

12 Feared Killed as Police, Shiite Clash During Marches

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Kingsley Nwezeh in Abuja, John Shiklam in Kaduna and Ibrahim Shuaibu in Kano

No fewer than 12 people were feared dead and many others injured as the members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), known as Shiite, clashed with policemen in Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Gombe and Bauchi States, when the Muslim sect defied government's order not to hold a procession to mark the annual Ashura parade commemorating the day in Islamic tradition when Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Imam Hussein, died in a battle.

However, the various state police commands have debunked the allegation that their men killed IMN members, saying that the Shiite were professionally dispersed.

But the sect blamed the order issued by the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Adamu Mohammed, for the alleged

killing of its members in some states.

The IG on Monday had directed commissioners of police in the 36 states to ensure that the procession did not take place in view of the subsisting court order that outlawed the group.

A police statement yesterday, however, clarified the earlier statement, saying the ban on procession was only applicable to the sect members and no other Muslims observing the procession.

IMN alleged in a statement that three of its members were killed in Kaduna, three in Bauchi, another three in Gombe State, two killed in Sokoto State while one person was killed in Malumfashi, Katsina State.

The Islamic group also said 10 others sustained injuries during the procession, which started about 6am along the Eastern Bypass, Kaduna.

The police were alleged to have opened fire to disperse the marchers.

Spokesman of the IMN, Mr. Ibrahim Musa, told THISDAY in a telephone interview that the police started shooting as the Shiite members were moving by the side of the highway.

He said the procession started by 6am, only to be stopped by the police as they were approaching Bakin Ruwa in Rigasa area.

However, spokesman of the Kaduna State Police Command, Mr. Yakubu Sabo, denied the allegations, saying the IMN is being mischievous.

He said the protesters were dispersed professionally and the police did not kill anyone.

THISDAY gathered that a few of their members were seen at Kurna Asabe Quarters in Kano, but when they sighted policemen, they ran away.

Kurna Asabe quarters in Dala Local Government Area of

Kano State, is one of the strongholds of the Shiites but it was quiet for the whole of yesterday due to the presence of security personnel.

A member of the IMN in Kano, who spoke with THISDAY under anonymity, said: "We came out as early as 6am and finished our activities within a few minutes to avoid casualties."

However, the police spokesman in Kano, Mr. Abdullahi Haruna, told THISDAY: "We only got report of about six to 10 people came out at Kurna Asabe but when they sighted policemen, they ran away."

But a statement by Musa, said two persons were killed in Sokoto State while one person was killed in Malumfashi, Katsina State.

Musa said the casualty figure might rise due to gunshot wound sustained by members in different states.

It said the procession was successfully held in all the state capitals in the North and Abuja.

He said: "The Islamic Movement in Nigeria has confirmed the killing of at least a dozen of Ashura mourners across the nation during the peaceful Ashura mourning procession today (yesterday).

"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 today, Tuesday, commemorating the tragic 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.

“Another three people were killed by the police in Gombe, Gombe State.

“One person was reportedly killed by the police in Illela, during the Ashura procession there, and another person was killed in Goronyo all in Sokoto State.

“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.”

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