

Trouble in Kaduna: 7 killed as Islamic groups clash

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AT least, seven people were yesterday, killed and dozens wounded following clashes between rival Islamic groups in Zaria, Kaduna State.

The clashes occurred just as members of Shi'ite Islamic movement staged a demonstration in Kaduna yesterday over the crisis in Gaza between Israel and Hamas.

Trouble started in the university town on Tuesday after members of the fundamentalist Shi'ite Islamic movement were accused of attacking the convoy of the Emir of Zaria during a procession, a charge the group denied.

Members of a rival Islamic group reacted by setting ablaze the home of a Shi'ite leader. They returned yesterday to pull the one-storey building down but were resisted by Shi'ites, who had gathered to protect it.

"In the process of trying to stop them, two of our members were martyred,

about three people died on the other side and about 20 were wounded," Abdulmumini Giwa, a spokesman for the Shi'ite Islamic Movement said.

Another witness however said seven people died in the clashes yesterday after being shot with home-made hunting guns.

A source at the police command in the state confirmed that there had been unrest in Zaria but gave no further details, adding that the situation had been brought under control.

As at the time of filing this report, more members of the state special security outfit, 'Operation Yaki,' had been drafted from Kaduna to Zaria to maintain peace in the area.

However, the Kaduna state government has refuted the casualty figure, assuring that security operatives were in control of the situation.

A statement signed by the special adviser to the governor on Media and Public Affairs, Alhaji Umar Sani said residents had no cause to panic, even as

he urged them to go about their normal duties without fear of molestation. He said that those who were behind the breakdown of law and order in Zaria have been arrested.

"The attempt to cause civil unrest in Zaria by some overzealous elements has been nipped in the bud by the combined efforts of our 'Operation Yaki' operatives," the statement said.

Meanwhile, during the demonstration in Kaduna yesterday against the continued bombing of Palestinian stronghold in Gaza Strip by Israel, the Shi'ite Islamic movement lamented the wanton killing of Palestinians and denounced the United States of America and other Arab nations for their alleged complicity in the attacks.

The Shi'ite group during the demonstration, chanted anti-Israel slogans and carried placards, some of which read: "Death to Israel"; "Shame on the Arab nations;" "It's

the worst atrocity against humanity."

Leader of the demonstrating group, Mallam Muktar Sahabi, lamented that Arab nations had failed to take positive action against the attack on the Palestinians, describing it as "highly unfortunate," adding that "this is the worst ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian innocent souls, while the United Nations, from its inception to date, is designed to protect and promote Zionism against the world population.

"We ask Muslims and all the defenders of human rights to realize the dangers of the ongoing killings of Palestinians as it is a direct threat to all mankind.

"Our hearts and prayers go to the Palestinians who are made the sacrificial lamb of the world Zionist movement and we implore all mankind, irrespective of faith, sentiment or geographical location, to equally condemn the acts, and offer assistance to them, no matter how little," he said.