



SHADES OF INJUSTICE

**TRAVAILS OF MUSLIM ACTIVISTS IN NIGERIA
IN THE HANDS OF SUCCESSIVE REGIMES**

**Dr. Shu'aibu Musa
February 2002**

PO Box 598, Wembley, UK, HA9 7XH, Telephone (+44) 20 8902 0888 Fax (+44) 20 8902 0889
e-mail: info@ihrc.org
web: <http://www.ihrc.org/>

First published in Great Britain in 2002
by Islamic Human Rights Commission
PO Box 598, Wembley, HA9 7XH

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Printed in England by Islamic Human Rights Commission

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ISBN 1-903718-13-9

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TRAVAILS OF MUSLIM ACTIVISTS IN NIGERIA
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**Being a paper presented by Dr. Shu'aibu Musa at an international conference on
prisoners of faith held in London on Sunday 17th February 2002**

In the name Of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

INTRODUCTION:

It is with some trepidation that I stand before distinguished scholars and activists in this conference to deliver a paper on aspects of the experiences of prisoners of faith in Nigeria. My worry is not without causes and is furthered by the fact that I have been instructed to step into the very big shoes of my eminent leader, guide and mentor, Mu'allim Ibraheem Zakzaky.

This paper would only give a very brief account of the scenery of an otherwise complex and lingering subject of rights violation of the leadership and members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria. To be fair, it would be impossible to adequately tell the experiences acquired by millions of members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria under the able leadership of Mu'allim Zakzaky over more than a decade in less than twenty minutes. However, I will try, as much as time would allow, highlighting experiences taken from selected individual and collective accounts. Certain oddity about rights violation when it pertains Muslim activists will be shown and attempts would be made to examine why successive regimes, civilian or Military, are so inimical to Islamic beliefs.

For the sake of convenience, I will speak more extensively on the brutal crackdown of the Abacha era and only sporadically touch on one or the other periods as appropriate not because members of the Islamic Movement were better treated by other regimes, but of course because, Abacha was the late dictator, under whose reign the Islamic Movement in Nigeria waded through the sorrowful turbulence of unrefined terror, as we shall see shortly.

TYPES OF PERSECUTION

All the force of the state has always been thrown against the Islamic Movement and its leadership. The Islamic Movement in Nigeria had its roots in the mid-70's in schools across the country. Not long after that, the authorities at once identified it as a great threat to the status quo and by implication to themselves. They began to wage war against it right away. In the over two decades of active Islamic struggle in Nigeria, civilian and Military authorities alike have acted with tremendous and blind vehemence.

At the initial stages, they tried to ensure that Islamic activism was restricted to the campuses while they slyly victimized Muslim activists by such tactics as unjustifiable demotions in schools, forced withdrawals and every now and then rustications. At the time, the range of techniques used in the suppression of the movement included being put under surveillance, forcible prevention from participating in the Movement's activities, degrading campaigns by the media or other paid agents, being sent out of schools or demoted, losing one's job or being demoted, wrongful persecution and imprisonment.

As these measures proved futile with time, the range of techniques were broadened to include instigation of local touts to summarily kill or maim Muslim brothers while the authorities looked the other way.

It was however during the wicked reign of late Abacha that these techniques were broadened with the aim of leaving none to tell the story. Muslim brothers witnessed the most sordid experience of repression and persecution yet. A brutal crackdown started characterized by illegal detention, torture, rape, summary trial and conviction on framed up charges, wrongful prosecution, extra-judicial executions, and demolition of buildings. The picture was that of uncontrolled use of force by the authorities. As a result, thousands were arrested and detained. Several scores of Muslim activists were maimed or killed. Many buildings including schools and Islamic centres were demolished. It became extremely difficult to ascertain the exact number of activists arrested or detained. The number swelled and changed continuously. It was even much more difficult to track down where those arrested were being held and in what conditions. The hunt was massive and unprecedented and there was hardly any place in the country where Muslim brothers were safe anymore. There was virtually no prison or detention centre across the country that did not have Muslim activists held for his/her belief.

Muslim brothers were treated atrociously and not even their acquaintances or neighbours were spared. Their places of work and homes were broken into every so often and their families were ceaselessly intimidated and terrorized. Far-reaching and frightful repressive apparatus against the Islamic Movement was put in place. Even visitors to the houses of known and suspected members or supporters were harassed and often arrested. Indiscriminate killings of Muslim brothers went on unabated. They attacked peaceful processions without provocation and swooped on Qur'anic study groups in mosques, killing and maiming. The police Commissioner at the time in Kaduna state, Mr. Yakubu Shaibu, was widely quoted as having said that they would not cease to break the legs of Muslim brothers if Muslim brothers would not stop to break their laws. Of course their law that was being broken was no other than Islamic activism.

Eviction from rented houses was quite common as landlords were under pressure to desist from offering their buildings to Muslim activists. Mu'allim Zakzaky's family was evicted from successive homes. Some Muslim brothers owning their own houses had them demolished. Several of the Movement's schools and other infrastructure were demolished. It became quite dangerous for members of the public to give shelter to Muslim activists or their families.

Rape as a weapon was also used.

POLICE BRUTALITY:

Policemen were the chief agents of coercion in the crackdown against the Islamic movement. Throughout the period they were unconventional in their tactics and clearly cruel-hearted to the core.

It was armed riot policemen in trucks and armoured vehicles under the command of ACP that raided the then residence of Mu'allim Zakzaky in the early hours of 12th September 1996 to affect his arrest. Almost simultaneously, they had affected the arrest of Alhaji Hameed

Danlami, Abubakar Abdullahi and Muhammad Shittu. It was the beginning of an unending phase of blind wrath of the police.

Although the police had prepared to unleash terror on anyone that protests the arrest, initially they severely underestimated the widespread support across the country Mu'allim enjoys. Thus, when less than 24 hours after his arrest, peaceful processions were carried out by millions of Muslim activists across the country, it was only in Zaria, his home town where they had anticipated protest and prepared for it that they opened fire on the defenceless people without provocation, killing 15 brothers instantly including a 3-year old Muhammad Rabi'u. Police bullets also hit the latter's mother and six-month old sister in the arm and abdomen respectively. The little infant and many others had to undergo emergency surgical operations to save their lives. The police had denied ever killing anybody that day.

When another procession was carried out in Kaduna on 18th September seeking the release of Mu'allim, the police went wild and military personnel were called to reinforce them. They used all force at their disposal including military helicopters to attack Muslim brothers. The exact number killed that day would be impossible to tell. For instance, I was a witness to a mass burial secretly done at night by police agents 3 days later.

The authorities sought to stop all forms of activities by the Muslim activists nationwide using the police through mass arrests and detentions, demolition of buildings, extra judicial killings, use of rape and sexual assault and the desecration and destruction of Islamic institutions and buildings. They terrorized suspected sympathizers and intimidated traders sympathetic to the Islamic Movement and extorted money from them. Police would fire at peaceful processions, attack Qur'anic study groups in mosques, invade schools and arrest all staff and students, defile the sanctity of mosques or arrest an entire congregation praying and violate the privacy of one's home even in absentia.

Count was of the number of times police invaded the home of Mu'allim Zakzaky while he was in detention incommunicado. Several Muslim brothers and sisters were arrested in such raids in the house and it is even difficult to accurately fix the figure of those arrested in the house. Some were arrested for paying a mere visit. The police had kept a constant vigil on the house and raided it at will without provocation. This went on and on. On occasions when the family got ejected from one rented apartment but manage to secure a new abode, the police would raid the new abode even before they were settled.

Each time they came calling, it followed a predetermined pattern. They would typically come in large numbers, heavily armed, shouting and uttering indecent and vulgar words. They would shoot incessantly including into the neighbourhood as if to punish them for having Mu'allim's family as neighbours.

Recounting one such incidence, the wife of Mu'allim said that they came in the early hours of the morning while she was yet asleep. She only woke up to see some giants right in her room ransacking everywhere. They had sneaked into the room without having the manners to even seek her permission. It was the reason that Muslim sisters had always worn their *Hijab* even when asleep in their bedrooms.

Throughout the period, the crudest terror tactics possible were employed. Being completely void of pity was fully demonstrated when they opened fire without provocation at Muslim sisters and children in front of a Hospital killing a 6-month old baby and fatally wounding several women, only to return and open fire yet again at people gathered for the funeral rites of those previously killed, thereby further killing several others.

JUDICIAL TERRORISM / BIZARRE TRIALS:

Whereas trials in regular court system was suppose to be public, when it involves Muslim brothers, it was done with utmost secrecy with all roads leading to the court sealed off by heavily armed policemen with armoured vehicles. No one was allowed to get in. Other armed policemen were put on red alert all over the town. Yet others were made to go around the town in armoured vehicles blowing sirens, generally terrorizing everyone. Sometimes, it was the only indication that Muslim brothers were to be brought to courts.

Trials generally in such situations do not conform to constitutional rights and international standards. Rules and procedures were set aside. The right to be present, to present evidence and to be represented by legal counsels was nearly completely ignored. Judges were not impartial and many of them were incompetent especially at the lower courts where most Muslim brothers were tried. Records of the cases were not even taken. Judgments were given according to the wishes of the authorities.

Mu'allim Ibraheem Zakzaky and three others arrested and detained with him without charges for about nine months were eventually transferred to Kaduna and charged to court in July 1997. The case, like others involving members of the Islamic movement, was tortuous, characterized by undue extra-judicial interferences, prolonged adjournments, obstruction of justice and reckless and blatant disregard of the fundamental rights of Muslim brothers. The government refused to show any level of seriousness in prosecuting the cases. They altered charges mid-way into the cases. At other times, prosecutors were swapped and at yet some other times, the trial judge was switched all in an attempt to stall the cases and unduly hold on to Muslim brothers for as long as was possible.

Since the initial concern expressed by people of conscience all over the World was that of detention without trial, the authority thought they could get around it by bringing the activists to trial. The result was that of framing of absurd and bizarre charges. Some were charged for saying the takbir in the Mosque! Others were charged for leaving in a house not permitted by law. Some others were brought to trial for being supporters of Mu'allim Zakzaky. Yet others were charged with being Shiites. If they swooped on a Qur'anic study group in the mosque, the charges were those of unlawful assembly, preaching without permit and insulting General Abacha. If they invaded one's home and arrested all family members, the charges were unlawful assembly, conspiracy, criminal intention, public disturbances and intimidating police officers! The most intriguing charge was that finally brought against Mu'allim Zakzaky and three others, which actually brought to the fore the reasons behind the brutal crackdown, which we shall briefly examine in a while.

Except in some few celebrated cases, convictions were swift and the sentences were as ridiculous as the charges. Proof of innocence was not enough for an acquittal. Muslim brothers were taken to be guilty even if proven otherwise. There were too many single court sessions, each lasting only a few minutes with prolonged sentence as the outcome to recount

here. In one such case in Zaria in 1997, Abubakar Isma'il was sentenced to 12 years for being a supporter of Mu'allim. And of course, it was specifically stated that he was to serve his sentence at "the last bus stop". (I shall shortly explain what that means). In February 1999, 27 Muslim brothers were sentenced to a total of more than 200 years for going to the mosque to listen to Mu'allim Zakzaky who had then only recently been released. That trial was done in a single session of less than 15 minutes. In fact, a higher court later ruled that the "conviction was done in error", and ordered the Brothers to be released. However, they were re-arrested as soon as they were freed within the court premises.

PRISON CONDITIONS:

Generally, Prison condition is poor in Nigeria particularly in areas of overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, lack of clean drinking water and absent medical facilities. However, in cases involving Muslim activists, matters are even made much more badly.

Feeding is irregular and poor except for those that can afford to feed on their own. Except in some few instances, Muslim activists were not given access to their brothers in detention let alone feed them. Police and prison officials confiscated food items sent to detained brothers.

Prison officials generally held Muslim activists incommunicado either in overcrowded poorly ventilated cells or at torture cells also called 'back cell'. Sometimes, they were kept along with hardened criminals or insane and dangerously volatile inmates.

Access to medical treatment was denied and on occasions prison officials had battered detained activists and prevented them from coming out of the cell. At Kafanchan prison, there was an occasion when Muslim brothers were tortured simply because they had complained to senior prison officials on a rare visit to the prison about the paucity of basic facilities in the prison. They were tortured until they could no longer move and were denied food and medical attention for days. Similar incidences in other prisons across the country involving Muslim activists abound.

Many other Muslim brothers recounted how they were tortured or how they had their beards forcibly shaved or how they were made to drink contaminated water.

In 1995, a group of Muslim activists were arrested in a town called Kontagora and were transferred to Minna the state capital on the allegation of preaching without permit. At the Minna police headquarters, they were tortured, had their beards forcibly shaved with broken bottles and were hung with ropes from the ceiling upside-down for hours. They were forced to take a drink that later turned out to be alcohol.

Extortion of money and other valuables from detained brothers was also quite common. There was the notable case of seizure of 5 blankets by the Kaduna police command in front of the Kaduna prison. The blankets were meant for Mu'allim Zakzaky and those detained with him. The practice was too rampant to catalogue here.

Consequent upon denial of medical treatment while in detention, many lives of Muslim brothers were lost. In December 1997 at the Daura prison, a Muslim brother lost his life after being denied access to medical treatment for tuberculosis that he contracted while in detention. Again in August 1998 at Lapai prison, another brother lost his life in similar circumstances. Yet another brother lost his life in the same manner at the Lapai prison in November 1998 and another brother in the same Lapai prison some few weeks later.

Let me comment a little about Lapai prison. I have gone to that prison and seen for myself the condition there. Both inmates and prison officials alike notoriously know it as the “last bus stop”. Nearly all the Muslim brothers detained at the place, contracted tuberculosis. There was severe shortage of water and inmates spent over 100 days without a bath. They defecated in their rooms and later emptied the faeces in a large open pit at the centre of the prison. It was learnt that Islamic activists were deliberately taken there as a further punishment.

Deaths in police custody were equally recorded, and were the direct result of torture while trying to make Muslim brothers make or accept incriminating statements or derogatory remarks about the Islamic Movement or its leadership. Adam Ahmad died in Zaria city police station on 10 June 1997 having had his neck and arm broken from torture by the police. His corpse was later dumped at a nearby clinic and the medical personnel at the hospital were forced to give a report that he died of diarrhoea and vomiting. He was arrested a night before for being in possession of *AlMizan* newspaper, a Hausa publication of the Islamic movement.

There were numerous cases of minors being detained in adult’s prisons, and particularly put in the same cell as vicious criminals. Not fewer than 13 children were arrested with the wives of Mu’allim Zakzaky and Alhaji Hameed Danlami in April 1998, including the infant child of Mu’allim. They were detained and charged together with their female parents. Similarly, 2 under-aged children were arrested in Zaria and taken to Kaduna prison where they were detained. Both were under 10.

When the wife of Mu’allim Zakzaky was arrested, there was a sister leaving in the house with advanced pregnancy. She was not spared either. Physical and psychological stress of detention under harsh conditions made her to begin premature labour. She delivered without supervision while yet in detention.

Muslim activists were also put to hard labour while in detention. Lawal Na Ingadi was arrested and detained for saying the Takbir – “Allahu Akbar!” – loudly in a Mosque. He was later summarily tried outside the court chamber. It was in his self defence that he said that if saying the takbir in a mosque was an offence, then the Imam and all those that followed him in the prayers including the chief of the town, who got him arrested in the first place, were as guilty as he was. It was perhaps this defence that earned him hard labour in the Kaduna prison farm centre for two years.

TRAVAILS OF WOMEN & CHILDREN:

For most of those moments, Muslim sisters and children were more in the line of fire. In most cases, they were the victims of the severest forms of savagery. They suffered physically, socially and psychologically like the adult male counterparts and additionally had to bear the pains of the brutal attack on their husbands, children and fathers.

As the circle of repression widened, increasing numbers of them were also arbitrarily arrested and detained. The exact number of them incarcerated is hard to fix accurately. Since it was much easier for the forces of coercion to identify a Muslim sister because of their *hijab*, they consequently suffered more intimidation. The privacy of their homes were

violated at will even at odd hours by security agents. Sisters, children and aged people were always taken in lieu of Muslim brothers, when security forces could not trace the later or after the brothers must have been incarcerated.

Of the people arrested and detained in the houses of Mu'allim Zakzaky and Alhaji Hameed Danlami during their detention, 13 were young children less than 10 years old, and the rest were women, including a sister with an advanced pregnancy, who later delivered in police cell.

The police was as forceful in handling Muslim sisters and children as they were in handling adult Muslim brothers. Mu'allim's wife was maltreated and wounded in the course of her arrest. That was the state of affairs in other cases of arrests of sisters and children. While in detention, they were also denied food, water or drugs, as was the case with Muslim brothers. On a number of occasions, they were taken to court on absurd charges too. Quite painfully, some Muslim sisters were even dishonoured!

Quite a number of Muslim sisters and children were martyred also. The first child to be felled by police bullet was a 3-year old, whose mother and younger sister were also fatally injured when police attacked a peaceful procession in Zaria a day after Mu'allim's arrest. Many more followed.

Hajara Gambo was in the company of other Muslim sisters in front of the Muslim Hospital in Kaduna in April 1997 when police came from behind to open fire on them. A police bullet pierced the upper side of her back just above the left shoulder blade and made its exit at a terrific speed in front of her chest, missing the heart by inches. She loudly uttered the *takbir* as others answered with more *takbirat*. Blood profusely poured from the wounds in her chest. She repeatedly thanked Allah for what she referred to as being the first Muslim sister to be shot for her faith and said that she neither has grief nor regrets, urging the others to keep on with the struggle. Aisha Junaid was another sister who felt that she was luckier than Hajara even as she was not hit directly by police bullets but her 4-month old and only baby at the time was. His tender right upper limb was shattered, thus becoming the second innocent little infant to be martyred at the time. There was also the case of a 60-year old Muslim sister killed along with two of her children by policemen in the mosque in a village near Sokoto. Halima Umar Gwandu was yet another sister shot dead in front of a mosque in Zaria soon after the annual Quds procession in 1999. She was nursing a six-month old baby at the time. Before her departure, she had told those close by to urge other Muslim activists not to surrender to tyranny and oppression come sun or shine.

MEDIA TERRORISM & BLACKMAIL:

The crackdown was not only physical, but like most modern warfare, it also involved the use of media outlets in the relentless campaign of repression and intimidation against Muslim activists. Blackmail, misrepresentation of facts and under-reporting of the authority's ominous acts were the principal ways employed.

Thus, all atrocious acts carried out against Muslim brothers merited little or no mention. Human rights violation against Muslim activists tend to receive lesser attention in the press and world than say cases of politically motivated rights violation involving others, although

the later cases that get extensive cover like the Ogoni and Niger Delta issues are by no means the only or even the most common, let alone the worst cases in which abuses occur in Nigeria.

Rights violations against Muslim brothers in Nigeria were much more extensive, frequent, widespread and severe. Yet they were the least reported. When they were reported at all, they contained serious and mischievous distortions. It was quite common to see headlines like; “Fundamentalists on rampage” or “Fundamentalists set Kaduna ablaze”, when in reality what had happened was that police had opened fire on a congregation in a mosque killing many.

There was a time in 1997, when Muslim brothers were celebrating the Eid –el Maulud and the police attacked them without provocation with live bullets and teargas at a place in Kaduna. The police hastily fabricated the story that Muslim brothers had attacked them in their station to steal weapons with which to forcefully free Mu’allim Zakzaky. According to that fiction, Muslim brothers had come to the police station armed with machete, stones, bows and arrows, sticks and so on chanting war songs. It was this unintelligent fictitious story that the media carried as news. But for the Hausa service BBC’s investigative report at that instance, the truth would have remained concealed. Of course, the police later arrested all the residents who granted the BBC interview revealing the truth.

Journalists who wanted to report the truth were frightened. In the peak of the atrocity, one journalist with the *Punch* Newspaper in Nigeria, a Christian, was arrested and accused of writing sympathetic reports on the plight of Muslim brothers. He was only released on the condition that if he ever did that again, he was to be shot. He said that it was the Police Commissioner, Yakubu Shaibu who threatened him. A different journalist was held because he was found writing a report on police shooting of Muslim women and children. Because he was found to be in possession of pictures of those children shot by the police, he was told that his release would only be if he produced the Muslim brothers who gave him the pictures. He too was a Christian. As a result of these and similar cases, media outlets were left to sing only the police song unedited.

Due to this inability of the press to live to its responsibility as the impartial watchdog of the society when Muslim activists were the victims, thousands of such activists across the country were detained, many more were killed or maimed including women and children, mosques and other places of worship were desecrated, schools and homes were razed down, rights were decimated. Yet, much of this remained unknown to the world. It was like a whisper in a vacuum.

OPUTA PANEL:

A truth commission, otherwise known as Oputa Panel, was set up to look into cases of abuses and violation of people’s rights by successive governments in Nigeria. Many welcomed the idea and the world hailed it. The commission received several thousands of petitions, and of course, including that of the Islamic movement.

In the course of its assignment, the commission held public hearings in selected Nigerian cities. During such public sittings, chosen cases of rights violation and abuse of power were

heard. Horrifying as the evidences given before the panel turned out to be, they were nowhere close to the brutality Muslim brothers were subjected to.

To our dismay however, the panel did not deem it fit to invite either the Movement as a group or any single Muslim brother whose rights were severely violated to appear before it publicly or in secret. This led many to the right conclusion that the aim of the panel was some other undisclosed political agenda.

According to the commission's spokesman recently, nearly 9000 petitions did not appear for the public hearings and that they are being handled administratively. However, the selection criteria for the public hearings leave much to be desired. Undoubtedly, the scope and scale of the violation of Muslim brothers' rights calls for public hearing. Many of the victims may be dead, but their widows and orphans are very much there. Those victims maimed are around with their ugly scars and disabilities. Others whose rights were severely violated for no other reasons than their beliefs are still with us to say it all. Likewise, Abacha may be dead, but the hydra-headed terror apparatus with which he attempted to crush the Islamic movement is there. His military, police and other security chiefs are still there. His special advisers, ministers and top government functionaries are still there. We very well know those who killed our brothers and sisters, razed our homes and places of work, desecrated and violated the sanctity of our mosques and places of worship and raped our women. We see them everyday walk about freely without remorse. Yet, the Human rights violation commission does not think Muslim activists must be heard.

INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE:

While successive governments in Nigeria waged relentless campaign of repression and intimidation to annihilate Muslim brothers in a futile attempt to obliterate any traces of Islamic activism in Nigeria, the West generally turned its face the other way.

For instance, in November 1996 when the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) visited Nigeria, copious references were made to failure to observe the fundamental rights of Ogoni people and other democracy campaigners, but no mention at all was made of the glaring violation of the rights of Muslim activists, which at that time was approaching a crescendo.

In the same vein, human rights groups around the world in most cases kept sealed lips for most of the time when grave cruelty was being meted out to Muslim activists. On the few occasions that *Amnesty International* or *Human Rights Watch* commented on the issue, it merited only one or two sentences, quite incongruous with the scale of violation of our rights.

Of course I am not unmindful of the massive international campaign initiated by the Islamic Human Rights Commission in London in support of Mu'allim Zakzaky and all other oppressed Muslim activists in Nigeria. In fact, it was the direct result of this campaign that brought the issue to the fore and culminated in the concern expressed by the Home Office here in Britain as well as a number of other governments across the world.

In November 1998, a United Nations Special Rapporteur, Mr. Soli Sorobjee visited the country to check on the human rights situation. At that time, most political detainees, Niger

Delta people, journalists, human rights and democracy campaigners had been released but Muslim activists remained detained and indeed more were being incarcerated. His audience was sought but he declined. However, a written memorandum detailing our plight was sent. Consequently, he visited Mu'allim Zakzaky in prison and in his final report he acknowledged that human rights were still violated.

WHY SUCCESSIVE REGIMES ARE AVERSE TO ISLAMIC MOVEMENT:

To complete this presentation, let me quickly comment on why I think successive regimes in Nigeria are so inimical to Islamic beliefs and why they all sought to violently suppress the Islamic Movement.

Personally, I do not think the reasons are far-fetched. In a nutshell, if we were to find out why successive authorities had been hostile and unreceptive to successive Prophets (AS), then we would have answered this question of why successive Nigerian authorities have been against Islamic beliefs. The reasons why the Prophet (SAWA) and his companions were persecuted in Makkah are quite similar to why Muslim activists have been persecuted in Nigeria and indeed everywhere around the globe till this day.

Central to this has been the fear that Islam would overthrow the status quo system that is in opposition to that of Allah. That has been the charge against successive prophets (AS). That also has been the charge against revivalists and all Muslim activists everywhere. In Nigeria, Muslim activists are taken to be traitors to a state that is not piloted according to the dictates of Allah and because they profess that the affairs of their society be directed by moral and God-fearing men as directed by their Lord. They are persecuted for their faith and for their commitment in the struggle to see that the life of their community is lived according to the dictates of their faith.

The Prophet (SAWA) had said; "Whoever fears God, He will make all things fear him, and whoever is not afraid of Allah, He will cause him to be afraid of everything." Thus, today like always, governments, forces, authorities or powers in opposition to Allah are consequently afraid of Islamic beliefs and Muslim activists. Just as the prophets (AS) were fought, persecuted and even killed, so also today Muslim activists would be fought, persecuted and killed. That is the way. Allah says you will never find change in this way. Thus, persecutions are milestones in this struggle and it is good for activists to realise that this struggle could be as long and tortuous as it could be hard and expensive, and be prepared to pay the supreme price for Islam. "Do you think you would enter paradise whereas God has not yet established who of you have struggled and who are patient?" (Q 3:142), asks Allah. He then affirmed: "We shall surely try you until we know those of you who struggle and are patient" (Q47: 31).

Mere saying of the *shahadah* is not what is required of a Muslim. He must live by the *shahadah*. Living by the shahadah will bring one in ceaseless confrontation with false gods inside one, and with those outside one. It entails a ceaseless struggle to reshape self and society so as to attest to the *shahadah*. Thus, Islam is not a passive belief system. It is an active, dynamic process, a movement. It has been adequately made clear that we shall encounter suffering and adversity in this struggle. "Do you think you will enter paradise while there has not yet come upon you the like of those who passed away before? Misery and hardship befell them." (Q2: 214) The Prophet (SAWA) in the very early Makkan life had

declared “There were such people before you that a man would be seized and a pit would be dug for him in which he would be thrown, then a saw would be brought and placed over his head and he would be cut into two, and his flesh would be combed away from his bones by iron combs, yet nothing would turn him away from his religion...” (Bukhari).

We in Nigeria have long realised this and fortunately, under the leadership of Mu'allim Zakzaky, successive regimes failed to score their goal of total annihilation of the Islamic movement. They have vainly suppressed the Movement, but its ideals, its mission and its cause remain firm and resolute. Sooner than later in sha Allah, the Movement will change the text and texture of the future outlook of Nigeria, giving it an obvious Islamic imprint.

Wassalam.



PO Box 598
Wembley
HA9 7XH
United Kingdom

1-903718-13-9