

**Oral Statement Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation with human rights defenders 52nd Session Human Rights Council, 15 March 2023
Agenda Item 3, Promotion and protection of human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

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Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is a not-for-profit campaign, research and advocacy organisation founded and based in the United Kingdom. It was set up in 1997 and works for redress of human rights violations and a better understanding of rights and norms across confessional, ethnic, national, political and other boundaries.

IHRC has consultative status with the UN – ECOSOC.

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IHRC has been following for years the case of Islamic Movement of Nigeria leader Shaykh Zakzaky, and more generally the government's crackdown against the Islamic Movement of Nigeria supporters. The IMN is a broad-based mass organisation based in Zaria, the major city of Kaduna state, 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 religious affiliations. Today estimates say the IMN enjoys the support of between 10-15 million people across Nigeria, from both Sunni and Shia Islamic schools of thought as well as some Christians.

In 2015, the Nigerian army carried out massive attacks against the Islamic Movement of Nigeria in Zaria. The operation resulted in the deaths of at least 1000 unarmed civilians, mostly IMN members, killed by gunshots attributed to soldiers. In the following years, IHRC has published two reports on the violence that have been sent to the International Criminal Court. Recently, the ICC Prosecutor declared to initiate an investigation on the base of these IHRC reports.

Although Skaikh Zakzaky has been released two years ago, his passport is still today illegally seized by the authority, and this is particularly important as he needs urgent medical treatment that cannot be delivered in Nigeria. He is suffering various many injuries in his body following the attack in 2015 and the period he spent in jail, that are: progressive glaucoma, cervical spondylitis, 2 episodes of stroke, up to 55 bullet fragments with excessive lead and cadmium poisoning in his body.

The urgency of the medical treatment has been confirmed by last Kaduna State High Court's rule (2019), whereby the presiding judge Dairus Khobo, on the base of **eight** Nigerian and foreign doctors' medical reports, has publicly acknowledged that Zakzaky and his wife are **in danger of death**. Zakzaky's lawyer Mr Femi Falana has formally issued the DSS and the Attorney-General of the Federation Court for refusing to release his passport without a court order.

All the above comes in blatant **violation** of the Kaduna State High Court's pronouncement and the Nigerian law. It is, clearly, a further attempt by the Nigerian authorities **to impede the necessary medical treatment and let Zakzaky die a slow death at home.**

By this oral statement, IHRC wants to make very clear that, considering his current situation, **any further delay in releasing him the passport corresponds to a death sentence** to which the international community should be called to respond. For this reason, IHRC urges all possible international actors and institutions to do whatever is in their power **to urge Nigerian authorities to release his passport and allow his immediate traveling.**