

**NIGERIA REPORT:**

**THE ZARIA  
MASSACRES AND  
THE ROLE OF THE  
MILITARY**

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## Table of Contents

Overview .....	5
Introduction.....	6
Events of Friday 25 July 2014.....	7
Events of Saturday 26 July 2014 .....	10
Findings .....	11
Recommendations .....	13
Appendix A – Situation Report .....	24
Appendix B – List of those killed .....	26
Endnotes .....	27

## Overview

On 25 July 2014 Nigerian soldiers attacked the annual al-Quds Day procession in support of Palestine in Zaria, a city in Kaduna State in northern Nigeria. The following day, soldiers drove to the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah and opened fire on supporters of the Islamic Movement within the precinct of the main building.

The two attacks killed 34<sup>1</sup> people including three children of the prominent scholar Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, head of the Islamic Movement. This is not the first time that the al-Quds Day procession in Zaria has been attacked. In 2009 four people were killed and several injured when police opened fire on civilians<sup>2</sup>.

Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) sent a fact-finding mission to Zaria on 30 July 2014. The mission was led by IHRC Chair, Massoud Shadjareh. This report is based on its interviews with victims, their families and also eye-witnesses.

The findings include video footage of Nigerian soldiers firing on unarmed civilians located at the tail end of the procession in Zaria on 25 July. Thirty-two people died. Bystanders were among those killed in the violence. Over 100 people were injured.

There is evidence that many of those arrested died in military custody. Reports indicate that some were taken into detention alive and well and later emerged dead with their bodies bearing signs of being beaten. Others who were injured were detained for hours and brutalised before being allowed to seek medical treatment.

According to eye-witnesses, three truckloads of soldiers opened fire at the procession without warning.

The following day three truckloads of soldiers approached the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah, the headquarters of the Islamic Movement in Zaria, and opened fire on people standing outside. Two people died and seven were injured.

## Introduction

The Islamic Movement, headed by Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, was founded in the late 1970s as a student movement. Since its establishment, it has grown into a social and religious movement with supporters and members of all ages and from all walks of life. Today estimates of its popularity vary, but most estimates say the Islamic Movement enjoys the support of between 10-15 million people across Nigeria.

The Islamic Movement has been organising the al-Quds Day procession for the last 33 years. This is a peaceful procession whose aim is to show solidarity with the people of Palestine. Al-Quds Day processions are held in towns and cities across the world by different organisations. This year, the march in Zaria was one of at least 22 that took place on the same day in towns and cities across Nigeria, all organised by Sheikh El-Zakzaky's Islamic Movement.

The names of eye-witnesses and the injured have been kept anonymous for their own safety. We have provided the names of those who have been killed as well as individuals who said they were happy for us to identify them in our report.

## Events of Friday 25 July 2014

The Al-Quds Day procession used the same route that it has for the last 33 years, starting at Sabon Gari Jamat Masjid. The procession consisted of unarmed men and women, of different ages, chanting slogans and carrying placards, banners and flags in support of the oppressed people of Palestine. The procession started after Friday prayers, at around 2pm.

At around 4.30pm the procession came to an end, a collective prayer was read and those attending dispersed. However, not all had reached the termination point because of the large turnout. The tail of the procession was still at some distance from the termination point (approximately 3km away). It was the tail end of the procession that was viciously attacked by soldiers.

We spoke to one of the volunteers who was helping to manage traffic around the tail end of the procession at the PZ roundabout, the scene of the first attack. He saw a vehicle with soldiers approach them. He did not think this unusual as Zaria has two military bases so soldiers in vehicles are a common sight in the centre of the city. The soldiers stopped near him and the other volunteers and tried to engage them in an argument about what criteria the volunteers should use to give vehicles priority to pass. This appears to have been a smokescreen for the attacks, because even as they were being given priority passage, the soldiers started shooting at demonstrators from a very close distance. Ishaq Abdullah<sup>3</sup> was shot and bundled into the army vehicle. The soldiers then sped off, went around the block of shops and cut off a large group who were at the tail end of the procession from the main body. They took positions near these shops<sup>4</sup> and started to shoot at the crowd. The volunteers and other non-partisan eye-witnesses stated that the volunteers did not have weapons and did not instigate the violence.

Video footage and images obtained by IHRC clearly shows the soldiers walking calmly towards the crowd while shooting at it. There seemed to be no obvious danger to the soldiers as they took no precautions against being attacked. They were not seeking protection behind objects, nor wearing helmets and were walking directly towards the crowd while shooting. Had the crowd posed any danger to them they would not have taken such a casual approach.

The stewards and volunteers who were helping with the procession started walking towards the soldiers despite not having any protection from the hail of bullets. As they walked towards the soldiers they chanted Allahu Akbar (Allah is great) and Ya Mahdi (O Mahdi)<sup>5</sup>. The reason they approached the soldiers was to place themselves between the soldiers and the crowd and also to rescue those who were lying injured on the road. Family members of Ridwan Musa, a 20-year-old student, told us how he was able to get close to the soldiers and stood between them and a group of women the soldiers had taken aim at. He challenged them, asking them why they were shooting at peaceful civilians. He was shot in the head and died immediately. His body was taken to Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah.

All those who were interviewed by IHRC, including victims and bystanders, stated that the crowd was unarmed and did not fight back. They chanted as soldiers approached them, and when the shooting became continuous and indiscriminate they lay on the ground for protection. The indiscriminate nature of the shooting meant a number of people who were not part of the procession were also killed or injured. Julius Anyanwu, a 68 year-old local Christian man, was shot and disemboweled as he sought to know why the soldiers were shooting unarmed civilians. He died before arrival at the hospital. In an adjacent shop, a Christian woman was shot and injured as she sought shelter in the shop she worked in. A number of stray bullets tore through the front of the shop and into her hands and chest. IHRC has obtained pictures showing

damage done to shops and other property. Bullets pierced metal doors. One physically handicapped victim recounted that she had been in the area begging for food. When the shooting started she dived for cover as she was unable to run away. A soldier approached her, shot her in her good leg and walked away. Her leg had to be amputated.

All the victims and eye-witnesses we spoke to confirmed that the soldiers did not issue any warnings before shooting – they opened fire randomly and indiscriminately at the crowd. We spoke to a farmer who was working in a sugar cane field near the procession. He described how he saw soldiers chasing victims into the field and shooting at them. As soon as he saw the soldiers running into the field he decided to flee. However a soldier managed to shoot him in his hand. He informed us that the soldiers hid amongst the sugar cane waiting to see if others would run in to the field so that they could shoot them as well.

While many of those who were shot either died on the spot or were taken away to Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah by volunteers of the Islamic Movement (where they were able to get to the person safely), others were arrested and went through a further 4-5 hour ordeal at the hands of the soldiers.

We spoke to a number of people who were arrested and taken to Basawa Military Barracks and tormented. One of the men who was arrested explained how as he was leaving the demonstration a friend called and told him that soldiers were shooting at people taking part in the procession. He decided to go back and see what was happening.

When he arrived at the PZ roundabout he met with Ahmad, Hamid and Ali El-Zakzaky. The soldiers approached them. Along with the stewards and volunteers, they continued chanting but as soon as the shooting became intense, they lay down on the ground for cover. The soldiers continued their advance. Ahmad and Hamid decided to get away but he and Ali remained on the ground. He confirmed that most of the people on the ground around them had been shot and were either injured or dead. He and Ali were unharmed at this stage. When the soldiers approached, Ali screamed out. Realising that they were not injured, the soldiers ordered them both to stand up. As soon as they stood up they shot Ali in the leg. One of the soldiers then pointed his gun at him and he instantly grabbed the barrel and pushed it away to try and prevent himself being shot. As he struggled with the soldier another soldier shot him in the leg. They were both then dragged to the side of the road. It was from there that he saw Ahmad and Hamid being shot by soldiers. Both were shot twice in the back and once in the leg. The soldiers put him, Ali, Ahmad and Hamid, along with three other individuals, who were also shot in the leg, into the back of a truck. (Mahmoud El-Zakzaky was also in this crowd with his brothers and had also been shot - he died instantly with his body being left on the street for volunteers to retrieve.) They were stacked in the truck one on top of the other. Ali was placed on top of his brothers Ahmad and Hamid. They were driven to Chindit Army Barracks which was about 500m from the scene. During the journey Hamid pleaded with the soldiers that Ahmad needed urgent medical attention, as he was unable to breathe. Each time Hamid spoke he was kicked and beaten. Ali tried to move so as to put less pressure on Ahmad's chest and allow him to breathe more freely. Each time he moved, he too was beaten. Throughout the journey the prisoners were kicked and beaten with the butts of the soldiers' AK-47 assault rifles.

Once they arrived at the barracks they were refused entry by the Chindit barracks commander. So they turned and headed to Basawa Military Barracks some 5km away. They were driven straight to the barracks hospital, pulled out and dumped on the ground outside. On seeing their condition a senior officer in the barracks ordered that they be placed in an ambulance and taken to the Teaching Hospital in Shika. However, the ambulance was stopped at the gates of the barracks and the commander of the unit that had arrested them, Lt Col. S. O Oku, pulled them out of the ambulance and dumped them on the ground outside the gates. He refused to let them be taken to the hospital. The victims had their



mobile phones confiscated and were left there for at least three hours. During this time a number of soldiers approached them, took pictures and then proceeded to hit them with the butts of their AK-47s. Lt Col. Oku asked who the sons of El-Zakzaky were. Ali, Hamid and Ahmad were identified. They were separated from the group and moved to one side.

The soldiers were also insulting and taunting their captives, and every time they said something Ali, who is only 15, would respond with a comment. One of the soldiers decided to attack him for his response and went to hit him, at which point Hamid tried to shield Ali with his own body. Hamid was hit on the head twice with the butt of a rifle. That was the last time anyone heard Hamid speak or move. Ali mentioned that he saw Hamid's eyes rolling and he died soon afterwards.

A few hours later, after dark, the soldiers who had arrested them returned with a number of vehicles, which they parked next to them. Using the headlights of their vehicles, they proceeded to film and take pictures of the arrested before disappearing.

It was only then that they were taken to Shika Hospital. They were driven there and dumped outside the emergency department. Before the soldiers left they continued to torture them. By this time Hamid's body was stiff and Ahmad's body had started to go cold - they were both dead. At least nine other persons amongst the 16 arrested died during this trip; five survived with various degrees of injuries. The hospital staff came out to help those who were still alive and also receive the bodies of the dead.

The above narrative was confirmed to us by Ali El-Zakzaky. Dr Shuaib Musa who attended to the injured at Shika Hospital confirmed that many of those injured or killed had bruises on their bodies consistent with being tortured in addition to gunshot wounds. Similar evidence was given by Dr. Gilbert Uwadia, the Medical Director of St. Luke's Catholic Hospital, Wusasa, where quite a number of those injured were treated. They both explained that many of the victims had clean lacerations, indicating that they had been cut or stabbed. Ali El-Zakzaky and the victim who was arrested and spoke to us both confirmed that the lacerations were from the bayonets of the AK-47s carried by the soldiers. Dr Shuaib also explained that both Hamid and Ahmad died as a result of not getting immediate medical attention. Had a doctor seen them immediately, they may have still been alive.

Dr Shuaib also mentioned how an ambulance conveying injured people to the hospital was stopped by the army. Two of those on board were arrested while the other two escaped. The soldiers took the ambulance and did not provide any reasons for why they had taken it. The ambulance was only released on 15 August, 2014.

## Events of Saturday 26 July 2014

The following day saw a further incident at the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah. After the previous day's events many of the injured had been brought to the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah where they received first aid overnight.

A number of the volunteers and supporters of the Islamic Movement were in the premises of the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah. One of the victims who had been shot in the leg that day explained that while they were outside the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah, three army vehicles approached them. The soldiers got out and walked towards them. Once they were on the opposite side of the road and after a very short discussion they opened fire. No warning was given before shooting. As soon as the soldiers started firing at the crowd, the people in the crowd started chanting Ya Mahdi and Allahu Akbar and dived to the ground for cover.

The soldiers were shooting from very close range – 10-20 metres. One of the victims was shot in the leg and we saw a very large exit wound on his leg: the bones in his leg were clearly visible. Two people were killed and seven injured. No soldiers were killed or harmed during this event.

The family of Haidar Muhammad Ugwado said he was also shot in front of the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah. He too was outside the Husainiyyah with others before the soldiers arrived. When the soldiers had left, people approached him thinking he had decided not to move from his place. They found that he had in fact been shot dead; he did not get a chance to seek cover when the soldiers had started shooting and had been killed where he sat.

All the victims and eye-witnesses we spoke to confirmed that none of the people outside the Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah were carrying guns or any weapons. They also did not provoke the attack either. The soldiers had shot at unarmed civilians.

## Findings

- Soldiers opened fire on unarmed civilians, without provocation, using live ammunition, without issuing any warnings on 25 July 2014. People were dispersing from a peaceful procession held in support of Palestine and all eye-witnesses / victims confirmed that only the soldiers were shooting.
- The police were not involved in the incident of 25 July. They refused to take captives from the army and did not wish to have any part in how the army handled the issue. Furthermore, in Nigeria, it is purely a police responsibility to handle civil disturbances and the army does not normally engage without the express knowledge of, and instructions from, their command and headquarters. In the latter case, all military and security formations are alerted. On July 25 and 26 however, the police refused involvement and soldiers in Chindit barracks refused entry to the soldiers who carried out the operations. The fact that a senior military officer at Basawa Barracks did not seem to be aware of what was going on and thus requested that victims be taken to the hospital would itself suggest that this was a special operation carried out by a select few.
- The army treated the civilians they attacked as hostile combatants, despite their being unarmed. In a special situation report obtained by IHRC (Appendix A), they stated that the soldiers were attacked by the civilians. They referred to those arrested as prisoners of war and counted an ambulance amongst the dangerous weapons that they confiscated from the enemy.
- There were no casualties or fatalities amongst the soldiers on 25 or 26 July.
- It is our opinion that this was not a conflict between the army and protestors as claimed by the military. Thirty-two people were killed on Friday 25 July, but as indicated in the special situation report (Appendix A), the soldiers sustained no casualties or losses. If this had been a conflict between two parties we would have expected the army to report some casualties as a minimum.
- A number of those injured or killed were shot at very close range. This is evidenced by the severe nature of the wounds as well as the fact that many of the victims said they could clearly see the faces of the soldiers who shot them and would be able to identify them if given the opportunity.
- Video footage clearly shows that the soldiers were walking around very calmly and did not perceive any threat from the crowd they were shooting at: they were not wearing helmets, were not seeking cover and were walking in the open as they fired at the crowd. We have images showing soldiers walking amongst the crowd; clearly they did not perceive any actual threat from the crowd as they have since claimed.

- Soldiers arrested a number of individuals who were held for 4-5 hours, without due legal process. These individuals were:
  - shot in the leg and the back and even the chest and head before being bundled into a truck. Many had multiple gunshot wounds
  - repeatedly tortured during the journey to Basawa Barracks,
  - refused medical attention, food and water throughout their imprisonment, which led to the death of Hamid and Ahmad El-Zakzaky,
  - showed evidence on their bodies of being kicked or beaten with the butts of AK-47 rifles,
  - had clean lacerations on their bodies from where they were cut or stabbed by the soldiers' bayonets.
- Soldiers opened fire on unarmed civilians, using live ammunition, without provocation and without issuing any warnings outside Husainiyyah Baqiyyatullah on 26 July 2014.
- All victims and family members stated that they had not received any explanation from the Police or any government functionary. No one had approached them to find out what had happened at the time of our fact-finding mission.
- Soldiers distinctly and actively sought to identify the sons of Al-Zakzaky and meted out the most severe forms of torture in addition to fatally shooting them suggests that eliminating members of the sheikh's family was one of their primary goals.

## Recommendations

- IHRC believes that an investigation into these two incidents needs to be carried out by a third party, independent of the Army and government. **Our recommendation is that the investigation be carried out by an independent international commission.**
- The incidents in Zaria are not the first time that the Nigerian Army has acted in this way. Amnesty International has reported the extra judicial killings of alleged members of Boko Haram by the Nigerian Army. These killings involved them slitting peoples' throats whilst filming and photographing the atrocities. Such actions amount to a war crime. These types of events strongly suggest that at least a section of the Nigerian army is totally out of control and is committing murder and extra-judicial killings of unarmed civilians with apparent impunity. **We recommend that the Nigerian Army's participation in all international peace missions, organised by the UN or the African Union, be suspended immediately, until the perpetrators are identified and brought to justice.**



Peaceful protest



Another section of the peaceful procession



Women's section of procession



Mens section of procession



Banner in solidarity with Palestine



Army personnel alongside army vehicle





Soldiers shooting at protestors



Injured man abandoned on the road and left for dead



Injured man becomes limp



Army officers throwing lifeless body onto truck



People seeking shelter during shooting



Ammunition collected at the site of the protest



One of the injured



Victim with part of leg amputated as a result of bullet wound



Wounded being carried by volunteers



Injured taken to hospital



Injured taken to hospital



Injured taken to hospital



Injured waiting to be treated



Burying the dead

## Appendix A – Situation Report

IN LIEU OF NA MSG FORM  
DEPOT/G3/240/5

IMM DTG: 260900 A JUL 14 U/C

FROM: HQ DEPOT NA

TO: HQ 1 DIV  
1 DIC


INFO: OFFICE OF THE COAS  
AHQ DATOPS  
AHQ DOAA  
HQ 1 DISFORCE  
11 FER

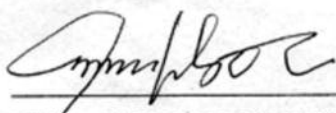
63 - 512

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TEXT: SPECIAL SITREP. SITREP NO 04/14. RELIGIOUS DISTURBANCE. AT ABOUT 251545A JUL 14 A ZARIA BASED ISLAMIC CLERIC AND LDR OF SHIITE, SHEIK EL ZAZAKI AND HIS FOLLOWERS UNLAWFULLY ENGAGED IN AN ACT OF CIVIL DISTURBANCE WHILE PROTESTING ONGOING CONFLICT BETW STATE OF ISREAL AND PALESTINE. THE SECT MEMBERS ARMED WITH DANGEROUS WPNS ATTK INNOCENT CIVS INCL SLDRS OF 11 FER. SECT MEMBERS ALSO ATTEMPTED TO DISARM SOME OF THE SLDRS. TPS ON GRD RESPONDED IN SELF DEF AND ENGAGED THEM IN EXCHANGE OF GUN FIRE. REINFORCEMENT SENT BY DEPOT NA IMM. SIT. EN FORCE. KIA 10. WIA 2. PW 13. 1 X AMB CAPTURED. OWN FORCE. KIA NIL. WIA NIL. OWN EQPT CAS. NIL. OWN TPS STILL DOMINATING THE AREA. SIT UNDER CONTROL. PROGRESS RPT TO FOL ASP. TPS MORALE AND ALERTNESS REMAIN HIGH. PLEASE ACK////

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RELEASING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE

NAME: BA FIBOINUMAMA

RANK: BRIG GEN

APPT: COMDT



Text: **special situation report. Situation report no 04/14. Religious disturbance.** At about 251545a July 14 a Zaria based Islamic cleric and leader of Shiite, Sheik El Zazaki and his followers unlawfully engaged in an act of civil disturbance while protesting ongoing conflict between state of Israel and Palestine. The sect members armed with dangerous weapons attacked innocent civilians including soldiers of 11 fer. Sect members also attempted to disarm some of the soldiers. Troops on ground responded in self-defense and engaged them in exchange of gunfire. Reinforcement sent by depot Nigerian Army immediately. Situation. Enemy force. Killed in action 10. Wounded in action 2. Prisoner of war 13. 1 x ambulance captured. Own force. Killed in action nil. Wounded in action nil. Own equipment casualty. Nil. Own troops still dominating the area. Situation under control. Progress report to follow as soon as possible. Troops morale and alertness remain high. Please acknowledge///

## Appendix B – List of those killed

### Friday 25 July 2014

Sayyid Ahmad Zakzaky  
Sayyid Hamid Zakzaky  
Sayyid Mahmoud Zakzaky  
Musa Soba  
Abdulbasit U/jaba  
Alhaji Atiku Zaria  
Sadisu Salisutanimu U/noma  
Kabiru Alaramma Muciya  
Usman Ridwan Zaria  
Zainulabidin K/dangoma  
Alaramma Alhassan U/kanawa  
Shamwilu Bashir Funtuwa  
Adamu Shitu Barwa  
Zulaihat Sani  
Yusuf Abdulqadir  
Mansur Ahmad Bilbis  
Haruna Ahmad T/wada – (9 years old)  
Abubakar Sabati T/jukun  
Shafi’u Tsugugi  
Umar Dambo  
Ishaqa Abdullahi Muciya  
Ahmad Habib Dabai  
Zakariyya A/gwado  
Aisha Muktar Kudan  
Isma’il Bashir Wuciciri  
Ibrahim Muktar S/gari  
Salisu Mati Maradi  
Mujtaba K/malam Karaye  
Husaini Muhammad Zabi  
Nuhu Ya’u Kundun  
Julius Anyawu  
Abubakar Lawal

### Saturday 26 July 2014

Haidar Muhammad U/gwado  
Haruna Sufi Dograwa

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B – List of those killed

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ihr.org.uk/activities/press-releases/9075-press-release-nigeria-breaking-news-police-fire-on-peaceful-protest-in-zaria>

<sup>3</sup> Ishaq Abdullah died following the serious fatal injuries he sustained. He was taken away by the soldiers and was not given any medical attention. He bled to death in custody.

<sup>4</sup> The shops are in the area immediately around PZ roundabout and the area itself is referred to as PZ, a densely populated area with very high concentration of shops, banks and other commercial activities.

<sup>5</sup> These chants were spontaneous and were meant firstly as warning to others nearby to be wary of danger and secondly as a form of spiritual protection and encouragement in the face of danger.



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