

UNDER SIEGE

Two yet to be buried and the rest live in fear

The family of killed Mungiki suspects remains in state of fright and suspicion

By MACHARIA MWANGI

It is a family under siege. Since their two sons were linked to the outlawed Mungiki group, they have never known peace.

The two sons are dead, but they are yet to be buried, compounding the physiological and psychological torture the family of Mr Joseph Wagacha Waithaka is still undergoing.

In their humble abode in Maai Mahiu, few family members are keeping vigil inside the compound as they frantically try to work out on the logistics of the burial.

The air of apprehension is almost palpable and the mistrust distinct, but understandably, the family has gone through a lot to fully trust any strangers.

His frustration

The 60-year-old former court prosecutor is now appealing to the Government to help him inter his sons and guarantee the safety of the four remaining siblings who are living in perpetual fear.

During a recent interview with the *Nation*, the old man poured out his frustration. The talk was punctuated with long silence and a blank stare into the clear blue sky.

"As a former soldier, I was taught to be brave; but the turn of events in my family has really weighed me down," he said, while letting out a dry cough.

His second born, Charles Ndong'u Wagacha, the chairman of the Kenya National Youth Alliance, died under a hail of bullets at Kwa Mathore area on the Naivasha-Nairobi highway.

Bizarre incident

The daylight shooting was unnerving experience to the few who witnessed the bizarre incident that was captured on television footage, as the car drove to a halt.

The vehicle is parked at the old man's home with bullet holes, a stark reminder to the family of how the young man met his death.

This happened barely a month after his other son, George Njoroge Wagacha, was killed alongside Ms Virginia Nyakio, the wife of jailed Mungiki leader Maina Njenga.

Njoroge was Nyakio's personal driver. Both were bludgeoned to death before

their bodies were found in Gakoe area.

"Even before we could establish how the son met his death, we received the news of the second death that completely threw us off balance. It is as if the gods of fate had conspired against us," he says.

Now, the two brothers are yet to be buried as the family members grapple with how to handle the issue following what they term as harassment from some of the police officers.

Neighbours, too, have shunned them for fear of reprisals.

"Police officers and the intelligence have visited our home on several occasions in search of guns and demanding to know when the burial will take place," Mr Waithaka says.

It has become almost impossible to conduct burial arrangements due to the prevailing circumstance and acute financial constraints, he says.

Police interest

Mr Waithaka questions the police interest in the burial of the two, having claimed that they were killed by "a criminal gang and the matter is under investigations".

In the emotional interview, the family revealed they wanted to conduct the burial ceremony two weeks ago, but were forced to suspend the exercise at the last minute due to unavoidable circumstances.

"The family is undergoing serious psychological trauma as nobody is willing to associate with us for fear of revenge," Mr Waithaka says.

Prior to their deaths, he says, the two expressed fear for their lives, claiming they were being trailed by strangers.

"In fact, before Ndong'u died, he told his mother that he was headed to Naivasha to meet a senior administrator, adding that he was being trailed," Mr Waithaka says.

The family's progress, he says, has almost ground to a halt due to persistent fears.

His wife, too, is equally tormented and her wish is to see her sons buried to enable them face the future, which she says, will surely be bleak.

"The family is on the verge of breaking down. What we have experienced is

'Even before we could establish how the son met his death, we received the news of the second death that completely threw us off balance'



Mrs Esther Njeri, the wife of George Njoroge Wagacha (left), her mother-in-law Mrs Esther Wagacha, and her father-in-law, Mr Joseph Wagacha Waithaka. On the extreme right is Ms Hannah Wanjiru, the wife of Charles Ndong'u Wagacha and some of their children. Right: Curious wananchi get a glimpse of the vehicle in which Ndong'u was felled. Photos /MACHARIA MWANGI/FILE



enough torture to bring down even the strongest in the society," Mrs Wagacha says.

The widows of the dead sons broke down and wept openly as they narrated their ordeal at the hands of the police, who were conducting searches in their homes, prior to the killings of their husbands.

"They could just bang into houses and spread terror even to children as they sought to know details about our husbands' whereabouts," they now say.

"We were beaten, harassed and abused during the interrogations and at times threatened with death," they add.

Some of the interrogators alleged that they were living in luxury and wondered

how that came to be.

Mr Waithaka is at a loss on how to educate the eight grandchildren left behind by his sons, saying they might be forced out of school.

Their mothers, he says, are jobless and are relying on the ageing man to provide for them.

"It is surely a Herculean task and I cannot be able to raise the kind of the money required towards their education kitty," he adds.

The sense of loss was clearly evident as the emotionally charged interview came to a close that was characterised by uncontrollable sobs.

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