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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Agence pour les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[05 June 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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NIGERIA's LEGAL REPORT - Minority Rights

Expressing the event in general

1. On 12th December 2015, which coincided with the Islamic calendar 1st Rabi al-Awwal 1437, at around 1:30 pm, 30 to 40 military personnel came in front of the Hussainiyah¹ Baqiyatullah, Nigerian Shiites main center located in Sokoto Road, Zaria, and took shooting positions.
2. A representative was sent from the Hussainiyah to speak to the military to inform the Army that they should move away, as the Hussainiyah has come under attack before.
3. The military agreed to move, but only 5 km away and remained in military formation. Also some of the Shiites and the guards of the Hussainiyah blocked the road to the Hussainiyah to prevent any attack by the army.
4. About 15 minutes after the army agreed to leave, there were 30 vehicles filled with soldiers coming towards the Hussainiyah. The trucks and cars were coming towards the road blocks set up by the guards and people. Some people were telling the army they could not pass through. However, they were very insistent. Then, the soldiers were shooting their guns in the air.
5. Between 1:45 and 2:00 pm, the soldiers had started shooting people at the Hussainiyah, though the reason for this is not known. Some of the casualties were taken by the soldiers and other casualties were taken by Shiites for medical treatment. An attempt was made to transport them to hospital located approximately 10 minutes away, but they were unable to as the two main roads were blocked by the military.
6. The people tried to take as many of the casualties inside the Hussainiyah. Because the military had blocked the roads, the casualties couldn't be taken to hospital. There were 15 casualties who had to be kept inside the Hussainiyah all suffering from gunshot wounds. They only had basic medical kits to tend to the wounded.
7. The military then took up positions and surrounded the whole building so that it was under siege. This was nearly at 5:00 pm.
8. Hearing that the military was attacking the Hussainiyah, some of the people tried to enter the area to offer their help to the wounded trapped inside the building. But the military had blocked the roads, so instead they came to the house of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, spiritual leader of Nigerian Shiites, which is situated approximately 10km away from the Hussainiyah.
9. While many Shiites and people were coming under attack by the military at the Hussainiyyah, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky² with his wife, Zeenah Ibrahim, his sister, Fatima Yaqoub, his three daughters, Suhaila, Sajida and Zainab, and his three sons, Haider, Humaid and Hammad, some guards and some others were all at Zakzaky's house and worried about people trapped at the Hussainiyyah.
10. The lane leading up to the Zakzaky's house was filled with a crowd of people who either originally came to attend the flag hoisting ceremony at the Hussainiyyah and ended up going to Gyellesu due to the situation or those that came to offer their help. Then just after 10 pm, suddenly gunshots were heard. The soldiers could not enter the lane because of the people who had gathered there, some of whom were chanting 'Allah Akbar'. Some volunteer forces who were attempting to establish order, tried to put sand bags to block the soldiers from coming through. The soldiers also threw grenades into the crowd without any announcements or warning and the shooting by them went on for hours.
11. On 13 December 2015, around 1.00 am to 2.00 am the volunteer forces took out the lights so the soldiers couldn't see the people. Every now and then when they noticed movement, the soldiers would start shooting the people who had gathered in the lane. Several people were killed at this time.
12. There was a point when there was no shooting for about 90 minutes. It was during this time that the military requested to see Hamza Yauri, a close associate of Sheikh Zakzaky. He went to the front accompanied by a few others. As soon as he arrived to speak to the military he was shot dead along with those who had accompanied him. This was at approximately 3 am.

¹ Hussainiyah is a cultural and religious site where Shiites perform their religious ceremonies.

² Ibrahim Yaqoub Zakzaky (February 4, 1954) is a Shia cleric from Nigeria and the leader of Shia minority in Nigeria.

13. After that, the shooting continued on and off when any movement was detected by the soldiers. This went on until 5.30 am when it started to get light and people started to pray *fajr* (early Morning Prayer). Around this time, the shooting started again and went on until day break. Many people were killed. They killed everyone in the lane all the way up to Zakzaky's house.
14. There was a house next door where casualties were being taken and the soldiers entered the house. Eyewitnesses have quoted that they were killing the injured and they were also firing RPGs at the house where the nurses were tending to the casualties. Many people were killed.
15. Then the soldiers were attacking Zakzaky's house from the rear with a tank and were trying to demolish the walls. They announced 'everyone in the house should come out – no one will be harmed.' But of course no one believed this as they had killed approximately 1000 of the people who had gathered in the lane. The military shot some people who were around the Sheikh and finally broke into the house. This was around 10 am.
16. The soldiers had set fire to the room the Sheikh Zakzaky's advocates were located in. Not all of them had been killed when the soldiers shot them, so they set fire to the room. They had been burned alive. The Sheikh Zakzaky's sister was also burnt alive. She was in her late 60s.
17. In the meantime, the soldiers were killing many ordinary and innocent Shiites in the neighbouring houses.
18. On the morning of 14 December 2015, the soldiers came to Zakzaky's house again and were looking for the Sheikh Zakzaky and his family. Finding the room where they were hiding, the soldiers started shooting into the room.
19. Two of Zakzaky's sons had been shot in the head – Hammad and Humaid. His wife was shot in the stomach and Sheikh Zakzaky himself was shot in his right leg and left arm three times. A bullet also scraped his left eye or the side of his head.
20. The soldiers claimed they would bring doctors. Yet snipers positioned in the trees focusing on the room where Sheikh Zakzaky and his family were situated in. The soldiers insisted we leave the room and that no one would be harmed.
21. In the meantime, one of Zakzaky's sons, Haider, went out of the room. One of the soldiers shot him in the back. He was killed and his body was dragged away.
22. The soldiers insisted the others should leave but that Sheikh Zakzaky should be left in the room. One of the soldiers tried to take him by force. He laid a ladder on top of the dead bodies that had been slain before. He tried to pull Zakzaky's wife, but she resisted, so the soldier punched her. He managed to pull her out of the room by force. Some of the other soldiers were beating her and they removed her hijab³.
23. The soldiers were trying to take them one by one. Suhaila, Zakzaky's daughter, was eventually forcibly taken from the room. Her sister Zainab was also dragged out of the room. She was kicked in the face and punched in the eye. She was thrown to the ground. Two soldiers were stepping on her back and a group of others were kicking her so she could not see everything that was happening. They bound her hands with rope.
24. Then, Sheikh Zakzaky was carried from the room and later had been put in a car.
25. After detaining Sheikh Zakzaky, the military were demolishing the houses of the Shiites in Zaria.
26. Up to this very day, there is no exact information about the current and medical condition of Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife.

The full article at the original report published in February 2016.

³ Muslim woman's veil covering her of the eyes of the strangers is called Hijab.