

Five killed in Ebonyi as sit-at-home records full compliance

Raphael Ede, Matthew Ochei, Edward Nnachi, Tony Okafor, Chidiabube Okema, Ogonnaya Ikoku

RESIDENTS of Enugu State on Monday complied with the sit-at-home order declared by all the pro-Biafra groups, including the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra, in memorial of those who died during the civil war and pro-Biafra agitators who were killed by Nigerian security agencies.

But in places like Emene and Eke-Obinagu, soldiers deployed to ensure that there was no chaos and breakdown of law and order were reported to have attacked residents.

According to sources, the soldiers, who were patrolling Airport, Ori-Emene and Eke-Obinagu road arrived on Owa Street and began to chase residents gathered in their compound and discussing about the sit-at-home.

One of the sources said, "The soldiers came here with about five patrol vans. Some of them started pointing guns at people and the people started running inside their compounds. Immediately, they all jumped down and started pursuing them."

Schools, shops, banks close down in Asaba

Meanwhile, business activities in Asaba metropolis were totally paralysed as schools, shops and business centres were shut down.

At the Okwe, Akwaebubu, Bonasac areas of Asaba, and Okpanam, public and private schools were shut down while shops at the Timbers Market, Ezeneyi, were also closed as result of sit-at-home order.

Total compliance in Ebonyi

Also, in Abakaliki, the Ebonyi State capital, streets, shops, schools, markets, banks, hospitals and even some police facilities were deserted on Monday morning as residents obeyed the sit-at-home order issued by the proscribed IPOB.

The PUNCH went round the capital city to monitor the exercise and observed that all major roads were deserted and had no sign of both human and economic lives in them.

The total compliance to this year's sit-at-home order by Ebonyi people was a sharp departure from what obtained in previous editions, which hitherto recorded partial compliance in the city.

The PUNCH reports that schools, four days ago, sent notices to parents that they would not open.

One of such notices sighted by one of our correspondents urged parents to stay safe at home with their wards.

People were seen in the Ebonyi State capital relaxing on tarred roads because there was no vehicular movement.

Again, gunmen burn Imo police station

But gunmen have again burnt the Amandugba Divisional Police Headquarters in the Isu Local Government Area of Imo State.

Monday's attack on police

station increased the number of divisional police headquarters razed in the state to four in less than one week in the state.

It was gathered that on arrival, the attackers threw inflammable substances at the police facility and it ignited fire.

The PUNCH observed a video footage where the police station was up in flames.

The burning of the police facility was the only violent development in the state on Monday.

When contacted, the police spokesperson in the state, Bala Elkana, said that the attackers were repelled and the inferno immediately put out.

No ESN seen anywhere in Anambra

However, there was pin-drop silence in major cities in

Anambra State in the early hours of Monday following the sit-at-home protest ordered by IPOB.

Commercial activities in major cities of Awka, Ekwulobia, Nnewi, Onitsha, Ihiala were at a halt as shops, markets, banks, schools were closed.

In some streets monitored in Awka, the state capital, no single person was sighted on the road as of 11am.

Contrary to claims by the leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, that men of the security arm of the group, Eastern Security Network, would be deployed on the streets to enforce the sit-at-home order, nothing of such was noticed anywhere in the state.

A member of IPOB, who spoke with one of our correspondents on the telephone, described the protest as a huge

success.

He said, "Only goats and dogs and other animals disobeyed the order as you could spot only them moving in some streets in the state. No single human being was seen on any street from 6am to about 12 noon."

Banks, schools, markets shut as Imo residents stay indoors

In Imo State, schools, banks, markets and other business enterprises failed to open on Monday.

The development was in a total compliance to the sit-at-home order declared by the IPOB.

Our correspondent observed that no single vehicle was sighted on the ever busy Douglas, Wetherall, Bank, Tetlow, Ikenegbu, Okigwe, Egbu, Orlu

and Government House roads.

Abia obeys sit-at-home order

The situation was similar in Abia State as the people obeyed the sit-at-home order by the leader of the IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, in remembrance of soldiers who fought from the Biafran side during the civil war.

In Umuahia, the state capital, all the major roads and streets were deserted for the first time to observe the day.

Like in other states, banks, schools, shop owners and other cooperate service providers in Umuahia also shut down their business.

Cop, four others killed in Ebonyi

A policeman attached to the Ebonyi State Police Command and four Biafra agitators were

reportedly killed on Monday while the sit-at-home order was being observed.

According to an eyewitness, suspected IPOB members had blocked the Nnodo axis of the Ebonyi Local Government Area of the state, seizing and burning vehicles and tricycles of violators of the order in the area.

According to the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, some people who defied the directive in the early hours of Monday went home with injuries and destruction of their belongings.

"So, it was like the police were mobilised to the area and there was a serious gun duel between the police and the agitators within Ebebe Junction, a suburb of Abakaliki, which claimed five lives," the source added.

Also, a source at the Alex Ekwueme Federal Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki, said about five corpses were brought into the morgue by the police.

When contacted, the Commissioner of Police in the state, Aliyu Garba, confirmed that some suspected agitators were arrested.

IPOB lauds govs, sit-at-home order recorded 100% compliance

Speaking on the order, IPOB lauded the South-East governors, Delta State Governor, Ifeanyi Okowa, and different tribes that fell within Biafra for ensuring that the 2021 edition of Biafra Day was successful.

This was as the secessionist group observed that this year's Biafra Day recorded 100% compliance across Biafra land.

According to the group, the huge success recorded further demonstrated that with unity, "we can actualise Biafra sooner than expected".

The group stated this in a statement signed by its Director of Media and Publicity, Emma Powerful, a copy of which was made available to The PUNCH on Monday.

The statement partly read, "We, therefore, wish to warmly commend Biafrans, South-East Governors, Gov. Ifeanyi Okowa, friends and lovers of Biafra freedom who made the exercise a huge success."

Four policemen feared killed in Enugu

Meanwhile, four policemen have been reportedly killed in various parts of Enugu metropolis.

Sources told one of our correspondents that one policeman was killed in Uwani in Enugu South, two at Nkeme area of Coal Camp and another one killed along Okpara Avenue opposite Central Bank of Nigeria, all in Enugu North.

One of the sources said, "I saw a police patrol van with blue colour parked near CBN along Okpara Avenue. Beside it was a mobile policeman lying in pool of blood. I don't know what exactly happened but the body was still lying there."

When the spokesman of the Command, Daniel Ndukwue, was contacted on the telephone over the incident, he declined comment.

He later sent a text that read, "I need to verify that first, please."



• L-R: Head, International Affairs, Nigerian Communications Commission, Mr Ibrahim Galadima; Head of Delegation, Guinea Bissau's Autoridade Reguladora Nacional, Mr Teofilo Lopes; Executive Vice-Chairman/CEO, Nigerian Communications Commission, Prof. Umar Danbatta; and Director, Public Affairs, Dr Ikechukwu Adinze, during the courtesy visit by ARN-TTC to NCC headquarters in Abuja... on Monday. Photo: NCC

Mali suspended as ECOWAS member until return to civil rule

Adelani Adepegba, Abuja

MALI has been suspended from the West African

SAN, others berate Buhari regime for attack on Sowore

Adelani Adepegba and Lesi Nwisagbo, Abuja

HUMAN rights activist and Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Ebin-Olu Adegboruwa, on Monday said the regime of the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (ret'd.), should be held responsible for the attack on a human rights activist, Omoyele Sowore, who only sought to exercise his fundamental human rights.

Adegboruwa, who was reacting to reports that Sowore was injured by a police officer during a protest at the Unity Fountain, Abuja, said the publisher of SaharaReporters had been "the target of criminal prosecution on account of his non-violent campaign for good governance and accountability."

Sowore was injured by a tear gas canister fired by a police operative in Abuja.

The politician was preparing to hold a rally with some associates when the incident happened at the Unity Fountain in Abuja on Monday.

Footage of the incident showed Sowore falling on the ground after the canister hit him.

But the FCT Police Command in a statement by the command spokesperson, Mariam Yusuf,

regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States.

The decision was

denied that Sowore was shot, saying there was no record of the incident.

She said, "Contrary to the speculation, police operatives professionally restored calm at the Unity Fountain following attempts by a group of protesters to incite public disturbance."

But Adegboruwa in a statement titled, "Nothing must happen to Sowore," said, "I urge all Nigerians and indeed the international community to hold the government of President Muhammadu Buhari responsible for anything that befalls Mr Sowore on account of the lawful exercise of his fundamental rights."

"The Unity Fountain is a public place, where other citizens have held protests in support of the Buhari administration in recent past, without let or hindrance and even with police escorts."

"In the period when President Muhammadu Buhari was leading the opposition politicians, he led several protests across the country, without anyone shooting at him or other protesters."

Adegboruwa also asked the government to leave Sowore alone and called on protesters to remain peaceful and uphold the

announced after an emergency meeting of the bloc's leaders in Accra, Ghana, on Sunday.

tenets of the law.

Another legal practitioner, Pelumi Olajengbesi, also condemned the attack on Sowore.

Olajengbesi also made his position known in a statement.

"It is however saddening and indeed condemnable that such a constitutionally guaranteed movement has been greeted with a violent and brutal response by the government who, acting through its police officers, opened fire on unarmed, peaceful protesters leading to several serious injuries on citizens, including a fatal wound on the person of Omoyele Sowore," he said.

He added, "Without mincing words, I want to reiterate that the Buhari-led administration will be held responsible and dragged before the international community should anything happen to Sowore and indeed all participants in today's peaceful protest at the Unity Fountain, Abuja."

"The Nigerian government must do better and be more mindful of its troubling antecedents as hard of hearing and failing to distil historical hindsight from the experiences of the past."

Ghana's Foreign Affairs Minister, Shirley Botchwey, told journalists that the Mali junta's non-adherence to the mediatory role of ECOWAS necessitated the decision of ECOWAS leaders.

ECOWAS envoy, former Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, had briefed the meeting behind closed-doors on his mediatory trips to Mali last week.

A communiqué released after the meeting stated that an extraordinary summit was convened to review the socio-political crisis in Mali following the arrest, detention and subsequent resignations of the president and the prime minister of the transition on May 26, as well as to determine the next line of action for the transition.

The communiqué said after the presentation of the report by Jonathan, the heads of state expressed concerns about the crisis in Mali, which was coming half-way to the end of the agreed transition period in the context of the security challenges related to incessant terrorist attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The heads of state also demanded the immediate release of the former president and prime minister of the transition who were kept under house arrest.