



INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA

March 23, 2020

Agnes Callamard
United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions
Human Rights Council

Dear Special Rapporteur Callamard:

I. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the opportunity to submit additional factual materials for your consideration for inclusion in the official final report of your mission to Nigeria from August 19 to September 3, 2019 in your capacity as UN Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. As you mention in your September 2 End of Visit Statement, the situation in Nigeria is volatile and violent, and “is a tragedy for the people of Nigeria.”

As concerned citizens and members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), we write to thank you for your attention to this crisis, provide supporting evidence to the observations you include in your preliminary report, and encourage you to continue to highlight the bloodshed and injustices taking place in Nigeria so that the international community will finally understand the urgency and importance of joining together to hold the Nigerian national government accountable and end these atrocities.

II. VIOLATIONS OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS & THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

As you have seen for yourself, the number of human rights abuses being committed against minorities and those with dissenting views in Nigeria, including members of the IPOB, over the past five years have increased dramatically both in scale and heinousness. These crimes, committed by state and non-state actors alike, are at best ignored by the Buhari regime and at worst sanctioned by the administration. Instances of mass murders and other horrific acts of violence are rarely investigated and perpetrators are not prosecuted. Even where violence has been demonstrated to have been led by state security actors, no mechanism exists to hold those responsible accountable.

Most concerning to us in particular as Biafrans is the massacre of Christians by Fulani extremists – a group that the 2019 Global Terrorism Index estimates is deadlier than Boko Haram, that has gone largely unacknowledged by the West. While atrocities are being committed regularly based on long simmering ethnic tensions and disputes over resources, the international community must not ignore this aspect of the conflict, which some have suggested is reminiscent of Rwanda in the 1990s, and Darfur and South Sudan in the 2000s.

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As some findings in your September 2 End of Visit Statement suggest, members of IPOB living in Nigeria continue to face violence and persecution each day. As such, included in this submission please find a video compilation containing recorded footage as well as a written explanation that details some of the most heinous and serious incidents affecting IPOB members in recent years.¹ All of these instances constitute gross violations of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles 6, 14 and 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including but not limited to the inherent right to life, liberty and security of person regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, and the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs;² the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law;³ and the right to equal protection of the law.⁴

1. On February 9, 2016, the Nigerian military surrounded a peaceful gathering of IPOB members and supporters at Aba National High School and fired live ammunition at them without any prior warning. According to eyewitnesses and local human rights activists, 9 people were killed and many of the protesters at Aba were rounded up and taken away by the military. Four days later 13 corpses, including those of men known to have been taken by the military, were discovered in a pit near the Aba highway.
2. On May 30, 2016 in Onitsha, Anambra State, dozens of Biafrans were killed by Nigerian security forces while peacefully celebrating Biafra Remembrance Day. Estimates range from at least 60 fatalities but have been cited as high as 150 in what Amnesty International labeled a “chilling crackdown.” Evidence gathered from eyewitnesses, morgues and hospitals confirmed that between May 29-30, 2016, the Nigerian military opened fire on members of the IPOB, supporters, and bystanders at three locations in the town.

Mass extrajudicial executions by security forces are not isolated to this incident. An Amnesty International investigation concluded that video, photos and eyewitness accounts consistently showed that the military fired live ammunition at IPOB gatherings between 2015 and 2016 with little or no warning to disperse crowds.

¹ Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, “Violence Against Biafrans- 2015 to 2019,” 11 Mar 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMFM6-Wu8oo&feature=youtu.be> [accessed 16 March 2020].

² UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), art. 2.

³ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171.

⁴ Ibid.



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3. On January 20, 2017, 65 IPOB members were arrested and one killed at a pro-Biafra rally to commemorate the inauguration of President Donald Trump in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Tear gas was used to disperse the crowds of peaceful participants.
4. At least four Biafrans were killed when Nigerian forces opened fire on pro-Biafra supporters congregating at IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu's residence in Umuahia, Abia State on September 14, 2017.
5. On May 30, 2018, members of the IPOB were asked to observe a sit-at-home order in recognition of the anniversary of the declaration of independence by Biafra in 1967 and a day dedicated to Biafran heroes. The sit-at-home was successful in many parts of the South East, but Nigerian soldiers shot and killed Kelvin Nnamdi Ikemeh while observing the sit-at-home. His body was taken away by soldiers. Another member of IPOB was allegedly shot and killed by security forces while attempting to set up a barricade in Nnewi, Anambra State.
6. In August 2018, the IPOB called for an international inquiry to investigate the execution of 38 pro-Biafra activists by the Federal Government after the discovery of 38 bodies of slain Biafrans at Obiawom village, Ogwe Autonomous Community, in Asa, Ukwa West Local Government Area of Abia State. The killings are believed to be the outcome of Operation Python Dance, which was carried out by the Nigerian Army in the South East zone.
7. On August 17, 2018, 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.
8. On May 22, 2019, 140 IPOB members were arrested during a peaceful burial procession and charged with treason. The Enugu state police command confirmed the arrests within the Nsukka area of the state, stating the individuals were arrested for allegedly "organizing unlawful procession and display of proscribed items on the streets."
9. On October 15, 2019, a petroleum tanker exploded in a central commerce area in Onitsha, Anambra State, killing at least two people and destroying many businesses. Government-run fire services refused to respond to the incident.
10. At least two IPOB members were killed when the home of IPOB lead counsel, Barrister Ejiofor, was attacked in Anambra State on December 4, 2019.
11. On December 8, 2019, IPOB member Chibuike Ojoko was killed and decapitated by Fulani herdsmen after they invaded the Ndunwafu Village by surprise.



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12. On December 12, 2019, Nigerian forces killed an IPOB member in Abuja at a police checkpoint.
13. In addition to the atrocities perpetrated against members of the Indigenous People of Biafra, instability in the country has resulted in the death of at least 589 Nigerians this year. An appendix is attached at the end of this letter, which documents the location, date, and number of people killed in Nigeria thus far in 2020.

These instances represent only a small fraction of the arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial executions perpetrated against Biafrans over the past several years. The actual number of deaths is alarmingly high and information regarding these and other cases is being suppressed by the Nigerian government.

III. CONCLUSION

At the height of the war in 1969, 12,000 people a day starved to death in Biafra at the hands of the Nigerian government. More than 50 years later, the violent persecution of Biafrans and other minority groups by the Nigerian state continues unabated. The UN has identified the IPOB as one group that is specifically targeted, repressed and arbitrarily killed by state actors, and the respective conflicts in the Middle Belt and Southern States – where IPOB members reside – constitute a major security challenge. In 2018, this conflict was six times deadlier than the Boko Haram insurgency and has displaced over 300,000 people. We fear without intervention, history may repeat itself.

The Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1989/65 of 24 May 1989, establishes the obligation of Governments “to guarantee effective protection through judicial or other means to individuals and groups who are in danger of extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions,” and requires that they “make every effort to prevent extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions,”⁵ and implement “thorough, prompt and impartial investigation of all suspected cases of extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions, including cases where complaints by relatives or other reliable reports suggest unnatural death in the above circumstances.” Nigeria has failed to meet its obligations.

Once again, we thank you for your attention to this humanitarian crisis. We are hopeful that the additional factual information, videos and eyewitness accounts provided in this submission will help tell the full story of what is taking place on the ground, and look forward to the publication and presentation of your final report. The time has come for the Nigerian government to face

⁵ UN General Assembly, *Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions Recommended by Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/65*, 24 May 1989, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/executions.pdf> [accessed 10 March 2020].



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pressure by the international community to adhere to its human rights obligations and constitutional commitments to its citizens.

Respectfully,

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IV. APPENDIX

In addition to the atrocities perpetrated against members of the Indigenous People of Biafra, instability in the country has resulted in the death of at least 589 Nigerians this year. Included below please find documentation of the location, date, and number of people killed in Nigeria thus far in 2020, as of March 10.



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<u>Date</u>	<u>Number Killed</u>	<u>Location(s)</u>	<u>Source(s)</u>
January 1	1	Plateau State	The Punch
January 2	1	Ekiti State	Daily Post Nigeria
January 3	23	Benue State (2 killed), Borno State (2 killed), Kogi State (19 killed)	New Telegraph , Sahara Reporters , Al Jazeera
January 4	4	Bayelsa State	The Nation Nigeria
January 5	4	Taraba State	Daily Trust
January 6	71	Kaduna State (37 killed), Borno State (33 killed), Katsina State (1 killed)	The Daily Times Nigeria , Daily Trust , Information Nigeria , The Guardian Nigeria
January 7	4	Borno State	The Sun Nigeria
January 8	34	Borno State (20 killed), Delta State (1 killed), Plateau State (13 killed)	Reuters , The Punch , The Guardian Nigeria
January 9	3	Borno State	The Whistler
January 13	7	Edo State (2 killed), Borno State (5 killed)	The Punch , The Daily Star
January 14	31	Kaduna State (30 killed), Adamawa State (1 killed)	Premium Times Nigeria , The Punch
January 17	3	Delta State (1 killed), Kaduna State (2 killed)	Daily Post Nigeria , Christian Headlines
January 18	20	Borno State	Human Rights Watch
January 19	1	Adamawa State	Daily Post Nigeria
January 20	4	Nasarawa State	The Punch
January 21	8	Borno State (7 killed), Adamawa State (1 killed)	AFP , Daily Post Nigeria
January 23	5	Borno State	The Punch
January 26	27	Borno State (4 killed), Plateau State (23 killed)	The Guardian Nigeria , The Punch
January 27	17	Plateau State (17 killed), Oyo State (1 killed)	Sahara Reporters , Vanguard



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January 28	4	Edo State (1 killed), Ogun State (1 killed), Borno State (2 killed)	The Punch , Independent Nigeria , The Punch
January 30	3	Borno State	The Punch
January 31	9	Borno State (8 killed), Ogun State (1 killed),	The Punch , Daily Post Nigeria , Naija News
February 1	1	Kaduna State	Breitbart
February 3	15	Kaduna State (11 killed), Taraba State (2 killed), Plateau State (2 killed)	The Punch , Sahara Reporters , The Punch
February 4	4	Delta State (3 killed), Katsina State (1 killed)	The Guardian Nigeria , The Punch
February 5	4	Kaduna State (3 killed), Katsina State (1 killed)	Channels TV , The Punch
February 6	3	Delta State (1 killed), Taraba State (2 killed)	The Guardian Nigeria , This Day
February 8	5	Niger State (3 killed), Kaduna State (2 killed)	Council on Foreign Relations
February 9	33	Borno State (30 killed), Plateau State (3 killed)	BBC , New Telegraph Nigeria
February 10	6	Borno State	Council on Foreign Relations
February 11	21	Kaduna State	Council on Foreign Relations
February 12	7	Kaduna State	Council on Foreign Relations
February 13	10	Delta State	The Punch
February 14	31	Katsina State (30 killed), Plateau State (1 killed)	Bloomberg , Sahara Reporters
February 16	8	Bayelsa State (6 killed), Plateau State (2 killed)	Council on Foreign Relations
February 17	4	Federal Capital Territory (1 killed), Ondo State (2 killed), Katsina State (1 killed)	The Punch , Council on Foreign Relations
February 18	4	Edo State (2 killed), Plateau State (2 killed)	Council on Foreign Relations



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February 19	7	Adamawa State (1 killed), Edo State (6 killed)	Sahara Reporters , Council on Foreign Relations
February 20	6	Ondo State (2 killed), Ogun State (2 killed), Kaduna State (2 killed)	The Punch , Council on Foreign Relations
February 21	7	Federal Capital Territory (2 killed), Yobe State (5 killed)	Council on Foreign Relations
February 23	1	Delta State	This Day
February 27	27	Katsina State (21 killed), Delta State (6 killed)	The Punch , The Punch
February 29	10	Borno State	The Guardian Nigeria
March 1	51	Kaduna State	Council on Foreign Relations
March 2	2	Kano State	Vanguard Nigeria
March 3	4	Benue State	Council on Foreign Relations
March 4	23	Delta State (3 killed), Borno State (6 killed), Yobe State (8 killed), Benue State (4 killed), Zamfara State (2 killed)	Council on Foreign Relations , Al Jazeera , AFP , This Day , Sahara Reporters , Vanguard Nigeria
March 8	8	Zamfara State	The Punch
March 9	1	Benue State	The Punch
March 10	2	Kaduna State (1 killed), Ondo State (1 killed)	The Punch , Independent Nigeria