

# Policeman Feared Dead, 8 Injured as Shiites March on N'Assembly

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- **IG warns troublemakers not to test will of state, orders 24-hour surveillance, 40 arrested**
- **Legislative body orders security to beef up**

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A police man was feared dead yesterday as members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), popularly known as Shiites, marched on the National Assembly to protest the detention of their leader, Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, who had been incarcerated along with his wife, Zeenatudeen, since 2015.



Eight other policemen were luckier, surviving the incident with injuries even as the police said 40 members of the sect were arrested.

The Shiites had marched on the National Assembly to demand the release of El-Zakzaky, who was arrested along with his wife in 2015, following a clash with the Nigerian Army and the subsequent Zaria massacre, in which three of his remaining sons, as well as hundreds of his followers, were killed.

El-Zakzaky has remained in detention despite being granted bail by the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja.

Justice Gabriel Kolawole had on December 2, 2016, granted the fiery Islamic leader along with his wife bail and imposed a fine of N50 million on the federal government for the incarceration of the duo.

Yesterday, Shiites, who had in April threatened to change tactics in their demand for the release of their leader and his wife, clashed with security agents when they stormed the National Assembly.

THISDAY gathered that both chambers of the National Assembly were in session when the group stormed the legislature.

The Inspector General of Police, Mr. Mohammed Adamu, irked by the brutality unleashed on the policemen, warned the sect members not to test the will of the state. He also ordered a round-the-clock surveillance on the Federal Capital Territory(FCT) and adjoining states.

The clash between the sect members and security operatives prompted the National Assembly to order an immediate beef-up of security in the legislature.

Although sources said two policemen died from injuries sustained during the protest, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Police Command in a statement, said eight of its personnel were injured just as it accused the sect of an attempt to violently take over the National Assembly.

The statement by the Command spokesman, Anjuguri Manzah, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), said two police officers were shot and were later rushed to the National Assembly Clinic.

It added that six others suffered various degree of injuries when the protest turned violent. It said: "The FCT Police Command yesterday foiled a violent move by members of the El-Zakzakky Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) to forcibly invade the National Assembly.

"The group, which started its activity, camouflaged in a peaceful procession, became violent and were trying to force their way into the National Assembly. Police operatives on the

ground, however, acted proactively, professionally and used minimum force to disperse the unruly protesters.

"Members of the sect during the violent protest shot two police personnel on the leg, while clubs and stones were used to inflict injuries on six other policemen. The injured policemen have been taken to the hospital for prompt medical attention.

"Meanwhile, 40 members of the sect have been arrested in connection with the violent protest. investigation is in progress."

Shortly after the FCT Police Command's statement, the IG, in a statement by Force Public Relations Officer, Mr. Frank Mbah, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, warned troublemakers not to test the will of the state and ordered a 24-hour surveillance of the nation's capital and surrounding environment.

He also placed on alert Commissioners of Police and their supervisory Assistant Inspectors General of Police in states contiguous to ensure maximum security in their respective areas of responsibility to avert any possible breach of public safety and security.

He ordered an investigation into the incident as well as prompt prosecution of those arrested. Adamu said while the police were not opposed to freedom of expression, it must be done in accordance with the laws of the land.

"The (Police) Force is not against citizens expressing their grouse against the state, the IG stressed that such ventilations must be done through legitimate and acceptable processes and not by taking the laws into their own hands. He therefore warned that citizens should not test the collective will of the people and the state by engaging in lawless acts likely to cause the breach of the peace.

"Meanwhile, the IG has ordered a speedy and diligent investigation into the incident as well as prompt prosecution of all the persons arrested and now in police custody in connection with the incident.

"The IG reiterated his displeasure with the unwarranted and unjustifiable attack on, and injury to nine police officers by members of the El-Zakzakky group and commended the restraint, maturity and professionalism displayed by police personnel in containing the protest.

"The IG also directed the AIG in charge of Police Medical Department to ensure that proper and prompt medical attention is given to the injured officers and wished the victims quick recovery," Mbah said.

Earlier, sources had said one of the shot policemen later died in the hospital.

The police officer, who was one of the two officers that were wounded in the fracas that ensued between the Shiite sect members and policemen at the entrance of the National Assembly, was said to have died a few hours after he was rushed to the National Assembly clinic for treatment.

Sources told THISDAY that because of his critical condition, he was to be referred to the National Hospital in Abuja before he breathed his last.

The late policeman was said to have lost much blood after he was stoned in the head by the protesters.

Six other policemen who sustained various degrees of injuries were also treated at the clinic when the protest by members of the radical Shiite Islamic movement at the Assembly turned violent.

Confirming that seven persons were rushed to the clinic, the Director of Medical Services at the National Assembly, Dr. Bashir Hamza, said: "The seven were brought here as an emergency. As usual, when patients come like that, we don't have to confirm whether it is a staff (member) or a visitor; we just first of all rush to save the life.

"That was what was exactly done. As soon as they were brought in, we had doctors on ground who quickly received them. There were other medical personnel also on ground who attended to them.

"One of the patients had a cut which looks like knife cut on the head and was bleeding profusely. That was immediately attended to, to stop the bleeding. There was another one with gunshot wound on the left shoulder he was quickly attended to too.

"In all the cases that we have seen, I think we have seen seven persons with various degrees of injuries, we make sure that they were stabilised, with the exception of the first one that I mentioned who has been losing a lot of blood and has started becoming restless.

"In our medical knowledge, we know that people (patients) who start to become restless are getting out of control, probably the bleeding is much higher than we anticipated or there is internal bleeding in the head, because it is appearing (to be) swollen.

"That one is to be transferred to the Trauma Centre of the National Hospital (Abuja). That will be ensured because we have ambulances on ground, ready for evacuation.

"Majority of the casualty are police officers. As we learnt, it was a protest. So, people who would try to go against a protest are usually police officers, except if you are unlucky to (have been) caught up between (them). The majority are police officers."

It was also learnt that three members of the sect died during the protest that lasted for over two hours before the situation was brought under control by security forces.

Reacting to the incident, Chairman of the Senate Ad-hoc committee on Media and Publicity, Senator Adedayo Adeyeye, said security within the Assembly would henceforth be beefed up.

According to him, the upper legislative chamber at yesterday's plenary discussed the issue of security within the National Assembly premises vis-a-vis the Shiites' invasion of the Assembly.

Adeyeye, however, said while the National Assembly is a public place for all Nigerians, people must follow proper channel and protocols if they have to access it.

The invasion made the House of Representatives to adjourn its sitting until today, with the Speaker, Femi Gbajabiamila, citing security and legislative reasons for the action.

THISDAY learnt that the Shiite members overpowered the policemen at the gate, collected one of their guns and shot the two security operatives.

They entered the main entrance popularly known as MOPOL gate and vandalised the gatehouse.

Three vehicles were burnt and many others destroyed.

The sect members unleashed terror on other security operatives when tear-gas canisters were fired to disperse them.

The gates to all the National Assembly premises have been closed as staff and other accredited persons scampered to safety.

Visitors to the federal parliament were barred from entering the premises as of the time of filing this report

The motion for House adjournment was moved by the House Leader, Hon. Ado Doguwa (APC-Kano) and was seconded by the Minority Leader, Ndudi Elumelu (PDP-Delta).

Prior to yesterday's violent protest, the Shiite members had for several weeks staged peaceful protests at the National Assembly gate demanding the release of their leader el-Zakzaky, who is being held by the DSS and facing charges of culpable homicide, unlawful assembly, and disruption of public peace.