

Procession: Police, IMN disagree over deaths

‘Ashura’: Muslims free to hold procession, proscribed IMN members banned—Police

Muhammad Sabiu | Kaduna with Agency Report

THE Nigeria Police, on Tuesday, disagreed with members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), over the claims by the sect that at least 14 members were killed in some parts of the country during the Ashura procession.

A statement released by the spokesman of the movement, Ibrahim Musa, and made available to the Nigerian Tribune, had disclosed that “at least three people were confirmed killed by the police in Kaduna and 10 others injured, some fatally when thousands of Muslim brothers and sisters trooped out in the early hours of Tuesday September 10, 2019 commemorating the events of Ashura.

“In Bauchi, reports also have it that three people were killed during the Ashura procession when the police attacked the mourners. Likewise three other people were killed by the police in Azare, also in Bauchi State, while another three people were killed by the police in Gombe, Gombe State.

The statement noted that “one person was reportedly killed by the police in Illiela during the procession, and another person killed in Goronyo, all in Sokoto State.

“In Malumfashi, Katsina State, another person was killed. In Katsina town, however, several people sustained bullet wounds when the police opened fire on the mourners, not only during the mourning procession, but afterwards.

“Armed policemen attempted to forcibly make their way into the Islamic centre of the movement.

“These casualty figures may, however, rise due to the serious gunshot wounds sustained by some of the peaceful mourners.

“This year’s Ashura procession was held in all the state capitals of the North and Abuja. It ended peacefully in Abuja, Jos, Kebbi, Minna, Lafia, Yola, Gusau, Zaria, Kano, Jalingo, Damaturu, Hadejia and Potiskum,” the statement read.

Reacting to the claims, however, the police said nobody died during the procession as claimed by the proscribed sect.

The police, however, accused members of the IMN of attacking their men with stones, iron bolts and catapults during the procession in Kaduna.

In a statement, spokesman of the Kaduna State police command, Yakubu Sabo, said a team of policemen dispatched to disperse the “unlawful assembly” and ease traffic congestion were attacked by the group.

He said despite the warning issued to the group against its procession, IMN members came out en masse on Nnamdi Azikiwe highway in Kaduna and at Kasuwan Mata area of Zaria city, blocking highways, causing traffic jam and molesting commuters.

“Today at about 0655hrs, we received an information that members of the outlawed Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), popularly known as Shites, came out en masse along Nnamdi Azikiwe expressway Kaduna

and at Kasuwan Mata area of Zaria city respectively on procession in respect of the annual Ashura Day, blocking the public highways, causing traffic jam and molesting commuters.”

“They were chanting slogans and demanding for the unconditional release of their spiritual leader, Sheikh Ibrahim Elzakzaky, despite earlier warning by the command yesterday.

“It is on record that both the Federal Government of Nigeria and the government of Kaduna State have separately proscribed the group recently.

“Thus, teams of policemen quickly dispatched to the areas with a view to dispersing the unlawful assembly and to

manage the traffic.

“However, on sighting the police, the protesters started throwing stones at them, hitting them with iron bolts through catapults. The situation became very tensed and members became violent and unruly.

“In view of these, therefore, minimum force was used in dispersing them. The command also wants to make it on record that, up till now, it has not formally received any report of death casualties as claimed by the proscribed group earlier today,” the statement said.

Meanwhile, the police has said the ban on ‘Ashura’ procession only applied to members of the IMN and not other Muslims observing the

day.

Ashura marks the remembrance of Muharram, the annual commemoration of the death of Husayn and his family and supporters at the Karbala on 10 Muharram in the year 61 AH (in AHT: October 10, 680 CE).

Mourning for the incident began almost immediately after the battle.

In Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Pakistan, Ashura has become a national holiday and many ethnic and religious communities participate in it.

Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO), Frank Mba, in a statement in Abuja, said Muslims in Nigeria were free to carry out peaceful procession alongside their counter-

parts across the world.

He said the clarification became imperative following enquiries concerning the ban on procession by the proscribed IMN.

He called on Muslims to carry out the procession within the confines of the law.

The FPRO, however, urged them to guard against infiltration by unscrupulous elements who would want to take advantage of the event to disrupt public peace, order and security.

Mba said the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Mr Mohammed Adamu, had directed all commissioners of police and their respective domains to give full effect to the clarification.



Members of Islamic Movement of Nigeria during the Ashura procession in Abuja, on Tuesday. Photo: Sunday Osunrayi.

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