

What is this protest about?

We are outside the Nigerian High Commission to demand the release of Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife Muallimah Zeenah and all political prisoners in Nigeria. Sheikh Zakzaky has been detained without charge by Nigerian security forces since the infamous Zaria massacre of December 2015. The Nigerian Federal High Court in Abuja ordered the government to release Sheikh Zakzaky and Muallimah Zeenah and pay compensation, describing their detention as illegal and unconstitutional. The Nigerian Government refused to obey the court order, and Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife remain caged illegally for over three years now.

Who is Sheikh Zakzaky?

Sheikh Zakzaky leads a peaceful popular mass movement with over 18 million followers in Nigeria. The Islamic Movement of Nigeria promotes social justice and educational programmes across Nigeria, meeting the needs of the poor and disenfranchised that the government has failed to address. It is renowned as a peaceful group that has never once been implicated in any violence in its 35 year history. It strongly abhors sectarianism, believing in unity against oppression. It enjoying support and respect from all communities including Muslims - both Shia and Sunni, and Christians. It is opposed to terrorism and has spoken out and campaigned strongly against the likes of Boko Haram / ISIS, and as a result has been its victim on several occasions. The movement is also highly critical of political corruption in the Nigerian government and military.

What is the Zaria Massacre?

In the 48 hours between 12-14th December 2015 the Nigerian army under the command of Lieutenant General-Tukur Buratai massacred over 1000 residents of Zaria in northern Nigeria. They were targeting Sheikh Zakzaky and his supporters. Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife Zeenah were both shot and abducted without charge, their three sons were murdered in the attack (3 of their other sons were murdered in a similar massacre by the army the previous year) and his sister was burnt alive, their home was destroyed, as was the graves of the Sheikh's parents. The army burnt the community's mosque to the ground and demolished their cemetery. The majority of deaths were caused by gunshots fired by soldiers. Some were reportedly burnt alive or hacked to death with machetes and knives. Reports have also emerged of sexual violence by soldiers including cases of rape against women and children. A 14 years old girl told human rights investigators that the military shot her in her private parts when she resisted attempts by soldiers to rape her. Others have had their breasts cut off. The soldiers mutilated the dead before hiding the bodies in mass graves.

In April 2016, Kaduna state government officials admitted that 347 bodies from the massacre were dumped in one mass grave uncovered near Mando. Other mass graves have not yet been exhumed. The massacre is now the subject of a preliminary investigation by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

What is Sheikh Zakzaky's condition?

Sheikh Zakzaky was shot four times during the Zaria massacre, as a result he lost sight in one eye and the use of one arm. In detention he suffered a stroke, and his remaining eye is in danger due to chronic glaucoma. On 25 April 2019, for the first time in over 3 years, IHRC led team of expert doctors visited and examined Sheikh Zakzaky and his wife. On 5 July 2019, the most recent examination show the lead levels in his body are 45 times over the normal acceptable limit, and also critical levels of Cadmium toxicity in his body. The lead toxicity is believed to be a direct result of the shrapnel from bullets left in his body. Due to the poisoning, his health is now critical and needs access to urgently needed life-saving medical treatment outside the country.

How can I help?

Please write to the Nigerian High Commission requesting that the sheikh be released and allowed to travel abroad for urgent medical treatment.

More info: <https://bit.ly/2S9iXR8>

