

# 8 feared killed in Shi'ites shooting in Abuja

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**...As Police say no life lost, DPO injured; arrest 45; 12 females 33 males**

**...They came from Bauchi, Gombe, Niger, Kaduna, Borno carrying flags of Shiites Islamic sect – Police**

**By Kingsley Omonobi & Luminous Jannamike**

AT least eight people were feared killed, yesterday after unidentified men in military uniform opened fire on some members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, IMN, who staged the annual Arbacen trek at Gwarinpa district of Abuja, the nation's capital, but Police authorities said no life was lost.

Some members of the sect were seen with placards including portraits of the sons of their leader, Ibraheem El-Zakzaky, who were killed during the 'Zaria Massacre' of December 2015.

Viral videos making the rounds of the incident showed several motorists abandoning their vehicles and taking to their heels to escape either gunshots or attacks while banks and other businesses in the affected areas quickly closed shop to avoid looting.

It was gathered that the gunmen attacked the sect members near the tricycle park at 3rd Avenue, Gwarinpa around 10:00 am.

Eyewitnesses told our correspondent that the armed men, who came in security patrol vans stormed the area without prior notice to residents.

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Although details of the attack were still sketchy, one of the sources told Vanguard that suspected security operatives killed about eight people, including passersby.

One of the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "It was around 10:00am when we started hearing gunshots along the road. The shooting lasted for about 10 minutes. But after the shooting, the gunmen appeared to have succeeded in thoroughly dispersing the Arba'een trekkers.

"I can't say how many people were killed but we counted eight corpses. What I can tell you is that up to eight people were killed in the incident. Some of the passersby who had nothing to do with the Shi'ites may have also been involved."

Briefing journalists after the sect clashed with security operatives, yesterday, Secretary of IMN's Academic Forum, Abdullahi Musa, confirmed that at least eight Arba'een trekkers were killed at the Gwarinpa district of Abuja, adding that like in previous killings, security agents hid some of the corpses of the slain.

The Shi'ites, however, said that despite the clampdown on their activities, the Arba'een Symbolic trek cannot be stopped for what it stood for.

According to him, the security agencies used excessive force in an attempt to control or stop their religious observance.

He said: "Sheikh Zakzaky's followers started an Arba'een procession from the gate of Gwarinpa model city to the main bus stop, where it was terminated. Those who attended had even begun to disperse when the team of the joint security agents arrived.

"The brutality they meted out on us was of different level. First, they doused people with tear-gas, started shooting live ammunition, and gunning down many.

"Eight were confirmed dead, tens of scores injured and numerous arrested. They even carted away some corpses to an unknown location. A woman, a passer-by, was pierced by an RPG. It was all bare cruelty.

"Despite 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.

“Today, before the attack on us, the general public witnessed how the Arbaeen trek like those before ended without any attempt to curb the right of safe passage to other road users. No panic was created by our Arbaeen trek.”

But Police authorities later disclosed that 45 people, including 12 females, 32 males and a young boy, were arrested in connection with the disturbances in some parts of the FCT.

A police source noted that the miscreants in their numbers were discovered to have been brought into Abuja from Bauchi, Gombe, Niger, Kaduna and the Borno States among other states in the north purposely to cause mayhem.

The source further disclosed that the DPO of Gwarimpa Police Station was injured by missiles/heavy stones thrown at him, adding that but for the riot helmet the officer was wearing, the situation would have been worse.

When contacted, FCT Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Adeh Josephine, disclosed that operatives of the FCT command have restored normalcy, pointing out that no casualty by way of death had been reported.