



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Shia Rights Watch, 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.

[27 May 2016]

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

GE.16-09371(E)



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## **Shia Rights Watch- Call for advocacy for Nigerian Shia**

Greetings esteemed colleagues and member states,

On behalf of Shia Rights Watch and Shia Muslims around the world it is a pleasure to be able to present this address to the commission. In the midst of terror expansion across regional boundaries, fear and a lack of security has permeated the minds of thousands of minority populations. One such minority is the Nigerian Shia population. This population has been renown in their lack of political and geopolitical ties, in the past decades however; they have been under target by terror organizations and human right violators alike. This statement intends to shed light on Shia minority in Africa. I bring your attention to Zaria, Nigeria Shia killing, for example. Nigeria is the home of one of the largest and fastest growing Shia densities in the African continent.

In December 2015, Nigerian security forces violently stripped the existing Shia community of their basic right to practice their belief system. As it was reported and investigated by Shia Rights Watch and many other human rights NGOs, local forces attacked Shia Muslims during a 48 hour window. The military crackdown of the local Shia religious center left not only the center in ruins, but also lead to the injury and death of more than 400 men, women and children. Local activist report the death of over 1000 people in the next 48 hours and stated many more disappeared since the attack. Atrocious dehumanization of the Nigerian army did not cease with the life of those killed, but was furthered as the bodies of those slain were taken and disposed of in a mass grave, some of which was discovered months later. Families of the deceased were not given opportunity to see their loved ones, bury them and even know where their graves are located. Families remain grieved by the knowledge that their loved ones were not buried according to their Islamic laws of burial.

Targeting of the Shia population does not seem to cease. During the same attack, Shia scholars such as Sheikh Zakzaky, whose three sons were killed in clashes between the army and pilgrims in a religious procession in 2013, were arrested. The army also detained more than 200 of his followers after the clashes of 2015.

Moreover, residents of the city say bulldozers demolished Shia's residences, a Shia shrine, a prayer hall, clinic, and cemetery. Witnesses also reported that the soldiers broke down the door of a room where people were receiving medical treatment, killed everyone in the room and then set some of the bodies on fire.

Although mentioned violation is not the only incident, it is the most horrifying in the history of this population in Nigeria. Such Shia rights violation elicits fear inside the hearts of Shia minority leading to change in social fabric of the Zaria as some Shia Muslims have left the area or gone into hiding.

By their actions, the Nigerian government has infused fear and marginalized a large portion of their population via religious identity. The environment of insecurity created by the Nigerian officials has disrupted the unity of Nigerian citizens and has created fertile ground for the influence of terror organizations such as Boko Haram and ISIS.

As of today, many Shia, including Sheikh Zakzaky, are still under custody without charges, and many more are missing.

Via this statement at the 32nd Human Rights Session, SRW hopes to emphasize the need of more attention on the ongoing minority rights violations in Nigeria. We humbly and respectfully invite State Members and NGOs to collaborate even more, to hold violators responsible and to prevent further violations. Assuring safety and security for all people in a country, including minority, lays foundation for tolerance, peace, and even better socio and economic growth.

Sincerely,  
Shia Rights Watch

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