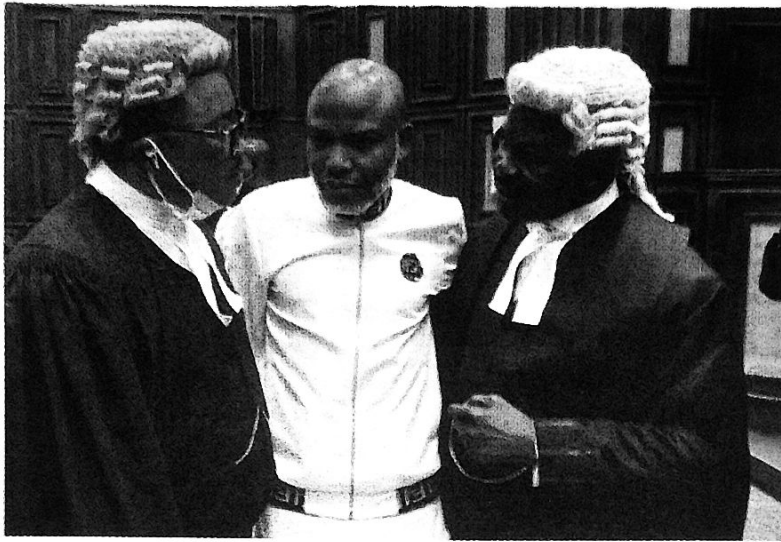




Nnamdi Kanu (middle) with his lawyers during a previous court appearance.
(File photo)



Bloodbath in S-East: Many dead, more missing in Ebonyi, Benue boundary clash

• I counted 7 corpses, Coordinator, Ngbo North DC, Onyekachi • 15 dead bodies've been discovered • We're still searching —Town Union President, Eze Moses Ekpe
• As gunmen invade Enugu bar, kill pregnant woman, vigilante member

By Peter Okutu & Chinedu Adonu

IT WAS a moment of trepidation and agony for the people of Ojogu and Okpochiri Ukwagba Ngbo in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, following an alleged attack that was unleashed on them by their neighbours within the boundary area of Benue and Ebonyi States which left many dead and others injured and missing.

This happened as gunmen invaded a drinking joint at Akwuke, Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State, and shot dead a pregnant woman and a vigilante member.

② Ebonyi mayhem

Apart from the killings, Vanguard reliably gathered that properties worth millions of naira were also destroyed as a result of the ugly incident in Ebonyi.

An eyewitness who spoke on condition of anonymity alleged that the identities of the attackers of Ngbo people in Ebonyi were both Benue indigenes (warlords) and the Ezza living within the boundary areas.

According to him, "I saw the people that attacked us. They were Benue and Ezza indigenes. What happened is usually an annual development that borders on land dispute."

"This dispute is occasioned by the quest for land, especially for farming by both sides of the divide. One person was killed, many were missing, and many injured while many are now displaced."

"It usually happens every year during rainy season. It is a normal land dispute in the area. During the incident, many people scamped for safety. Those people whose houses were destroyed will now become refugees."

"They don't have anywhere to go to. They will go to their brothers, sisters, and in-laws' houses to seek refuge. Benue people came together to fight Ngbo people. It is what I saw on the ground."

In his findings, the Coordinator, Ngbo North Development Centre, DC,

Echem Onyekachi stated that seven corpses had so far been discovered following the incident.

"As of now, we have discovered seven corpses, 6 injured persons and so many houses and shops were burnt down in many places. Some people are still missing."

"Before now, we have been having clashes with the people of Ado Local Government Area of Benue State. So, it is always during this period that this kind of crisis usually occurs."

"I suspect that this crisis was caused by Agila people in Benue State. Anybody calling Ezza is on his or her own. Ngbo people and the Ezza people do not have any dispute or crisis. I believe that this crisis is caused by Agila people. It is the issue bordering on land."

"Government should write to the National Boundary Commission, NBC, for land demarcation between Ngbo and Agila people. Without government intervention, the crisis will continue. It is over 100 years. It is above my grand father."

Also, the Town Union President for Ukwagba Community, Eze Moses Ekpe, in a telephone chat with Vanguard explained that 15 corpses had so far been discovered in the affected communities of Ngbo.

According to him, the search is still on to enable the community to get the details of the number of casualties and those displaced.

"We have alerted the Commissioner of Police and other government agencies. The CP sent some policemen there today. The victims are too many. We are still searching. For now, 15 persons were killed, while many are missing. Houses were burnt and farmlands were destroyed."

"We are still discovering dead bodies and that's why I said we are still searching. We want government to help us beef up security there. The attack came from Ezza people."

"Ohaukwu Local Government Council has received with concern, report of the security breaches and attack against the innocent people of Ojogu and Okpochiri Ukwagba Ngbo on Monday the 27th of June, 2022."

"The council has liaised with appropriate security agents to immediately move into the troubled area while working assiduously with the relevant stakeholders to ensure a quick return of peace and normalcy to Ukwagba."

"Our heartfelt sympathies go to all the affected families and our beloved brothers from the affected villages and indeed the entire Ngbojeogbu clan."

"The Council re-affirms our commitment to promote and

propagate peace in every part of Ohaukwu Local Government Area and indeed in all communities. The government of Ebonyi State under our peace-loving governor has worked assiduously to restore peace in the entire Ebonyi State and all hands must be on deck to achieve the task of a peaceful Ebonyi State where love and unity reign supreme."

"Once again, our people are assured that government will not rest until total peace is restored in every part of the Local Government and Ukwagba Ngbo community in particular."

On the attack, the Executive Chairman of Ado LGA of Benue State, Mr. James Oche who described the development as

strange added that "I completely doubt if our people are involved. We are not aware of any crisis in Ebonyi. In recent times, we have had relative peace from this side of the divide. We are fully in control of our people and there has not been any reason why we should fear that our people have been involved in anything."

"It's strange. This is strange and I completely doubt if our people are involved. I will get in touch with the security operatives under my control and get in touch with you. I want to say that I'm hearing this for the first time and I'm not aware that there's an issue of insecurity around our borders."

At the time of this report, several calls made to the phone lines of the State Commissioner of Police, CP Garba Aliyu, and the Command's Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Chris Anyanwu were not responded to.

Gunmen invade Enugu bar, kill pregnant woman, vigilante member

During the gunmen invasion in Enugu where a pregnant woman and vigilante member were killed, the daredevils also shot a secondary school girl who is now receiving treatment in an undisclosed hospital.

It was gathered that the three hefty gunmen on masks stormed the relaxation centre around 8:00 pm on Saturday and ordered everybody to lie down.

The owner of the joint who also lives in the same compound where he is running the drinking joint sensed danger and escaped through the back door but his pregnant wife was not so lucky as the men pursued her into her kitchen and shot her dead.

A young man, whose name was given as Nonso, one of the vigilante members, who was having a good time at the joint tried to escape and was also shot dead.

The pregnant woman's maidservant who was also helping out in the joint was shot in the leg and is now receiving treatment at a hospital.

Vanguard learnt that the gunmen had earlier gone into a compound inside Akwuke and demanded to see another young man but the man was not at home prompting them to come for the owner of the drinking joint, Felix Onyia, the immediate past councillor representing Akwuke ward at the Enugu South legislative assembly.

An eyewitness who claimed anonymity said he saw everything live.

"I was there and I saw everything. I asked the woman to prepare fish and I was drinking, waiting for the fish when we heard 'lie down all of you'."

"Nwagor Onyia was sitting on the other side with Nonso, the vigilante man that was shot. When they told us to lie down, I quickly moved into one of the rooms and from there, I jumped through the window. They did not shoot me. It was later I learnt that they shot NwaGod's wife and shot Nonso, the vigilante man. They also shot the girl that was serving in the bar parlour," he said.

He said that it was only God that saved him because he could have been shot. He pointed out that others who were at the drinking joint were not hurt because it seemed that they purposely came for the former councillor, Hon. Felix Onyia, alias NwaGod.

"The way they came straight to his house and shot his wife when he escaped is an indication that they came purposely for him," a resident said.

He said that he wouldn't know why they came for him but pointed out that something must have prompted the visit of the gunmen that came in a vehicle for the attack.

The Police Spokesman, Daniel Ndukwue, when contacted on phone in the morning demanded a message to allow him to address the issue quickly but till the time of filing this report after hours of sending a message both on WhatsApp and SMS, he has not replied.

"Please send me SMS to allow me to address it quickly," Ndukwue asked.

Terrorism charge: Why Court refused Nnamdi Kanu's fresh request for bail

• Adjourns trial till Nov 14 as case shifts to A-Court
• As hoodlums set fully loaded truck ablaze in Abia
• I want Biafra land to be calm, peaceful —Nnamdi Kanu

By Ikechukwu Nnochiri, Ugochukwu Alaribe, Chimaobi Nwaiwu & Steve Oko

ABUJA—THE detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, on Tuesday, failed to persuade the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja to release him on bail, pending the determination of the treasonable felony charge, the Federal Government preferred against him.

The court, in a ruling that was delivered by trial Justice Binta Nyako, declined Kanu's fresh request for bail on the premise that it lacked merit.

It held that the Defendant failed to adduce a cogent reason that could warrant the setting aside of the order that revoked his bail.

The ruling came on a day the court temporarily suspended further proceedings in the matter to await the outcome of an appeal the embattled IPOB leader lodged to challenge the competence of the charge FG slammed against him.

Kanu, who is currently facing

a seven-count charge, had in the fresh bail application he filed through his team of lawyers led by Mike Ozekhome, SAN, equally challenged the revocation of the bail the court earlier granted to him.

Specifically, he urged the court to set aside the order it made on March 28, 2019, which not only issued a bench warrant for his arrest but also gave FG the nod to try him in absentia.

The IPOB leader told the court that contrary to FG's allegation that he jumped bail, he fled for his life after his hometown at Afaraokwu Ibeku in Umuahia, Abia State, was invaded by soldiers, which he said led to the death of 28 persons.

Contending that he was denied a fair hearing before his bail was revoked, Kanu, attached eight exhibits that included photographs, as well as an affidavit he deposed to from Israel after he fled from the country.

Meanwhile, dismissing the bail request on Tuesday, Justice Nyako, said she was not satisfied with the reason Defendant gave on why he absconded and failed

to appear in court for the continuation of his trial.

The trial judge noted that from records of the court, Kanu, was represented by his lawyers on the day his bail was revoked, likewise his sureties.

"His sureties told the court that they did not know the whereabouts of the Defendant and even applied to be discharged from the matter."

"Therefore, the Defendant was not denied fair hearing", the Judge held.

More so, Justice Nyako stressed that though a court could vacate a previous order when confronted with a cogent and verifiable reason, she maintained that such reason was not adduced in the instant case.

"The present application amounts to an abuse of court process for attempting to relitigate an issue already decided by the court."

"If the Defendant is dissatisfied, he has the Appeal Court to go to."

"This application is accordingly dismissed", Justice Nyako added. It will be recalled that the court had also on March 18, declined

to release the embattled IPOB leader on bail.

The court maintained that Kanu must explain the reason why he breached the previous bail that was given to him before he could enjoy another favourable discretion from it.

"Until the issue of the absence of the defendant for his trial, with all the bail conditions breached, is determined, the instant application of the defendant for bail will at best be premature and it is refused."

"However, the defendant is at liberty to re-file the application", the judge held.

Meantime, shortly after the ruling was delivered, the court, suspended further hearings on the case till November 14.

Kanu's lawyer, Ozekhome, SAN, had notified the court that his client had on April 29, approached the Court of Appeal in Abuja to quash the entire charge against him.

Ozekhome, SAN, told the court that Kanu equally filed a motion on May 19 to stay further proceedings in his trial, pending the outcome of his appeal.

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