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# Protests spread over Zakzaky arrest

By Yusha'u A. Ibrahim (Kano), Andrew Agbese & Maryam Ahmadu-Suka (Kaduna), Isiaka Wakili (Abuja) | Publish Date: Dec 16 2015 1:28AM | Updated Date: Dec 16 2015 1:30AM

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Members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria call for the release of their leader, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky, during processions in Kano yesterday.

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Peaceful protests yesterday spread to some northern states including Kaduna and Kano over the arrest of the leader of Islamic Movement of Nigeria, Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky.

At least three people were said to have been killed in Kaduna when police tried to disperse a procession of Shiite members who were protesting the arrest of their leader.

Sect members said some of their members were killed but the police disputed the claims.

Our correspondent gathered that the protest march started from the Layin Kosai area of Tudun Wada with the sect members demanding the release of their leader.

Witnesses said trouble however started when some members got to Tudun Nupawa near Enugu road met a convoy of Hilux vans carrying anti-riot policemen.

Business activities were grounded in Tudun Wada and Tudun Nupawa in Kaduna South LGA of the state, normally later returned.

The army, Operation Yaki security outfit and the civil defence quickly mobilized to the scene to contain the situation.

The Shi'ites in a statement by the president of its media forum, Ibrahim Musa, accused the Mobile Police Unit (MOPOL) of attacking a peaceful protest.

The police killed three people on the spot, with many receiving gunshot injuries.

As usual with such protest conducted by the Muslim brothers, it started peacefully from Layin kosai area of Tudun Wada Kaduna, however when it reached Tudun Nupawa near Enugu road, the MOPOL, in about five vehicles, opened fire on the protesters.

"The main aim and slogan of the protesters was: "Release Sheikh Zakzaky, Enough is Enough" and the protest was dispersed by the police by their sporadic shootings.

"However, about nine police vehicles moved to Tudun wada where the Markaz (Islamic Centre) of the Muslim brothers is situated and opened fire there, as if in continuation of what the army started in Zaria over the weekend. Reports reaching us said many were killed or wounded there also", he said.

In Kano, thousands of the Shi'ite members including women and children began a peaceful protest from the central mosque early yesterday, marching through Kano Central to the Kantin-Kwari market, Kofar-Mata, Ibrahim Taiwo Road and Fagge Juma'at mosque and ended the protest at the Bata roundabout around 1pm. Some protesters carried placards which read: Free Zakzaky now, Soldiers should stop killing our people, No to brutality and No one can



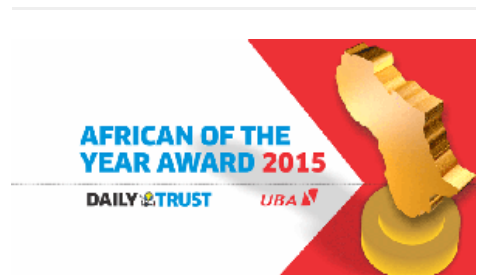
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intimidate us, among others.

Members of the sect have been protesting in Kano since Sunday when the military clashed with members of the sect in Zaria, Kaduna State.

The spokesperson of the sect in Kano, Muhammad Saqafah, told Daily Trust that the procession was in protest against the recent arrest of their leader by military.

“We will continue protesting until government releases him. His arrest was unlawful and government must release him with immediate effect”, he said.

“Protests were held in Bauchi, Gombe, Kano and Gusau, and they all ended peacefully, because no police were ordered to shoot the protesters, the question is who are those in authority that are bent on creating chaos in Kaduna through such brutal attacks on ordinary unarmed people?” he asked.

Police spokesman, DSP Zubairu Abubakar, who confirmed the incident said the Tudun Wada police station was attacked, but denied any casualty.

“Some people who we have not identified yet but believed to be Shi’ite members attacked the Tudun Wada police station in their hundreds. No casualty was recorded on both sides so I do not know where they got their figures from, they were not in a peaceful protest because came directly towards the station and attacked and we used non-lethal weapons to bring sanity in the area”, he said.

He noted that calm had returned to the area and urged residents to go about their lawful business. He said to the best of his knowledge, no policeman used live bullets on the procession because they were under strict instruction not to open fire on the protesters.

“They tried to attack a police station, so our men moved there to ensure peace. Our men used tear gas to disperse the people”, he added. Similar protests were held in Kebbi, Bauchi and Nassarawa States, according to the protest leader in Kano, Malam Imamu Kurna.

“We had concurrent processions in Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Nassarawa, Kebbi and other states,” he said. “We did not face any intimidation from security forces in Kano, and even in other states, apart from Kaduna, we did not receive any assault on our members. We are doing this based on orders from our leaders”, he added.

### Zaria incident a military affair—Presidency

The Presidency yesterday described weekend’s clashes in Zaria, Kaduna State, between the military and members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria as a military affair.

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The Special Adviser to President Muhammadu Buhari on Media and Publicity, Mr Femi Adesina, last night in a reaction to the incident in a text message sent to our correspondent said: "It's a military affair".

Meanwhile, the federal government yesterday delegated the Minister of Interior, Interior Minister on fact-finding mission in Kaduna Abdulrahman Danbazzau, on a mission to ascertain what really transpired between the Shiites and the Nigerian Army in Zaria which led to the killing of the sect members. The minister on arriving Kaduna, held a closed-door meeting with Governor Nasir El-Rufai with other top security chiefs in the state. The meeting lasted for about an hour before the minister, accompanied by trucks of policemen, set out for Zaria. Danbazau who responded briefly to questions from newsmen confirmed he was in Kaduna because of the clash, to find out the situation of things.

He said he would not make further comments until he had gone round scenes of the crisis in Zaria.

"I came to Kaduna to see the situation of things and I decided to see the Chief Security Officer of the state. I'm on my way to Zaria to see the situation of things", he said.

In Zaria, the minister urged Nigerians to conduct themselves in such a manner that peace would reign in the country.

Leading a delegation that comprises the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Solomon Aranze, and other top security officers to the Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji Shehu Idris, Danbazau said they were in Zaria for an on the spot assessment of the situation. He said at this crucial time of Nigeria's development, the country needs peace more than ever before. He added that without peace, the change Nigerians require cannot be achieved.

Danbazau commended the fatherly role of the emir of Zazzau in promoting peaceful coexistence not only in Zaria but Kaduna State and Nigeria in general.

In his response, the emir said Zaria was known for peace, saying his emirate would continue to do everything possible in ensuring that peace continued to prevail. He urged all residents of the city to continue to be law abiding and cooperate with the authorities in their effort to safeguard lives and property.

While thanking the minister and his entourage for the visit, Alhaji Idris said his council would continue to cooperate with government at all levels in their efforts to move the country forward. Before leaving Zaria, Danbazau visited Gyellesu quarters where Sheikh Zakzaky's house is located and their centre, Hussainiyya on Sokoto Road.

**ABUTH confirms receiving 61 corpses**

The Chief Medical Director (CMD) of the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH) Zaria yesterday confirmed that the hospital had received 61 bodies of victims of the clash between the army and Shiites.

Professor Lawal Khalid told our correspondent in Zaria that the corpses were brought in batches by the army.

"The initial batch was 60 bodies. They later brought an additional one. This made a total of 61. However, they have evacuated all the corpses from the hospital. This is all I know, as I am not around now," Professor Khalid said.

**Soldiers still in Gyellesu**

Gyellesu area of Zaria, where Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky's house is located and PZ-Samaru Road, where the Shiites centre, Hussainiyya, is located, are still under siege by the army. The roads leading to these places were barricaded by the soldiers yesterday.

Our correspondent observed that residents of Gyellesu access the area through two alternatives routes, but all the routes leading to Sheikh Zakzaky's house were under the control of the military. Apart from these two areas, residents of Zaria went about their normal businesses yesterday. Some banks opened for business, an indication that normalcy is gradually setting in.

**Kaduna assures on security**

The Kaduna State government has assured residents of the state of their safety and security.

A statement by the spokesman to the governor, Samuel Aruwan, urged the people of the state to remain peaceful and law-abiding, and to calmly go about their normal activities.

He said, "A situation of calm prevails in the state, with security agencies maintaining a vigilant stance.

"Zaria is peaceful and quiet. Today, an attempt to breach the peace in a part of Kaduna was swiftly contained. Soldiers and other security agents will remain on patrol overnight in Tudun Wada district in Kaduna to ensure the maintenance of order.

"Citizens are assured of state protection. All residents of the state are requested to promote harmony and peaceful relations, avoid panic and shun rumours."

The sect members in Katsina demanded for the immediate and unconditional release of Sheikh Zakzaky and other members held by security forces.

The group also wants the release of the bodies of its members for



proper burial according to their tenets, saying they would not accept any mass burial by government.

The interim leader of the group in the state, Yakubu Yahaya, said at a news conference that they were not convinced with the said medical treatment purportedly being given to Zakzaky and others by the military.

“From the pictures we are seeing, our leader is in dire need of the best medical attention, we are not satisfied with his condition and we want him along with others returned to us for proper care”, he said.

According to him, since the skirmishes started last week, the group had lost between 500-1000 members, just as several others were critically injured and held by the army and police.

He said it was a clear clamp down on its members across the country, and wondered why other members outside their Nasairiyah base were being attacked.

“We are getting reports that our members are being attacked in Jos, Kaduna and Bauchi amongst other places. Were they also among those that blocked the said road for the army general?” he said.


In a related development, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has commiserated with the group over the crisis. CAN chairman, Very Reverend Nelson Onyekachukwu, said the job of the security was to protect lives, and taking lives was uncalled for. He said the group had co existed peacefully with the state CAN and prayed for peaceful resolution of the issue.

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