



Crime Guard

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Father of 10 killed in Abuja after escaping death in Chibok

By Jude Opara, Abuja

When Joseph Pudza, an indigene of Chibok in Borno State ran to Abuja with his family early in 2015, he had thought he had been able to avoid being killed in a gruesome manner by the deadly Boko Haram insurgents who have terrorized the entire North East especially Borno State for the past five years.

He and his family found shelter in Pegi Village, a community under the Kuje Area Council of Abuja. Joseph could be said to have been luckier than most of his other Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the North-East because his immediate elder brother Habila had a house he was building in Pegi which he promptly allowed Joseph and his family to live in.

New life

When he arrived Abuja, the father of 10 who was also a well known farmer in his native Chibok knew had to work very hard to cater for his many children. He indeed hit the ground running by acquiring a motorcycle for commercial transportation and of course he did not abandon his farming profession since he had enough land to farm in Abuja.

Soon enough the Pudzas who said their house was just behind the now popular Government Girls' Secondary School, Chibok began to pick the pieces of what was left as things started turning right for them; children were enrolled in schools and the dignity of husband and father was returning back in his life.

But all that came to an abrupt end on Friday, May 20 when yet-to-be-identified mindless human beings literally slaughtered the 45-year-old man along the Kuje-Pegi Road and made away with his motorcycle and the proceeds of his sweat that day.

"They do not know what they are doing"

In a chat with our reporter, the widow, Mrs. Naomi Joseph who was still in tears said she has left everything in the hands of God even as she said she does not really know what to do or how to cater for the children. But surprisingly, she prayed for God to forgive the killers who turned her into a sudden widow because, according to her, they did not know what they were doing.

"Honestly, I don't really know what is happening to me and I don't know what to do. Fate has been very harsh to us. In Chibok we were okay because my husband had a huge farmland. We had cattle and goats but we left

everything to save our lives but now my husband has been killed by evil men.

"Well, what can I do? How can I alone feed and train these children? I will leave everything in the hands of God and as for those who killed my husband, I pray that God should forgive them because they don't know what they are doing."

Also speaking to *Saturday Vanguard* at their residence in Pegi, Habila Pudza, the immediate elder brother of the deceased said he was at home that night when the brother's wife Naomi called to inform him that her husband was yet to return home, a message he said put him off balance because he knew that his brother was not a night crawler.

Habila said he immediately contacted some of their tribesmen who were also in the business of *okada* riding, and they all agreed to report to the Police and also to conduct a search by the next morning.

The heart-broken father of four who said he is now at a crossroad on how to take care of his own family and that of his late brother including an aged mother narrated his story.

"We are from Chibok Town. What brought my late brother and his family to Abuja in the first place was the insecurity that reigns in our place due to the Boko Haram insurgency. First of all, the first time that Boko Haram came to Chibok was when they kidnapped those school girls. So after that incident, I sent for my mother and seven of my brother's children so that they could live here in Abuja. But he and his wife remained behind with two other children; his first daughter is already married.

Unfortunately, when Boko Haram came the second time to Chibok was when they were able to escape, and they ran to Abuja. In fact, on that fateful day, they were in the farm when the attackers came, and from the farm they didn't return to Chibok again. Interestingly, when that crisis started, they usually carried all their money on them and that was why he was able to escape from the farm to here with his remaining family members.

"As soon as he came to Abuja, being a struggling man, he did not waste time to start something. Also before he came, he had heard how I was struggling with his seven children so he immediately acquired this motorcycle so that he could be doing *okada* business to cater for his



Wife of the deceased

family. So, he had been doing this business which he equally combined with his farming to make ends meet. He was into this *okada* business until that fateful Friday night."

Discovery

He continued: "My brother's wife called me around 1 am that Friday night to complain that her husband was not yet home. So, as I said earlier, I decided to go to the Police, hospitals and all such places to check if he had a kind of problem. But around 6 am on Saturday, I was about going out to begin the search when one of our brothers called that my attention was needed at the Police station and I raced to Kuje Divisional Police Headquarters.

"As I was approaching the station, I saw a mammoth crowd; I saw some of our kinsmen who were already there. They said that as early as 5 am, they had gone out to search for him around all the areas they used to operate but did not see him.

"And on getting to the Police station to also report his disappearance, they now saw his corpse inside the police van and when they inquired what happened, the Police said they found the body by the road side along Pegi Village. On getting there, I was confused and when I removed the leaves they used to cover the body, I discovered it was my brother."

"What he was running from met him here"

Habila who appealed to the government and well-meaning

Nigerians to come to the aid of the family described his late brother as a hard working man, gentle, quiet and somebody that never wanted any problem.

"My late brother knew he was only a sojourner here; he ran away from Chibok to save his life and his family but unfortunately what he was running from also met with him here. But my message to the people that slaughtered him, killed him in cold blood and made away with his *okada* is that they should repent. Number two, they should come out and surrender themselves to the authorities for justice to be served."

He also tasked the Police to up their game because according to him, this is not the first time such chilling stories of people being killed along that Pegi Road, but nobody has been arrested ever since.

"If there was a good road, Joseph would not have died"

Some of the residents who spoke to our reporter blamed the incessant attacks and killings on that road on its bad shape which they insisted forces people to move slowly, a situation that the bandits usually capitalize on to carry out their dastardly acts. A resident who gave his name as Bulus Anthony said the area has been forgotten by successive FCT administrations since the estate was created in 2001 by the former FCT Minister and now Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai.