

# TheMetroSection

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## Road users in pains over military checkpoints on Enugu-Anambra road

From **Lawrence Njoku** (Enugu)

It was a horrible and dehumanising experience for road users on the dilapidated Enugu-Onitsha Expressway, following their subjection to a stop-and-search operation by soldiers mounting a checkpoint between Enugu and Anambra states.

The inhuman treatment, they said, was akin to the treatment meted to captives from a war-ravaged territory.

To cross Amansea-Awka boundary, passengers are dropped off a few metres away and forced to raise both hands in surrender and walk about two kilometres to resume their journey.

Also, no vehicle is authorised to proceed with more than the driver, who is thoroughly searched by soldiers.

The development followed what has been described as a "stop-and-search" op-

eration adopted by the soldiers since last Sunday in which a military checkpoint was attacked at Ihiala in Anambra State, which resulted in the killing of a soldier and stealing of his rifle.

*The Guardian* gathered that unknown gunmen, who operated from the bush, had opened fire on the soldiers, killing one and removing his rifle, adding that though the soldiers fired back and "killed" one of the attackers with the amount of blood that flowed at the place, his body was not recovered.

One of the travellers, Mrs. Amaka Nweze, who went through the ugly experience at the Amansea military checkpoint, while travelling for a burial in Awka on Wednesday, told *The Guardian* that it was a "horrible and painful experience."

"If I knew this is what people are suffering, I will not



Some of the travellers at the checkpoint

attend this burial. I left Enugu around noon on Wednesday to attend a burial on Thursday in my home town in Ifite-Dunu. On approaching the Amansea boundary, I saw several vehicles lined up

and our driver started asking everybody to come down and walk across the military checkpoint," she added.

Another traveler, Chief Johnson Udogu, a community leader in Awka, also

narrated his painful experience, "when my driver told me to come to the driver's seat when we got to the check point so that he will join others and walk, I told him to continue his driving that I will go and

talk to them. I got there and introduced myself to them, but they insisted that I should not return to where my vehicle was in the queue but to continue to walk and wait for my driver until he passed the checkpoint.

"It was only during the civil war that people were subjected to raising their hands as they walked while guns were pointed to them. I have not been able to overcome the fear and the horrible experience I had." Confirming the development, an official of the Anambra State Government, who craved anonymity, asked road users to bear with the government for now.

He told *The Guardian* that it was part of measures introduced by the military to improve security in the state, especially around boundary communities after the attack on the Ihiala checkpoint.