



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Nigeria: Biafran secessionist groups

Version 2.0

March 2021

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](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 18 March 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by state actors because the person is a member of or perceived to belong to a Biafran separatist group.

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 There are reported to be several groups aiming for the secession of Biafra. This Country Policy and Information Note (CPIN) focuses on the 2 main groups, which 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 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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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](#)).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

Official – sensitive: End of section

2.2 Exclusion

2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.

- 2.2.3 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](#).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

Official – sensitive: End of section

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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 guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

a. Political context

- 2.4.1 'Biafra' is an area in the south-east of Nigeria that comprises the states of Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra. The area is inhabited principally by Igbo (Ibo) people who are one of the country's 3 largest ethnic groups (see [Biafra background](#)).
- 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, to 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 to 3 million people died. Biafran rebels were eventually overwhelmed by and surrendered to the federal government forces in January 1970 (see [Biafra background](#)).
- 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 background](#) and [Political landscape](#)).

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b. MASSOB and IPOB

- 2.4.5 Since the 1990s, new independence movements have formed, reportedly driven by a sense of unfair treatment and marginalisation. While several groups have formed with the goal of achieving Biafran secession, the 2 main groups are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) (see [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\) leadership](#)) and [Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)](#).
- 2.4.6 IPOB grew out of MASSOB between 2012 and 2014 and reportedly has a presence outside of Nigeria, including the UK. There are also reported to be a number of minor Biafran groups but these do not seem to have a significant presence in the country. In recent years, MASSOB has become divided, splitting into several smaller groups and is less active than IPOB. There is limited information in the sources consulted on the organisational structure or membership procedures for either IPOB or MASSOB (see [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\) leadership](#)) and [Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)](#).
- 2.4.7 Both MASSOB and IPOB have largely advocated for peaceful change but on occasions have used rhetoric that may encourage violent resistance. IPOB in particular, through its online platform, Radio Biafra, and online comments of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, has stoked secessionist aspirations and encouraged resistance to the authorities. In December 2020, IPOB is reported to have set up the Eastern Security Network (ESN), a militia to counter the rising insecurity in the region. In February 2021, Facebook locked Kanu's account for violating its rules on harm and hate speech (see [Overview of groups](#) and [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\) leadership](#)).
- 2.4.8 In May 2013 former 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, IPOB was declared a terrorist organisation. There is no indication that smaller pro-Biafran groups have been banned by the Nigerian authorities. Sources are inconsistent, but DFAT concluded that MASSOB is not a banned organisation and continues to conduct public activities. While a number of its supporters have been arrested – and some killed – these have occurred during demonstrations (see [Overview of groups](#) and [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra \(MASSOB\) leadership](#)).
- 2.4.9 MASSOB, since its formation in the late 1990s, has clashed with the security forces. Numerous members have been killed, wounded and arrested – usually during demonstrations. Over a hundred arrests were made in September 2018, at least 10 in 2019; and, in July 2020, it was reported that members of MASSOB were arrested following clashes with police (see [Overview of groups](#) and [Treatment of MASSOB](#)).
- 2.4.10 IPOB has in recent years become the dominant Biafran group. Since 2015 the security forces have reportedly extra-judicially killed 10's and injured hundreds of its supporters and leadership, often using excessive force to control protests. The security forces have also arrested hundreds of IPOB

supporters at different events, usually when disrupting demonstrations or marches to promote Biafran independence, particularly during 2015 to 2017, as well as during raids on the homes of IPOB leaders. Sources also report clashes with the authorities during 2018 and Amnesty reported that security forces arrested at least 200 and killed 10 supporters at different times during 2019. Further clashes and violence occurred between security forces and IPOB in August 2020 in the city of Enugu when police stormed an IPOB meeting and also in October 2020 during confrontations in Rivers State. These incidents resulted in the arrests and deaths of IPOB supporters as well security force personnel, although there seem to be contradictory reporting on the exact figures. In November 2020 there were reports that security forces were carrying out revenge killings following the October attacks in the Rivers State area of Oyigbo, these reports were denied by state Governor Nyesom Wike. In February 2021 the Nigerian military launched land and air operations against operatives of the ESN, a militia/vigilante group originally set up to protect the south-eastern region, which IPOB claims marked the beginning of the second Nigeria/Biafra war (see [Indigenous People of Biafra: Clashes between state and secessionist groups](#) and [Treatment of IPOB](#)).

- 2.4.11 Outside of demonstrations and marches, 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 on bail. Kanu managed to flee the country and is now believed to be in the UK. Most recently in November 2020, two unnamed suspected senior IPOB militants were reportedly arrested in Rivers State. There have also been a few reports of persons who publicly display Biafran independence, though not necessarily IPOB supporters, through flags and other insignia being arrested. The prevalence of such arrests is difficult to gauge, however there were 51 arrests linked to persons in possession of IPOB material in December 2018, 140 in May 2019 and four in December 2019. However, the sources consulted did not indicate whether such flags and insignia are commonly on display in the South-East region (see [Aims, Activities, Clashes between state and secessionist groups](#), and [Treatment of IPOB](#)).
- 2.4.12 There are reports that some IPOB members, supporters and leaders arrested have been charged with treason which is punishable with the death penalty. However, sources do not indicate whether these cases have then been prosecuted and convicted for treason or other crimes. Some of those arrested have been held without charge and incommunicado (see [Treatment of IPOB](#)).
- 2.4.13 Following an attack by IPOB members in Rivers State in October 2020, the governor offered a reward for information that could lead to the arrest and prosecution of the IPOB state leader Stanley Mgbere. CPIT could find no further information in the sources consulted that Mr Mgbere had been located and arrested (see [Clashes between state and IPOB](#) and [Bibliography](#)).
- 2.4.14 Sources are inconsistent, but DFAT concluded that MASSOB is not a banned organisation and continues to conduct public activities. While a number of its supporters have been arrested and some killed these have

occurred during demonstrations. A person who is a supporter is unlikely to be of interest to the authorities simply for expressing support for the group. However, the risk of arrest, violence and harassment by security forces is increased during pro-Biafra demonstrations or gatherings. A risk of persecution will depend on their role, profile and activities for the group, and previous arrests by the state.

- 2.4.15 A person who actively and openly supports IPOB is likely to be at risk of arrest and detention, and ill-treatment which is likely to amount to persecution. Each case will need to be carefully considered on its facts, with the onus on the applicant to demonstrate that they are likely to face a risk of persecution.

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c. Prosecution

- 2.4.16 Decision makers must also consider if the government's actions are acts of prosecution, not persecution. Those fleeing prosecution or punishment for a criminal offence are not normally refugees. 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 (see the section on prosecution in the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing credibility and refugee status](#)).
- 2.4.17 While MASSOB appears not to be banned, IPOB has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation. However, both groups have generally acted peacefully in advocating for an independent 'Biafra' and been the victims of state violence. The groups have also used inflammatory rhetoric, including comments in support of violence, and clashed violently with the authorities during demonstrations and protests, resulting in deaths of security force members and damage to property (see IPOB – [Activities](#)).
- 2.4.18 The security forces have also alleged that IPOB members have on occasion targeted and killed police officers. Reports of casualties vary, but in October 2020 at least three police officers and six army officers were killed in clashes with IPOB. It is not clear from the sources consulted whether supporters or members who have been arrested have since been prosecuted or convicted for treason or other offences. Nor do sources provide specific information about the length of or treatment of members or supporters of Biafran groups in detention. However in general detainees are held in harsh overcrowded conditions with poor access to water, sanitation and adequate medical care. Lengthy and pretrial detention is common (see [Clashes between state and secessionist groups, Treatment of IPOB](#) and for detention conditions, see [CPIN: Nigeria – Actors of Protection](#)).
- 2.4.19 The government has a responsibility to maintain law and order, to prevent and protect the public against acts of violence. Where supporters or

members of MASSOB or IPOB have incited or used violence to disrupt public order, the government may have legitimate grounds to arrest and prosecute those people. 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 subjected to periods of detention in degrading or inhuman conditions, such treatment is unlikely to be fair or proportionate, and is likely to amount to persecution.

- 2.4.20 Decision makers need to consider each case on its facts to determine if the person is likely to be of interest to the government and whether this is for the legitimate grounds of prosecution which 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.
- 2.4.21 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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d. Sur place activity

- 2.4.22 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](#)).
- 2.4.23 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](#)).
- 2.4.24 From the sources consulted the most recent reported upon pro-Biafra protest in the UK was held in 2018. There is no evidence in the sources consulted that there is significant ongoing pro-Biafran activity in the UK (see [Sur place activities of separatist groups](#)).
- 2.4.25 Sources indicate that the government monitors groups it considers a threat and members of the media, including their online activities, in Nigeria. Sources also indicate that the government sometimes blocks websites advocating Biafran independence and in February 2019 President Buhari declined to sign the Digital Rights and Freedom Bill which would have included the regulation of government surveillance of Nigerians on the internet. However, there is limited information in the sources consulted indicating if the government monitors the activities of members of the diaspora in the UK. If it does monitor the diaspora, it is unclear what is its capability, or the nature and degree of its surveillance of Nigerians in general and the Igbo, pro-Biafran communities in particular (see [Separatist groups outside of Nigeria](#) and [Bibliography](#)).
- 2.4.26 In general, there is no information in the sources consulted that the government actively monitors supporters or members of Biafran separatist groups in the UK. Nonetheless, it is possible that, given the government's activities in Nigeria, that the government does monitor online activity of the

diaspora in the UK. Decision makers must, therefore, consider each case on its facts, taking into account:

- profile, size, and organisation of the group/organisation to which the person belongs and its activities
- whether a person in the UK would wish to continue their activism if returned to Nigeria (if not, why not)
- whether the group/organisation has a presence in Nigeria as well as outside of the country and any evidence that it is being 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

2.4.27 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.

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

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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 risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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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](#).

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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 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section 3 updated: 29 March 2021

3. Biafra background

3.1 Geography and demography

- 3.1.1 The Biafra region as illustrated in a map from featuring in a 2010 Deutsche Welle article¹.



- 3.1.2 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... populated predominately by people of the Igbo ethnicity...'²

- 3.1.3 The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) country information report of December 2020 stated:

'Nigeria is... grouped into six geopolitical zones: North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East [which according to DFAT's map of Nigeria encompasses Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states] and South...

'The Igbo people are the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria, constituting 15 per cent of the population. They originate from southeastern Nigeria and live in large numbers in the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The Igbo speak a number of Igbo dialects. They are predominantly Christian.'³

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¹ Deutsche Welle, '[Biafra War anniversary highlights Nigeria's uncertain future](#)', 15 January 2010

² IRBC, '[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)', 28 June 2019

³ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 2.38 & 3.7 - 3.8), updated 3 December 2020

3.2 Civil war and secession

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

'... 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.'⁴

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

'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

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

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.⁵

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Section 4 updated: 18 March 2021

4. Political landscape

4.1 Background

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

4.1.1 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.’⁶

4.1.2 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 Nigeria⁷.

4.1.3 An expert comment by Sola Tayo, a BBC journalist, and Fidelis Mbah, 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.

⁵ Norman M, [‘Handbook of Famine, Starvation, and Nutrient Deprivation’](#), 20 February 2017

⁶ African Arguments, [‘Nigeria: How to solve a problem like Biafra’](#), 29 May 2017

⁷ BBC News, [‘Nigeria’s Igbo leaders reject call for Biafra state’](#), 3 July 2017

'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 Uwazuruike, 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 Uwazuruike 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.'⁸

4.1.4 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of June 2019, based on a range of sources, stated: '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....'⁹

4.1.5 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.

'[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.'¹⁰

4.1.6 The US State Department 2019 Human Rights Practices Report (USSD Human Rights report 2019) 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

⁸ CH, '[Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria](#)', 9 November 2017

⁹ IRBC, '[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)', 28 June 2019

¹⁰ DW, '[The Long Shadow of Biafra Lingers over Nigeria](#)', 14 January 2020

¹¹ USSD, '[2019 Human Rights Practices Report](#) (section 6), 11 March 2020

4.1.7 Bertelsmann Stiftung in an April 2020 country report, covering events between 2017 and 2019, stated: 'In the Igbo heartland, a wave of renewed nationalism in the spirit of a sovereign Biafra has subsided somewhat thanks to the fact that its main proponent, Nnamdi Kanu, allegedly fled to Israel, a claim that the Israeli government denies.'¹²

4.1.8 The DFAT report of December 2020 stated:

'Despite ... moves to encourage greater national unity, there has never been a national reckoning or dialogue in relation to the issues that led to the Biafra conflict, which is not officially commemorated. According to observers, many in the southeast report feeling ongoing resentment at the lack of action to resolve issues emanating from the conflict and from their perceived ongoing marginalisation in national life. Such feelings have reportedly grown stronger in the years since President Buhari came to power, with many of his major political and military appointments tending to favour individuals from the north. As a result, in recent years there has been a noticeable resurgence of calls from the southeast for greater self-determination in the form of an independent Biafran state.'¹³

4.1.9 The DFAT report of December 2020 also stated:

'There are no legal provisions targeting the Igbo population in Nigeria and the Igbo, like all Nigerians, are able to move freely within Nigeria. Many Igbo have migrated to other areas of Nigeria, including northern states. Like other non-indigenous communities, Igbo residing in these areas have occasionally faced discrimination from locals... DFAT is not aware of any other significant cases in which Igbo have been specifically targeted for violence or exclusion due to their ethnicity.

'...Senior Igbo figures have claimed successive Nigerian governments, including the Buhari administration, have subsequently excluded Igbo from senior political, military and civil service positions. A number of political organisations continue to advocate for an independent Biafran state and have occasionally clashed with security authorities.'¹⁴

4.1.10 DFAT concluded: '... Igbo are not specifically targeted for discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity throughout Nigeria. Like other non-indigenous communities, Igbo residing outside of their traditional homeland may face localised discrimination.'¹⁵

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4.2 Unitary state and public order

4.2.1 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)¹⁶.

¹² Bertelsmann Stiftung: [BTI 2020 Country Report Nigeria](#) (p6), 29 April 2020

¹³ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.47), updated 3 December 2020

¹⁴ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.8-3.10), updated 3 December 2020

¹⁵ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.10), updated 3 December 2020

¹⁶ Nigeria government, [Constitution](#) (accessed via refworld), 1999

- 4.2.2 [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.

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Section 5 updated: 18 March 2020

5. Secessionist groups

5.1 Overview of groups

- 5.1.1 An expert comment by Sola Tayo, a BBC journalist, and Fidelis Mbah, a journalist, published on the Chatham House website in November 2017 identified the 2 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). 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.’¹⁷
- 5.1.2 Country information included in the EASO Country Guidance for Nigeria of February 2019, based on material in EASO’s November 2018 country information reports, 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.’¹⁸
- 5.1.3 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) see table below. IRBC commented that no further information on either umbrella group could be found¹⁹.

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),

¹⁷ CH, ‘[Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria](#)’, 9 November 2017

¹⁸ EASO, ‘[Country Guidance: Nigeria](#)’ (page 41), February 2019

¹⁹ IRBC, ‘[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)’, 28 June 2019

Joint Revolutionary Council of Biafra (JRCEB)	Customary Government of Biafra (CGB),
Biafra Liberation Crusaders (BLC)	
Salvation People of Biafra.	

5.1.4 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 (JRCEB),
- ‘Biafra Revolutionary Force (BRF), Customary Government of Biafra (CGB),
- ‘Biafran Central Council (BCC)
- ‘Biafran United Liberation Council (BULCO).’²⁰

5.1.5 The DFAT report of December 2020 stated:

‘While there are a number of Biafran secessionist movements, the two most prominent are the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Both MASSOB and IPOB draw their support predominantly from the Igbo speaking southeast states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The differences between the two groups (and other Biafran secessionist movements) is unclear, and DFAT does not have any information on the membership procedures or organisational structure for either movement.’²¹

5.1.6 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](#)).

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Section 6 updated: 18 March 2021

²⁰ National Daily, ‘[MASSOB dares military, insists to mark Biafra at 51](#)’, 28 May 2018

²¹ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (section 3.48), updated 3 December 2020

6. Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

6.1 Background

Official – sensitive: Start of section

Official – sensitive: End of section

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6.2 Legal status

6.2.1 The BBC reported that MASSOB was banned in or around 2002²².

6.2.2 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.’²³

6.2.3 However DFAT stated in its December 2020 report that ‘... , although authorities have threatened to proscribe MASSOB on several occasions, they have not actually done so and MASSOB has continued to conduct public activities.’²⁴

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Section 7 updated: 18 March 2021

7. Treatment of MASSOB

7.1 Killings, discrimination, violence and harassment

7.1.1 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.’²⁵

7.1.2 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 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.”’²⁶

7.1.3 The 2020 DFAT country information report Nigeria commented:

‘... There have also been recent reports of deaths, injuries and mass arrests of MASSOB members in the context of clashes with security forces during

²² BBC, ‘[Nigeria arrests Biafra separatist](#)’, 27 October 2005

²³ HRW, ‘[“Rest in Pieces”, Police Torture and Deaths in Custody in NGA](#)’ (section VI), July 2005

²⁴ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (section 3.51), 3 December 2020

²⁵ EASO, ‘[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)’ (page 82), November 2018

²⁶ BBC Monitoring, ‘[Nigerian separatists in violent confrontations...](#)’, 23 May 2019, subscription only

pro-Biafra demonstrations. In May 2019, two MASSOB members were reportedly killed and 15 wounded following clashes with police at a MASSOB anniversary event in Onitsha, Anambra state, while in the same period a MASSOB member was reportedly arrested and tortured at a police station in Mgbidi, Imo state. In September 2018, 125 MASSOB members were reportedly arrested, with some sustaining injuries, during a rally in Anambra state...'²⁷

- 7.1.4 DFAT assessed 'Ordinary members of ..., MASSOB and other Biafran secessionist organisations who participate in political demonstrations or rallies face a moderate risk of being subjected to violence by state security forces.'²⁸

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7.2 Arbitrary arrest and detention

- 7.2.1 BBC monitoring reported, via the Nigerian newspaper website the Guardian, in July 2020:

'The Imo State Police Command has arrested some members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in Owerri for allegedly attempting to murder and dispossess some police officers on duty of their service rifles.

'In a statement yesterday signed by the command's Public Relations Officer, Orlando Godson Ikeokwu, the police also accused members of the movement of inflicting machete wounds on some officers.

'Ikeokwu added that while some of the agitators were arrested, others took to their heels.

'The statement read in part: "On July 23, 2020, at about 20:15hrs, a group of persons claiming to be members of MASSOB in an attempt to snatch rifles, attacked some policemen on duty around New Owerri area and inflicted machete injuries on two of the policemen.

"Also today being July 24, 2020, a group of persons numbering about 100 claiming to be members of MASSOB, attacked a team of policemen attached to Orji Division along Owerri/Okigwe Road by the Orji Flyover.

"The hoodlums while trying to dispossess the policemen of their service rifles also inflicted machete wounds on them. However, the attack was successfully repelled with arrests made, while some others ran away with various degree of injuries."

...

'All efforts made to reach the leader of the group, Uchenna Madu, as at press time, yielded no fruit, as his phone was unreachable.

'But The Guardian learnt that the members of the movement were agitating for self-determination, among others.'²⁹

²⁷ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.51), updated 3 December 2020

²⁸ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.52), updated 3 December 2020

²⁹ BBC Monitoring, '[Nigerian police arrest separatist group members in Imo State](#)', 25 July 2020, subscription only

8. Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

8.1 Background

Official – sensitive: Start of section

Official – sensitive: End of section

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8.2 Proscription/legal status of IPOB

8.2.1 Country information included in the EASO Country Guidance stated: ‘In 2017, the Nigerian authorities declared IPOB a terrorist organisation.’³⁰

8.2.2 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 proper legal processes to apply for IPOB’s proscription in September 2017.’³¹

8.2.3 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”.’³²

8.2.4 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.’³³

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

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8.3 Aims

8.3.1 Amnesty International in their November 2016 report stated:

³⁰ EASO, ‘[Country Guidance: Nigeria](#)’ (page 41), February 2019

³¹ African News, ‘[Biafra agitation: Nigeria court upholds IPOB terrorist label](#)’, 19 January 2018

³² EASO, ‘[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)’ (page 83), November 2018

³³ HRW, ‘[World Report 2019, Nigeria: Events of 2018](#)’, 17 January 2019

'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".

'... As in other regions in Nigeria, there is a strong feeling of marginalization in the southeast. Most of the IPOB members and supporters Amnesty 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.'³⁴

8.3.2 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).'³⁵

8.3.3 A BBC monitoring biography timeline of Mr Kanu using a range of sources stated: 'The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) says it is on 16 February 2019 going to hold a referendum to ascertain the number of Nigerians who want a separate Biafra republic through a peaceful and democratic process. IPOB in a statement says: "Our leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is currently meeting with IPOB high command in Europe to perfect plans for the

³⁴ AI, '[Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere](#)'(p8), 24 November 2016

³⁵ IRBC, '[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)', 28 June 2019

referendum which will go side by side with the February 16 presidential poll”³⁶

8.3.4 BBC monitoring also stated:

‘The leader of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, [Nnamdi Kanu](#) says he is ready to face trials and defend Biafrans at the International Criminal Court (ICC), against "genocidal" attacks by "killer herdsmen and bandits". Speaking on a live broadcast on Radio Biafra, he says: "Herdsmen will attack us, rape our women, destroy our farms and kill our farmers nobody will arrest them but when we try to defend ourselves, the government will come after us rolling out the tanks and using their helicopter gunboats. If defending our ancestral land against conquest by Fulani Janjaweed invaders will take me to The Hague, I am ready to go to The Hague”³⁷

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8.4 Activities

8.4.1 Amnesty report in its 2016 report:

‘Despite these inflammatory statements [in an address to the World Igbo Congress on 5 September 2015, Nnamdi Kanu see [9.3.1](#)], 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.”³⁸

8.4.2 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 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

³⁶ BBC Monitoring, [‘Biography - Nnamdi Kanu’](#), updated 14 December 2020, subscription only.

³⁷ BBC Monitoring, [‘Biography - Nnamdi Kanu’](#), updated 14 December 2020, subscription only.

³⁸ AI, [‘Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere’](#)(p8), 24 November 2016

and 6pm on Wednesday, May 30, 2018. Only ambulances and those responding to emergencies are allowed on the roads.³⁹

- 8.4.3 Lifos, the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket), noted 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. Apart from the Nigerian authorities' view that IPOB has performed acts of violence that are to be considered as terrorism (see below), Lifos has not been able to identify information signaling that incidents of violence committed during IPOB manifestations have been endorsed by leaders of the movement.'⁴⁰

- 8.4.4 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.'⁴¹

- 8.4.5 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.'⁴²

- 8.4.6 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

³⁹ Pulse, '[Pro-Biafra group announces May 30 sit-at-home order...](#)', 25 May 2018

⁴⁰ Lifos: '[Nigeria – Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)](#)', 19 December 2017

⁴¹ TNV, '[Ipob Gives A Sit-at-home Order On 30th May 2019](#)', 2 May 2020

⁴² The Guardian – Nigeria, '[Enugu residents partially comply with IPOB's...](#)', 30 May 2019

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”.⁴³

8.4.7 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.’⁴⁴

8.4.8 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.’⁴⁵

8.4.9 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.’⁴⁶

8.4.10 BBC monitoring reported on 26 August 2020:

‘A pro-secession radio station [Radio Biafra] has called on “Biafra” supporters to defend themselves against attacks by security forces.

⁴³ EASO, ‘[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)’ (page 82-83), November 2018

⁴⁴ EASO, ‘[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)’ (page 84), November 2018

⁴⁵ IRBC, ‘[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)’, 28 June 2019

⁴⁶ Today.ng, ‘[Police confirm attack, killing of two officers...](#)’, 3 December 2019

'Radio Biafra made the call and invited listeners to comment on an attack against members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) by security forces on 23 August [in reference to clash between Nigerian security forces and members of IPOB in the city of Enugu on 23 August 2020 – see section [9.5](#)].'⁴⁷

8.4.11 'The following events referring in incidents involving IPOB were reported on the Janes website:

- '20 October 2020 – 'In Oyigbo, Rivers state, six soldiers were killed by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) militants in an unspecified attack. The report added that 50 unspecified weapons were stolen by the militants during the attack.
- '2 November 2020 - In Rivers State ... [IPOB] militants had allegedly been involved in an attack during which 10 security force personnel were killed in the town of Oyigbo in the same state in separate attacks on 20 October and on an unspecified earlier date.'⁴⁸

8.4.12 The DFAT country information report of December 2020 stated: 'While the two groups [IPOB and MASSOB] (and other Biafran secessionist movements) have called for independence to occur through peaceful means, such as via referendum, central authorities have strongly rejected such calls, stating the country's unity is "not negotiable."⁴⁹

8.4.13 The BBC monitoring timeline for IPOB included the following:

'6 December 2019 - The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) claims responsibility for the attack on Nigeria's transport minister, [Rotimi Amaechi](#) in Madrid, Spain. In a statement, the group's spokesman Emma Powerful says: "Yes, IPOB beat Amaechi the transport minister based on the standing order given by our leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu to reprimand those politicians who think they have arrived"...

'22 October 2020 - IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu dismisses an allegation that he ordered the destruction of properties belonging to the people of the South-West geopolitical zone. He says that his statement was twisted by his enemies to suit their purposes, and urged his followers and the entire Igbo to guard against any destruction in the ongoing #EndSARS protests across Nigeria...

'13 December 2020 - The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) launches Eastern Security Network (ESN), a security outfit for the South-East and South-South regions. IPOB spokesperson Emma Powerful says the establishment of ESN is due to the failure of governments of the two regions to set up regional security outfits like their counterparts in other regions despite the worsening insecurity in the country...'⁵⁰

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⁴⁷ BBC Monitoring, '[Nigerian radio urges 'Biafra' supporters...](#)', subscription only, 26 August 2020

⁴⁸ Janes, [website](#), subscription only, undated

⁴⁹ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.49), updated 3 December 2020

⁵⁰ BBC Monitoring, '[IPOB Timeline](#)', updated 23 February 2021, subscription only

8.5 Clashes between state and IPOB

8.5.1 Pulse, a Nigerian news website, in October 2020 stated: 'A total of seven members of the group [IPOB] have now been killed since the #Endsars protest started in the state.

'Some [IPOB members](#) were reported to have engaged in a shoot-out with a joint security team comprising soldiers and police deployed to quell their activities at some flashpoints in the state.'⁵¹

8.5.2 Premium Times news website in October 2020 reported:

'The police in Rivers State have accused members of the pro-Biafra group, Indigenous People of Biafra, (IPOB), of hiding under the #EndSARS protests to kill three police officers in the state...

'Mr Mukan said IPOB invaded Oyigbo local government area on October 21, launched "senseless and mindless attacks on the area command, Oyigbo and Afam police stations, and burnt down the three stations."

'He said, "They also went to the adjoining Eberi-Omuma local government area, where they attacked the Umuebulu police station.

"In all the attacks, several vehicles were burnt and three policemen were hacked to death and burnt to ashes."

'Mr Mukan said the IPOB members also attempted to burn down Mile One police station the same day, but were repelled by the police.

'Four of the IPOB members were killed, while eight of them were arrested during the attack, Mr Mukan said.

'The police chief, who paraded the suspects before journalists, said 21 people have been arrested so far in the state.

'He began his address to reporters by saying that his heart was heavy because of the attacks on public and private property in the state. He, however, said there was "relative peace" in Oyigbo, which is still under curfew imposed by the Rivers State government.

'The Rivers State governor, [Nyesom Wike](#), on Friday declared one Stanley Mgbere, said to be a leader of IPOB in the state, wanted over the violence in Oyigbo.

'The governor announced a N50 million reward to anyone with information that could lead to the arrest and prosecution of Mr Mgbere.

'IPOB, which wants an independent Biafra country, has been proscribed by the Nigerian government which labels it a terrorist organisation. The group, however, says it wants to achieve its goal in a peaceful manner and through a referendum.'⁵²

8.5.3 BBC News in a November 2020 article reported:

'Nigerian security forces are carrying out extrajudicial killings in Oyigbo, say residents of the town in southern Rivers state.

⁵¹ Pulse, '[9 feared dead as soldiers and IPOB members clash in Rivers](#)', 25 October 2020

⁵² Premium Times, '[Police accuse IPOB members of killing three officers in Rivers](#)', 26 October 2020

'They accuse the army of carrying out revenge killings after authorities said three policemen and six soldiers were killed by members of a proscribed separatist group.

'Amnesty International also said it had received reports that "soldiers are allegedly invading homes" and that "some residents reported seeing dead bodies on the street, allegedly shot by soldiers" [[see Amnesty International Nigeria Facebook post of November 2020](#)].

'Monday Bakor, 36, told BBC Igbo that police officers shot dead his fiancée Queen Nwazuo on 22 October [2020] while they were both locking up their barbing salon...

'Police spokesman Nnamdi Omoni told the BBC that no report had been made of the incident.

'Mr Bakor said he could not do this because of a 24-hour curfew in the area and pointed out the closest police stations had been burnt down...

'Authorities say members of the Indigenous People of Biafra - Ipob, proscribed as a terrorist organisation in 2017 by Nigeria's federal government - targeted security operatives in Oyigbo as tensions spilled over following the #EndSars protests against police brutality in the country...

'Two police stations and a hospital in the area were burned on 21 October as widespread mayhem erupted after protesters against police brutality were shot at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos.

'Encouraged by their leader Nnamdi Kanu, Ipob members are accused of attacking security operatives in eastern Nigeria.

'Clashes with the army in Abia state spilled over into the neighbouring Oyigbo town in Rivers state.

'Ipob activists are accused of burning down three police stations in the area and killing three policemen, after one of them was killed during a protest at a police station in Oyigbo.

'Rivers state Governor Nyesom Wike imposed a 24-hour curfew on 23 October in Oyigbo as the violence threatened to spiral out of control but said on Monday that soldiers had not been killing people in the area.

"It is not correct that soldiers are going from house to house to kill. When the Ipob killed the Army officers, they took their guns. It is normal for them [army] to recover those guns. In any case, there are consequences when soldiers are killed," Mr Wike said on Monday.

'The governor last month banned demonstrations in the state on the eve of a peaceful #EndSars protest but protesters defied him, marching to government house in the state capital, Port Harcourt, and forcing him out to address them.

'Demonstrations by Ipob were banned in the state. Mr Wike recently placed a bounty of 50 million naira (\$130,000; £100,000) on the head of the group's leader.

"This is clearly a terrorist group whose existence, creed, mission and activities are strongly denounced even by the government and peoples of South-Eastern States of the country," he said.

'Army spokesman, Major Charles Ekeocha, also denied that soldiers were going door-to-door and killing people, telling a local radio station that there was an ongoing operation in Oyigbo but that soldiers were not targeting people.

"People have been spreading information based on their interests but when you investigate you find out it's not true," he told government-owned Radio Nigeria.⁵³

8.5.4 The Guardian Nigeria reporting on the same incident stated:

'Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, has declared that alleged killing of Igbo was a ploy to shift attention from activities of outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Oyigbo Council Area of the state.

'He described the allegation that he ordered the Nigerian Army to kill Igbo in Oyigbo, as a politically motivated falsehood. Governor Wike made the clarification on a live television programme in Port Harcourt yesterday, maintaining that he imposed curfew on Oyigbo to restore calm after IPOB members killed six soldiers, four policemen and destroyed all police stations and courts in the area.

'His words: "I know that this is not the first time IPOB has used Oyigbo as launching ground. Security agencies are aware of this, but IPOB added a new dimension to their activities this time.

"They killed six Army Officers and burnt one, killed four police officers and destroyed all the police stations and court buildings. I imposed curfew to restore calm and I proscribed IPOB activities anywhere in the state."

'In the statement issued by his Special Assistant on Media, Kelvin Ebiri, the governor condemned IPOB for its effrontery to rename a local government in the state and hoist its flag in a public school in Komkom Town.

'Wike stated that the state government did not regret its stance on IPOB, which he said, had been designated as a terrorist organisation by the Federal Government, adding that the South-East Governors have never supported IPOB and wondered why any governor of a Niger Delta should tolerate the group.

'He said during a search of some residents in Oyigbo, security agencies uncovered shrines with IPOB flags and Nnamdi Kanu's picture, maintaining that if IPOB members were allowed to operate in Oyigbo, they would soon overrun the state.⁵⁴

8.5.5 The BBC monitoring timeline for IPOB included the following:

'20 February 2021 - Several people are feared dead and property destroyed as members of the Eastern Security Network set up by the Indigenous

⁵³ BBC News, '[Oyigbo clashes: "Nigerian security agents shot dead my fiancée"](#)', 3 November 2020

⁵⁴ The Guardian - Nigeria, '[Alleged killing of Igbo a distraction from IPOBS...](#)', 3 November 2020

Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) clash with a combined team of police and army in Orlu in Imo state, south-east Nigeria.

'20 February 2021 -The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) says the military raid of Orlu and Orsu Local Government Areas of Imo State on 18 February 2021 marked the beginning of the second Nigeria/Biafra war. This is after the military admitted launching of land and air operations against operatives of Eastern Security Network (ESN), a vigilante group protecting the eastern region's people against "terrorists and killer herdsman". In a statement, the IPOB spokesperson Emma Powerful says: "We wish to bring to the attention of the whole world that the Nigeria military has, at last, brought war to Biafra land. Supported by other security agencies, including police and the Department of State Services, they came with military jets, tanks and heavy war equipment against us. Yes, the second Nigeria/Biafra war has begun! It began on Thursday, 18 February 2021 at Orlu in Imo State, Biafra land"⁵⁵

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Section 9 updated: 18 March 2021

9. Treatment of IPOB

9.1 State treatment: security presence in South East zone

9.1.1 An expert comment by Sola Tayo, a BBC journalist, and Fidelis Mbah, 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...

'... 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.'⁵⁶

9.1.2 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 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

⁵⁵ BBC Monitoring, [IPOB Timeline](#), updated 23 February 2021, subscription only

⁵⁶ CH, '[Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria](#)', 9 November 2017

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.'⁵⁷

- 9.1.3 The EASO report also included sources which commented on Operation Python Dance 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.'"⁵⁸
- 9.1.4 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.'⁵⁹ On 11 December 2020 the ICC Prosecutor announced the 'completion of her preliminary examination of the situation in Nigeria, having concluded that there was a reasonable basis to believe that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed... While the Office's preliminary examination has primarily focused on alleged crimes committed by Boko Haram since July 2009 and by the Nigerian Security Forces since the beginning of the non-international armed conflict between the Nigerian Security Forces and Boko Haram since June 2011, it has also examined alleged crimes falling outside the context of this conflict. Since 2015, the preliminary examination also focused on the existence and genuineness of national proceedings in relation to these crimes. The Office has found that the alleged crimes identified would currently be admissible, and thus there was a reasonable basis for investigation, subject to judicial authorisation.'⁶⁰
- 9.1.5 The US State Department 2019 Human Rights Practices Report (USSD Human Rights report 2019) stated: 'The government continued to turn to the armed forces to address internal security concerns, due to insufficient capacity and staffing of domestic law enforcement agencies. The constitution authorizes the use of the military to "[s]uppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order." Armed forces were part of continuing joint

⁵⁷ CH, '[Calls for Biafran Independence Return to South East Nigeria](#)', 9 November 2017

⁵⁸ EASO, '[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)' (page 83), November 2018

⁵⁹ EASO, '[Country Guidance: Nigeria](#)' (page 41), February 2019

⁶⁰ ICC, '[Preliminary examination Nigeria](#)', Undated

security operations in the Northeast, Southeast, Niger Delta, Middle Belt, and Northwest.’⁶¹

9.1.6 A report by ECP - Escola de Cultura de Pau, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and published by ReliefWeb from July 2020 noted: ‘...with regard to the situation in Biafra... Various local and international human rights organisations noted that during 2019, violent persecution of social actors and civilians suspected of being sympathizers of the independence movement (considered a terrorist movement by the Nigerian state) continued.’⁶²

9.1.7 Whilst not an area in the South East zone, Pulse, a Nigerian news website, published in October 2020 an article concerning Rivers State, an area where Igbo live:

‘Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers has signed an executive order to reinforce the ban on the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and its activities in the State.

‘He made this known in a statement by Mr Kelvin Ebiri, Special Assistant (Media) to the Governor.....

‘According to the statement... “the State government is opposed to the presence and activities of the legally-proscribed and anarchic IPOB and whatever it stands for in Rivers State...

we have everything against the presence and activities of the legally-proscribed IPOB and whatever that group stands for in Rivers State,” the governor warned.

“This is clearly a terrorist group which existence, creed, mission and activities are strongly denounced even by the Government and peoples of South-Eastern States of the country.

“I have, therefore, signed the executive order to reinforce the total ban on IPOB and its activities in Rivers State or any part thereof and nothing will stop us from enforcing this ban in its entirety,” he said.

‘The statement also added that Wike also “directed security agencies and the Chairmen of Local Government Areas to fish out and resolutely deal with any [member of IPOB](#) found in any community following the executive order and other legal instruments”.’⁶³

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

9.2.1 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...’⁶⁴

⁶¹ USSD, [2019 Human Rights Practices Report](#) (section C), 11 March 2020

⁶² ECP, [‘Alert 2020! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding’](#), July 2020

⁶³ Pulse, [‘Gov. Wike signs executive order proscribing IPOB in Rivers State’](#), 29 October 2020

⁶⁴ EASO, [‘Nigeria: Targeting of individuals’](#) (page 84), November 2018

- 9.2.2 The International Centre for not-for-profit Law stated in a report updated in November 2020: '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.'⁶⁵

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9.3 Killings, discrimination, violence and harassment

- 9.3.1 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.'⁶⁶

- 9.3.2 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 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.'⁶⁷

- 9.3.3 Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions [SR] 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,

⁶⁵ ICNL, '[Civic Freedom Monitor: Nigeria](#)' (section: [Legal analysis - Enforcement](#)), 5 October 2019

⁶⁶ EASO, '[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)' (page 54-55), November 2018

⁶⁷ EASO, '[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)' (page 83), November 2018

arbitrary killings in the context of: The repression of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)...

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).'⁶⁸

9.3.4 Agnes Callamard also reported in September 2019 on killings and arrests:

'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.

'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 [for Human Rights, ACHR] 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.'⁶⁹

9.3.5 The SR's 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

⁶⁸ OHCHR, '[End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...](#)' (para 11 & 14), 2 September 2019

⁶⁹ OHCHR, '[End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...](#)' (para 47-52), 2 September 2019

further states that all allegations of torture, extrajudicial killings and war crimes made against the Nigerian Military will be investigated.’⁷⁰

- 9.3.6 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.’⁷¹

- 9.3.7 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) in a December 2019 regional overview noted: ‘Elsewhere in the country, the attempted arrest of an Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) lawyer sparked clashes between security forces and IPOB youth, causing the death of two officers and two IPOB supporters.’⁷²

- 9.3.8 The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) – Germany reported in August 2020 that:

‘On 23 August 2020 the police stormed the Community Secondary School (aka St Patrick Secondary School) in the city of Enugu (capital of the south-eastern state of the same name) in the Emene district. Members of the separatist organization Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) held a meeting there. The separatists allegedly resisted the attempt to arrest them and overpowered the police. More than a dozen patrol cars with officers of the police, the military, and the Department of State Services (DSS), the domestic intelligence service, had appeared to reinforce the security forces, reports said. Violent clashes then occurred on the school grounds and along the old Abakaliki Road between the school and the Catholic Church of St Joseph. The reports on the number of victims vary. On 23 August 2020, the IPOB spokesperson, Emma Powerful, announced that 21 IPOB members had been killed and 47 arrested in the course of the violent clashes. According to the police chief of the state of Enugu, the police arrested four IPOB members; four people were killed in the incident, he said. A DSS spokesperson informed that two DSS members had been killed.’⁷³

- 9.3.9 PM News reporting on the same incident noted:

‘Ahmed Abdulrahman, the Police Commissioner in Enugu state has given an official account of the bloody clash between security agents and members of

⁷⁰ OHCHR, ‘[End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...](#)’ (para 74), 2 September 2019

⁷¹ BAMF, ‘[Nigeria: briefing notes](#)’ (p6), 9 December 2019

⁷² ACLED, ‘[Regional Overview – Africa \(1 - 7 December 2019\)](#)’ (p2), 10 December 2019

⁷³ BAMF, ‘[Nigeria: briefing notes](#)’ (p5), 24 August 2020

the Indigenous People of Biafra(IPOB). But it is not all the truth as IPOB offered a different version.

'The clash at Emene Community Secondary School in Enugu on Sunday led to many deaths. The police gave an official death toll of four. But IPOB claimed 20 of their members were killed. Abdurahman said his command also arrested five IPOB members.

'One of the arrested IPOB members, Ebube Agu told journalists that they were having a martial art training for self defence when they were attacked by the security agents. Agu said that they were not armed as claimed by the police.

'Abdurahman, in his own account said trouble started when operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) went on a covert operation in Emene early Sunday morning. But they were overwhelmed and two of their officials allegedly abducted by IPOB members. Abdurahman said that the DSS operatives called in the police and the army for reinforcement. He noted that the police were able to rescue one of the DSS officials in a building where he was held hostage. The DSS later claimed it lost two of its men.

"However, four persons lost their lives; two were hacked to death with machetes and one passerby set ablaze.

"Many of the IPOB members also escaped with bullet wound and police have started tracing them," he said.

'Abdurahman urged health facilities to treat anyone with bullet wounds but should report such cases to the police. In a statement, the DSS confirmed that said two of its men died during the clash. The service said a comprehensive investigation had commenced into the incident, according to its Public Relations Officer, Dr Peter Afunanya.

"The DSS wishes to inform the public that its patrol team was, today (Sunday), attacked in Emene, Enugu State by members of the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra.

"The service lost two personnel in what was clearly an unprovoked violent attack launched by IPOB on the team."⁷⁴

9.3.10 The Guardian Nigeria reported in August 2020:

'Igbo socio-cultural organisation, Nzuko Umunna, has charged Enugu State Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi to set up a judicial commission of inquiry to unravel the circumstances surrounding the killing of unarmed Igbo youths in the state by suspected security agents or face them in court.

'Persons suspected to be state security officials allegedly opened fire on unarmed youths who were having physical exercise training in Emene and massacred them in cold blood on August 23, 2020.

'Represented by its counsel, Edwin Anikwem, the group said the unprovoked attack and murder of innocent and unarmed indigenes of Enugu caused unrest within Enugu and environs, as the citizens live in fear...

⁷⁴ PM News, '[Genesis of the bloody IPOB – Police, DSS clash in Enugu](#)' 24 August 2020

‘Meanwhile, Good Conscience Forum (GCF) says the call by the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, on his members to attack security operatives is a “significant threat to peace and tranquility in Nigeria”. Kanu had reportedly told IPOB to retaliate further killing of its members by security operatives.

‘The group, in a statement signed by its National President, Dr. Edwin Ogbu, at the weekend, urged relevant authorities to take proactive action to avoid a breakdown in law and order.

‘Department of State Services (DSS) had said that two of its operatives were killed penultimate Sunday in a clash with IPOB members in Enugu State.

“The GCF is in receipt of the call by the leader of IPOB for its members to attack security operatives in South East Nigeria.

“We consequently condemn the call by Kanu in very strong terms, as Nigeria is a sovereign country governed by extant laws in the conduct of its affairs. We also condemn the recent clash between security operatives and IPOB members in Enugu that led to the death of two security operatives and life threatening injuries to scores of other innocent people,” he stated.

‘The group called on South East governors, stakeholders and parents to caution their children not to allow anyone to be recruited by IPOB.

“We urge members of the general public to assist security agencies in Nigeria by providing credible information that would lead to the arrest and subsequent prosecution of IPOB members for the threat to human lives and the unity of the country,” he added, calling on the government to probe the clash between IPOB and security operatives in Enugu that led to the loss of lives.’⁷⁵

9.3.11 The 2020 DFAT country information report on Nigeria stated:

‘While the clampdown [Operation Python Dance] by security forces appeared to largely curtail IPOB’s public activities, November 2020 saw a new outbreak of open conflict in the southeast of the country. Rivers state Governor Nyesom Wike has reportedly ‘declared war’ on the group following an attack on security forces which killed six soldiers and four police officers.’⁷⁶

9.3.12 The 2020 DFAT country information report Nigeria commented: ‘The Special Rapporteur’s report ... noted reports of extrajudicial killings by state forces in relation to other groups, including ... IPOB ... the latter primarily in the context of demonstrations.’

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9.4 Arbitrary arrest and detention

9.4.1 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

⁷⁵ The Guardian, ‘[Nzuko Umunna may sue Ugwuanyi over killing of Igbo youths](#)’, 31 August 2020

⁷⁶ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (section 3.49, 3.50, 3.52), updated 3 December 2020

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.'⁷⁷

- 9.4.2 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.'⁷⁸
- 9.4.3 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'.⁷⁹
- 9.4.4 The Nigerian newspaper Punch reported on its website in January 2018 that: '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.'⁸⁰
- 9.4.5 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.

⁷⁷ AI, '[Nigeria: Bullets were raining everywhere](#)', (p5), 24 November 2016

⁷⁸ EASO, '[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)' (page 83), November 2018

⁷⁹ AI, '[Nigeria 2017/2018](#)', February 2018

⁸⁰ Punch, '[Army arrests 27 IPOB members](#)', 4 October 2019

'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.

'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.'⁸¹

9.4.6 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.'⁸²

9.4.7 The EASO report also noted that 'Lifos [the COI unit of the Swedish Migration Agency - Migrationsverket] 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".'⁸³

9.4.8 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.'⁸⁴

9.4.9 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

⁸¹ NAN, '[Court frees 114 women demanding IPOB leaders Kanu whereabouts](#)', 24 August 2018

⁸² NAN, '[Police to charge arrested IPOB members with terrorism](#)', 25 November 2018

⁸³ EASO, '[Nigeria: Targeting of individuals](#)' (page 84), November 2018

⁸⁴ HRW, '[World Report 2019, Nigeria: Events of 2018](#)', 17 January 2019

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....'⁸⁵

- 9.4.10 Amnesty International's Human Rights review of 2019 stated: 'Security forces have arbitrarily arrested at least 200 and killed at least 10 members and supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) at different times during the year [2019].'⁸⁶
- 9.4.11 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 court⁸⁷.
- 9.4.12 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).'⁸⁸
- 9.4.13 A 24 December 2019 report on the Nigerian news website Today.ng 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.'

⁸⁵ IRBC, '[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)', 28 June 2019

⁸⁶ Amnesty International, [Human Rights in Africa: Review of 2019 - Nigeria](#), 8 April 2020

⁸⁷ PM News, '[Police arrest 140 members of Biafra group in Nsukka](#)', 23 May 2019

⁸⁸ IRBC, '[Nigeria: The Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\)...](#)', 28 June 2019

'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.

'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.'⁸⁹

9.4.14 The following arrests were reported on the Janes website:

- '12 August 2020 - In Orji, Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, police arrested 67 suspected members of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) over alleged unlawful assembly.' '2 November 2020 - In Rivers State, two suspected senior Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) militants were arrested by security forces during a security operation.'⁹⁰

9.4.15 The 2020 DFAT country information report Nigeria stated:

'In her September 2019 post-visit report, the UN Special Rapporteur ... noted a number of arrested IPOB members had allegedly been held incommunicado before being detained without charges; and there had not been any convictions of IPOB members since 2015 due to the discontinuance or dismissal of charges...'⁹¹

9.4.16 DFAT assessed that '... as members of a proscribed organisation, IPOB members face a risk of arrest that is likely to be higher for those in leadership positions.'⁹²

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9.5 Prosecutions and convictions

9.5.1 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:

' 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.'⁹³

⁸⁹ Today.ng, '[IPOB members arrested for selling Biafra newspaper](#)', 24 December 2019

⁹⁰ Janes, [website](#), subscription only, undated

⁹¹ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.49, 3.50, 3.52), updated 3 December 2020

⁹² DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (section 3.49, 3.50, 3.52), updated 3 December 2020

⁹³ OHCHR, '[End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur...](#)' (para 49-50), 2 September 2019

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

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Section 10 updated: 18 March 2021

10. Separatist groups outside of Nigeria

10.1 Nigerian diaspora

10.1.1 The UK Office for National Statistics published figures to June 2020 estimates that 219,000 people (with a confidence interval (CI) of 24,000) 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 UK⁹⁴.

10.1.2 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.'⁹⁵ There is no indication from the sources consulted that this group have any connections to IPOB.

10.1.3 The Nigerian in Diaspora monitoring group (NDMG) were reported to have called for Nigerians living abroad to distance themselves from Nnamdi Kanu and IPOB⁹⁶. 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 Nigeria⁹⁷. The president of the group condemned in particular the attack of a member of the National Assembly in Germany by reportedly members of IPOB^{98 99}.

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10.2 Biafran separatists/supporters in the UK

10.2.1 In October 2018 photos appeared on social media showing the leader of IPOB Nnamdi Kanu in Jerusalem¹⁰⁰. It has since been suggested that Mr Kanu, who holds both Nigerian and British nationality¹⁰¹ has relocated to the UK^{102 103}. 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 Nigeria¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁴ OfNS, '[Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality](#)', 28 November 2019

⁹⁵ NIDO, '[About us](#)', undated

⁹⁶ Vanguard, '[Group to Nigerians in diaspora: Be wary of Kanu](#)', 29 August 2019

⁹⁷ Vanguard, '[Group to Nigerians in diaspora: Be wary of Kanu](#)', 29 August 2019

⁹⁸ Vanguard, '[Group to Nigerians in diaspora: Be wary of Kanu](#)', 29 August 2019

⁹⁹ Premium Times, '[Ekweremadu dragged, assaulted in Germany](#)', 17 August 2019

¹⁰⁰ BAMF, '[Briefing Notes - 1 April](#)', (section Nigeria), 1 April 2019

¹⁰¹ BBC News, '[Nnamdi Kanu, Nigerian separatist leader, resurfaces in Israel](#)', 22 October 2018

¹⁰² Vanguard, '[I am back in UK to continue our work to liberate #Biafra](#)', 26 January 2019

¹⁰³ The Cable, '[Nnamdi Kanu hints at not returning to Nigeria for parents'...](#)', 10 February 2020

¹⁰⁴ Independent, '[Soldiers came to kill me...](#)', 6 November 2019

- 10.2.2 Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the IPOB is also the director of the London-based Radio Biafra¹⁰⁵. [Radio Biafra](#) is a website page with access to its radio channel, the website also contains news articles, a donation page and previous broadcasts. The website also contains links to various online Biafra newspapers such as the [Biafra Telegraph](#) and [Biafra Herald](#)¹⁰⁶. It also provides links to the Radio Biafra Facebook page¹⁰⁷ which lists upcoming and past events¹⁰⁸. According to BBC Monitoring Radio Biafra began broadcasting online from studios in London in 2009¹⁰⁹.
- 10.2.3 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 news¹¹⁰.
- 10.2.4 In February 2021 Nnamdi Kanu's personal Facebook account was removed by Facebook for violating its rules on harm and hate speech. A BBC report stated:
- 'Mr Kanu's page was removed for repeated violation of its community rules, the social networking site told the BBC.
- 'He had posted a video of a militia group attacking and killing cattle in a herders' settlement.
- 'He also used the live broadcast to accuse herders of destroying farmlands in eastern Nigeria.'¹¹¹
- 10.2.5 The BBC also stated:
- 'Before the ban by Facebook, he created an app called Ipob Community Radio and asked his followers to get on it.
- 'With this app, Mr Kanu bypasses social media censorship.
- 'He's also asked his followers to move to Twitter but if he continues with the same rhetoric and controversial comments, he might not last long there.
- 'He however appears to be more measured on Twitter, where he is currently trying to get verified.'¹¹²
- 10.2.6 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.
- 10.2.7 An IPOB website [www.IPOB.org](#) contains links to news articles, radio Biafra and a photo gallery, as well as providing links to other Biafran media sites.
- 10.2.8 Other websites or organisations that promote Biafran separatism in the UK could not be found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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¹⁰⁵ RadioBiafra, [website](#), undated

¹⁰⁶ RadioBiafra, [website](#), undated

¹⁰⁷ RadioBiafra, [Facebook](#), undated

¹⁰⁸ RadioBiafra, [website](#), undated

¹⁰⁹ BBC Monitoring, '[Biography – Nnamdi Kanu](#)', 8 December 2019, subscription only.

¹¹⁰ [Facebook](#), undated

¹¹¹ BBC news, '[Nigerian separatist Nnamdi Kanu's Facebook account removed...](#)', 4 February 2021

¹¹² BBC news, '[How will this ban effect Nnamdi Kanu?](#)', 4 February 2021

10.3 Size and composition of separatist groups in the diaspora

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

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10.4 Sur place activities of separatist groups

10.4.1 April 2018 footage available on YouTube shows a group protesting in London where they are calling for a referendum on Biafra¹¹³.

10.4.2 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)...'¹¹⁴

10.4.3 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](#)).

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10.5 Monitoring of Biafra groups in Nigeria and the UK

10.5.1 The Nigerian Nationality Security Agencies Act established the Nigerian intelligence services responsible detecting and preventing crimes against the state inside and outside of Nigeria (see Country Policy and Information Note, Actors of protection). There is, however, limited information in the sources consulted of the capability, presence and activities of the intelligences services (see Bibliography).

10.5.2 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 Nigeria¹¹⁵. The same allegations appeared in an article in the Nigerian news website Sun News online¹¹⁶ however no further details regarding these allegations were found in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))..

10.5.3 Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020, covering events in Nigeria between June 2019 and May 2020, based on a number of sources, observed:

'In October 2019, a law enforcement agency disclosed the use of sophisticated spyware that can forensically search electronic devices...

'There were no new reports of content blocking or filtering ordered by the Nigerian government during the coverage period. In November 2017, it was revealed that service providers blocked 21 websites, including the popular Naij.com online news outlet, at the request of the (Nigerian Communications Commission, internet regulator] NCC... Though the blocking order lacked transparency, many of the blocked sites promote the independence of

¹¹³ YouTube, '[Biafra Protest: Group Protests In London, Call For Referendum](#)', 19 April 2018

¹¹⁴ Premium Times, '[Ekweremadu dragged, assaulted in Germany](#)', 17 August 2019

¹¹⁵ Vanguard, '[DSS list declaring our members wanted, shameful...](#)', 8 September 2016

¹¹⁶ Sun News Online, '[Biafra: Our members on DSS wanted list - IPOB](#)', 9 September 2016

Biafra, the region that attempted to secede from Nigeria in 1967 and fought against the federal government in the 1967–70 Biafran War. Although access to Naij.com was eventually restored, at least a dozen pro-Biafra websites were still inaccessible as of March 2019... As of February 2020, at least nine websites remained inaccessible, but the others were accessible...¹¹⁷

10.5.4 The FH report also noted, with regard to Nigeria and not on activities outside of the country, that

‘The persistent arrests of users for their online activities under the 2015 Cybercrime Act has resulted in growing self-censorship, particularly among professional journalists who publish content online... This self-censorship worsened after recent reports that revealed the extent of the Nigerian security services’ surveillance and interception powers. Security forces had access to journalists’ private communications, and sometimes used that information to facilitate arrests...¹¹⁸

10.5.5 The FH report also noted, in the context of Nigeria not outside of the country:

‘Several legal provisions may allow the government to conduct surveillance without respect for the Necessary and Proportionate Principles, international guidelines that apply human rights law to monitoring technologies...’ In October 2019, a Nigerian law enforcement agency disclosed that Nigerian security forces use software from Cellebrite and AccessDataGroup, two companies that provide technology to extract and forensically search data from electronic devices, including devices protected by strong encryption. Forensic search technology was reportedly used to search over 20 computers and phones seized from the Daily Trust when the paper’s editors were arrested in January 2019 for their reporting on military operations in the northeast... In recent years, the government has acquired equipment for mass surveillance. In 2015, leaked emails from the Italian surveillance firm Hacking Team revealed that the company had a contract with the Bayelsa state government that expired in 2013... The active period of the contract, from 2012 to 2013, coincides with the governor’s crackdown on so-called “rumormongering” online... Citizen Lab research from 2014 also found a FinFisher command-and-control server located in a private ISP in Nigeria... The extent to which that surveillance system is operational is unclear...

‘The government’s intent to enhance its surveillance capabilities is reflected in the federal budget, which in 2018 allocated 4.6 billion naira (\$12.8 million) to Stranvisky Project 2.148 Observers believe the project, which falls under the purview of the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), is for new surveillance technology. Several other budget allocations for the ONSA and DSS were intended to increase their surveillance capabilities, including a “Social Media Mining Suite,” “Wolverme Next Generation SDRIMSI,” “Surveillance Drone,” and “Mobile Surveillance Facilities.”¹⁴⁹ Government officials frequently assert that new technology to fight the Boko Haram terrorist group is necessary...

¹¹⁷ FH, ‘[Freedom on the Net 2020](#)’ (Nigeria), October 2020

¹¹⁸ FH, ‘[Freedom on the Net 2020](#)’ (Nigeria), October 2020

‘Online journalists and activists have been subject to increasing extralegal harassment and intimidation in retaliation for their activities in recent years, particularly by local officials or powerful businesspeople who have taken issue with critical commentary posted about them on social media. Along with the threat of arrest as an intimidation tactic, police often raid the homes of targeted bloggers, sometimes seizing equipment.’¹¹⁹

10.5.6 Premium Times, a Nigerian news outlet, stated in August 2017:

‘President Muhammadu Buhari has been urged to prevail on the military to halt its ongoing monitoring of Nigerians on the Internet.

‘The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project, SERAP, was joined by another civic group, Concerned Nigerians, in a recent demand for the president to respect the freedom of Nigerians on all social media platforms...

‘The admonition followed an announcement by Defence Headquarters that citizens are being monitored for “hate speech, anti-government and anti-security information” on social media.

‘The defence spokesperson, John Enenche, who hinted at the operation in an interview with Channels Television this week did not elaborate on the type of speeches that military deemed as constituting “hate” or “anti-government.”... But the administration’s stance on did not go down well with many Nigerians, and rights groups have roundly criticised any attempts to curb freedom of expression.’¹²⁰

10.5.7 Freedom House in their Freedom in the World 2020:

‘Nigerians are generally free to engage in discussions on politics and other topics, though expression of critical views on political leaders or sensitive subjects like the military, religion, and ethnicity occasionally leads to arrests or violent reprisals. By 2018, both houses of the National Assembly had passed the Digital Rights and Freedom Bill, which would expand freedom of expression online by regulating government surveillance and prohibiting the suspension of internet services [at the time of writing the bill had not become law in the sources consulted – see [Bibliography](#)]. The bill was sent to the president in February 2019, but Buhari declined to sign the bill in March, stating that it covered too many technical subjects and did not address them extensively. A revised version of the bill was making its way through the National Assembly as 2019 ended.’¹²¹

10.5.8 The 2020 DFAT country information report on Nigeria stated: ‘Internet service providers sometimes block websites at the NCC’s [The Nigerian Communications Commission] request, particularly websites advocating Biafran independence.’¹²²

10.5.9 No further information was found in the sources consulted of the Nigerian authorities monitoring the online or physical activities of the diaspora in the UK (see [Bibliography](#)).

¹¹⁹ FH, ‘[Freedom on the Net 2020](#)’ (Nigeria), October 2020

¹²⁰ Premium Times, ‘[Stop military from tracking Nigerians groups tell Buhari](#)’, 27 August 2017

¹²¹ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2020 - Nigeria](#)’ (section D4), 4 March 2020

¹²² DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (section 3.70), updated 3 December 2020

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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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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **29 March 2021**

Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information and assessment.

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