

Two killed in Abuja Shiite-police clash, bandits kidnap 150 in Sokoto

From Odiata Sunday, Abuja

TWO people were feared killed yesterday following a clash between members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), also known as Shiites, and officers of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Police Command.

The Police Public Relations Officer for the command, Josephine Adeh, said the incident was sparked by an unprovoked attack by members of the proscribed group on some police officers at Wuse Junction in the capital city. Motorists travelling through affected routes were forced to take alternative paths to avoid violence and potential damage to their vehicles. The incident also caused significant disruptions to traffic flow in the area.

The Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) is a Shia group with strong connections to Iran. It is predominantly active in the northern regions of Nigeria and was established in the 1980s. It is headed by Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzaky.

Adeh said two police officers were killed, three were left

• **FCT police boss condemns 'unprovoked' attack on officers**

• **IMN accuses police of killing 'numerous' members**

• **Security analyst tasks govt, says bandits, logistics suppliers not unknown**

unconscious in a hospital, and three patrol vehicles were set ablaze.

"The proscribed organisation attacked the police checkpoint unprovoked, wielding machetes, improvised explosive devices and knives.

"While several arrests have been effected, the Commissioner of Police FCT, Benneth C. Igweh, condemns the unprovoked attack on officers. "He promises to bring those involved to book. The situation is currently under control, and normalcy has been restored. Further development will be communicated in due course," Adeh said.

Meanwhile, an IMN spokesperson, Sheikh Sidi Munir Mainasara Sokoto, said: "The police attacked the ongoing Arbaeen symbolic trek at Wuse District in Abuja and killed numerous mourners. While trying to disperse the trek, the police killed and injured numerous mourners.

"Currently, security agents are busy arresting the mourners.

Medical practitioners are attending to those critically injured, and details of those killed, injured, and arrested will be made available to members of the press in due course.

"Before the commencement of the trek, we searched all participants to ensure there was no infiltration."

The Arbaeen commemoration is a significant event for the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), particularly for the Shi'ite community. It marks the 40th day after the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and is observed with a symbolic trek to express solidarity and remembrance. This year, the event is notable for its inclusivity, with reports of Shiites and Christians planning to march together in Abuja to promote justice and humanity.

Recall that a Nigerian court ruled on July 26, 2019, that IMN activities amounted to "acts of terrorism and illegality" and ordered the government to ban the group.

The then presidency had consequently announced a ban on July 28.

Nigerian researcher at Human Rights Watch Anietie Ewang had commented at the time: "The sweeping court ruling against the Shia movement threatens the basic human rights of all Nigerians. The government should seek to reverse the ban, which prohibits the religious group's members from exercising their right to meet and carry out peaceful activities."

Ewang added: "Allegations of criminality do not present legitimate grounds to ban the activities of a religious group, including protests for justice and the release of their leader. The ban on the Shia movement may portend an

even worse security force crackdown on the group, which could have dire human rights implications throughout Nigeria."

ALSO, as the people of Gobir in Sokoto State mourned the death of their Emir, Alhaji Isa Muhammad Bawa, who was murdered by bandits, the hoodlums reportedly invaded the community again and kidnapped over 150 people.

A university don, Prof. Bello Bada, disclosed this in an interview with Radio France International's Hausa service, which was monitored in Kaduna yesterday.

He blamed the activities of bandits in the area on security lapses.

"This is not the first time a prominent monarch was attacked, but this is the first time a prominent monarch was murdered," he said.

Bada described the murder of the Emir as humiliating to all Nigerians, adding that now is the time for Nigerians to rethink the nefarious acts of the bandits who have continued to kill people intermittently.

"The bandits made a similar attempt on the life of the Emir of Potiskum while he was on the way to Zaria, but he narrowly escaped. The Emir of Kauran Namoda escaped death by the whiskers, but members of his entourage were killed by the bandits.

"In the Zuru community, a monarch was slaughtered by the bandits. Sadly, these heinous acts would be completely forgotten after a few days as if nothing ever happened until the bandits struck again."

He said the acts should not be left unchecked and allowed to become a recurring decimal.

He alleged: "Where these bandits are coming from is well known, but the appropriate action against them is not adequately taken."

A security analyst, Dr Yahuza Getso, said the security operatives who were complacent and allowed the late Emir of Gobir to be murdered by bandits after spending over three weeks in captivity should be punished.

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