

The Resurgence of Police Recklessness and Brutality against the Shia Religious Minority in Sokoto State

Written by freezak

Thursday, 02 January 2020 13:54 -

Resource Forum Muslim Brothers and Sisters Maberu Area,
Sokoto 30th December, 2019 .

His Excellency, The Executive Governor of Sokoto State,
Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal (Matawallen Sokoto)

Attention: The Resurgence of Police Recklessness and Brutality against the Shia Religious Minority in Sokoto State

As a follow up to an earlier letter written and delivered to your office on the 3rd of September, 2019 on the looming and the subsequent violent crackdown on the members of the Shia Religious Minority Group in Sokoto state by the Police, we regret to write to report to you, the unfortunate and avoidable violent attack by the Sokoto state Police Command on the group on Friday, the 27th Day of December, 2019. This irresponsibility, which marked the resurgence of reckless use of force against an endangered minority group in the state is undoubtedly the result of the inconsiderate attitude with which our letter of 3rd September was treated. This recent event is no less than an organized state violence against law abiding citizens whose fundamental rights to freedom of religion, conscience, dignity and peaceful assembly are guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, as amended. This unfortunate and brutal outing of the Police has climaxed an utter show of shame on the part of the Police and indeed the state whose responsibility is to protect the lives and property of the citizens and residents alike. His Excellency may wish to know that the series of police violent attacks on the shia population in the state demonstrates a compromise of his oath of office with which he was sworn in as the Chief Executive and Chief Security Officer of the state.

Of recent, you may not be unaware of the deliberate mobilization of the Police to the scene of a peaceful procession by the members of the Shia minority group in the city of Sokoto on the 27th December, 2019 as protest to the continued detention of Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzakky and his wife Malama Zeenat in spite of their deteriorating health conditions and subsisting court order releasing them. The protest, which was carried out in a number of cities and towns across the country and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja were eventful except for the brutal attack by the Police on the protesters in Sokoto Metropolis. During the attack by the police, live ammunitions were fired directly at the protesters among whom are women, children, youth and the aged. Resultant from the reckless and brutal use force by the police, one young person in his early twenties, Yahuza Umar from Kalambaina Village in Wamakko Local Government was shot dead by the police while ten others sustained various degrees of grave injuries from gunshots. Among the victims of the barbaric police behaviour include a woman, children and young persons. The victims are currently receiving medical attention at various medical facilities while the dead has since been buried in accordance with the Islamic rites.

Your Excellency, this recurring Police brutality and persecution against us as citizens, on account of our religious opinion and minority status is meant to strip us of our dignity as humans and our fundamental rights as citizens. As the Chief Executive and Chief Security Officer of the

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state, your powers are limitless in this regard. At the minimum, your powers must be exercised to prevent the security agencies, particularly the Police in the state to act arbitrarily and to confine them within the bounds and provisions of the laws of the land. This is against the background that the persecuted Shia population in the state have proved on many occasions to be civil, law abiding and peaceful in our general conduct, particularly in matters that have to do with the violation of our rights. For instance evidence abound that on numerous occasions we have approached the court against the state and security agencies in the entrenchment of our fundamental rights from which favourable verdicts from courts were obtained to not only re-establish our rights to practice our religion but also the duty of the security agencies to provide us maximum protection and security as citizens. The recent court verdict obtained on the 31st Day of January, 2018 is a case in point. In the verdict by the Federal High Court of Nigeria sitting in Sokoto, which ruled that members of the Shia minority group have the Constitutional right to peaceful assembly and practice of their religion and the Fourth Respondent (The Sokoto State Police Command) was directed to stop further interference with the Applicant's religious activities except to provide protection in his interest (see attached copy of the judgement).

To our greatest dismay, however and in flagrant disobedience to this court order, which was served duly to the Police in the state and other respondents, the Commissioner of Police in the state, Ibrahim Sani Ka'oje has renewed his vigour to brutalize the Shias in the state at the slightest opportunity. This is evident in various police crackdown on peaceful protesters across the state ever since. This recent violent attack of Friday 27th December, 2019 is in addition to another violent attack on shias in Illela town on the 10th of September, 2019, a week after our letter to His Excellency on the possible violent crackdown. This attack has also claimed the life of one Abubakar Muhammad, leaving behind two widows and eleven orphans.

In the light of the above, we hold high misgiving about the attitude of the state governor towards the shias in the state. As if we are not citizens and do not deserve fairness and justice from the state and particularly his leadership. His Excellency's recent response to the murder of civilians by men of the Nigeria Airforce in Mabera Area confirm our fears that the minority shia population are marked for persecution and annihilation. This letter is once again, a modest reminder of His excellency's responsibility and oath of office that place the burden of the security of lives and property in the state in his office. For us, the blood of our brothers and sisters carelessly and lawlessly being shaded by the security agencies is a direct responsibility of the state. Your indifference thus represents your silent approval. This is unbecoming given the growing concerns for security and peaceful coexistence in the state. Your timely intervention at this trying time of complex security challenges facing the state and the nation at large becomes obligatory as Chief Security Officer. This is with the view to controlling and preventing the reckless use of state power by security agencies, particularly the police in the state under the Command of Ibrahim Sani Ka'oje against the shia population on account of our minority status and religious opinion.

Thank you as we await your swift and rational response in this regard.

Sidi Manniru Mainasara (+2347064194054)

Resource Forum of the Muslim Brothers and Sisters in Sokoto State

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Cc:

His Eminence, The Sultan of Sokoto
Dist. Senate President, National Assembly, Abuja
Rt. Hon. Speaker, House of Representatives, National Assembly, Abuja
Hon. Minister of Police Affairs, Abuja
The Inspector General of Police
Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum
National Human Rights Commission, Abuja
Director, Human Rights Watch, Nigeria
Director, Amnesty International, Nigeria
Director, Department of State Service, Abuja
Director, Department of State Service, Sokoto
Attorney General & Commissioner for Justice, Sokoto state
Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)
Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA)
Nigeria Bar Association (NBA)
Public Complaints Commission, Sokoto
Police Commissioner, Sokoto state Command
The Press
Barrister Femi Falana, SAN
Barrister Festus Okoye, SAN
Bishop Hassan Mathew Kukah
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Initiative for Conciliation and Rights Protection (ICRP),