



Nigeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 29 August 2016

- 1. Are ordinary members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) at risk of arrest or detention by the Nigerian Authorities?**
- 2. Are members of this organisation who were involved in the Biafra Day Protests on the 29th and 30th May at increased risk of arrest, detention, kidnapping or execution?**
- 3. Is there any evidence that the groups MASSOB and Benia Human Rights are involved in leaking information about IPOB to the Nigerian Security Forces?**

An Agence France Presse report refers to IPOB as follows:

“IPOB was founded by Nnamdi Kanu, who is currently on trial for treason in a high-profile case in Abuja. He was arrested in October for operating pirate Radio Biafra where he was alleged to be broadcasting ‘sedition messages’ against Nigeria.” (Agence France Presse (10 April 2016) *Nigeria blames Biafra group after dozens found in shallow graves*)

This report also states:

“IPOB supporters have staged a series of protests across the country in recent months to demand his release and call for a breakaway state for the Igbo people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa. The leader of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), another pro-Biafra group defended the IPOB against the latest charges. ‘The DSS allegation against the pro-Biafra agitators lacks merit and evidence because MASSOB and IPOB are non-violent organisations,’ Uchenna Madu told AFP.” (ibid)

A report from the Germany-based NGO the Society for Threatened Peoples states

“The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) accuses Nigeria’s new president, Muhammadu Buhari, of stepping up repressions against Biafra-activists during the first 100 days of his rule. At least 371 supporters of the Biafra-movements MASSOB and IPOB were arrested, and dozens are still in custody. They are facing long prison terms, based on accusations of inciting violence and rioting. The STP demands the detainees to be released and has called for a comprehensive independent investigation of the police action in which, according to the protesters, several Biafrans were killed.” (Society for Threatened Peoples (16 September 2015) *Detained Biafra-activists threatened with long prison sentences*)

An report from the Nigerian Tribune on a protest by IPOB members in November 2015 states:

“The Police in Delta on Friday used teargas to disperse dozens of pro-Biafra agitators who staged a protest rally in Asaba. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported that the protesters said they were in solidarity with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Some members of the group were arrested for blocking the Asaba-Benin expressway. They chanted songs calling for the unconditional release of Nnamdi Kanu, a member of the Pro Biafra group. However, a police source told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the arrested members were later released following ‘an order from above’.” (Nigerian Tribune (7 November 2015) *Police disperse pro-Biafra agitators in Asaba*)

An article from Nigerian newspaper The Sun states:

“Hard time awaits members of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and other pro-Biafran groups, as the Nigerian Army has decided to stop protests that could lead to breakdown of law and order as well as threaten the nation's sovereignty. Daily Sun gathered that the military will soon begin a crackdown on the pro-Biafran protesters, as part of effort to end activities of IPOB and other groups. Towards this end, the Army authorities have directed General Officers Commanding (GOCs) of all its division across the country to issue a subtle warning to the agitators on the consequences of their actions and the likely penalty for such.” (The Sun (Nigeria) (17 November 2015) *Army set to clamp down on Biafra agitators*)

A report from the Abuja-based newspaper Leadership on clashes between IPOB members and the security forces in December 2015 states:

“Agitations for the state of Biafra by members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) turned bloody in Onitsha, Anambra, yesterday, after no less than seven people lost their lives when the protesters and members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) clashed. The seven who were killed included two police men, a female passer- by and four pro- Biafra agitators.” (Leadership (3 December 2015) *Biafra Protest Turns Bloody, Claims 7 In Anambra*)

See also report on this incident from The Sun (Nigeria) which states:

“Five members of Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) were yesterday allegedly shot dead by securitymen in Onitsha, Anambra State while celebrating the release by an Abuja High Court of Radio Biafra Director, their leader, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu. The IPOB members who were jubilating at the Bridge Head in Onitsha clashed with the security operatives resulting in the death of five persons. There was tension among motorists and commuters along the busy Niger Bridge area, Enugu/Onitsha Expressway over fear of possible blockage of the Bridge Head by the IPOB members. The supporters, who on hearing about the court's favourable verdict on Kanu converged at the statue of the late Biafran leader, Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu- Ojukwu in a large procession from Bridge Head to the town when they were intercepted by the security operatives. An eyewitness, who is also a trader at Bridge Head Market, Chibuike, said trouble started when the IPOB members were asked to stop their march towards the River Niger Bridge, but the group insisted and continued, an action that led to the fracas and shootings. He said the security

agents shot sporadically probably to disperse the crowd. They might have been hit by stray bullets, he noted.” (The Sun (Nigeria) (18 December 2015) *Biafra: 5 shot dead celebrating Kanu's release*)

A report on this incident from Radio France Internationale states:

“Soldiers raided a hospital in southeastern Nigeria last week to detain patients who had been wounded in a pro-Biafra demonstration, according to rights defenders and opposition activists. Nine people were killed and more than 20 people wounded on Thursday when cheering supporters took to the streets of Onitsha in Anambra state to celebrate a high court decision ruling ordering the release of Nnamdi Kanu, the charismatic but controversial leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a separatist group. The army acted in self-defense when they used live ammunition to disperse an ‘irate mob’, Col. Hamza Gambo, an army spokesman, told This Day newspaper. Soldiers initially fired warning shots into the air, but the crowd was ‘undeterred’, he said, adding that ‘three criminals were shot.’ According to rights defenders, five demonstrators were killed at the busy Niger River Bridge, where some 200 demonstration had gathered. The death toll rose to nine when four other people died from their wounds. In a bizarre development that the pro-Biafra described as a ‘dastardly act’, some 22 patients were picked up by Nigerian troops from the city’s Multi-Care Hospital and taken to military barracks that evening, according to Justus Ijeoma, the legal secretary of the Civil Liberties Organization in Anambra state. Five were subsequently taken back to the hospital.” (Radio France Internationale (22 December 2015) *Nigeria - Nigerian army raids hospital, arrests wounded civilians*)

An article from IHS Global Insight states

“Activists from IPOB founded by Kanu have staged fairly small-scale but frequent and violent protests to demand his release. They have been joined by the more established Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). These protests have taken place in the states of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo, where the Igbo are in a majority, but also in oil-producing states to the south such as Rivers, Delta, and Akwa Ibom, which were part of Biafra in 1967-70. Many demonstrations have gone ahead despite permission being refused by state or police authorities. That factor has frequently led to violence as security forces aim to break up the marches by force. Since Kanu's arrest, 14 protesters and two police officers have been killed, and at least 200 people detained. The most serious incident occurred on 17 December when supporters of Kanu gathered in Onitsha (Anambra) to celebrate the decision of the Federal High Court in Abuja, the capital, to release him. The IPOB members gathered at the southern end of the Niger Bridge, one of the main links joining eastern and western Nigeria. This caused serious disruption, and led to a confrontation with troops, who started firing on the crowd. Rights activists say five people died at the bridge and four more from their wounds.” (IHS Global Insight (19 January 2016) *Biafran support likely to remain limited but detention of secessionist leader will continue driving violent Nigerian protests*)

A report from The Sun (Nigeria) on protests in January 2016 states:

“Aba, the commercial hub of Abia State was yesterday literally turned into a war front as soldiers clashed with protesting members of Indigenous People

of Biafra (IPOB) and a faction of the Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign States of Biafra (MASSOB), resulting in the death of eight people with over 30 injured. The pro-Biafra groups, who were protesting against the detention of IPOB leader and Director of Radio Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu had the previous day ordered markets, banks, schools and other business centres to close shop in solidarity. They converged at the National High School, along Port Harcourt Road, Aba, from where they attempted to march and enforce the order, but were quickly dispersed by soldiers and policemen.” (The Sun (Nigeria) (18 January 2016) *Biafra protest turns bloody, again*)

See also report from The Sun (Nigeria) on the arrest of IPOB members which states:

“For failing to abide by the warning of the Enugu Police Command not to protest in Enugu State for the release of their leader, Nnamdi Kanu, eight members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have landed into trouble. The Enugu State Command through its Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr Ebere Amaraizu, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), had on Sunday warned sternly the IPOB members planning to go on peaceful protest in the state to shelve their action, but they refused. The eight members of IPOB were arrested by the police in Enugu last Monday as they were allegedly marching on the streets of Enugu in protest of the continued detention of their leader by the Department of State Service (DSS) in Abuja despite the warning by the Enugu State Police Command.” (The Sun (Nigeria) (20 January 2016) *IPOB protest: 8 members land in trouble in Enugu*)

An article from the Nigerian regional newspaper The Neighbourhood states:

“Security operatives comprising soldiers and policemen have renewed their raid and search for pro-Biafra agitators in the Southeast geopolitical zone. The new offensive by the military and police against members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra [MASSOB] and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra [IPOB] is linked to President Muhammadu Buhari's recent declaration in Katsina that he would not allow any part of the country to secede. Our correspondent learnt that men of the Nigeria Police and soldiers, at the weekend launched a massive search for members of IPOB and MASSOB in Onitsha and its environs. Residents who had encounters with the military and the police personnel claimed that crack teams of the two security agencies combed Onitsha and its environs in search of where the Biafra groups were holding their meetings. The security agents allegedly stormed some public schools, uncompleted buildings, town halls and warehouses in Onitsha and other places such as Nkpor, Nkwerezunaka, Obosi, Okpoko, and Oba in search of the pro-Biafra agitators. Other areas visited by the security agents were hotels, pubs and churches suspected to be in support of MASSOB and IPOB.” (The Neighbourhood (18 May 2016) *Nigerian security operatives renew crackdown on secessionist agitators*)

An Agence France Presse report on protests in May 2016 states:

“Police said officers opened fire because members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement shot at security forces deployed to monitor the protests. But IPOB spokesman Anayo Chukwu-Okpara denied the claim and said at least 35 members of the group were killed in the commercial hub of

Onitsha in Anambra state. An Anambra police spokesman told AFP 'five corpses were recovered' in Onitsha while in the capital of neighbouring Delta state, Asaba, the police said five protesters were killed." (Agence France Presse (31 May 2016) *Ten dead as Biafra anniversary turns bloody*)

See also report from the International Business Times which states:

"The alleged incidents occurred on 30 May as people were holding events to remember what many refer to as the 'genocide' or 'holocaust of the Biafran people'. It has been alleged that security forces entered St Edmund's Catholic Church, Nkpor Agu, in Anambra state, and opened fire on worshippers, accusing them of belonging to the Indigenous People of Biafra (Ipub) group. At least five people were killed in the incident. Another 35 are believed to have been killed when security forces allegedly opened fire on Ipub members in Onitsha, Nkpor and Ogidi, the Vanguard newspaper reported. AFP reported that at least seven people – five civilians and two police officers – were killed during clashes between pro-Biafra demonstrations and security forces in Asaba, Delta state. An Ipub coordinator who witnessed some of the alleged violence on demonstrators in Anambra, told IBTimes UK security forces used tear gas and fired shots in the air to intimidate people, who ran away. 'I witnessed a section, as the attacks were coming from all directions. Our people who were camped at a school in Nkpor Uno were attacked and many people were shot and three died,' the source explained. 'The Nigerian military and police arrived at Nkpor park where some of our people ran for cover and started firing tear gases and firing gun shots into the air. At some point they aimed directly at our people, causing them to run for safety. The army arrested those who could not escape. Dead bodies in our possession are nine. The Nigerian forces took almost all the dead bodies. We tried to rescue the injured, but the shooting was too much,' the source continued." (International Business Times (31 May 2016) *Nigeria: 'Many people shot' during Biafra Day events as police order disarming of Ipub members*)

An article from The Sun (Nigeria) states:

"Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has slammed the Inspector-General of Police Mr. Solomon Arase over an order to his men to clampdown on its members and disarm pro-Biafra agitators in Delta and Anambra States. The group had clashed with security agents on Monday during the 30th anniversary of Biafra during which many lives were lost and scores injured. In their reactions to the IGP order to deal decisively with IPOB members, spokespersons of the group, Dr. Clifford Iroanya and Mr. Emma Mmezu accused the police boss of alleging that IPOB members were armed and undertook premeditated attacks on police officers which they said was a lie." (The Sun (3 June 2016) *Biafra: IPOB spits fire*)

An Amnesty International report on the killing of IPOB supporters during the May 2016 protests states:

"An on-the-ground investigation by Amnesty International has confirmed that the Nigerian army gunned down unarmed people ahead of last month's planned pro-Biafran commemoration events in Onitsha, Anambra state. Evidence gathered from eyewitnesses, morgues and hospitals confirms that between 29-30 May 2016, the Nigerian military opened fire on members of the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB), supporters and bystanders at three

locations in the town.” (Amnesty International (10 June 2016) *Nigeria: Killing of unarmed pro-Biafra supporters by military must be urgently investigated*)

This report also states:

“Amnesty International has received reports from various sources on the ground alleging that at least 40 people were killed and more than 50 injured. After visits to hospitals and morgues, the organization has confirmed - based on this initial investigation - that at least 17 people were killed and nearly 50 injured. The real number is likely to be higher. Some of the dead and injured IPOB supporters seen by an Amnesty International researcher were shot in the back, an indication that they were fleeing the scene when they were shot.” (ibid)

Referring to previous incidents involving IPOB this report states:

“The organization’s research shows that since August 2015, there have been at least five similar incidents in Onitsha alone where the police and military shot unarmed IPOB members and supporters. Amnesty International has documented cases of alleged unlawful killings by the Nigerian army between August 2015 and May 2016. In August 2015, military officers opened fire on peaceful supporters of IPOB calling for an independent Biafran state. The killings and mass arrests of members and supporters of IPOB by a joint military and police operations continued in October, November and December 2015.” (ibid)

An article from the pro-separatist Biafra Telegraph refers to the arrest of IPOB member Chidiebere Onwudiwe as follows:

“Last month; the Biafra Land National coordinator of IPOB was arrested in his home by DSS and till date nobody knows his state. The DSS went on to accuse him of terrorism, an accusation that stirred anger among various pressure groups and many activists condemned the accusation. It is one thing to arrest Indigenous People of Biafra because they share different opinion with you but it is entirely another thing to accuse them of terrorism because they peacefully asked for self determination. Biafrans have been subject to forceful disappearance, murder and incessant arrest, but in a situation the DSS could not hide an arrest, they should give them hope that their own is still alive.” (Biafra Telegraph (3 August 2016) *Where Is Chidiebere Onwudiwe, Ipob Biafra Land National Coordinator, Dead Or Alive?*)

An Amnesty International report on the abduction of an IPOB member states:

“Sunday Chucks Obasi (30), a pro-Biafran activist, was abducted by five armed men suspected to be security agents at about 9pm on 16 August from the front of his home in Amuko Nnewi, Anambra State. According to his family members and other witnesses, the five armed men in two SUV vehicles, one of them bearing a government registration number plate, ambushed Sunday Chucks Obasi as he drove into his compound at about 9 pm. They said that the men shot him, then put him in one of vehicles and drove away. Family members and neighbours who came out after the shooting saw blood and empty bullet shells on the ground in front of Sunday Chucks Obasi’s house as well as near his vehicle.” (Amnesty International (26 August 2016) *Nigeria: Pro-biafran activist shot and abducted: Sunday Chucks Obasi*)

In a paragraph headed “Additional Information” this report states:

“Sunday Chucks Obasi is a member of the security team of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a group campaigning for the independence of former Biafra territory in south eastern Nigeria. Since August 2015 several IPOB members and supporters have been arrested, detained or killed while engaging in peaceful protests. Dozens of IPOB members and supporters have also been arrested from their homes.” (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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