

Biafra Day: Eight Killed, 481 Arrested In Anambra, Imo, Ebonyi

By **Our Correspondents** - May 23, 2018



Awka / Owerri / Abakaliki – The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) has claimed that eight of its members were killed, four wounded, while more than 381 others were clamped into detention as it celebrated its Independence Day.

MASSOB said Tuesday, May 22, 2018, was the 18th anniversary of the Independence of New Biafra. New Biafra, the group said, was being celebrated in continuation of its desire to achieve sovereignty from Nigeria.

In a statement issued by its Director of Information, Mazi Chris Mocha, the group said while its members were gathered at the Onitsha-Owerri Road, Obosi junction, a joint military task force, including the army, navy, police, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps arrived in over 45 Hilux vehicles and shot dead five of their members.

According to the statement, 206 of its members were arrested and clamped into detention.

It listed the name of some of the arrested members.

The statement also stated that four persons, including Chief Vincent Iloh, Ebuka Emmanuel, Innocent Okolie, and Mrs. Virginia Ubazuonu, received machete cuts on their heads from the JTF in its desperate attempts to disperse the crowd.

Three Shot, 175 Arrested As Police Swoop On MASSOB Members In Owerri

No fewer than 175 members of MASSOB and the Biafra Independence Movement (BIM) were on Tuesday arrested by the police; and are currently cooling their feet in police cell in Owerri, the Imo State capital.

They were hauled into police custody following their participation in the 18th anniversary celebration of the group in the state.

Samuel Njoku, the Regional Coordinator of MASSOB/BIM in Owerri region, who spoke to newsmen soon after the group was forcefully dispersed by a combined team of military and other security operatives, disclosed that about 150 members of the organisation were arrested in Owerri before the procession started.

Another 25 coming from the Okigwe axis for the anniversary procession were arrested by the police

while on their way to the capital city.

About three persons were feared dead after the security operatives stormed and attacked the group in a bid to scuttle the procession slated to commence from Old Timber Market on Wetheral Road to end at Port Harcourt Road, also in the metropolis.

This disclosure was made by Mazi Sunny Okereafor, the Regional Commander and MASSOB's spokesman, in a chat with newsmen.

According to Njoku and Okereafor, the fierce looking security personnel swooped on the MASSOB/BIM members in a commando-like operation and ferociously pounced on everyone in sight around the area.

They also shot sporadically into the air while throwing tear-gas canisters indiscriminately in an attempt to disperse the celebrators, leaving scores wounded, the duo said.

Njoku confirmed that about three members of the group were shot dead by the security operatives, adding that journalists, who had come to cover the event, were also manhandled by men of the Nigeria police, the army and air-force.

Among the journalists who were manhandled was the Punch correspondent in Imo State, Emeka Ihiegbulam.

He was hit severally on the head with baton and gun butt and forced to tie Biafran flag round his body in order to pass him as one of the MASSOB members.

While making great effort to speak to newsmen from his sick bed, Ihiegbulam recalled that the security operatives attacked him and snatched his identity card, mini-recorder and other personal effects despite introducing himself to them as a journalist.

Okereafor, who decried the unleashing of mayhem on the group by the security operatives, wondered why they would be attacked by armed security agents despite their non-violent method of demanding for self-determination.

According to him, many of the aged members of the group were easily injured, as the security operatives pushed and beat the crowd, while those in uniform had their clothes torn and severed from their bodies.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer in the State, Andrew Enwerem, confirmed the arrest of some MASSOB/BIM members, saying they were nabbed for attempting to cause breach of public peace and heat up the polity.

Police Nab MASSOB Members In Ebonyi

The Police in Ebonyi State, assisted by other security agencies, arrested scores of members of MASSOB in Abakaliki, the Ebonyi State capital, on Tuesday.

The MASSOB members were said to be on a peaceful march round major streets of the city.

But security agencies in the state accosted them along Nkaliki Road as they started the peaceful march, sprayed tear gas, and arrested some of them, it was gathered.

The army, the Department of State Services (DSS), and the police carried out the joint operation. Commander of the Nigerian Military Cantonment in Nkwegu, Col S. O. Sadiq, confirmed the participation of the army in the operation, adding that all the arrested persons had been handed over to the police.

He stressed that MASSOB did not notify security agencies in the state of the event in writing, stating that this necessitated the action.

Loveth Odah, the Police Spokesperson in the state, also confirmed the incident to our reporter but could not give the actual number of persons arrested.

"I don't have details of the actual number of persons arrested right now, when I get the full details I will let you know," she said.

But a member of the group claimed that about 100 persons were arrested.

Comments

1 comments