

Sheikh Zakzaky: Court Sets February 24 and 25 for Trial

Written by freezak

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The much talked about trial of the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky and his wife is set to commence almost two years after both were charged to a Kaduna High Court. At the last sitting of the court, February 24 and 25 were set aside for the ailing duo to appear and take a plea, officially signifying the commencement of the trial, contrary to widely held views that the trial was ongoing, and that judgment was about to be delivered.

Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife have remained in detention since December 2015 after their residence in the Gyellesu Quarters of Zaria was violently raided by Nigeria's armed forces, in what has been aptly termed Zaria massacre, despite a ruling by an Abuja Federal High Court that declared their violent arrest and detention as unconstitutional and a violation of their fundamental rights. The Federal Court had, therefore, in December 2016 (a year after their arrest), ordered their release and payment of compensation amounting to N50 million and construction of a house in any town of their choice in any northern state of the country.

However, the government had contemptuously kept them in detention, sparking public outrage at this flagrant disobedience of the rule of law, and particularly the impunity with which they went about it.

As the government struggled to explain away, why the Sheikh and his wife were still detained, they came up with some bizarre explanations such as that the wife was not being detained, but that she is merely keeping her husband's company and she was free to walk out anytime. Other such absurd explanations proffered by the government included that they were holding the Sheikh in "protective custody" for his own safety and not because he had committed any crime and that they were seeking in which neighbourhoods to build the residence for him as ordered by the court before releasing them but that they were limited by people not wanting to be their neighbours.

When the pressure became intense from both within and outside the country for their release, particularly as the government didn't charge them to court and could not sensibly justify their continued detention, they transferred them to Kaduna and brought up charges against them bothering on aiding and abetting alleged culpable homicide and inciting public disturbances, in what observers thought was an attempt to deflect criticisms and justify their continued detention.

However, their attempt at seeking any justification suffered a severe fatal blow when the

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Kaduna High Court, barely a month after the Sheikh and his wife were charged, delivered a judgement exonerating about a hundred members of the Islamic Movement of all charges brought against them, including that of culpable homicide, which the Sheikh and his wife are being brought to trial for aiding and abetting.

The only option left for the government was to employ a litany of delay tactics in the trial, while working internally, using their moles to fathom out some more sinister justification for the Sheikh's conviction and even probably banning the Islamic Movement that he leads.

In the former, the government approached the issue of delaying the trial for as long as possible using a number of cunning ways. The first was the inclusion in the charges of two other members of the Islamic Movement who were clearly not even in Zaria when the alleged crime was said to have taken place. In fact, one was not even in the country at the time. The ploy here was to delay the trial by their absence for as long as possible since both were not even in custody and government was never ever going to make any efforts at bringing the other two to court for the trial, knowing that the trial would not progress in their absence.

This much they achieved using their moles within because when this their plot was discovered, attempts at facilitating the appearance of the other two in court so as to thwart the government's plot at delaying the trial was obstructed and frustrated by these moles within, who used a combination of lies and blackmail to achieve their aims. As a result, the government maximally utilized the chance to delay the commencement of the trial for nearly two years. Each previous court sitting, the prosecution only reported that they were unable to find the other two being charged with the Sheikh and his wife. The trial never made any progress. It was only when the court urged them to either sever the case and charge only those in custody or the court would throw out the case that they have now agreed to proceed by altering the charge sheet as presented during the last sitting, which would now allow the case to proceed hopefully with the taking of pleas by the Sheikh and his wife.

The government knows that they don't have any case and any chance of obtaining a conviction against the Sheikh. Hence, their only bet in that regard was to delay the trial for as long as possible, so as to use the trial as a justification for his continued detention. While that is being done, they are working actively in labelling the Islamic Movement as a terrorist organization with the active connivance of these moles, who through blackmail, lies, deliberate misinformation and wicked plots are working to actualize this their ultimate goal.

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Through the deliberate spread of falsehood and misinformation, they seek to incite members of the Islamic Movement into mob action, from where government's security agencies would take over indiscriminate attacks on innocent members of the public in the name of the Islamic Movement. The government will then gleefully present as evidence that Sheikh Zakzaky has been a leader of a terrorist group all along and use these attacks to convict him of terrorism and ultimately proscribe the Islamic Movement. It was what they have attempted in Abuja last year. It was exactly in the same fashion they created Boko Haram. Already, the government has been campaigning that the Islamic Movement is worse than Boko Haram. They are all out to prove this using these moles, who have been particularly active on Social Media and in contact with some undiscerning close friends and sympathizers of the Movement within and outside the country whom they appear to as true activists working hard for the release of the Sheikh. They churn out lies to blackmail other members of the Islamic Movement, whom they accuse of not being sufficiently worried enough about the plight of the Sheikh.

Now that the trial is set to commence however, the world must remain vigilant and not fall victims of the nefarious activities of the government and their agents.