



■ From left: Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Works, Rep. Abubakar Kabir Abubakar and Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, during a courtesy visit to the Governor at Lagos House yesterday

Photo: Benedict Uwalaka

Experts warn of anarchy as IPOB locks down South-East

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Analysts and social commentators yesterday rang the warning bell over what they described as setting in of anarchy in the South-East region following total lockdown of the five southeastern states in compliance with the stay-at-home directive issued by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB).

Our correspondents report that streets were completely deserted in all major cities as residents shelter at home for fear of drawing the ire of the IPOB militiamen who patrolled key areas ahead in the past three days.

IPOB through its spokesperson, Emma Powerful hailed governors from the South-East in a press statement for "supporting" the stay-at-home directive to commemorate the lives of those killed in the area during the Nigerian Civil War.

Daily Trust reports that tension had mounted in the five states of the South-East zone of the country ahead of the sit-at-home order issued by the proscribed self-declaration group, which took effect yesterday.

Although some state governments in the zone initially kicked against the directive by IPOB, with warnings to trouble-makers to stay off the zone, our correspondents report total compliance, a development that attracted praises from IPOB for the South-East governors for supporting the sit-at-home directive.

Looming anarchy

Security analysts and social commentators who spoke with Daily Trust yesterday warned of impending anarchy.

A political scientist and public affairs commentator, Prof Jibrin Ibrahim said there appears to be a "unity of purpose" between the secessionist agitators and political leaders from the region. He however predicted the relationship to be short-lived.

Prof Ibrahim said the proscribed group has, by now, "engaged in a total attack against the Nigerian state" through years of "effective pursuance of its agenda".

According to him, "The major problem is that their elite have kept quiet for too long, and that is very disappointing because the people of the South-East are spread all over Nigeria. They have fruitful investments all over the country which they are going to lose by going to war. The feeling I have is that they don't seem

to care," he said.

On his part, a human rights activist and former chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, Professor Chidi Odinkalu said compliance with the sit-at-home order in the southeast amounted to a vote of no confidence in the political leadership in the region.

"The people are questioning the imposed model of political leadership in the region. All over the region, you have politicians who were manufactured into office.

"In Imo State, for instance, you have a governor who came fourth in the elections but became first through the Supreme Court's verdict. There is also the case of Okiagwu North Central zone where a man who was disqualified succeeded in being manufactured into office.

"So, part of the narrative is about the functionality or legitimacy of political leadership in the region," Odinkalu said.

A security Management and Intelligence Specialist, Kabiru Adamu said the sit-at-home order shows clearly that non-state actors are challenging the supremacy of the state, adding that the success of this challenge indicates an increasing failure of the capacity of the state to provide security for its citizens.

"Unfortunately it points to the failing nature of the Nigerian state; the more non-state actors like the proscribed IPOB issue such directives -and these directives are successful- the more we see this kind of failure by the state. It does not in any way portend well for our national security.

"What we know for a fact is that unfortunately and consistently when IPOB attacked and even force people to do things against their will and the security agencies have not been able to prevent that. So, it is our understanding that people just chose to comply mainly because of safety reasons," Adamu said.

With regards to the governors, he said they are playing the political card, saying: "I think they are being politically correct mainly to help themselves and to avoid issues that may come. The governors are sitting on the fence but what I would like to remind them is that this is a phase in an insurgency. It appears this phase is to target security infrastructure. Phase two would be to target individuals and it is very likely that phase three would be to target government offices and all that."

South-East shut down

Streets in the five states making the southeast of Nigeria were deserted yesterday as residents complied with the sit-at-home order by the proscribed

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Our correspondents report that government offices, schools, hotels, shopping malls, and banks were under lock and key as markets and roads were empty in the major cities of Aba, Owerri, Awka, Ebonyi and Enugu among others. IPOB praised the people for compliance, boasting that 'very soon the stage will be set for our referendum to decide our fate'.

Daily Trust reports that four persons were reportedly killed in Ebonyi as security operatives engaged members of IPOB enforcing the sit-at-home order in the area.

It was also gathered that all roads leading into and out of Anambra, especially Onitsha, the bridgehead that links Asaba and Western States of Nigeria, Enugu-Anambra at Amasea border and those leading into and exit of Nnewi- the industrial city of Anambra State were ghosts of themselves as residents deserted them.

Daily Trust observed the presence of joint security personnel, comprising Army, Navy, Nigeria Security, and Civil Defence Corps, Immigration officers at both ends of Niger Bridge head as well as Oga junction by Atani Road to prevent the breakdown of law and order.

People who were on essential duties, such as doctors, nurses, journalists were periodically checked by security operatives before allowed to proceed on their journey.

Similarly, the streets of Owerri, the Imo State capital and its environs were empty as residents observed the sit-at-home order.

In a bid to maintain law and order, a combined team of security agents drawn from the army, police, navy and sister agencies cordoned off strategic areas identified as flashpoints in and around Owerri and its environs.

Our correspondent gathered that there was a heavy military presence along Aba - Owerri Road, specifically at Naze No 1, Akachi Road where some air force personnel were allegedly killed on Saturday. There was also a heavy security presence at Okiagwu Road and at Imo State University roundabout.

Men of the anti-kidnapping unit in their patrol vans took over Umezurike Hospital off Royce Road, while Ama JK along Douglas Road, Control Roundabout, Concord Hotel Road by first inland road junction and Protea Hotel.

Heavy security presence was also witnessed at Airport Junction Aba-Owerri Road and Obiangwu-Ngor Okpala, where a former presidential aide, Ahmed Gulak,

was killed on Sunday.

The sit-at-home order also gained compliance in Aba, Abia State.

Our reporter who monitored the situation around three major axes in the city: Over-Rail, Aba Main Town and Ndiegoro reported that all major and minor markets including street shops in people's residences were all shut down.

Business outfits including banks, government offices, markets and schools were also closed.

Notable specialised goods markets like the Jubilee Road auto spare parts markets, St Michael's Road phone and computer accessories market, Hospital Road electrical Market and the popular Pound Road kitchen utensils Market were without commercial activities.

Foodstuffs markets like Ama-Ogbonna Market, Achiaru Market, Abia-Udele, Good morning Market, Highlife Market, Nkwor-Ngwa Market and the ever-busy Railway Halt Market were also affected by the order.

Our reporter also observed that the Aba Central Police Station, Aba Area Command Headquarters, and the Ndiegoro Police Station remained barricaded with police officers within their barracks and station gates.

There was heavy shooting at Nnodo in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State between suspected members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the police.

Daily Trust also gathered that the shooting erupted between the police and members of the IPOB when they were enforcing the sit-at-home order on residents in the area.

A reliable source who doesn't want his name in print told our correspondent that motorbikes and cars were set ablaze during the attack.

Explosion rocks market in Rivers

The sit-at-home order recorded insignificant compliance in Oyiabo urban in Oyiabo Local Government Area of Rivers State where there is a huge presence of Igbo residents just as an explosion rocked parts of the popular Mile 3 Park Market in Port Harcourt.

Our reporter learnt that Igbo residents of Oyiabo did not go to market yesterday in compliance with the sit-at-home directives. It was also observed that the entrance gate of the popular Eke Oyiabo Market, mainly dominated by the Igbo traders, was open for business but many of the traders did not open their shops.

Also in Port Harcourt, the popular Diobu Market where most of the traders are Igbo did not also open their stores in compliance with the order.

A trader at Oyiabo Market, Ikechukwu Ibe said that they decided to close their businesses on Monday in honour of the fallen Igbo heroes who died during the Biafran war.

Elsewhere in Jos, the Plateau State capital, our correspondent reports that shop owners especially Igbo closed their business premises for fear of reprisal attacks over what is happening in the South-East.

It was observed that many Igbo especially those having their businesses within the heart of the city didn't open their business in the morning, while those who opened later closed in the afternoon.

Our correspondent who went round Ahmadu Bello Way, Katakao Market and other areas within the city reports that apart from the Igbo, other business owners equally closed their business for fear of unforeseen violence that may erupt in the city.

Security agents, including police and SSS, were seen in their numbers around the popular Ahmadu Bello Way, trying to avert the eruption of violence in the area and other strategic locations of the state capital.