

Sit-at-home order: Four feared killed, vehicles burnt as economic activities shut down in S/East states

IPOB salutes Igbo on compliance

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THE order by the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) that South easterners should sit at home every Monday, starting from August 9, to compel the Federal Government to release their leader, Nnamdi Kanu, claimed three lives in Anambra State on Monday.

A passenger was reportedly burnt to ashes in Imo State with three vehicles conveying passengers from Umuahia, Abia State, to Owerri, also burnt.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that at Nnewi, the two people who died in a confrontation between the army and suspected members of IPOB at Izuchukwu junction area of Roundabout in the industrial town, according to an eyewitness, were a leader of Eastern Security Network (ESN) and a commercial motorcyclist.

According to an eyewitness, problem started at about 7:00 a.m. when some IPOB members came out to enforce the sit-at-home order and, in the process, blocked major roads in the industrial town.

Some unidentified soldiers, according to the source, came in to clear the blockade, leading to altercation between them and the IPOB members, with the duo eventually killed by gunshots by the soldiers.

Nnewi was reduced to a ghost town as some residents who had initially come out for their daily business had to rush back home.

Some vehicles were also smashed by aggrieved individuals over the attack on the civilians by armed sol-

diers.

A combined team of security agencies later stormed the town to disperse the protesters.

Awka, the state capital, recorded partial compliance, because commercial buses and tricycles operators were seen conveying passengers from one bus station to another.

Even at the banks location along Enugu-Onitsha expressway, the gates were locked but customers were seen patrolling the vicinity, waiting if the banks would eventually open for business.

Some civil servants were also seen going to their offices in line with the state government's order.

In the popular Eke-Awka market, traders shut down their shops for the fear of being looted by hoodlums.

At Onitsha, one person was shot dead, just as popular markets in the commercial city were closed, including shops and commercial banks within the metropolis.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that around 7:00 a.m., news had spread that a yet-to-be identified man had been shot dead at the Awada area of Onitsha.

Although no group claimed the death of the young man, rumour has it that he was murdered by some IPOB boys who came out in the streets early morning, chanting songs.

According to a source who pleaded anonymity, the deceased was murdered as early as 6:00 a.m. because he refused to go back home when he was ordered to do so.

When **Nigerian Tribune** contacted some residents near the main market, it was reported that all places were shut down with the presence of vigilante securitymen guarding the area.

Other places like the Ose

Okwaodu market, Ochanje market, Coca market in Uga all recorded compliance with the sit-at-home order, though there were few vehicular movements of tricycle riders along the Awka Road, Ugwuakpankpa Road, Upper New Market, as well as New Cemetery Road.

Also observed were kiosks which opened for people in the neighbourhood to buy some household items.

Chinedu Egbuche who spoke to **Nigerian Tribune** said it was unfortunate that people could not go about their normal businesses as a result of the order.

Another resident, Mrs Cecilia, said her son had National Examination Council (NECO) examination on Monday but she did not allow him to go.

Nigerian Tribune observed that some students were seen trekking to their various schools for their NECO examination.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Tochukwu Ikenga, could not be reached as of press time.

The order was also obeyed in Enugu with social and commercial activities disrupted.

All schools, including government schools, were closed except NECO exam class teachers, invigilators and teachers who had trekked distances or paid exorbitant fares to motorists.

The Ogbete main market and Kenyatta markets were all under locks and keys. Banks also closed their doors for security reasons.

Government agencies, hotels and other public concerns were also shut to the public.

Curiously, there was sparse security deployment of soldiers and policemen as their patrol vans cruised through empty streets.

Ebonyi State also wit-

nessed about 90 per cent compliance of the sit-at-home order.

When the **Nigerian Tribune** visited some popular and busy roads in the state like Ogoja Road, International market, EzzaMgbo Market, Vancu Junction, Presco Junction, Speradeo Junction, there were skeletal movements of private vehicles, tricycles and motorcycle operations, but all offices, shops, banks, markets, including the state international market, were all shut.

At Afikpo road, it was discovered that all the transportation companies and parks were open, but no vehicle was seen loading or offloading.

A visit to some popular government and private schools showed that only students writing NECO examination were on the school premises.

At the popular Onuebonyi Axis, **Nigerian Tribune** gathered that IPOB members at the early hours of Monday blocked the road with tyres before security agencies arrived the scene and restored peace.

In Imo State, a passenger was burnt to ashes with three vehicles conveying passengers from Umuahia to Owerri also torched by some gunmen.

The incident happened at the early hours of Monday as **Nigerian Tribune** gathered that the driver of one of the buses was shot on his waist while other passengers escaped.

Two Hummer buses and a Sienna bus were said to have loaded at Umuahia and were heading to Owerri when they ran into gunmen at Nkwogwu Mbaise, on Owerri/Umuahia express-road.

The video clip showed that the driver managed to escape with the gunshot wound, while one of the

passengers was burnt inside one of the vehicles.

Eyewitness also said other passengers in the buses managed to escape.

When contacted, the state PPRO, Michael Abatham, said that the command was investigating the incident.

In Abia State, despite the announcement ordering workers to go to work, the sit-at-home order was obeyed in the state.

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu had, on Sunday night, directed that all civil servants must ensure they were at their places of work on Monday and going forward, except those exempted from work based on COVID-19 guidelines.

However, as early as 8:20 a.m. at Aba-Owerri Road axis of Aba, there was a sparing movement of both commuters and motorists, but at 12:00 p.m., the area was totally without any movement.

In Umuahia, major streets witnessed scanty movements of humans and vehicles.

Major markets in the state were open due to government's directive, but were shunned by traders for security reasons.

Banks operated behind closed doors, restricting businesses to automated teller machines, while parents withdrew their wards from schools.

Except for students writing NECO examinations, schools were shut with teachers inside to regulate students.

Stores in Aba were shut, while in Umuahia, a few were opened, even as eateries continue to function with little patronage.

Government institutions were open, including ministries and local government offices with limited staff movement.

Though no much security agencies movement was

noticed, there were indications that residents were conscious of being harassed by security agencies or IPOB adherents.

In Asaba and other communities in Delta State, economic activities went on unhindered.

Government offices, markets, banks were opened to customers for business as usual while vehicles and residents were seen moving freely along the streets in Asaba.

Nigerian Tribune, however, observed that policemen were positioned at strategic locations in the state capital.

According to the PPRO, Bright Edeaf, "police have been monitoring the situation, even since the order was given. As you can see, everybody is doing his lawful business without any hindrance in the state."

Reacting, IPOB expressed happiness towards the compliance to the sit-at-home order within the South-East states.

According to the group, the success recorded in the sit-at-home order has further demonstrated that IPOB is intact and has no issues with anybody, adding that "we are in unity and we can restore Biafra sooner than expected."

The group made this known in a statement signed by its media and publicity secretary, Comrade Emma Powerful, at the end of the order on Monday.

Emma further noted that the quest to demand for the release of their leader, Nnamdi Kanu, from DSS dungeons will continue but from another dimension until he is released.

He thanked God for making the exercise peaceful and hitch-free but maintained that "we will continue to push for our freedom peacefully till the end of this struggle for Biafra freedom."

Court orders final forfeiture of choice properties linked to Okorocha

A State High Court in Owerri has ordered the final and absolute forfeiture of Royal Palm Springs Hotel and other properties said to belong to Senator Rochas Okorocha and other members of his family.

The forfeited properties are contained in pages 226 to 272 of the Imo State government white paper report by a Judicial Commission of Enquiry on Recovery of Lands and other related matters.

According to the ruling by Justice Fred Njemanze, who was sitting as a vacation judge, Okorocha's counsel

failed to give concrete and verifiable reasons why a final and absolute forfeiture order should not be given in favour of the Imo State government.

Justice Njemanze added that the suit against the state government by Okorocha's counsel was not properly filed.

He also described it as a surpluseage, a term in law which means a useless statement completely irrelevant to a matter.

Justice Njemanze maintained that the white paper gazette by the Imo state government is a legal binding

document.

The judge concluded that there was no concrete reason before it why the forfeiture should not be made absolute and final, hence the Imo State government could go ahead and do whatever it deems fit to do with the properties.

As for persons who might have made purchase on such properties, Justice Njemanze said they were at liberty to approach the court to prove their titles.

However, the properties as of today have been returned to the Imo State government.

Justice Njemanze had on

February 26 given an interim order of forfeiture on the properties urging Senator Rochas Okorocha to approach the court to showcase as to why a final and absolute order of forfeiture should not be given over the properties following an application brought by Mr Louis Alozie, on behalf of the state government.

This prompted Okorocha's counsel to file a preliminary injunction to stop the final forfeiture citing forceful eviction and that the suit by the Imo State government was not properly instituted.

Some of the properties forfeited include Eastern Palm University, Ogboko; Royal Spring Palm Hotels and Apartments; IBC staff quarters said to have been illegally acquired for the purpose of Rochas Foundation College; Owerri magistrate quarters, Orlu road/Cooperative Office/Girls Guide allegedly converted to private use housing market square and Kilimanjaro eatery; Public building situated at plot B/2 Otamiri South Extension Layout given to the ministry of women affairs for establishing a skills acquisition centre for

women, allegedly acquired for the benefit of Nneoma Nkechi Okorocha's all-in Mall along Aba Road.

Others are plot P5, Naze residential layout, initially part of primary school management board but now annexed to All-In Mall along Aba Road, belonging to Mrs Nkechi Okorocha and all the properties contained from pages 226 to 272 of the government white paper on the recommendation of the judicial commission of inquiry into land administration in Imo state from June 2006 to May 2019.