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50 killed as Shiites, security agents clash



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Posted on Nov 15 2016 - 2:21am by Ibraheem Musa, Muhammad Kabir, Usman Jirgi and Ahmed Miringa

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A police sergeant was said to be among 50 people who were reportedly shot dead yesterday when members of Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) otherwise called Shiites clashed with security agents in Kano. The Shiites were said to be protesting the continued detention of their leader,



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Sheik El Zakzaky, in Kano. But another report said the Shiites were marking the annual 'Arbaeen Trek'.

The confrontation involved the Army, the Department of the State Services (DSS) and the police. Although the police said eight Shiites were killed, a witness claimed that more than 50 people were killed, among them a police sergeant.

The state Police Commissioner, Rabi'u Yusuf, said the Shiites, who were in a procession with dangerous weapons, attacked his members, snatching AK47 rifles, which they used in killing the sergeant.

He said the incident started about 8a.m. when his men were told that the Shiites were in a procession and blocked Kwanar Dawaki-Zaria Road.

The Shiites reportedly vandalised property and attacked motorists at random. Yusuf said that on hearing the news, the police drafted a combined team of anti-robbery squad and regular policemen. But, according to him, on arriving at the place, the police met the Shiites with arrows and other dangerous weapons.

He said the group started attacking the policemen. The commissioner added that the police used canisters of tear gas on the Shiites but they turned violent.

According to him, they started using dangerous weapons to attack the police and at the end, snatched an AK47 rifle which they used to kill the sergeant. He said: “Police used minimal force on them, resulting at mortally injuring eight who, after being taken to the hospital, were confirmed dead by the doctors.”

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The commissioner explained that four of his men were also injured while 10 Shiites members were arrested.

He noted that scores of Shiites were injured and were receiving treatment at various hospitals. Yusuf disclosed that he had directed Officer in Charge of SCID to commence investigations into the immediate and remote causes of the crisis.

He urged residents to immediately report suspicious movements to the nearest police station. The police chief warned that his command would not tolerate any attempt to cause civil disaffection and breach to the peace by anybody.

But a witness said several police trucks took away scores of bodies from the scene of the clash. He added that many of the Shiites who were critically injured might have escaped with their wounds for fear of being arrested. Police later cleared the Kano- Kaduna Road, which was earlier blocked and was inaccessible because of the clash.

But the IMN members have vowed to continue with their trek to Zaria, despite the clash with policemen. Addressing a press conference in Kaduna yesterday, Coordinator of the trek, Sheikh Nasir Mansur, said members of the movement from Kaduna would equally commence trekking from Kaduna to Zaria today.

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He said: “The Arbreen trek is a religious duty incumbent on all supporters of the holy household of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a sign of solidarity.

“It is a response to a clarion call made by Imam Hussain (AS), the grandson of the Prophet (S) on the plains of Karbala some 1400 years ago.

Whose credible narrations from the Prophet (S) enjoined the faithful to respond to, even if it were to be by crawling.

“Already, there are reports that indicated that soldiers have mounted checkpoints on the outskirts of Potiskum, Yobe State and detained a trailer carrying the personal belongings of those going to Kano for the kick-off of the trek.

“Apparently, these soldiers have some sinister motives as they were overhead scheming to plant weapons in the luggage and thereafter claim that these bags with the weapons belong to members of IMN.

“Throughout the nearly four decades of the existence of IMN, it has never stockpiled, carried or used weapons, it never had any cause to even in the face of provocation.” The IMN also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of their leader, Zakzaky, from what they termed illegal detention.

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“We shall not relent in our call for the immediate and unconditional release of our leader, Sheikh Ibraheem Yaqoub Zakzaky (H), from illegal detention by the Nigerian government and in contravention of the Nigerian constitution.”

The IMN spokesman, Ibrahim Musa, said in a statement yesterday that the attacks in Shiites came despite a letter last week by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) to President Muhammadu Buhari, demanding that he act to ensure the protection of those taking part in the annual trek.

He said: “Today’s military attacks follow similar events last month when Ashura commemorations were targeted by security forces across several states in northern Nigeria in a continuing crackdown on the IMN. “Over a dozen people were killed by police and army gunfire during the processions and many others beaten by thugs hired by the authorities to sabotage the events. Places of worship associated with the IMN were also attacked.”

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