

Onitsha deserted over bomb scare

• CLO alleges extra-judicial killings, torture

ONITSHA city was yesterday deserted amidst rumours that the once boisterous city was about to be bombed by the military. The fear was further fuelled by alleged threats of a showdown by the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

Residents fled to remote villages while markets were shut, despite assurance by the state Governor, Peter Obi.

Onitsha/Enugu expressway was also deserted with few vehicles plying the road. Public primary

*From
Gbenga Akinfenwa,
Onitsha*

and secondary schools, including some of the private ones in the city were locked up with only the final year students writing their Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) seen coming out of the schools.

The ever-busy Awka Road and old Market Road were also deserted as some shops were locked up.

In his reaction to the situation, the Chairman, Anambra Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Nze Emeka Umeagbalasi, said there were deliberate extra-judicial killings being carried out by the military and police personnel, especially in Fegge area of Onitsha.

In a letter addressed to the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the chairman said there were also indiscriminate arrests, torture and solitary detention of mainly innocent members of the

human rights organisation's family, stressing that apart from two alleged MASSOB members who were reportedly shot dead on June 27 on Port Harcourt Road, Onitsha, unidentified citizens, numbering about eight, were believed to have been killed.

The chairman said three persons were reportedly frog-jumped and pushed inside a gutter where they were reportedly shot dead. Four others were

Continued on Page 2

PHOTO: ABAYOMI FA

Onitsha turns ghost town

Continued from Page 1
reportedly dragged out of their homes, which the armed security men commonly called, "hideouts" and shot dead and their remains taken away. As it is now, residents are fleeing with some relocat-

ing to their villages," he added.

Said he: "Homes are being broken into and there are yet to be substantiated allegations that young married women and girls are being sexually harassed and over-powered."

Some young women are alleged to have given out their cell-phone numbers to the rampaging armed security men with a view to sexually partnering with them or to be spared from their homes being raided".

He stressed that the findings made by the Anambra CLO investigators are chilling and alarming. The areas affected are Ihiala, Anaekwe, Alor, Ukpok, Ofili, Akoakwa Street and Port Harcourt Road. He stated that an eyewitness on Alor Street told the CLO that on June 30, four unidentified persons were shot dead on the street.

According to the chairman, the victims were allegedly brought out from one of the L300 Mitsubishi buses in front of No. 23 Alor Street by men of the Mobile Police Force under the watchful eyes of some armed military men and shot dead. Their remains were dumped inside the booth of their L300 bus and moved to unknown destinations.

He condemned the unprovoked homicidal attacks on innocent persons, saying that the successes so far recorded in ridding Onitsha and its environs of hoodlums and other armed criminals are on the verge of being rubbished by these horrendous acts.

"We also condemn the reported abduction of five policemen in Nkpor and the killing of three policemen in Onitsha by suspected MASSOB militants. The harbouring of ethnic sentiments or grudges by some armed police or military personnel, who now go about killing, maiming, torturing, looting or raping innocent members of the human family is despicable and condemnable," he said.

The chairman urged the President to call his statutory security chiefs in the affected areas.

He urged the security personnel to carefully fish out real culprits and to identify victims or their families so as to compensate them.

He also condemned the large sums of money being demanded for the release of suspects by the police authorities