

MY MENTOR AND GUIDE: SHEIKH ZAKZAKY

For the past thirty years, he has stood firm and uncompromising in his principles. He is advocating for change in the system being operated, which he argued is alien to our culture, our religion and most important of all, it is not divine. It harbors all types of ills such as corruption and in its very nature, is oppressive. For his ideals and steadfastness, he made tremendous sacrifice. Those in authority would not have any of that. They neither tolerated nor accommodated his wisdom. They felt threatened. They deployed all weapons in their possession to stop him. Consequently, he has had to face persecution in all its ramifications ranging from physical torture, incarceration, killings of his supporters and disciples, destruction of properties, and even the arrest of his entire family.

In fact, one can not quite enumerate what he has had to go through for his cause. The sacrifice he had to make for this cause cannot be quantified. He served close to 10 years behind bars at different times, in various prisons and detention centers across the country from Enugu, Kaduna and Port Harcourt prisons to interrogation center in Lagos among others.

Yet, he is still able to successfully mobilize the masses towards a common goal far beyond any imagination. He has taught his followers, supporters and sympathisers how to stand against tyranny, oppression and injustice prevailing in the society. This large mass-based supporters could rapidly rally across the country and beyond should they see some infringement of some rights somewhere. This is a grassroots-based mass movement, with clearly defined goals and objectives. This movement, which he leads, is so organized that it has established some viable alternative structures in several spheres of human endeavors.

The *Fuddiyyah Lajna* impacts positively in the educational sector through the over 360 nursery, primary and secondary schools spread across the country. In the economic front, there is the *Zahra* Relief Foundation, which distinguishes itself in the provision of relief materials to distressed persons. It also sometimes gives soft loans for small businesses.

In the health sector, there is the ISMA, comprising of qualified doctors, nurses and other health professionals, that also stands out in the provision of healthcare to the masses and especially when there is an outbreak of disease or when hospital workers down tools. In addition, they run a mobile hospital and are in the fore-front of voluntary blood donation campaigns for use in hospitals. This drive is acknowledged and cherished by the National Blood Safety and Transfusion Services.

The *Shuhada* Foundation was established to cater for the families of the martyrs in the course of the struggle. Its main task is to fulfill all the needs of the families of the martyrs including educational needs and basic care and support. To date, they provide scholarship from primary to university level for all the children of all those martyred in the course of the struggle.

The Movement also has a robust publishing outfit, producing two newspapers; *The Pointer Express* fortnightly in English and *Almizan*

a weekly publication in Hausa. The later was in fact the first Hausa newspaper to be on the internet and remains the most widely circulated vernacular paper in Nigeria. In the social front, there is the I. M. Productions, whose major task is the production of Islamic films. Right now, they are in the process of producing a film on the Islamic revivalist, Shehu Usman Danfodio.

All the activities of the movement including public rallies and processions are usually highly organized. *Hurras* is a paramilitary outfit that makes that possible through the manifestation of exceptional skills in crowd management and control.

Both the *Fuddiyyah* Islamic Centre and the *Hussainiyah Bakiyyatullah* are in Zaria. These are multi-purpose centers that serve for all the academic and social needs of the movement. In these centres most programmes, lectures, seminars, and other forms of teaching like the *Tafsir* and *Nahjul*

Balagah sessions are held.

The movement maintains a solid presence on the internet through a number of websites,

prominent among which are www.islamicmovement.org , www.harkarmusulunci.org and an all encompassing, well-maintained blog situated at www.shuhada-foundation.blogspot.com

Several other fora are responsible for the organization of many other programs and activities of the movement. Prominent among these are the Academic and Resource fora. The later operates within academic circles, comprising mostly of students in tertiary institutions and their lecturers across the country. The Resource forum is a contact platform for intellectuals and other resource persons in the society. It has served as the voice of the movement on occasions when the name of the Movement was being soiled. Being not an all males' affairs, there is also the Sisters' forum, carrying out a lot of activities. The youths are not left out too. They are visibly represented in two quite active fora; *Dandalin matasa* (Youth Forum) and *Abul Fadalil Abbas*. The later is fashioned in the mold of the *Hurras*, but conducts its programs complimentarily.

Followership of the Movement is widespread and cuts across all geographical and international boundaries. In all these cities, towns, villages and countries across continents, activities and programs are being conducted as it is in Zaria. In all these places, they identify with the cause and struggle of my mentor. Such is the deep grassroots and widespread support base of the Movement.

In the face of hopelessness prevalent in the society, this movement has given hope to its adherents. Life would have had no meaning for a teeming number of people but for this Movement, which has redefined the purpose of existence and brought it in tandem and harmony with the Divine purpose.

Allah, out of his grace, bestowed on this servant, my mentor, the wisdom and foresight to see the vain and futile course we had taken, and the insight, willingness and ability to redirect us and take us out of the woods, in this world as well as in the life beyond. His quest for change and the sacrifice in pursuit of that change is unique. It is to him that Allah has shown both the spiritual and temporal solutions to the myriads of problems afflicting us. There is little wonder that he is increasingly being seen as such, even across the religious divide. He has received several Christian delegations at different times for different reasons. Notable ones include the Catholic Bishop of Zaria Dioceses, a Priest from Coventry, UK and a delegation of the Holy Sea, Pope John Paul II to name a few. I recall that my mentor, Sheikh Zakzaky, was among the 25 people the Pope specifically requested amnesty for from the dictatorial regime of Sani

Abacha during his visit to Nigeria.

Only recently, he again clearly demonstrated exceptional qualities of tolerance during the post election violence that engulfed parts of the country inclusive of Zaria. This was publicly acknowledged by Christian population and some Ibo communities in parts of Zaria, who paid him a visit in appreciation of the cover and protection he provided them during the crisis. In fact, a Newspaper named him “the only hero of post election violence”.

My mentor is indeed a disciple of Imam Ali [AS]. He is neither a party to all the corruption that is taking place nor does he endorse any party or politician. He is the only religious scholar you don't see in the corridors of power looking for contracts or receiving his share of the loots. He maintains his independence. He is an extraordinary personality, principled and focused. His primary goal has remained to change the system for the better and fulfill that divine purpose of man on earth.

My mentor, Sheikh Zakzaky, has taken the lead. We must be his vanguards of the change he struggles to enforce. We must assist him, support him and rally round him to give him all the necessary assistance he needs until that time when that change is accomplished. Undoubtedly, my mentor and guide has some unique qualities that say much about him. His consistency in the face of adversity for over 3 decades, his firm stand for the powerless and the oppressed against tyranny and oppression, and his voice for the voiceless stand him out. He has revived Islamic consciousness. The name ZAKZAKY rings a clear and distinct bell. Bravo Sayyed.

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