



Nigeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 12 May 2017

Is there COI to suggest that in 2015 that the group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) were active in Nnewi, Anambra State, Nigeria?

Is there COI that there have been IPOB rallies in the south eastern part of Nigeria in 2015?

A report from the Lagos-based newspaper Vanguard refers to a protest by members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Nnewi, Anambra State in 2015 as follows:

“Over seven thousands members of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, yesterday, shut down markets and all commercial activities in Nnewi, Anambra State in solidarity protest for the release of the Director of Radio Biafra, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu, who has been incarcerated by the Directorate of State Services, DSS, for over one month. Members of the IPOB mobilized from Onitsha, Asaba, Awka, Ekwulobia, Awka-Etiti, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi and Abia states, converged at Nnewi from where they marched to the house of the late Ikemba Nnewi, Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu to ask for his blessing even in death. This came as constitutional lawyer and leader of eminent group of Nigerians, The Patriots, Professor Ben Nwabueze (SAN), admonished the groups to have a re-think over their renewed calls for the state of Biafra. According to one of the commanders, of IPOB, Mr. Emeka Onwane, the protest was a warning signal to the Federal Government to make sure that Kanu, who he said, would appear in court today is released without further delay. Onwane said they decided to shut down Nnewi and made sure there were no commercial and business activities to further press home their demand for Kanu’s release without which he said there would be no peace in Nigeria. He said the protest would last for three days, and they chose Nnewi for the mother of all rallies as it is the home-town of the former Biafra war lord, late Dim Odumegwu Ojukwu.” (Vanguard (1 December 2015) *Biafra: IPOB, MASSOB shut down markets, Uwazuruike expelled*)

A report from the Nigerian Tribune on a pro-Biafran protest in Asaba 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*)

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

“Agitations for the state of Biafra by members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) turned bloody in Onitsha, Anambra [southeastern Nigeria], 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 article from Nigerian newspaper The Sun 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 IHS Global Insight report 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.” (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 Nigerian newspaper The Sun 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*)

An International Business Times report on events in Anambra State in May 2016 states:

“Dozens of people – including two policemen – are believed to have been killed by security forces in south-eastern Nigeria during commemorations to pay homage to the victims of the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war, also known as Biafran war. There are contrasting reports on the death toll, ranging from seven to 40. 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.” (International Business Times (31 May 2016) *Nigeria: 'Many people shot' during Biafra Day events as police order disarming of Ipub members*)

See also Agence France Presse report which 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*)

A report from Nigerian newspaper The Sun 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 (Nigeria) (3 June 2016) *Biafra: IPOB spits fire*)

A report from Amnesty International 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 the deaths of IPOB members in Onitsha, Anambra State between August 2015 and May 2016 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)

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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