

Shiite sect, police clash leaves six dead, 60 injured in Zaria

Segun Olatunji, Kaduna

No fewer than three persons were feared killed while about 60 others were injured on Friday in Zaria when hostilities broke out between the Shiite Sect and the police in the ancient town.

An unidentified police officer was allegedly shot and seriously injured by some suspected members of the Shiite sect who allegedly shot the Assistant Superintendent of Police with his own gun after disarming him during the crisis.

Members of the sect in Kaduna had earlier staged a peaceful demonstration in the state capital in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

The two incidents however heightened tension in the state resulting in the state government beefing up security by deploying fully armed military and police personnel under its anti-crime outfit, Operation Yaki, throughout the state, particularly in Zaria and Kaduna.

Our correspondent gathered that the clash in Zaria between the Shiite and security agents broke out during a procession by the members of the Muslim sect in the town.

The dead and injured persons were allegedly caught in a cross-fire during an exchange of gunshots between the security agents and some alleged members of the Shiite sect.

Eyewitnesses told newsmen that the Shiite protest which took off on a peaceful note, suddenly turned violent with the arrival of some armed policemen and soldiers.

Our correspondent, however, learnt from security sources that the police got an intelligence report of an impending attack on them by the Shiite sect and then mobilised to secure the lives

and property of the people of the area.

The security sources added that an assistant superintendent of police controlling traffic around the area was allegedly attacked by the sect members who allegedly snatched his gun and shot him with it.

He further said that in a bid by the Shiite members who shot the police officer and snatch his gun to escape from the scene, some mobile policemen stationed around the area who heard the gunshot moved in swiftly to retrieve the seized gun from the fleeing members of the Shiite.

And in the process of disarming the sect members, there was exchange of gunshots during which the three persons were killed and 60 others seriously injured.

Meanwhile, the police officer allegedly shot is now lying critically ill at the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching hospital, Shika, Zaria, while corpses of the three dead persons have been deposited at the mortuary of the same hospital.

The tension created by the skirmishes between the security agents and the Shiite members, however, made the residents of the area to panic as they feared that the sect could be planning a retaliatory offensive.

As at the time of filing this report, more detachment of soldiers and anti-riot policemen were still being

drafted from Kaduna to Zaria to maintain peace in the area.

A state security council meeting was also being convened in Zaria by the state authorities.

The Kaduna State Commissioner of Police, Tambari Mohammed, declined to comment when contacted but said that he was on his way to the scene of the incident "to assess the situation."

In a swift reaction, the Kaduna State Government said that there was no cause for alarm as security agencies were in control of the situation.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and

Public Affairs, Alhaji Umar Sani, said residents of the state had no cause to panic and should go about their normal duties.

On Friday, last week, the Shiite sect had alleged that security agencies, particularly the police were planning to carry out an onslaught reminiscent of that recently meted out to the Boko Haram and the Darul Salam sects against their members as they planned their annual Ramadan procession.

The leader of the sect, Sheikh Ibraheem El-Zakzaky had alleged that security agencies had planned to attack them before the end of the Muslim Ramadan fasting period.

Similarly, the National Coordinator of the Shiite

sect's Resource Forum, Dr. Abdullahi Danlandi, had alleged in a statement dated September 11, 2009 that there was a high level security meeting in Abuja where a decision was taken to "phase out members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (Shiite)."

Danlandi's statement entitled "Nigerian government's planned onslaught on the Islamic Movement exposed" had read thus in part: "A leaked security report reveals high level decision and consultations, some of which are currently being implemented. Close sources confirmed that the planned onslaught on the Islamic Movement was divided into long-term and short term-plans."



•L-R: Servetek Chairman, Chief Femi Shomolu; Deputy Managing Director, SkyeBank, Mr. Kehinde Durosini-Etti; and MD/CEO, Servetek Construction Limited, Ikeja ... on Thursday

Gani: Afenifere carpets Onovo over Ribadu's visit denial

Ademola Oni, Abeokuta

The Yoruba socio-cultural group, Afenifere, has chided the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Ogbonna Onovo, for denying that the former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, paid a condolence visit to the family

of late Chief Gani Fawehinmi.

In an interview with our correspondent in Abeokuta on Friday, the General Secretary of Afenifere, Senator Femi Okurounmu, who described Onovo's manner denial as reckless, urged President Umaru Yar'Adua to remove the IGP from office immediately.

Onovo was, on Thursday,

reported to have the former EFCC helmsman visited the country on Thursday last week to commiserate with the family of the late legal icon and human rights activist, Gani, who died on Saturday, September 5.

The IGP was on a visit to Lagos on Thursday when he made the statement, asking journalists why a photograph of Ribadu's

Gani's bereaved family during the visit.

Okurounmu submitted that the reported comments had portrayed Onovo as grossly incompetent, saying that he ought to be sacked immediately. The Afenifere secretary equally called for the "immediate resignation" of President Umaru Yar'Adua, saying the President was also