Funtua Command.

Many people who spoke with our correspondent during a visit to Funtua condemned the attitude of the Police in Makera-Funtua for their unfairness and bribe taking.

"They arrested a very poor Yoruba woman with her four children alongside a single poor Hausa man also selling firewood close to each other for nothing. The confirmation by the deceased's father that the N10 given to Aisha was found in the polythene bag is a clear indication that the girl did not reach the firewood

selling point. Besides, these Christian women don't sell on Sundays. The Makera-Funtua Policemen just wanted money and they have gotten it from these poor and innocent people, but God will avenge them," an eyewitness charged.

In his own comments, Mohammed Bello Shehu, a civil rights campaigner based in Funtua alleged that: "since the introduction of politics of violence in Funtua town, the town had been witnessing upsurge of armed robbery, ritual killings and high rate of drug abuse. And this is being promoted by powers that be in the area."

A 65-yr old resident of the community who declined to be named said that "the major problem in Funtua is that most of the policemen have spent over three decades working in the same environment. This depreciates their performance, and sometimes led to compromise in the discharge of their duties. In order to redeem the image of the police in the area, I would appeal to the Katsina State Police Commissioner to ensure a total overhaul of the Funtua Police Command immediately".

Comrade Abdullahi U.A., a civil servant lent his voice to the attitude of the Police in Funtua, and alleged that

the killings are politically motivated: "Security of the masses is not a priority of political office holders. Last month, a twelve years old Hafsat Ahmed was beheaded and now a five year old Aisha Saminu had been beheaded in a dastard way, and the police are not serious about tracking down the possible ritualists suspected to be powerful politicians. This has shown clearly that all killings which is happening in our town (Funtua) cannot be disconnected from political ritualists."

The late Aisha Saminu is fourth child among six in the family. Her other siblings are Yusuf, Nana, Hadiza, Abdullahi and Habiba.

"I know that God has destined that my younger sister, Aisha will die in these unfortunate circumstances. But I am sure that God will definitely expose the killers one day. May her soul rest in perfect peace", Yusuf Saminu, Late Aisha's elder brother told *Saturday Vanguard*.

Aisha's 70-year old grandmother, Hajia Rukayya Suleiman who saw her last delivered a curse: "My prayer is for Allah to expose the killers without delay. Those who found pleasure in killing innocent children will never get whatever they are looking for in this world. Misfortune will be their own forever".

The late Aisha was buried amidst tears on Tuesday 11th July, 2006 at Funtua according to Muslim rites.

"It was one Maikudi and I that took the remains of late Aisha to the burial ground on Thursday around 10:30 am. But Mallam Yau wanzam put additional perfume for her and Mallam Abdulrahman Mai-Almajirai led the prayer," Hussaini Abdullahi concluded.



●Aisha, as a baby, with mum



●Late Aisha, with older brother, Yusuf

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