

Another Five Killed As Police, Shiites Clash, 400 Arrested

JIDE OYEKUNLE;
SAMUEL OGIDAN;
INNOCENT OWEH;
JULIET OYOYO;
OJO OYEWAMIDE
ABUJA / KADUNA / AKURE

Again, five members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) were reportedly shot dead by the Nigeria police in Abuja on Tuesday. The group said over 300 of its members were still missing.

The protesters finally gained access to the city by boarding commercial vehicles instead of trekking, to beat security operatives who had laid ambush at the three major entry points into Abuja.

Tuesday's protest was to end the mass protest tagged, 'Arbaeen Symbolic Trek' and was scheduled to be terminated at the Unity Fountain, near Transcorp Hilton Hotel.

But security operatives realised that the mob had succeeded in gaining entry into the city and swiftly moved in, forming a barricade along the road and engaging the sect on their way to the Unity Fountain.

The protesters, who also engaged the police in a hide and seek game, decided to follow Ademola Adetokunbo Way to outplay the stern looking policemen.

The situation forced the security operatives to request for reinforcement as more policemen and soldiers were deployed there, leaving the protesters with no option

than to face the battalion near Abia House.

The police fired several teargas canisters to dislodge them but the measure had little or no impact as members of the group rolled out stones which had been concealed in their bags and pelted the police in retaliation.

The police were said to have resorted to firing live ammunition and shooting sporadically at protesters at a close range.

Many people were said to have lost their lives, many others allegedly sustained gunshot injuries, while many were arrested.

Also, a patrol vehicle of the police was set ablaze by the protesters in retaliation and was burnt beyond recognition.

The police chased the mob from Central Area to Wuse Zone 4, firing teargas canisters.

Spokesperson of the group, Abdullahi Muhammad Musa, who had a chat with *Daily Independent* on the incident, said the group was able to recover only one dead body, adding that many corpses were taken away by the police.

He stated that over 300 members of the group were still missing.

He asked the police to release the four bodies which were taken away during the mayhem to them and warned the police against conducting mass burial for their members.

He put the total number of those that were killed since



President Muhammadu Buhari (right), with Nyesom Wike, Governor, Rivers State (second right); Ifeanyi Okowa, Governor, Delta State (second left) and Udom Emmanuel, Governor, Akwa Ibom State, during the South-South governors' visit to the president at the State House, Abuja on Tuesday.

the beginning of the protest at 47.

"They killed 6 members on Saturday and killed 36 on Monday, and 5 people lost their lives today, Tuesday," he said Musa.

Musa said the killing of their members would not discourage them, but that it would give them the audacity to continue to challenge the government on its record of injustice and oppression.

He added: "They are trying to instill fear in us with this killing so that we will stop challenging the government, but they have failed and we are not going to stop."

"This has shown that this

government is intolerant of whoever that challenges its oppression, but I can tell you that they are coming after other Nigerians."

He said the protest on Tuesday marked the end of the 'Arbaeen Symbolic Trek' but that the group would always continue with the daily protest until the government released their leader, Ibraheem El-Zakzaky.

Meanwhile, police in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) said 400 members of IMN, also known as Shi'ites, had been arrested in connection with Tuesday's violent protest in the territory.

Commissioner of Police in

the area, Bala Ciroma, stated this when he presented the suspects to the media at the command's headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

He said that the suspects had been detained for discreet investigation, adding that dangerous weapons were also recovered from them.

He said that the police recovered 31 bottles of petrol bombs and other dangerous weapons brought in the territory by the suspects.

Ciroma said that among the suspects was their 'First Aider', one Salahuddeen Ahmad, male, 23, who hails from Illela Local Government of Sokoto State.

He said that all the suspects would be arraigned upon conclusion of investigation.

The commissioner said that arrest of the sect members was part of the continuous efforts of the command to provide residents of the territory with adequate security, protect lives and property and prevent breakdown of law and order.

He stated that the command intercepted and arrested some members of "the EL-Zakzakky Islamic Movement of Nigeria with 31 bottles of petrol bomb and other dangerous weapons be-