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Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Nigeria: Biafran separatists

Version 1.0

April 2020

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- The general humanitarian situation is so severe as to breach Article 15(b) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive) / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules
- The security situation presents a real risk to a civilian's life or person such that it would breach Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- A claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

Contents

Assessment	6
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Basis of claim	6
1.2 Points to note	6
2. Consideration of issues	6
2.1 Credibility	6
2.2 Exclusion	6
2.3 Convention reason(s)	7
2.4 Risk	7
2.5 Protection	11
2.6 Internal relocation	11
2.7 Certification	11
Country information	12
3. Biafra background	12
3.1 Biafra region	12
4. Political landscape	14
5. Separatist groups	15
5.1 Overview of groups	15
5.2 Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)	17
5.3 Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) leadership, size and structure	19
5.4 IPOB aims and actions	21
6. State treatment of separatist groups / supporters	25
6.1 Unitary state and public order	25
6.2 Proscription / legal status	25
6.3 State actions	26
6.4 Break-up of / use of excessive force against demonstrations	27
6.5 Killings, discrimination, violence and harassment	28
6.6 Arbitrary arrest and detention	31
6.7 Prosecutions and convictions	36
7. Separatist groups outside of Nigeria	36
7.1 Nigerian Diaspora	36
7.2 Biafran separatists / supporters in the UK	37
7.3 Size and composition of separatist groups in the diaspora	38
7.4 Sur place activities of separatist groups	38

7.5 Monitoring by Nigerian Government in the UK	38
8. Freedom of movement.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Terms of Reference.....	39
Bibliography	40
Sources cited	40
Sources consulted but not cited	44
Version control.....	45

Assessment

Updated: 9 March 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by state actors because the person is an actual or perceived Biafran separatist.

1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 There are several groups aiming for the secession of Biafra, among which the two main groups are:
- the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)
 - Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)
- 1.2.2 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Nigeria is listed as a designated state in respect of men only.
- 1.2.3 For information on certification, see the instruction on [Certification of protection and human rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses applies. If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 A person's actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.3.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the particular person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their actual or imputed convention reason.
- 2.3.3 For further general guidance on the 5 convention grounds, including particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.4 Risk

a. State treatment

- 2.4.1 'Biafra' is an area in the south-east of Nigeria that comprises the states of Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambara. The area is inhabited principally by Igbo (Ibo) people who are one of the country's 3 largest ethnic groups (see [Biafra region](#)).
- 2.4.2 In the mid-1960s economic and political instability and ethnic friction were a feature of the newly independent Nigeria. Tensions between the Hausa and the more prosperous Igbo minority led to violence and in September 1966 a massacre that resulted in between 10,000 and 30,000 Igbo being killed. Attempts to resolve these differences failed and in May 1967 Biafra unilaterally declared its independence from Nigeria, triggering a civil war in which an estimated 1-3 million people died. Biafran rebels were eventually overwhelmed by and surrendered to the federal government forces in January 1970 (see [Biafra region](#)).
- 2.4.3 Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has been perceived by some as being dismissive and unsympathetic towards the people of the southeast particularly with regard to the appointment of senior government officials which appeared to favour his northern constituents (see [Political landscape](#)).
- 2.4.4 Some Igbo complain of under-representation in federal government, marginalisation, deficient infrastructure as a result of a smaller allocation of federal resources than other regions and a sense of historical grievance against a state that they say does not represent them (see [Biafra region](#) and [Political landscape](#)).
- 2.4.5 The Biafran cause of secession endures, driven by a sense of unfair treatment and marginalisation which led to the formation of new independence movements. In South East Nigeria there are several groups aiming for secession. The two main groups are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), founded in 1999 whose members were drawn from the Biafran Igbo-dominated states. In recent years MASSOB has fractured into several factions and splinter groups (see [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\) leadership, size and structure](#)).
- 2.4.6 The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) grew out of MASSOB between 2012 and 2014 and reportedly has a presence in and outside of Nigeria. There are also a number of minor Biafran groups, but they do not seem to have a

significant presence. Both MASSOB and IPOB have largely advocated for peaceful change but on occasions have used rhetoric that may encourage violent resistance (see [Overview of groups](#)).

- 2.4.7 Sources indicate that MASSOB was banned by the Nigerian authorities in 2001 however it is not clear from the sources consulted if this ban endures. In 2005 the federal government declared membership of MASSOB illegal on the grounds that they constitute a threat to the security and sovereignty of the nation and in May 2013 President Goodluck Jonathan identified MASSOB as one of the 3 'extremist groups threatening the national security'. In 2015 pro-Biafra marches were banned in some southern states. However, since August 2015, IPOB and MASSOB members and supporters have held protests, marches and gatherings. In September 2017 the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was declared a militant terrorist organisation. There is no indication that smaller pro-Biafran groups have been banned by the Nigerian authorities (see [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\)](#), [Proscription / legal status](#), [Overview of groups](#), [Political landscape](#), [Break-up of / use of excessive force against demonstrations](#) and [Killings, discriminations, violence and harassment](#)).
- 2.4.8 MASSOB, since its formation in the 1990s, has clashed with the security forces and numerous members have been killed and arrested usually during demonstrations. However, MASSOB has become divided, splitting into several smaller groups and is less active than IPOB. Smaller pro-Biafran groups do not appear active or of interest to the Nigerian authorities (see [Overview of groups](#), [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\) leadership, size and structure](#), [Break-up of / use of excessive force against demonstrations](#) and [Killings, discriminations, violence and harassment](#)).
- 2.4.9 IPOB has in recent years become the dominant Biafran group. Since 2015 the security forces have reportedly killed 10s and arrested 100s of IPOB supporters, usually when disrupting demonstrations or marches to promote Biafran independence, particularly during 2015 to 2017. Also a number of IPOB senior members have been arrested, including the IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu who was jailed for 2 years and then subsequently released and is reported to have left the country. Following the ban of IPOB in 2017, when all its activities were declared illegal, 100s of supporters of IPOB (but also some members of other pro-Biafran groups) who have attended protests and processions have been arrested and detained. There have also been a few reports of persons who publicly display Biafran independence through flags and other insignia being arrested (see [Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\) leaders, size and structure](#), [Break-up of / use of excessive force against demonstrations](#) and [Killings, discriminations, violence and harassment](#)).
- 2.4.10 Arrests of IPOB, MASSOB and other pro-Biafran group members largely occur during demonstrations, anniversary celebrations and marches. In general there is limited evidence to demonstrate that arrests have led to prosecutions or convictions despite IPOB being proscribed. There are reports that some of those arrested have been charged with treason which is punishable with the death penalty but sources do not indicate whether these

cases have then been prosecuted and convicted for treason or other crimes. Others have faced arrest for suspected membership (see [Arbitrary arrest and detention](#) and [Prosecutions and convictions](#)).

- 2.4.11 In general, low rank supporters or sympathisers of IPOB, MASSOB and smaller pro-Biafran groups are unlikely to be of interest to the government for that reason alone. However, the risk of arbitrary arrest, discrimination, violence and harassment by security forces is increased during demonstrations or gatherings, protest activity or participation in the annual Biafra Remembrance Day events (see [Killings, discriminations, violence and harassment](#)).
- 2.4.12 Whether a person is at risk of persecution or serious harm will depend on the group to which the person belongs, their profile and activities for that group and to what extent these are, or likely to become, known about by the authorities. Factors to take into account include:
- the group to which they belong, its aims and activities and legal status
 - the profile of the person within the group, including the role, nature and profile of their activities
 - whether the person has come to the attention of the authorities previously if so, the nature of this interest
 - the person's activities critical of government since leaving Nigeria (see [Sur place activities](#) below)
 - profile and activities of family members in Nigeria or outside of the country (see [Sur place activities](#) below).
- 2.4.13 Decision makers must also consider if the government's actions are acts of prosecution, not persecution, taking into account the reasons why (i) Biafran separatist groups are targeted and (ii) whether the state's actions are proportionate and fair. Those fleeing prosecution or punishment for a criminal offence are not normally refugees (see the section on prosecution in the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing credibility and refugee status](#)).
- 2.4.14 The government has a legal duty to protect the 'indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state' of Nigeria and maintain law and order. While MASSOB and IPOB have generally acted peacefully in advocating for an independent 'Biafra', the groups have also used inflammatory rhetoric, including comments in support of violence, and clashed with the authorities during demonstrations and protests. Therefore, the government and its agents, including the security forces, are likely to have a legitimate rationale in acting against the Biafran separatist groups where they pose a threat to the unitary state of Nigeria and law and order (see [State treatment of separatist groups / supporters](#)).
- 2.4.15 Prosecution may, however, amount to persecution if it involves victimisation in its application by the authorities; for example, if it is the vehicle or excuse for or if only certain groups are prosecuted for a particular offence and the consequences of that discrimination are sufficiently severe. Punishment which is cruel, inhuman or degrading (including punishment which is out of all proportion to the offence committed) may also amount to persecution.

The government has primarily arrested members or supporters of Biafran groups during demonstrations and marches, as part of maintaining law and order although the security forces have reportedly used excessive force against demonstrators. Some persons have also reportedly been arrested on grounds of treason. There is limited evidence that supporters or members who have been arrested have been prosecuted or convicted for treason or other offences. Nor do sources provide information about the length of or treatment of those in detention (see [State treatment of separatist groups / supporters](#)).

- 2.4.16 The government's aim of targeting members or supporters of Biafran groups who advocate violence generally and participate in demonstrations which lead to violence or disrupt public order are likely to be legitimate acts of prosecution. However, where the government has arrested and detained persons who, for example, peacefully participate in demonstrations and has then charged them with treason or the person is subject to long periods of detention in degrading or inhuman conditions, such treatment is likely to be discriminatory and disproportionate, and amount to persecution.
- 2.4.17 Decision makers need to consider each case on its facts to determine if the person is likely to be of interest to the government, whether this is for the legitimate grounds of prosecution with is proportionate and non-discriminatory. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they will be at risk of persecution or serious harm on return.
- 2.4.18 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

b. Sur place activity

- 2.4.19 The IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu reportedly resides in the UK. He is the director of London-based Radio Biafra, an online radio station set up to broadcast the demands of secessionists. Programmes are transmitted daily in English and Igbo (see [The Political landscape](#) and [Biafran separatists / supporters in the UK](#)).
- 2.4.20 Pro-Biafra organisations in the UK exhibit a varied online presence in the form of websites, radio broadcasts and social media (see [Biafran separatists / supporters in the UK](#)). However, the size of the support within a large and established diaspora living in the UK is not clear (see [Size and composition of separatist groups in the diaspora](#)).
- 2.4.21 From the sources consulted the most recent reported upon pro-Biafra protest in the UK was held in 2018. It is unclear from the sources consulted if there is significant ongoing pro-Biafran activity in the UK by members of the diaspora (see [Sur place activities of separatist groups](#)).
- 2.4.22 There is limited information in the sources consulted indicating that the Nigerian government monitors the activities of the diaspora in general and the Igbo, pro-Biafran communities in particular. Nor is there information about the government capacity to do this (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 2.4.23 In general, there is no clear evidence that supporters or members of Biafran separatists groups are monitored by or are of interest to the Nigerian

authorities while in the UK. Therefore it is unlikely that a person, by their activities in the UK alone, is likely to be of interest to the authorities on return to Nigeria. However, decision makers must consider each case on its facts. Factors to take into account include:

- profile, size, and organisation of the group / organisation to which the person belongs and its activities
- whether it has a presence in Nigeria as well as outside of the country and any evidence that it is monitored by the government
- person's profile and political activities (including those online) and relevant documentary or other evidence
- profile and activities of family members
- past treatment
- evidence that the Nigerian government has taken an active interest in the person while in the UK

2.4.24 The onus will be on the person to demonstrate that they are of interest to the government because of their profile and activities and are at risk of serious harm or persecution.

2.4.25 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.5 Protection

2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, they are unlikely to be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.

2.5.2 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.6 Internal relocation

2.6.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, it is unlikely a person will be able to relocate to escape that risk.

2.6.2 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.7 Certification

2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Country information

Section 3 updated: 9 March 2020

3. Biafra background

3.1 Biafra region

3.1.1 The Encyclopaedia Britannica provided a short history of the secessionist state of Biafra:

'... unilaterally declared its independence from Nigeria in May 1967. It constituted the former Eastern Region of Nigeria and was inhabited principally by Igbo (Ibo) people. Biafra ceased to exist as an independent state in January 1970.

'In the mid-1960s economic and political instability and ethnic friction characterized Nigerian public life. In the mostly Hausa north, resentment against the more prosperous, educated Igbo minority erupted into violence. In September 1966, some 10,000 to 30,000 Igbo people were massacred in the Northern Region, and perhaps 1,000,000 fled as refugees to the Igbo-dominated east. Non-Igbos were then expelled from the Eastern Region.

'Attempts by representatives of all regions to come to an agreement were unsuccessful. On May 30, 1967, the head of the Eastern Region, Lieutenant Colonel (later General) Odumegwu Ojukwu, with the authorization of a consultative assembly, declared the region a sovereign and independent republic under the name of Biafra. General Yakubu Gowon, the leader of the federal government, refused to recognize Biafra's secession. In the hostilities that broke out the following July, Biafran troops were at first successful, but soon the numerically superior federal forces began to press Biafra's boundaries inward from the south, west, and north. Biafra shrank to one-tenth its original area in the course of the war. By 1968 it had lost its seaports and become landlocked; supplies could be brought in only by air. Starvation and disease followed; estimates of mortality during the war generally range from 500,000 to 3,000,000.

'The Organization of African Unity, the papacy, and others tried to reconcile the combatants. Most countries continued to recognize Gowon's regime as the government of all Nigeria, and the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union supplied it with arms. On the other hand, international sympathy for the plight of starving Biafran children brought airlifts of food and medicine from many countries. Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Tanzania, and Zambia recognized Biafra as an independent state, and France sent Biafra weapons.

'Biafran forces were finally routed in a series of engagements in late December 1969 and early January 1970. Ojukwu fled to Côte d'Ivoire, and the remaining Biafran officers surrendered to the federal government on January 15, 1970. Biafra, on the point of total collapse, thereupon ceased to exist.'¹

3.1.2 A 2017 publication on the Biafran famine, The Handbook of Famine, Starvation, and Nutrient Deprivation stated:

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica, inc, 'Biafra – secessionist state, Nigeria', 4 March 2015, [url](#).

‘Following ethnic, economic, and religious tensions, the republic of Biafra unilaterally declared independence from the rest of Nigeria in 1967. This action triggered the Nigerian civil war in which the inflow of food and supplies to Biafra was blocked. The result was extensive famine, regarded as one of the great nutritional disasters of modern times. During the two-and-a-half years of armed conflict, an estimated one to three million people died, most of them from starvation.’²

- 3.1.3 The Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) country information report of March 2018 on Nigeria stated: ‘[...] The Biafran cause remains current in southeast Nigeria, propagated by the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and more recently the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).’³
- 3.1.4 DFAT also stated in their 2018 country information report that:
‘The Igbo people constitute 18 per cent of Nigeria’s total population and are one of the most politically influential groups in Nigeria. Some Igbo have campaigned for an independent state since 1999 [...]. The Igbo originate in south-eastern Nigeria and live in large numbers in the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Many Igbo have migrated to other areas of Nigeria including northern states. The Igbo speak a number of Igbo dialects. They are predominantly Christian. There are no legal provisions directed towards the Igbo population in Nigeria. The Igbo are able to participate in political, social and cultural life in Nigeria without interference. The Igbo, like all Nigerians, are able to move freely within Nigeria.’⁴
- 3.1.5 There are 36 states in Nigeria plus the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja which are grouped into six geographical zones. The South East is made up of Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia and Anambra⁵.
- 3.1.6 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated:
‘Biafra is a region in South East Nigeria [...]. It is populated predominately by people of the Igbo ethnicity [...]. Sources state people in the South East feel marginalized due to the Nigerian military presence [...] or to the lack of government investment in the region [...]. Corroborating information regarding Nigerian military presence in Biafra could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.’⁶
- 3.1.7 A Deutsche Welle article of 14 January 2020, noting that people in the Biafra region feel marginalised, considered the perception versus the reality:
‘But the statistics paint a different picture: In the 2015 national development index for example — the latest available edition — the geopolitical eastern and southern parts of the country are further ahead in terms of education, gender equality and poverty reduction compared to the north.

² Norman M, ‘Handbook of Famine, Starvation, and Nutrient Deprivation’, 20 February 2017, [url](#).

³ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (p7), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁴ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (p15), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁵ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (p7), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁶ IRBC, ‘Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...’, 28 June 2019, [url](#).

‘[Eghosa] Osaghae [professor of comparative politics at the University of Ibadan] says this is often where perception and reality drift apart: "Many people from the southeast do not know the north at all. In their opinion, the north still gets the lion's share of the resources."

‘The main point of contention — as it was before the war — is the oil which comes from the southeast.’⁷

- 3.1.8 There is no further information in the sources consulted in this note on how many Igbo people support the Biafran cause of aiming for succession from Nigeria.

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 4 updated: 18 February 2020

4. Political landscape

- 4.1.1 For further information on the political situation and system in Nigeria see [Nigeria: Country Background Note](#).

- 4.1.2 An African Arguments article from May 2017 provided background information:

‘Separatists contend that since the Biafra War, the Igbo, one of the country’s three major ethnic groups, have been marginalised. They note that no Igbo has been elected to lead the country since Nnamdi Azikiwe’s ceremonial presidency in the 1960s or to be vice president since Alex Ekwueme (1979 to 1983).

‘This persisted even under military rule. The only Igbo head of state in this period, Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, was killed after only seven months.

‘Administrative structures decreed by northern-led military governments have also undermined the region. Of the country’s six geo-political zones, all but the south east contain either six or seven states. The south east has just five, while it accounts for only 96 of Nigeria’s 774 local governments. Representation in government and the flow of federal resources are based on those administrative units.

‘Today, the south east, like much of the country, suffers deficient and dilapidated infrastructure and widespread youth unemployment. But many believe this is structural. They point out that as federal revenue allocation is based on number of states and local governments, the south east receives the least of all zones.’⁸

- 4.1.3 A BBC news article from July 2017 reported that Igbo leaders at a specially convened meeting in Enugu city had pledged their loyalty and “full support” to a “united Nigeria”, rejecting calls for a Biafra state to be created in the south-east, whilst appealing that the state be “restructured” to achieve “a just and equitable society. The Igbo leaders involvement has been seen by some as an attempt to de-escalate tensions between rival communities in Nigeria⁹.

⁷ DW, ‘The Long Shadow of Biafra Lingers over Nigeria’, 14 January 2020, [url](#).

⁸ African Arguments, ‘Nigeria: How to solve a problem like Biafra’, 29 May 2017, [url](#).

⁹ BBC News, ‘Nigeria's Igbo leaders reject call for Biafra state’, 3 July 2017, [url](#).

- 4.1.4 An expert comment by Sola Tayo, a BBC journalist, and Fidelis Mbah, described as a journalist, published on the Chatham House website in November 2017:

‘The new campaign for Biafran independence is largely championed by young people who were born after the civil war, with no memory of the suffering it caused.

‘The first sign of reviving the call for Biafra emerged in 1999 – shortly after the end of Nigeria’s period of military rule – in the form of an organisation called MASSOB, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra. The group was led by Ralph Uwazurike, who had several brushes with security agencies, and was arrested and imprisoned on charges of treason.

‘IPOB came to prominence at the centre of the latest wave of Igbo nationalism following the arrival in office of Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari. The tone of the new president towards the people of the southeast was perceived as at best dismissive, and at times hostile. He was accused of favouring his northern constituents, notably in terms of senior government appointments. The president has yet to visit the southeast. With anti-Abuja sentiment growing in the southeast, IPOB seized the opportunity to reactivate the demand for secession.

‘IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu was at the forefront of these demands. A British-Nigerian political activist, Nnamdi Kanu is the director of London-based Radio Biafra, a broadcast outfit set up to propagate the demands of secessionists. He had been recruited by MASSOB leader Uwazurike to run Radio Biafra in London. The pair fell out and Kanu later re-emerged as IPOB leader. The station broadcasts daily programmes in English and the Igbo language, including anti-Nigeria and pro-Biafra propaganda.’¹⁰

- 4.1.5 The US State Department 2018 Human Rights Practices Report (USSD Human Rights report 2018) stated: ‘The law prohibits ethnic discrimination by the government, but most ethnic groups claimed marginalization in terms of government revenue allocation, political representation, or both.’¹¹

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 5 updated: 9 March 2020

5. Separatist groups

5.1 Overview of groups

- 5.1.1 An expert comment by Sola Tayo, a BBC journalist, and Fidelis Mbah, described as a journalist, published on the Chatham House website in November 2017 identified the two main groups aiming for secession as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)¹².

¹⁰ CH, ‘Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria’, 9 November 2017, [url](#).

¹¹ USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), 13 March 2019, [url](#)

¹² CH, ‘Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria’, 9 November 2017, [url](#).

- 5.1.2 The same source stated 'There are several other pro-Biafra groups in the southeast but internal disputes have so far prevented them from presenting a unified front.'¹³
- 5.1.3 Country information included in the EASO Country Guidance stated: '[...] Both organisations [MASSOB and IPOB] claim to be non-violent and aim to reach secession through referendum. They mostly engage in awareness-raising activities, marches, and other gatherings. However, the leader of IPOB has reportedly endorsed violence as means for resuscitating Biafra.'¹⁴
- 5.1.4 The DFAT report of March 2018 stated: 'Factional fighting has plagued the MASSOB during the past two years, with the creation of splinter movements such as the Biafran Zionist Movement. However, the splinter groups have not been particularly successful or influential in building mass popular support.'¹⁵
- 5.1.5 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated that it was announced in June 2017 that 7 pro-Biafran groups had agreed to collaborate under the leadership of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu as the Biafran People National Council, and that a Nigerian Newspaper in May 2019 reported that at least a further 5 pro-Biafran groups had formed a coalition called Biafra Liberation Movement (BPLM). IRBC commented that no further information on either umbrella group could be found¹⁶.

Biafran People National Council	Biafra Liberation Movement
IPOB	MASSOB
MASSOB	Eastern People Congress (EPC)
Biafran Revolutionary Organization (BRO)	Igbo Youth Cultural and Restoration Initiative (IYCRI),
Eastern People Congress (EPC)	Movement of Biafrans in Nigeria (MOBIN),
Joint Revolutionary Council of Biafra (JRCB)	'Customary Government of Biafra (CGB),
Biafra Liberation Crusaders (BLC)	
Salvation People of Biafra	

¹³ CH, 'Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria', 9 November 2017, [url](#).

¹⁴ EASO, 'Country Guidance: Nigeria' (page 41), February 2019, [url](#).

¹⁵ DFAT, 'Country information report: Nigeria' (section 3.20), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

¹⁶ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

5.1.6 The National Daily news website gave a list of groups reported to be involved with marking the 51st anniversary of the Republic of Biafra on 30 May 2018:

- 'Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB),
- 'Eastern Peoples Congress (EPC), Igbo Youth Cultural and Restoration Initiative (IYCRI),
- 'Bilie Human Rights Initiative (BHRI),
- 'Movement of Biafrans in Nigeria (MOBIN), Biafran National Liberation Council (BNLC),
- 'Biafran Revolutionary Organisation (BRO),
- 'Biafran Liberation Crusade (BLC),
- 'Joint Revolutionary Council of Biafra (JRCB),
- 'Biafra Revolutionary Force (BRF), Customary Government of Biafra (CGB),
- 'Biafran Central Council (BCC)
- 'Biafran United Liberation Council (BULCO).'¹⁷

5.1.7 There is no further information in the sources consulted regarding the activities of smaller pro-Biafran groups in Nigeria or their interest to the Nigerian authorities (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

5.2 Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

5.2.1 A BBC Monitoring report of July 2017 gave the following information based on information from the Sunday Vanguard (Nigerian daily news publication) website:

- '[MASSOB was] Founded, 13 September 1999...
- 'Founding Leader - Uwazuruike, Chief Ralph
- 'Chief Ralph Uwazuruike is ousted as leader and replaced with Uchenna Madu in 2015. Uwazuruike rejects this and continues to claim leadership of the group
- 'Leader - Madu, Uchenna
- 'Director of Information - Edeson, Samuel.'¹⁸

5.2.2 Amnesty International in their November 2016 report stated: 'Prior to the emergence of IPOB, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was perhaps the most prominent pro-Biafra group in Nigeria. But due to state coercion and persecution, as well as infighting,

¹⁷ National Daily, 'MASSOB dares military, insists to mark Biafra at 51', 28 May 2018, [url](#).

¹⁸ BBC Monitoring – Organisation, 'Movement for the Actualisation...', 20 July 2017, Subscription only

allegations of misappropriation of funds and power tussles, the group's influence waned.' ¹⁹

- 5.2.3 The Australian Government's 2018 DFAT country information report Nigeria stated:

'Formed in 1999, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) campaigns for the independence of the Igbo people in the southeast region known as Biafra. The organisation reflects a lingering Biafran secessionist sentiment that has continued to exist since the end of the Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafran War) in 1970. MASSOB members are commonly from the Igbo speaking southeast states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo.' ²⁰

- 5.2.4 The EASO 'Targeting of individuals' report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated:

'By the end of 1999, a new movement for an independent Biafra, MASSOB, was founded by Ralph Uwazuruike...

'MASSOB was banned in 2001. Particularly in the first years of the twenty first century, MASSOB was actively pursuing independence, by organising rallies and protests, hoisting Biafran flags and using its own currency, identity cards, etc. The group defined itself as non-violent and peaceful.

'However, as International Crisis Group notes, "its members, alleging provocation, clashed with police repeatedly, resulting in several members killed." Its leader Uwazuruike was jailed in 2005 on treason charges and released two years later.

'In recent years, MASSOB has fractured into several factions and splinter groups, such as in 2010 the Biafra Zionist Movement or Biafra Zionist Front, and in 2012 IPOB. MASSOB leadership was contested in 2015 and 2016 between Uwazuruike and Uchenna Madu, whose factions expelled each other from the movement. Madu is reportedly more sympathetic to Kanu's IPOB. In December 2015 Uwazuruike changed the name of MASSOB (or a faction thereof) into Biafra Independent Movement (BIM).

'The Nigerian authorities accused MASSOB members of being "violent criminals" and "armed robbers". In May 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan marked MASSOB as one of the three "extremist groups threatening the national security", together with Boko Haram and the Yoruba group Oodua People's Congress (OPC). The latter conducted violent actions in the South West Zone mainly between 2000 and 2002.' ²¹

- 5.2.5 MASSOB has an official website [Biafranet](#) and the Biafra Independent Movement has a Facebook presence however, CPIT has been unable to find any information regarding the size or membership of MASSOB / BIM in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

¹⁹ AI, 'Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere', (p11), 24 November 2016, [url](#).

²⁰ DFAT, 'Country information report: Nigeria' (section 3.22), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

²¹ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 81), November 2018, [url](#).

5.3 Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) leadership, size and structure

5.3.1 Amnesty International in their November 2016 report stated: 'IPOB emerged in 2012 and campaigns for an independent Biafran state. Through its London-based Radio Biafra station, IPOB reaches out to a growing number of disgruntled youths in the southeast and southern zones of Nigeria. Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB and Director of Radio Biafra, has used the station to transmit pro-Biafra messages to his many supporters and members in and outside Nigeria.'²²

5.3.2 The EASO 'Targeting of individuals' report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated:

'IPOB grew out of MASSOB. Its leader Nwannekaenyi "Nnamdi" Kanu is the director of the London based Radio Biafra who parted from MASSOB. He founded the IPOB in 2014. The internal structure consists of state chapters governed by coordinators, under the leadership of Kanu and Uche Mefor as deputy leader; also a Biafra Security Service has been established. A Customary Government of Indigenous People of Biafra is in place as well.'²³

5.3.3 The EASO targeting of individuals report of November 2018 also stated: 'IPOB made use of the growing anti-Buhari and pro-Igbo nationalism feelings to "reactivate the demand for secession." Kanu was arrested by the Nigerian authorities in October 2015. He was released on bail on 28 April 2017, but disappeared in September 2017 after his house was raided by [the] Nigerian army.'²⁴

5.3.4 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated with regards to the structure of IPOB:

'Sources name the following leadership of the IPOB:

- 'Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the IPOB and director of the London-based Radio Biafra [...];
- 'Mazi Alphonsus Uche Okafor-Mefor [...] or Uche Mefor [...], deputy leader [...];
- 'Mazi Chika Edoziem, head of the Directorate of State of the IPOB [...];
- 'Emma Powerful, media and publicity secretary [...] and the main host of Radio Biafra [...].

'According to a report by Amnesty International, the IPOB's activities are led by state chapters directed by state coordinators, who are managed by the "Coordinator of Coordinators" [...]. The same source notes that the "Directorate of State" manages IPOB representatives abroad [...]. However, a statement issued by Nnamdi Kanu in May 2017, reprinted on the IPOB-operated news website, the Biafra Telegraph [...], indicates that the following organizational changes have taken place:

- 'the position of "Coordinator of Coordinators" have been "abolished";

²² AI, 'Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere', (p11), 24 November 2016, [url](#).

²³ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 82), November 2018, [url](#).

²⁴ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 82-83), November 2018, [url](#).

- 'the "world [a]dministrative [h]eadquarters" are located in the UK and Germany;
- '[Radio Biafra London](#), with satellite stations in South Africa, Malaysia and Germany and "soon to be opened" in the US, is the official channel of communication for the IPOB; and
- 'Uche Mefor and Mazi Chika Edoziem are authorized to communicate and issue directives on behalf of Kanu and the IPOB [...].

'A statement from Emma Powerful, quoted in the Independent, a Nigerian newspaper, indicates the "'world administrative headquarters"' of the IPOB was opened in Langenfield, Germany in December 2017 [...]. Powerful stated that the IPOB's regional liaison offices, which serve as "regional points of contact," continue to operate in London, Tel Aviv, Ankara, New Delhi and Los Angeles, but only the administrative headquarters is authorized to issue "diplomatic directives" under the direction of Edoziem [...]. Further and corroborating information on the structure of the IPOB could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

'In an interview with the Sun, a Nigerian newspaper, Emma Powerful stated that the IPOB established the Biafra Secret Service (BSS), a "vigilance" group to "gather intelligence and to safeguard those returning to Biafraland from the North," while also noting the peaceful nature of the IPOB and that the group would not be "militarised" [...]. In the same article, the Abia State Police Commissioner was quoted as stating the BSS is illegal and anyone caught promoting the BSS, including by posting videos of the group on social media, will face the "'full weight of the law"' [...]. In an interview with Reuters, a special advisor to the Abia State Governor stated he saw IPOB "uniformed national guard and secret service" hold parades in September 2017, while he also indicated he never saw IPOB members carrying weapons [...]. 2017). Further and corroborating information on the BSS could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.'²⁵

- 5.3.5 With regards to the movements and whereabouts of the IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu, the IRBC stated in their June 2019 response based on a range of sources that:

'Sources indicate the following information:

- 'Kanu disappeared after the raid [...];
- 'he surfaced in Israel in October 2018 [...]; and
- 'he has been in Britain since early 2019 [...].'²⁶

- 5.3.6 A BBC monitoring biography of Mr Kanu using a range of sources stated he: '[...] is a Nigerian activist and broadcaster agitating for the creation of an independent Biafran state. The son of a traditional monarch from Abia State in South East Nigeria, Kanu is the director of the pirate radio station Radio

²⁵ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

²⁶ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

Biafra and leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group. He was arrested by the federal security service in October 2015 and was ultimately charged with treason for allegedly calling on southern states to secede from Nigeria and wage war against it, to which he has plead not guilty. Mass protests erupted following his arrest, and after being repeatedly denied bail he was granted provisional release under strict conditions in April 2017.²⁷

- 5.3.7 Country information included in the EASO Country Guidance stated: 'In 2017, the Nigerian authorities declared IPOB a terrorist organisation.'²⁸
- 5.3.8 IPOB has an official website [IPOBGovernment](#), however, CPIT has been unable to find any information regarding the size or membership of IPOB in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

5.4 IPOB aims and actions

- 5.4.1 Amnesty International in their November 2016 report stated:

'Thousands of people frequently tune in to the clandestine radio station Radio Biafra. The station broadcasts messages that may constitute incitement to violent acts against the Nigerian state. For example, on 31 August 2015, the day after the military killed two and injured 30 IPOB members in Onitsha, the station aired a message that threatened violent retaliation against the military.

'In another example, an IPOB statement referred to President Buhari as "the Hitler of Nigeria." Radio Biafra has also accused the Nigerian security forces of committing "genocide".

'Similarly, some of Nnamdi Kanu's interviews and speeches may constitute incitement to violence. For example, he said in March 2014: "Our promise is very simple. If they fail to give us Biafra, Somalia will look like a paradise, compared to what happened there. It is a promise, it is a threat and also a pledge... we have had enough of this nonsense..." In an address to the World Igbo Congress on 5 September 2015, Nnamdi Kanu told the audience "we need guns and we need bullets".

'Despite these inflammatory statements, all the IPOB protests in Nigeria that Amnesty International researched and documented for this report were largely peaceful. IBOP members and coordinators in Nigeria that Amnesty International interviewed claimed that the IPOB leadership has instructed its members to make their demands without the use of force. According to a leading IPOB member, the movement is only opposing "orchestrated violence against the people of Biafra" with words, and the inflammatory remarks were made in the context of self-defence. He further stated that "despite the mass killings by the Nigerian army and police, we have remained calm and focused in the face of the provocation."

'[...]

'As in other regions in Nigeria, there is a strong feeling of marginalization in the southeast. Most of the IPOB members and supporters Amnesty

²⁷ BBC Monitoring, 'Biography - Nnamdi Kanu' (section 3.26), 8 December 2019, subscription only.

²⁸ EASO, 'Country Guidance: Nigeria' (page 41), February 2019, [url](#).

International interviewed said they felt excluded by the Federal government of Nigeria. They claimed that without an independent Biafran state, the people of southeast Nigeria would not be able to realize their socio-economic and political aspirations. Many of them are young and unemployed, and have vested their hopes and aspirations in an independent Biafran state. They view the group's leader as some kind of "redeemer" and follow him unquestioningly.²⁹

- 5.4.2 The Australian Government's 2018 DFAT country information report Nigeria stated: 'The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) also seeks the creation of a Biafran state. [...] IPOB has led a resurgence of independence protests in the southern region of Biafra in recent years, some of which have degenerated into violence.'³⁰

- 5.4.3 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated:

'According to an interview with Agence France-Presse (AFP), Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, stated:

"The mission and the values of IPOB are very simple: to restore Biafra, to make sure Biafra comes by whatever means possible... We have chosen the track of peaceful agitation, non-violence, persuasion, logic, reason, argument. We are going to deploy all of that to make sure we get Biafra Our ultimate goal is freedom, referendum is the path we have chosen to take to get Biafra... There is no alternative." (AFP 31 May 2017, last ellipsis in original).'³¹

- 5.4.4 Pulse, a Nigerian news website, reported in May 2018 that:

'The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has announced a sit-at-home order across the entire south east region as a mark of honour for the Nigerians who died in the Civil War decades ago, as well as victims of ongoing violence in the country.

'In a statement signed by the proscribed group, the south east, south south and selected cities and states in Nigeria will witness a total lock-down. The statement named Lagos state, Southern Kaduna, Benue state, and other Middle Belt areas experiencing savage attacks, as locations where the sit-at-home will take place.

'It noted that the day will serve as a remembrance of the declaration of Biafran Republic in 1967 as well as the opportunity to mourn victims of the resulting war against the federal government that lasted three years.

'For the sit-at-home, the group declared a curfew, with no human or vehicular movement, in affected states between 6pm on Tuesday, May 29 and 6pm on Wednesday, May 30, 2018. Only ambulances and those responding to emergencies are allowed on the roads.'³²

²⁹ AI, 'Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere'(p8), 24 November 2016, [url](#).

³⁰ DFAT, 'Country information report: Nigeria' (section 3.27), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

³¹ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

³² Pulse, 'Pro-Biafra group announces May 30 sit-at-home order...', 25 May 2018, [url](#)

- 5.4.5 The Nigerian Voice news website reported on 2 May 2019 of a similar call made by IPOB the following year:

‘The Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, on Thursday, asked its members and people of the Benue, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Kogi and Kaduna States, to sit at home on May 30 [2019].

‘IPOB explained that the order was in protest over killings by Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram activities in the affected states.

‘The annual sit-at-home order is a move by the proscribed IPOB aimed at pushing for the actualisation of the sovereign state of Biafra across the South-East. It is expecting that Igbo and those sympathetic to the struggle for Biafra on May 30 stay indoors.

‘In a statement signed by its spokesperson, Emma Powerful, the secessionist group stated that there would be no vehicular movement both in South East and the Middle Belt region of the country on May 30.’³³

- 5.4.6 The Guardian – Nigeria reported on 30 May 2019 that: ‘Enugu State residents Thursday partially observed the sit at home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to protest and mark its “holy day” in deference to those that have lost their lives to the struggle.’³⁴

- 5.4.7 The EASO ‘Targeting of individuals’ report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated:

‘IPOB’s activities include “distribution of flyers, awareness-raising amongst the population, meetings, marches, and other gatherings (such as prayer meetings).” Like MASSOB, IPOB claims to be a nonviolent organisation – which the government contests.

‘However, IPOB’s leader Nnamdi Kanu has repeatedly expressed “inflammatory statements” about President Muhammadu Buhari (describing him as “terrorist-in-chief”), and the need to arm the movement: at the World Igbo Congress in 2015, he told the audience: “we need guns and we need bullets”. International Crisis Group also notes: “repudiating MASSOB’s pledge for non-violence, Kanu has strongly endorsed violence as an instrument for resuscitating Biafra.”

‘March 2016, MASSOB and IPOB issued a statement together that all Fulani herdsmen should retreat to northern Nigeria, as “their safety [could] no longer be guaranteed”, because MASSOB and IPOB “can no longer tolerate the systematic killing of our people and invasion of our land in the name of cattle grazing”.

‘In April 2016, the Nigerian secret police accused IPOB of abducting and killing 5 Hausa-Fulani residents, whose bodies were found buried in a forest in Abia State together with 50 other unidentified bodies.

‘The allegations were denied by MASSOB, stating that “IPOB and MASSOB are non-violent organizations”.

³³ TNV, ‘Ipob Gives A Sit-at-home Order On 30th May 2019’, 2 May 2020, [url](#).

³⁴ The Guardian – Nigeria, ‘Enugu residents partially comply with IPOB’s...’, 30 May 2019, [url](#).

'Lifos, the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket), notes on IPOB's non-violence claim:

"IPOB has occasionally resorted to violent rhetorics, not least through the transmissions of Radio Biafra. The occurrence of clashes between security forces and activists, some resulting in casualties on both sides, has also been reported during IPOB arrangements. Nevertheless, the movement appears to have aspired to a non-violent approach with the realisation of a secession through referendum [...] Lifos has not been able to identify information signalling that incidents of violence committed during IPOB manifestations have been endorsed by leaders of the movement." ³⁵

- 5.4.8 The same report stated: 'Several sources report support by IPOB for the NDA (Niger Delta Avengers) and vice versa. The NDA criticised President Buhari for the detention of Kanu in October 2015 and threatened to attack oil plants unless he was released.' ³⁶

- 5.4.9 With regards to activities linked to IPOB the IRBC response stated:

'Various sources state Radio Biafra broadcasts from London (Amnesty International 24 Nov. 2016, 5; Tayo and Mbah 9 Nov. 2017; BBC 5 May 2017). However, a Los Angeles Times (LA Times) article published in April 2019 indicates the broadcasts are conducted live from an undisclosed location in Nigeria (LA Times 30 Apr. 2019). Tayo and Mbah state the daily broadcasts are in English and in Igbo (Tayo and Mbah 9 Nov. 2017). Sources further indicate broadcasts on IPOB's Radio Biafra are used to advocate for an independent Biafra (Turnbull Aug. 2017, 30; BBC 5 May 2017; LA Times 30 Apr. 2019). The LA Times article states that Radio Biafra is used by its main host, Emma Powerful, to organize protests, including a boycott of the 2019 election (LA Times 30 Apr. 2019). The same source further indicates that the broadcasts are illegal, and that activists report that people caught listening have been beaten or arrested (LA Times 30 Apr. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

'According to Amnesty International, the broadcasts contain messages that "may constitute incitement to violent acts against the Nigerian state," including Kanu calling for retaliation against the military by stating "'we shall hunt them down, the zoo soldiers, and kill them'" after the military killed two IPOB members and injured thirty in August 2015 (Amnesty International 24 Nov. 2016, 11). The same source indicates that despite the rhetoric of Radio Biafra, IPOB demonstrations documented by Amnesty International for their 2016 report were "largely peaceful" (Amnesty International 24 Nov. 2016, 12). Similarly, Meghan Turnbull states that Radio Biafra's "'rhetoric has been violent'," including stating that they "'needed guns and bullets'," but IPOB-organized demonstrations have been "'overwhelmingly peaceful'" (Turnbull Aug. 2017, 30).' ³⁷

³⁵ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 82-83), November 2018, [url](#).

³⁶ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 84), November 2018, [url](#).

³⁷ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

- 5.4.10 Today.ng reported in December 2019 that: 'The Police command in Anambra have confirmed the death of two police officers, allegedly attacked and shot by suspected members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) at Oraifite in Ekwusigo council area of the state.'³⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 6 updated: 9 March 2020

6. State treatment of separatist groups / supporters

6.1 Unitary state and public order

- 6.1.1 The Constitution of Nigeria explains in Chapter 1, part I that 'Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.' It also provides various provisions for public order and public safety (Chapter 1, part II) and establishment of political parties (Chapter VI, part III)³⁹.
- 6.1.2 [The country policy and information note on actors of protection](#) provide background information on the role and activities of the security forces, as well the criminal justice system more generally including detention centres and conditions.

[Back to Contents](#)

6.2 Proscription / legal status of MASSOB

- 6.2.1 Human Rights Watch in a 2005 report stated: 'Although there is no law proscribing MASSOB, the federal government has declared membership of the organization illegal on the grounds that they constitute a threat to the security and sovereignty of the nation.'⁴⁰
- 6.2.2 The EASO Targeting of individuals report of November 2018 stated that MASSOB was banned in 2001⁴¹ however DFAT state that 'the federal government has threatened to ban the group [MASSOB] on several occasions, most recently in June 2013.'⁴²

[Back to Contents](#)

6.3 Proscription / legal status of IPOB

- 6.3.1 AllAfrica reported on 21 September 2017 in an article Nigeria: 'A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja has proscribed the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Nigeria, the South-east separatist group which has been agitating for the realisation of the Republic of Biafra.'⁴³
- 6.3.2 AfricaNews in January 2018 stated that, 'A court in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, has upheld an earlier ruling that pro-secessionist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), is a terrorist group. The court presided over by Justice Abdul Kafarati ruled that the Attorney General of the Federation had used

³⁸ Today.ng, 'Police confirm attack, killing of two officers...', 3 December 2019, [url](#)

³⁹ Nigeria government, Constitution (accessed via refworld), 1999, [url](#)

⁴⁰ HRW, "Rest in Pieces", Police Torture and Deaths in Custody in NGA' (section VI), July 2005, [url](#).

⁴¹ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 81), November 2018, [url](#).

⁴² DFAT, 'Country information report: Nigeria' (section 3.22), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁴³ AllAfrica, 'Nigeria: Court Formally Proscribes IPOB...', 21 September 2017, [url](#).

proper legal processes to apply for IPOB's proscription in September 2017.⁴⁴

- 6.3.3 The EASO Targeting of individuals report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated:

'After the crackdown [August 2015 and August 2016] in which the army killed and arrested an unknown number of IPOB members, the military, endorsed by the federal government, banned IPOB and declared it a terrorist organisation. This declaration was not supported by many Nigerians and international observers such as the EU and the US, as the Chatham House article noted. It was stated that "IPOB supporters are not known to be violent and that the protests have been largely peaceful".'⁴⁵

- 6.3.4 Human Rights Watch in their World Report 2019, Nigeria: Events of 2018 stated: 'In a letter to President Buhari in March, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) declared the government's proscription of IPOB as a terrorist group and attacks against its members as prima facie violation of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. In April, Nigeria's sixth periodic report on the implementation of the charter was considered at the ACHPR's 62nd Ordinary Session in Mauritania.'⁴⁶

- 6.3.5 CPIT has been unable to find any information indicating that any other pro-Biafra groups are banned in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

6.4 State actions

- 6.4.1 An expert comment by Sola Tayo, a BBC journalist, and Fidelis Mbah, described as a journalist, published on the Chatham House website in November 2017 stated:

'In September [2017] Nigeria's military launched Operation Python Dance II, its second military exercise in South East Nigeria this year. It was carried out with the intention of quashing any calls for secession in a region with a long history of antagonism with the central Nigerian state...

'The desire for independence among Igbo people of South East Nigeria is fuelled by a feeling of marginalization, and historical grievances against a state that they say doesn't represent them. Feelings have reached boiling point with this latest military action. Python Dance II escalated into a violent confrontation in which supporters of secessionist group the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) claim some of their members were killed, and the home of the group's leader, Nnamdi Kanu, was raided. Kanu has not been seen in public since the raid on his house.'⁴⁷

- 6.4.2 The report continued that:

'Indeed, in the southeast, Operation Python Dance II seems to have emboldened rather than silenced IPOB supporters, through adding to the feeling of discrimination felt in the region and by making a martyr out of

⁴⁴ AfricanNews, 'Biafra agitation: Nigeria court upholds IPOB terrorist label', 19 January 2018, [url](#).

⁴⁵ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 83), November 2018, [url](#).

⁴⁶ HRW, 'World Report 2019, Nigeria: Events of 2018', 17 January 2019, [url](#).

⁴⁷ CH, 'Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria', 9 November 2017, [url](#).

Kanu. And in any case, IPOB may be the most prominent, but it is not the only group advocating secession. MASSOB is also accused of violence by Nigeria's government, and, like Kanu, Uwazuruike has previously been imprisoned, accused of treason and released. There are several other pro-Biafra groups in the southeast but internal disputes have so far prevented them from presenting a unified front.

'The umbrella body of Igbo people, Ohaneze Ndigbo, has openly voiced its concerns and is calling for the government to address the grievances of the region. They may not all support IPOB's rhetoric but are vehemently against labelling the group a terrorist organization, and condemn attacks against its members.

'Kanu's continued absence and violent confrontations risk igniting an insurrection that could destabilize Nigeria's southeast. The federal government's response and tactics employed by Nigeria's military should be called into question as forces are stretched on many fronts. In addition to the Boko Haram crisis in the northeast, the military has also been deployed to combat a rise in kidnapping of civilians and violence in the oil producing Niger Delta region. The proscribing of IPOB could in fact lead to a fully armed insurrection, plunging the country into deeper insecurity and sewing further division in this fragmented nation.'

- 6.4.3 The EASO Targeting of individuals report stated: 'From 15 September to 15 October 2017, the Nigerian army launched a military exercise called Operation Python Dance II in South East Nigeria to tackle "violent agitation and kidnapping".'
- 6.4.4 The EASO report also commented on incidents in 2015/2016 noting that 'In March 2018, an article in the World Politics Review reports that, "since the launch of Operation Python Dance II, the southeast has effectively become a police state. Igbos who live elsewhere in the country and who returned for Christmas celebrations last year reported being detained and harassed for hours by Nigerian soldiers conducting stop-and-search operations."
- 6.4.5 Country information included in the EASO Country Guidance stated: 'The ICC [International Criminal Court] reported having identified two cases of crimes against humanity and war crimes involving the Nigerian security forces: the case of IMN in Zaria in December 2015 and actions against 'pro-Biafra protesters in the course of 2017'. The ICC is currently assessing both claims.'

[Back to Contents](#)

6.5 Break-up of / use of excessive force against demonstrations

- 6.5.1 The Australian Government's 2018 DFAT country information report on Nigeria stated: 'On 9 February 2016, police and military personnel reportedly

⁴⁸ CH, 'Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria', 9 November 2017, [url](#).

⁴⁹ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 85), November 2018, [url](#).

⁵⁰ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 83), November 2018, [url](#).

⁵¹ EASO, 'Country Guidance: Nigeria' (page 41), February 2019, [url](#).

used live ammunition to disperse protesting members and supporters of the IPOB movement at a school in Aba, Abia State.’⁵²

- 6.5.2 The EASO ‘Targeting of individuals’ report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated: ‘As MASSOB and IPOB have the same aim, are often taken together in media reports, and the authorities tend to react in the same way on rallies, demonstrations and members/supporters of both groups...’⁵³
- 6.5.3 The International Centre for not-for-profit Law stated in a report updated in October 2019 ‘In 2015, in Rivers State in the south of the country, pro-Biafra marches were banned by the state governor. In the run-up to gubernatorial elections in Bayelsa State, also in the south, protests were similarly banned by the Nigeria Police. In January 2017, the police also broke up a protest in favor of US President Donald Trump by the Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), which led to the death of a protestor.’⁵⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

6.6 Killings, discrimination, violence and harassment aimed at MASSOB

- 6.6.1 The Australian Government’s 2018 DFAT country information report Nigeria stated:
- ‘Government security forces have previously injured, arrested and killed MASSOB supporters participating in protest rallies. In June 2013, local media reported that government security forces killed ten individuals during a MASSOB protest in the southern state of Anambra. The Nigeria Police Force claimed security forces had acted in self-defence after attempting to stop the protesters from looting local businesses.’⁵⁵
- 6.6.2 However, DFAT assessed ‘that individuals associated with MASSOB live free from violence and discrimination on a day-to-day basis, however individuals participating in protests face a low risk of being arrested or injured by security forces. Leaders may face a higher risk of arrest when engaged in MASSOB events.’⁵⁶
- 6.6.3 The EASO Targeting of individuals report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated: ‘Over the years, police and security agencies have clashed hard with MASSOB members, arresting and killing many, during manifestations and rallies. The use of a Biafra flag or currency is considered unlawful and anyone caught in possession of such items will be arrested and can even be accused of sedition or treason.’⁵⁷
- 6.6.4 BBC monitoring reported via the Nigerian diaspora website Sahara Reporters that ‘...during preparations for the MASSOB 19th anniversary celebrations on 22 May 2019 at Upper Iweka, police opened fire on MASSOB members. Two were reported killed, 10 were arrested and 15

⁵² DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (section 5.7), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁵³ EASO, ‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’ (page 84), November 2018, [url](#).

⁵⁴ ICNL, ‘Civic Freedom Monitor: Nigeria’ (section: Legal analysis - Enforcement), 5 October 2019, [url](#).

⁵⁵ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (section 3.23), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁵⁶ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (section 3.25), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁵⁷ EASO, ‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’ (page 82), November 2018, [url](#).

sustained bullet wounds. The regional administrator of the movement, Mr Amadi Ifeanyi (aka Ochiagha), said that they were “a non-violent organisation but that this incident would not stop them from struggling for a Biafran state.”⁵⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

6.7 Killings, discrimination, violence and harassment aimed at IPOB

6.7.1 The DFAT report of March 2018 stated:

‘Since August 2015, members and supporters of IPOB have held a series of protests, marches and gatherings. According to an investigation published by Amnesty International in November 2016, Nigerian security forces killed at least 150 peaceful activists between August 2015 and 2016. Biafra Remembrance Day on 30 May 2016 saw the largest number of deaths when an estimated 1,000 IPOB members and supporters gathered for a rally in Onitsha, Anambra State. Amnesty International found that security forces killed at least 60 people on this occasion. IPOB and MASSOB themselves claimed that 2 000 people had died, while 750 people were missing. Another 567 people went to different hospitals for related injuries [...]

‘In 2016, police killed 17 protesters and arrested 100 IPOB supporters during demonstrations that Amnesty International described as ‘peaceful.’⁵⁹

6.7.2 DFAT assessed ‘that individuals associated with IPOB do not face official violence on a day-to-day basis; however, individuals participating in Biafran protests, particularly on Biafran Remembrance Day, face a high risk of violence by security forces during protest activity.’⁶⁰

6.7.3 The EASO Targeting of individuals report of November 2018 citing several media news sources stated:

‘The military Special Board, set up to investigate the events of 30 May 2016 [Remembrance day when at least 60 people were killed], did not find any wrongdoing by the army, reporting only on the arrest of 14 persons during the demonstrations on those days. In August 2017, after numerous protests and calls for investigation from both national and international organisations, the Governor of Anambra State apologised to IPOB members for the events of 30 May 2016.

‘Another major clash between the armed forces and the pro-Biafra activists occurred in October 2015 when the IPOB-leader Kanu was arrested on charges of treason and ethnic incitement. A wave of street protests and arrests followed. Kanu was released on 25 April 2017. However, on 22 September 2017, soldiers attacked the house where Kanu was staying and killed 28 people in the surroundings. The government denied the claim.’⁶¹

6.7.4 The EASO ‘Targeting of individuals’ report of November 2018 stated:

‘The Nigerian federal authorities consider IPOB’s activism as a threat to the national security, “even if the support for an independent Biafra does not

⁵⁸ BBC Monitoring, ‘Nigerian separatists in violent confrontations...’, 23 May 2019, subscription only

⁵⁹ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (section 3.28), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁶⁰ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (section 3.28), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁶¹ EASO, ‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’ (page 54-55), November 2018, [url](#).

appear to be strong, even not among the Igbo”, as Lifos [the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency - Migrationsverket] notes. The ban on IPOB in September 2017 implies that all activities were declared illegal; even possession of IPOB material can lead to arrest and prosecution. Several members have been charged with treason which is punishable with the death penalty in Nigeria.

‘Lifos analyses that “the vulnerability of arrested persons suspected of IPOB affiliation may have been enhanced following the government’s decision to brand IPOB a terror organisation”.’⁶²

- 6.7.5 Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions stated in a statement of September 2019 following a visit to Nigeria that:

‘... nation-wide and broader regional pressures applied against Nigeria’s diverse eco-political-economic systems are producing localised systems and country-wide patterns of violence, many of which are seemingly spinning out of control. They are claiming the lives of thousands and include, for instance, arbitrary killings in the context of: The repression of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)...

‘In yet other eco-political systems of violence, the security response is dangerously quasi-prospective, with individuals, communities and associations actively targeted for what they may have done decades ago, or for what they may do or may become, rather than for what they are doing or have done (e.g. members of the IMN, IPOB).’⁶³

- 6.7.6 Agnes Callamard also reported on killings and arrests that had occurred since 2015 which have also been described in the [DFAT 2018 report](#), [EASO Targeting of Individuals 2018](#) and [Amnesty International 2016](#) report:

‘Since 2015, members of IPOB have faced arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial executions, predominantly in the context of demonstrations. Between 2015 and 2016, it is alleged that law enforcement officials killed at least 100 IPOB members in different events in Aba (Abia State), and Awka and Onitsha (Anambra State). On 29 and 30 May 2016, during a demonstration, the Nigerian military opened fire on IPOB members and bystanders in Onitsha. At least 60 persons were killed and over 70 injured, mainly shot in the back. The exact number of deaths remains unknown.

‘Between 12 and 14 September 2017, IPOB followers gathered at the family home of their leader, Nnamdi Kanu, in Afara-Ukwu (Abia State) to take part in a peaceful vigil. The military operation (as part of Python Dance II) carried out in the afternoon of 14 September 2017 is alleged to have resulted in the killing of 150 persons. The IPOB leader went in exile and some of its followers remain disappeared since then. No Nigerian soldiers were killed in the operation. Following this event, the Federal High Court in Abuja proscribed IPOB and designated it as a terrorist group.

⁶² EASO, ‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’ (page 83), November 2018, [url](#).

⁶³ OHCHR, End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...’ (para 11 & 14), 2 September 2019, [url](#).

‘During my [Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur] visit, I met with several survivors of various security attacks and witness to killings. I have received a large number of allegations of killings by the Military Forces in 2017, 2018 and 2019...

‘On March 8, 2018, the African Commission issued Provisional Measures, asking the Federal Government of Nigeria to rescind its decision branding IPOB and its members as terrorists as well as the proscription and “Not to take any further action so as to avoid irreparable damage to the Victim, IPOB and its members, pending the decision of the Commission on this Communication.”

‘I am not aware of any steps taken to implement the ACHR interim decision at the time of writing these preliminary observations.’⁶⁴

6.7.7 The same report stated that:

‘The Government has acknowledged in 2016 that “in the course of security operations against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria and recently in the context of countering militant and separatist groups like the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Niger Delta Avengers, the Nigerian Military have been accused of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrarily arrest and detention”. The report further states that all allegations of torture, extrajudicial killings and war crimes made against the Nigerian Military will be investigated.’⁶⁵

6.7.8 The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees – Germany reported, based on various sources, that that on 2 December 2019:

‘.... police went to the home of lawyer Ifeanyi Ejiofor in Oraifite (federal state of Anambra). Ejiofor is representing the wanted leader of the banned pro-Biafra organisation IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, in his trial. According to the police, they were investigating a case of abduction and intended to arrest suspects in Ejiofor’s house. According to IPOB, the police allegedly attacked the house, shooting at people who were inside. At least two police officers and two people in the house are believed to have been killed in the course of a violent altercation between IPOB supporters and the police. The police burned the house down. In connection with the outbreak of violence John Abang, chief of police in the federal state of Anambra, declared IPOB member Ejiofor and his supporters to be wanted persons. The whereabouts of Ejiofor, who was not at home during the clash, is since unknown.’⁶⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

6.8 Arbitrary arrest and detention of MASSOB members

6.8.1 The Australian Government’s 2018 DFAT country information report Nigeria stated:

‘Clashes between members of MASSOB and Nigerian security forces have occurred from time to time since 1999 [...]. The current leader of MASSOB, Ralph Uwazuruke, has been arrested on at least four occasions while

⁶⁴ OHCHR, End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...’ (para 47-52), 2 September 2019, [url](#).

⁶⁵ OHCHR, End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...’ (para 74), 2 September 2019, [url](#).

⁶⁶ BAMF, ‘Nigeria: briefing notes’ (p6), 9 December 2019, [url](#).

participating in MASSOB events. Uwazuruke was arrested in September 2005, for participating in a Biafra Day ceremony, along with six MASSOB deputies on charges of treason. Uwazuruke remained in custody for two years during a protracted bail hearing in the High Court. Most recently arrested in 2011, Uwazuruke was released shortly after on order of President Jonathon.⁶⁷

[Back to Contents](#)

6.9 Arbitrary arrest and detention of IPOB members

6.9.1 Amnesty International in their 2016 report stated:

‘The authorities initially allowed IPOB rallies to take place, but from September 2015 onwards the authorities have claimed that IPOB is a threat to the security of Nigeria, despite the fact that the IPOB protests and gatherings documented by Amnesty International were largely non-violent. Since the IPOB leader and Radio Biafra director Nnamdi Kanu was arrested on 14 October 2015, the meetings and demonstrations calling for his release have increased and so have the violations committed by the military.’

‘The security forces have arrested hundreds pro-Biafra activists. In addition, DSS [Department of State Security,] has arrested eight IPOB coordinators; some at IPOB events and others at their homes. While some have been released, many others were charged with treason, which carries the death penalty under Nigeria law. Amnesty International was not able to confirm the exact number of people who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained in connection with the Biafra independence campaign in various parts of southeast Nigeria.

‘Many of the people arrested after IPOB events have told Amnesty International that they were beaten or subjected to other forms of ill-treatment. Some were tortured in detention. In addition, there is a consistent pattern of the security forces denying injured victims medical treatment.’⁶⁸

6.9.2 The EASO Targeting of individuals report of November 2018 citing media news sources stated: ‘On 18-19 May 2017, a group of women supporters of the IPOB reported being harassed, stripped and arrested by the Nigerian Army, during a rally in Abiriba, Abia State.’⁶⁹

6.9.3 Amnesty International reported that in May 2017 ‘a high court ordered the SSS [State Security Service] to release Bright Chimezie, a member of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Instead, the SSS included his name in another case. Bright Chimezie had not been brought to court by the end of the year [2017]; the SSS had held him in incommunicado detention for more than one year’.⁷⁰

6.9.4 The Nigerian newspaper Punch reported on its website in January 2018 that:

⁶⁷ DFAT, ‘Country information report: Nigeria’ (section 3.22), 9 March 2018, [url](#).

⁶⁸ AI, ‘Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere’, (p5), 24 November 2016, [url](#).

⁶⁹ EASO, ‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’ (page 83), November 2018, [url](#).

⁷⁰ AI, Nigeria 2017/2018, February 2018, [url](#)

'The Nigerian Army said on Thursday that its troops on Operation Mesa have arrested 27 members of the Indigenous People of Biafra and recovered an AK-47 rifle from one of them, Oliver Onyebunachi, in Imo State.

'According to the military, the IPOB members, who were 23 men and four women, were apprehended by troops of 144 Battalion, 82 Division, on October 1 [2017].

'The army noted that the IPOB members had a spiritual leader, Pa Michael Madumere, a 56-year-old, who hailed from the Ideator South Local Government Area of Imo State.

'The army Operations Media Coordinator, Col. Aminu Iliyasu, in a statement said the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, had directed that all army formations and unit commanders sustained their operational activities nationwide.

'Iliyasu said, "One of the suspects was shot in his right leg as he tried to shoot at own troops. Normalcy has since been restored in that area as troops continued to maintain surveillance in the general area.

"The Chief of Army Staff hereby solicits the support of our citizens in availing the army units and formations nationwide with timely information that will assist them in ridding the communities of criminal elements."'⁷¹

6.9.5 The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) – Germany reported in June 2018 that:

'On 30 May 2018, the leader of the secessionist BZF (Biafra Zionists Federation) Benjamin Onwuka and 20 other members of the organisation were arrested by police in front of the government house in the city of Enugu (capital of the south-eastern federal state of the same name). Already before, BZF had publicly announced their intention to occupy the government house, to hoist the Biafra flag and declare Biafra independent on this day marking the 51st anniversary of the declaration of the independent Republic of Biafra in 1967. In the five south-eastern federal states Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu und Imo, home mostly to the Igbo people, the two pro-Biafra organisations MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) and IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) had warned people to stay in their houses on 30 May. The call was followed to varying degrees. No violent clashes were reported.'⁷²

6.9.6 The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported in August 2018 that:

'A high court sitting in Owerri on Friday granted the unconditional release of 114 women alleged to be members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group.

'The women who were remanded on the orders of a magistrate's court in Owerri were arrested on Friday August 17 [2018] by the police for demanding to know the whereabouts of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu. They were also held for unlawful assembly.

⁷¹ Punch, 'Army arrests 27 IPOB members', 4 October 2019, [url](#).

⁷² BAMF, 'Nigeria: briefing notes' (p3), 4 June 2018, [url](#).

'NAN reports that the bail application filed by the lead counsel to the women, Ejiofor Uche was not opposed by the police.

'Theaddus Oke, prosecuting for the police, told NAN correspondent that the case had been referred to the state Ministry of Justice for advice.

'He said that the police had no say in whatever decision that was taken by the court.

'NAN recalls that the arrests sparked off widespread condemnation by residents of the state and sympathisers of IPOB.'⁷³

- 6.9.7 Human Rights Watch in their World Report 2019, Nigeria: Events of 2018 stated: 'On August 17, 112 women were arrested and prosecuted in Owerri, Imo State, for protesting the disappearance of IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu. They were discharged and released by a court six days later.'⁷⁴

- 6.9.8 NAN also reported in November 2018 that:

'The Police said they would charge 33 members of the banned Indigenous People (IPOB) of Biafra with terrorism after they allegedly killed an inspector and set ablaze a police patrol vehicle.

'The men, whose identities were unveiled Sunday, were arrested in Nnewi, Anambra state, along with some insignias of IPOB and eight motorcycles.

'The police said they may also be charged with murder, attempted murder, rioting and malicious damage, upon the completion of their investigation.'⁷⁵

- 6.9.9 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated:

'According to sources, 51 people suspected of being IPOB members, were arrested in December 2018 as they "were reportedly setting for [a] Judaism service within the premises of the country home of the leader of [IPOB] Mazi Nnamdi Kanu" in Unuhia [...] or during a procession through the streets which started in the Afaraukwu community from which Kanu hails [...]. Sources indicate they were demonstrating for an independent Jewish State [...] and that they were arrested for "being in possession" of different emblems of the IPOB [...]. Sources state they were arraigned at magistrate court for terrorism and treason but the court decided it lacked jurisdiction to hear the case and ordered the detainees into custody while the case is transferred [...]. Counsel for the defendants was quoted as saying the prosecution's decision to arraign the respondents at a court lacking jurisdiction was illegal and unconstitutional, citing similar Supreme Court decisions [...]. According to the *Guardian*, the detainees were granted bail on 8 January 2019 [...].'⁷⁶

- 6.9.10 The EASO report also noted that 'Lifos [the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency - Migrationsverket] analyses that "the vulnerability of

⁷³ NAN, 'Court frees 114 women demanding IPOB leaders Kanu whereabouts', 24 August 2018, [url](#).

⁷⁴ HRW, 'World Report 2019, Nigeria: Events of 2018', 17 January 2019, [url](#).

⁷⁵ NAN, 'Police to charge arrested IPOB members with terrorism', 25 November 2018, [url](#).

⁷⁶ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

arrested persons suspected of IPOB affiliation may have been enhanced following the government's decision to brand IPOB a terror organisation".⁷⁷

6.9.11 PM News, a Lagos based news outlet, reported in May 2019 that 140 members of IPOB were arrested in Nsukka, Enugu state. The arrests were confirmed by the Police public relations officer (PPRO). The group were arrested for organising an unlawful procession, displaying proscribed items and chanting inciting songs. The PPRO said that the suspects would be later be charged to court⁷⁸.

6.9.12 Reporting on the same incident, the IRBC response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated:

'A representative of the Enugu Police was quoted, by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), a state-run news agency (NAN n.d.), as stating that 140 IPOB members were arrested for "engaging in unlawful procession and display of prohibited items" in the Nsukka region of Enugu State on 22 May 2019 (NAN 23 May 2019). In contrast, the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety), a Nigerian civil society and human rights group, as quoted in the *Sun*, stated that the 140 individuals were arrested at a military and police checkpoint while going to a funeral, "tortured," then arraigned in court on 23 May, where the court decided it does not have jurisdiction to hear the case and ordered them to prison (*The Sun* 6 June 2019). The same source further states that the detainees have not received a trial date as of two weeks after their arraignment (*The Sun* 6 June 2019). Similarly, the South-East Based Coalition of Human Rights & Democracy Organisations (SBCHROs), "a coalition of 22 rights and democracy groups operating in the Southeast part of Eastern Nigeria," quoted in News Express, a Nigerian online newspaper (News Express n.d.), indicates "Biafra insignias" including "flags and bangles" were found by the "Enugu State Joint Security Patrol teams" on some of the 140 people going to a funeral (News Express 26 May 2019). The same source indicates that all 140 individuals were arrested and charged with terrorism, and were sent to prison by the magistrate court until their case can be heard at the High Court (News Express 26 May 2019).'⁷⁹

6.9.13 A report on the Nigerian news website Today.ng on 24 December 2019 stated:

'Four persons, suspected to be members of the banned Indigenous People of Biafra have been arrested in Aba Market by Nigerian soldiers for selling a banned Biafran newspaper.

'The men were picked up under the Nigerian Army "Exercise Atilogwu Udo 1", now ongoing in the South eastern states and Cross River.

'Col. Aliyu Yusuf, Deputy Director, Public Relations of 82 Division of the Nigerian Army said on Tuesday in Enugu, the four vendors were arrested by troops of sector 2 in Abia on Nov. 19.

⁷⁷ EASO, 'Nigeria: Targeting of individuals' (page 84), November 2018, [url](#).

⁷⁸ PM News, 'Police arrest 140 members of Biafra group in Nsukka', 23 May 2019, [url](#).

⁷⁹ IRBC, 'Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...', 28 June 2019, [url](#).

‘He gave the names of the vendors as Sunday Elom, Martins Ogwuchukwu, Chineme Obiechifula and Innocent Mike.

‘Yusuf did not indicate the name of the newspaper.

‘But he said they have been handed over to the appropriate security agency for further action.’⁸⁰

- 6.9.14 The EASO report noted ‘In March 2018, an article in the World Politics Review reports that, “since the launch of Operation Python Dance II [September 2017], the southeast has effectively become a police state. Igbo who live elsewhere in the country and who returned for Christmas celebrations last year [2017] reported being detained and harassed for hours by Nigerian soldiers conducting stop-and-search operations.”’⁸¹

[Back to Contents](#)

6.10 Prosecutions and convictions

- 6.10.1 Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions stated in a September 2019 report in a section titled ‘Arbitrary Killings of Members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)’ that:

‘During my visit, I met with several survivors of various security attacks and witness to killings. I have received a large number of allegations of killings by the Military Forces in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In addition, a number of those arrested are allegedly held incommunicado before being detained without charges. When charges are finally made, they include membership to a terrorist organisation, unlawful gathering and in some cases kidnapping.

‘It is alleged that not a single conviction against IPOB members has been secured since 2015, due to discontinuance or dismissal of charges. None of the killings of IPOB members have been investigated.’⁸²

- 6.10.2 There is no further information about the outcome of arrests in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

Section 7 updated: 9 March 2020

7. Separatist groups outside of Nigeria

7.1 Nigerian Diaspora

- 7.1.1 The UK Office for National Statistics published figures to June 2019 estimates that 207,000 people (with a confidence interval (CI) of 22,000) that were born in Nigeria live in the UK. Additionally, the figures also show that there are estimated to be 90,000 (CI 14,000) people with Nigerian citizenship living in the UK⁸³.

⁸⁰ Today.ng, ‘IPOB members arrested for selling Biafra newspaper’, 24 December 2019, [url](#).

⁸¹ EASO, ‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’ (page 83), November 2018, [url](#).

⁸² OHCHR, End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...’ (para 49-50), 2 September 2019, [url](#).

⁸³ OfNS, ‘Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality’, 28 November 2019, [url](#).

- 7.1.2 Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation UK (NIDO) have headquarters in London and Manchester. Their website stated that their aim is: ‘to bring Nigerians living in the United Kingdom together and to identify those willing to offer their skills (Education, Information Technology, Health, Economic, science, Administration, Law, Political and Corporate Governance, Management etc.) to assist Nigeria’s national development.’⁸⁴ There is no indication from the sources consulted that this group have any connections to IPOB.
- 7.1.3 The Nigerian in Diaspora monitoring group (NDMG) were reported to have called for Nigerians living abroad to distance themselves from Nnamdi Kanu and IPOB⁸⁵. At a press conference held in London in August 2019 a statement was made by the group’s president which was critical of Kanu and IPOB members and their activities outside of Nigeria⁸⁶. The president of the group condemned in particular the attack of a member of the National Assembly in Germany by reportedly members of IPOB^{87 88}.

[Back to Contents](#)

7.2 Biafran separatists / supporters in the UK

- 7.2.1 In October 2018 photos appeared on social media showing the leader of IPOB Nnamdi Kanu in Jerusalem⁸⁹. It has since been suggested that Mr Kanu, who holds both Nigerian and British nationality⁹⁰ has relocated to the UK^{91 92}. The Independent published an article written by Kanu on 6 November 2019 which details the Biafran cause, his arrest and detention and the events leading to him leaving Nigeria⁹³.
- 7.2.2 Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the IPOB is also the director of the London-based Radio Biafra⁹⁴. [Radio Biafra](#) is a website page with access to its radio channel, the website also contains news articles, a donation page and previous broadcasts⁹⁵. It also provides links to the Radio Biafra Facebook page⁹⁶ which lists upcoming and past events⁹⁷. According to BBC Monitoring Radio Biafra began broadcasting online from studios in London in 2009⁹⁸.
- 7.2.3 There are a variety of Facebook accounts including Radio Biafra London, Biafra Revolution, Ipob-Biafrans in Diaspora stand up and restore Biafra, The Good Shepherds Movement (GSM) and IPOB Biafra news⁹⁹.

⁸⁴ NIDO, ‘About us, undated, [url](#).

⁸⁵ Vanguard, ‘Group to Nigerians in diaspora: Be wary of Kanu’, 29 August 2019, [url](#).

⁸⁶ Vanguard, ‘Group to Nigerians in diaspora: Be wary of Kanu’, 29 August 2019, [url](#).

⁸⁷ Vanguard, ‘Group to Nigerians in diaspora: Be wary of Kanu’, 29 August 2019, [url](#).

⁸⁸ Premium Times, ‘Ekweremadu dragged, assaulted in Germany’, 17 August 2019, [url](#).

⁸⁹ BAMF, ‘Briefing Notes - 1 April’, (section Nigeria), 1 April 2019, [url](#).

⁹⁰ BBC News, ‘Nnamdi Kanu, Nigerian separatist leader, resurfaces in Israel’, 22 October 2018, [url](#).

⁹¹ Vanguard, ‘I am back in UK to continue our work to liberate #Biafra’, 26 January 2019, [url](#).

⁹² The Cable, ‘Nnamdi Kanu hints at not returning to Nigeria for parents’...’, 10 February 2020, [url](#).

⁹³ Independent, ‘Soldiers came to kill me...’, 6 November 2019, [url](#) ,

⁹⁴ RadioBiafra, website, [url](#).

⁹⁵ RadioBiafra, website, [url](#).

⁹⁶ RadioBiafra, Facebook, [url](#).

⁹⁷ RadioBiafra, website, [url](#).

⁹⁸ BBC Monitoring, ‘Biography – Nnamdi Kanu’, 8 December 2019, subscription only.

⁹⁹ Facebook, [url](#).

- 7.2.4 An [IPOB government](#) webpage has a link to an application form for Biafrans living in the diaspora to fill out to register in their indigenous identification database, with payment into a UK bank.
- 7.2.5 Other websites or organisations that promote Biafran separatism in the UK could not be found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

7.3 Size and composition of separatist groups in the diaspora

- 7.3.1 There is no information about the number, size, aims and activities of pro-Biafran groups in the UK (see sources consulted in [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

7.4 Sur place activities of separatist groups

- 7.4.1 April 2018 footage available on YouTube shows a group protesting in London where they are calling for a referendum on Biafra¹⁰⁰.
- 7.4.2 Premium Times reported that:
 'Nigeria's former [Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu](#), was on Saturday physically attacked by a mob while attending a cultural event in Germany.
 'Mr Ekweremadu, who confirmed the attack in a statement, said the attackers were members of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) ...'¹⁰¹
- 7.4.3 There is no further information in the sources consulted of recent recorded activities in the UK by IPOB or other groups supporting the creation of a Biafran state (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

7.5 Monitoring by Nigerian Government in the UK

- 7.5.1 A Vanguard article from September 2016 reported on the alleged listing of a number of IPOB members in Nigeria and the diaspora as wanted by the Department of State Services (DSS) in Nigeria¹⁰². The same allegations appeared in an article in the Nigerian news website Sun News online¹⁰³ however no further details regarding these allegations were found in the sources consulted.
- 7.5.2 There is no further information in the sources consulted in this note on the nature and degree of monitoring undertaken by the Nigerian authorities in the UK (see [Bibliography](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

¹⁰⁰ YouTube, 'Biafra Protest: Group Protests In London, Call For Referendum', 19 April 2018, [url](#).

¹⁰¹ Premium Times, 'Ekweremadu dragged, assaulted in Germany', 17 August 2019, [url](#).

¹⁰² Vanguard, 'DSS list declaring our members wanted, shameful...', 8 September 2016 [url](#).

¹⁰³ Sun News Online, 'Biafra: Our members on DSS wanted list - IPOB', 9 September 2016, [url](#).

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Biafra: background
 - Biafra regions
 - Biafra war and famine
- The Political landscape
 - Elections 2019 /Ruling party
 - Southeast / Igbo participation in political process
- Security situation in South-east Nigeria
- Separatist Groups
 - IPOB
 - MASSOB
 - Other separatist groups
 - Separatist / supporters actions
- State treatment of separatist groups
 - Legal context
 - Discrimination and harassment
 - Meetings and demonstrations
 - Arrest and detention

Prosecutions and convictions

- Treatment in detention
- Separatist groups outside of Nigeria
 - Size and composition of separatist groups in the Diaspora
 - Sur place activities of separatist groups
 - Monitoring by Nigerian Government in the UK
 - Treatment of returns
- Freedom of movement (covered by IFA CPIN)

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[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **2 April 2020**

Changes from last version of this note

New CPIN

[Back to Contents](#)