

Another Identity

It was rumoured that the wedding
was to happen on a Friday.
People gathered
and burst in,
they found two men
beat them
nearly to death.
I was in the toilet
under the sink.
They looked
for people to beat.
I hid and prayed for safety.

I went to a friend's house,
I got a call that men were looking for me.
The doors burst open
they took my electronics, shoes,
the money I kept in a safe.
They threatened the landlord
they would burn his house to ashes
if I did not vacate.

I decided to go
home;
it was bad,
a lot of stigma and discrimination
from my family.
They called me despicable.

'You have dropped our name to mud,
you have dropped our name to mud,
we are ashamed,
you have no shame,
God will see you to hell.'

People got wind
and decided to take action.
They threatened they would burn the house down
if I did not come out,
saying 'he is their mentor and protector.'
My mom put a burqua on me
a taxi was waiting
I rushed out
and was taken to safety.

My dad went out,
and told them,
the person they were looking for
was not in the house.
They told my father,
'Your son's life is in our hands.
Tell him we shall kill him
because he is campaigning
for gay rights.'

I changed my phone.
I cut contact with my family,
I had to leave many things associated with my childhood,
I had to have another identity.

Composed by Juliana Mensah from the interview transcript of a transwoman human rights defender from Kenya working on the rights of LGBTIQ persons from the research project 'Navigating Risk, Managing Security, and Receiving Support', which focuses on the experiences of human rights defenders at risk in Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, and Indonesia (securityofdefendersproject.org)*