

# Obi bans MASSOB, NARTO

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movement and the National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) in Onitsha.

The development came shortly after police headquarters deployed Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) Zone 9, Mr. Adewole Ajakaiye to Onitsha to bring sanity there.

Last Friday, hostilities between the police and the movement claimed the lives of five, the burning of a police station, an armoured personnel carrier (APC) and a Tata vehicle.

It was believed that MASSOB last night burnt the Three-Three police station in the commercial nerve centre of the state as a reprisal measure for the police raid on their Akpaka forest reserve base.

Addressing a press conference yesterday on the security situation in Anambra State, Governor Obi vowed to deal ruthlessly with all the groups causing ill feelings in Onitsha once the federal government gave him the go ahead.

He appealed to President Obasanjo to intervene in the security crises in Anambra State by taking a stand on the issue to enable the state take immediate action to quell the business and capital flight from the state, noting that the federal government can as well give the state directive to take action.

His words, "The Anambra State Government has observed with utmost regret the events of the last few days in which some hoodlums, operating under various organizations both registered and un-registered have been attempting to create an atmosphere of disturbance in the commercial city of Onitsha. This cannot be tolerated. All these groups have been outlawed as they don't represent anything other than what is bad for the society and their selfish interest. We will only work with duly recognized law enforcement agency".

"We cannot descend so low to work with other groups not legally recognized because they are creating confusion, burning police property which is like burning government property. They are engaged in a family war. To every group we say, please leave. We are appealing to every group who knows these groups to please tell them to leave both good and bad. We are going through the due process, if not they don't have the monopoly of rascality.

Going further Governor Obi pointed out that, "This problem can only be solved by the federal government. Until they come to our aid and take a stand, we can't take action because it is bordering on national security which is under the federal government. I would want the federal government to take a stand. I'm sure Mr President would take a stand favourable to us or direct that we take action. I have implicit confidence in the Nigerian police. If the police said that they have given up, let's call in the army. I don't believe that any group can stand the military strength of this country. We want to see the stand of the federal government because they are a small group to handle.

He lamented that the troubles the miscreants have caused the state when they don't contribute anything meaningful but, crises and destruction even when the Anambra State House of Assembly had passed a law proscribing the activities of NARTO in the state, warning that after the president and the commander in chief of the armed forces had taken a stand, the crises in Onitsha and Anambra at large caused by NARTO, MASSOB and other groups would be a thing

of the past.

Governor Obi appealed to peace loving people of Anambra State to remain calm and peaceful even in the face of deliberate aggression and provocation and pleaded with the miscreants who according to him are mostly *Ndigbo* to desist from actions calculated to inflict pains on their kith and kin as they should not destabilize the society that they would bequeath to their children.

He stressed that only in the atmosphere of peace that the economy would grow and urged parents and guardians of the misdirected youths, to impress on them the necessity to be law abiding as the consequences of their current actions could only be unpleasant. He finally noted that President Obasanjo has promised to address the problem the moment he is back to the country.

*Sunday Champion* gathered that the resultant hostilities had led to the blockade of Owerri road, the only link between the state and the rest of the world.

Although it was not clear who blocked the road, residents of the area claimed that members of National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) were responsible.

Meanwhile hoodlums have cashed in on the development to rob commuters and passers by in the area. Many were dispossessed of their money and handsets.

Ajakaiye yesterday visited Obi of Onitsha, Igwe Alfred Achebe and Catholic Bishop of Onitsha, Most Rev. Valerian Okeke in what Ajakaiye said was part of community policing which included the government, the police and the people to ensure peace and security in the town.

Ajakaiye said that the losses recorded by the police in the clash with MASSOB were part of professional hazard, stating that they have reached a critical stage where they have to involve the opinion leaders because "it is now a psychological war".

The AIG said he has temporarily relocated to Onitsha to ensure that peace was returned to the commercial city.

Obi of Onitsha had lamented that the crisis has taken a toll in the economy of Onitsha and Anambra State, stating that there was no effort to nip MASSOB in the bud because if that had been done, we will not be experiencing the crisis today.

MASSOB on Friday burnt two police vehicles including the Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) worth several millions of naira and Tata-truck.



quest lecturer, with Mr. Fidelis Oyakhi  
National Security in Democratic Gov-  
Photo: FRANCIS OJO

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masses to give more emphasis on the character and pedigree of contestants.

Although he submitted that where a candidate comes from was immaterial, Justice Oputa however, noted that it would align with justice and equity if the South east is supported by other zones to produce the president.