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Violence in Abuja as Shi'ites allege police killed eight of them

We only dispersed them with tear gas — Police

From Lawrence Bajah and Collins Nnabulfe | Abuja

~~THE Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja was thrown into confusion on Tuesday morning when members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), popularly known as Shi'ites, clashed with security operatives around Kubwa and Gwarimpa areas of the city.~~

Members of the IMN were reported to have been on the final lap of their Arbaeen Symbolic Trek when security operatives allegedly opened fire on them.

There were reports in some quarters that two persons were killed.

However, the IMN has said eight of its members were killed and many injured.

Addressing newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja on behalf of the Academic Forum of the movement, Abdulahi

Musa, said the security forces arrived when they had concluded the trek and were about to disperse.

"We started yesterday (Monday); it ended peacefully, and today (Tuesday), being the last day, we came out to conclude the trekking; we started from Gwarimpa Model City Gate at about 9:00 a.m.; we marched down to Gwarimpa main bus stop, and that is where we terminated the trekking and everything was over then.

"The closing prayer had been recited and people had started dispersing when the police and soldiers arrived at about 10:00 a.m. The soldiers were behind the police who started firing teargas, while the soldiers used live bullets.

"First, they doused people with tear-gas, and began shooting live ammunition, gunning down many. Eight

persons were confirmed dead, several injured and many arrested. They even carted away some corpses to unknown location.

"In spite of all the brutality, Arba'een Symbolic Trek cannot be stopped for what it stands for. The purpose of the trek is to recall and equally experience the trial and tribulation faced by the household of the Holy Prophet.

"They were chained and dragged in scorching desert, barefoot from Karbala in Iraq to Damascus in Syria after the killing of Imam Husain 61 years after Hijra. It was a period of anger and anguish at the perpetrators of injustice, not just in the plains of Karbala, but the world over," Musa said.

On whether the group informed the police of their procession, Musa said there was no need as they (police) would still attack

them.

He demanded that perpetrators be brought to book, adding that "we will go to court."

When *Nigerian Tribune* contacted the FCT Police Relations Officer, Adeh Josephine, she said the Shi'ites came to cause unrest in the FCT with the sole purpose and intention of making the city ungovernable.

Adeh said: "We got a security report before now that the Shi'ites mobilised people from six states into the FCT with the intention of making the city ungovernable.

"They engaged our men with dangerous weapons. They were throwing explosives and stones at our men.

"What we simply did was disperse them with tear gas, and there was no casualty as reported in some quarters."