



Horizon West Africa – Mali 150 Metres Route de Koulikoro Sotuba ACI Route 3EME Pont, Bamako
Horizon West Africa - Nigeria No. 101 Midel Centre, Oladipo Diya Way, Gudu District, Abuja, FCT

Email operations@horizonwestafrica.org • Website www.horizonwestafrica.org

DATE: 20 April 2021
IPOB in Nigeria

BACKGROUND

The group known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was created in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a British of Nigerian descent. Its focus was to restore an independent state of Biafra in the South East of Nigeria. The idea of creating a separate state is not new as it first appeared in 1967 when an Igbo General Ojukwu declared Biafra to secede from Nigeria due to his



Photo 1: Nnamdi Kanu during one of his radio sessions in London

dissatisfaction of how the then South Eastern region was marginalized. This resulted in a civil war that lasted three years in which over 3 million civilians mostly of the Igbo tribe were killed. The war ended but the clamour for independence remained as different groups emerged over the years like the Biafra Zionist Front (BZF) and Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) but none held sway like IPOB as its activities have transcended the shores of the south eastern states. Supporters of IPOB are Igbos but this does not eliminate the possibilities that support for secession or disintegration remain exclusive to one tribe, rather we see an increase in the clamour from other tribes

in 2021. IPOB has criticized the Nigerian federal government for its poor investment, inequitable resource distribution, ethnic marginalization, and heavy military presence in the south eastern region over the years.

The leader did not outrightly create the group but started out running Biafra radio from London, England. He reportedly started his agitations since 1997 but was not popular till he started Radio Biafra according to his ardent listeners in 2008, just a year into President Umaru Yaradua's tenure but it went off air some months later. Four years later that is in 2012, Nnamdi recommenced broadcasting with short wave systems in London after protests were held over the kidnaping of girls in Chibok, Borno State. Video showed he was part of the protesters in London and was given an opportunity by the reporting journalist to speak on the issue.



Photo 2: Nnamdi Kanu on his way to one of the court arraignments

In 2013/2014 he began to use long wave system to broadcast his messaging which were inciting and divisive against other major tribes in the country. He even issued death threats against several state officials which might be what eventually led to his arrest a year later. As such, in 2015 the newly elected administration of President Muhammadu Buhari started jamming his connection preventing his station from airing then the Department of State Security (DSS) arrested him on his arrival in Lagos on 14 October and charged him for terrorism. Several tactics of subtle arraignment at the magistrate with verdicts to continually hold him in custody for longer periods rather than release him were used by the DSS for years and he was in custody for almost two years. Six months later, on 5 April 2016, he was arraigned alongside two others who are Benjamin Madubugwu and Onwudiwe Chidiebere, National Coordinator of IPOB at the Abuja High Court. The court decided that six of the 11 count charge brought against them which were terrorism, treasonable felony, managing an unlawful society, publication of defamatory matter, illegal possession of firearms and improper importation of goods, were unfounded and were therefore struck out for lack of proof.

He was later released in April 2017 and disappeared off the radar. Since then, he has continued to preach his message of secession.

IPOB'S Evolution



Photo 3: IPOB members during a protest in SE region

After his arrest and arraignment, the popularity of Nnamdi Kanu grew and he began to gather devout followers who agreed with his ideologies on seceding from Nigeria. Violent protests were held by his followers outside court rooms during his criminal proceedings and when he was released on bail by the courts on health grounds on 14 April, he disappeared from the radar. On 14 September 2017, an estimated 28 persons were killed by soldiers who attempted to

forcefully rearrest Nnamdi Kanu thinking he was hiding at his father's residence in Afaraukwu, Abia State. He was reportedly rescued by his comrades and escaped Nigeria. It was reported that two days before the raid, there was a clash between soldiers and IPOB in the evening. Thus, the return of the soldiers with about 10 armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and seven Hilux vans caused panic in the area, forcing shop owners to close immediately. Some of the soldiers also invaded the Abia State Council of the Nigeria Union of

Journalists on Aba Road, Umuahia, and destroyed laptops and other valuables. According to journalists at the secretariat, the soldiers claimed they saw somebody taking photographs of them from the building. This set the stage for further random raids from security forces specifically the DSS attempting to infiltrate the group on several occasions leading to fatalities. Also, the group held several protests in Abia, Enugu, Imo, Anambra and even further south in Rivers State as the group believes the Niger/Delta states should also secede with the SE region perhaps to gain control of the resources in the region.

Several rumours claimed he died in the 2017 raid, but a picture emerged of him praying at the Wall in Jerusalem, Israel on 19 October 2018. Not long afterwards, he started announcing plans of his return to Nigeria to disrupt the 2019 elections. Threatening all South Eastern states to boycott the 2019 elections. Another rumour of the death was spread in April 2020 but eight months later, Eastern Security Network was created



Photo 4: Nnamdi Kanu in Israel 2018



Photo 5: ESN recruits

reportedly in response to the incessant attacks by Fulani herdsmen on residents of the SE region and not long after the SW created Amotekun.

In 2021 however, police officers and police stations became the target of armed men who either in the early hours of the morning or late in the evening attack police stations and police checkpoints killing officers, setting ablaze

the police stations, steal weapons and also release inmates. This has been the trend till date. Thus far, IPOB has denied being involved in these attacks despite threatening to harm any one deployed to join the Ebube Agu which is a regional security outfit created by the SE state governors to curb the recent insecurity in the region.

It was amidst these incidents that the United Kingdom (UK) government granted asylum to persecuted members of IPOB and MASSOB in April. The group rejected the offer while the Federal Government condemned the policy stating that it was disrespectful to Nigerians. There were indications, by 23 April, that the UK Government



Photo 6: ESN agents in the bush in Abia State

had suspended its asylum policy for the groups. This followed an e-mailed statement signed by Senior Communications Officer, Newsdesk, at the Home Office, Hannah Dawson, in which the UK Home Office said the policy was being reviewed and would be uploaded once ready. Thus far, five states have been mostly affected by these attacks and they are, Abia, Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi and more recently Enugu. Total number of police officers killed since January 2021 to date is 30 and number of incidents is at 23. This is considering that the Southern part of the country recorded the most violence against security forces especially the police between 2018 and 2021.



Photo 7: Snippet from a video showing the armed men who attacked Imo State Governor's house in Oru East LGA

A 24 April attack on the country home of the Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodinma further raised accusation against IPOB as the assailants were dressed in all black like the ESN network's uniform. The only difference were the caps worn by the assailants which was also black while the caps for ESN are either blue or red. Noteworthy, cult groups are rampant in the South East region and these groups might be taking advantage of the existing insecurity to unleash mayhem against the Tomregion and hoping IPOB would be accused of the attacks. This is what has occurred thus far as IPOB continue to deny orchestrating the attacks. Security agencies on the same day attacked a

hideout in Our East and killed a commander of IPOB alongside four others without proper investigation on who perpetuated the act.

These types of raids are expected to continue as the government has taken a hard line against the group even as far as banning and fining a popular local TV station for reportedly airing the opinion of a IPOB member who are now termed terrorists.



Photo 8: IPOB commander killed by soldiers during raid on Oru East LGA



HORIZON CONTACT PAGE



International Headquarters

2309 – X3 Tower
Jumeirah Lake Towers
Dubai
P.O. Box 445436
Managing Director Middle East & Asia
James Michie
james.michie@horizon.uk.com



UK/European Headquarters

Pegasus House
Main Street, Alexandria
West Dunbartonshire
United Kingdom
G83 9HY
Group Director of Education
Chris Campbell
chris.campbell@horizon.uk.com



Horizon West Africa Headquarters

Plot 14
Off Oladipo Diya Way
Gugu District
Abuja
Nigeria
Programme Director
Tom Watts
tom@horizonwestafrica.org



Horizon Maritime Security Headquarters

Caira House,
228, 21st September Avenue
Naxxar, NXR 102,
Malta
Managing Director
Paul Howlett
paul.howlett@horizonmaritime.com.mt



Horizon Kids

Business Development Manager
Sami Smith
sam.smith@horizon.uk.com



To enquire about our reports or any of our security, risk management and training services, please email: operations@horizonweatafrica.org

www.horizonwestafrica.org

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error, please notify the system manager. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute, or copy this e-mail. Please notify the sender immediately by e-mail if you have received this e-mail by mistake and delete this e-mail from your system. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing, or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.