

# MASSOB anniversary: Showdown in Anambra

## ...2 members feared killed, 200 arrested

### • Freedom, our rights, Group insists

From **Aloysius Attah, Jeff Amechi Agboodo, Onitsha; David Onwuchekwa, Nnewi and Okey Sampson, Aba**

**AT** least two members of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) were feared killed and over 100 others arrested yesterday in the commercial city of Onitsha, Anambra State when MASSOB members clashed with security operatives during activities marking the 16th anniversary of the group. The thanksgiving services which held in all the states of the South East during the weekend, also led to the arrest of scores of MASSOB members in Aba and Nnewi, according to *Daily Sun* reports.

The group's coordinator for Anambra North zone, Emmanuel Omenka, told *Daily Sun* on phone that the clash took place during the thanksgiving mass held at St. Lwanga Catholic Church, Okpoko, New Haven in Ogbaru Local Government Area. According to him, a joint security task force had invaded the venue and arrested about 200 members.

Omenka alleged that the joint security task force used brute force on them and told them point blank that they were carrying out the Federal Government directive on the clampdown on the group.

Also in Nnewi, Anambra State, members of the group also clashed with the Police in Nnewi, leaving five persons wounded and over 50 arrested in the church.

Regional Administrator, MASSOB, Anambra South, Mr Mrs. Virginia Ubazuonu said members were attacked without while in the church to thank God for sustaining them this far.

*Daily Sun* learnt that trouble started after MASSOB members had arrived the church and got seated. However, some of the members who arrived later were accosted by the police at the Traffic Light, a stone's throw to the residence of late Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu residence.

On getting information that their members were being arrested at the Traffic Light, other members in the church were said to have mobilized to know why there were problem with the police without any provocation. There was a clash and the police started shooting which lasted for nearly thirty minutes. In the process, three MASSOB members were said to have sustained bullet wounds and the two people arrested were handcuffed by the police were rescued by their members who assisted them to the church for safety while the wounded were taken to an undisclosed hospital. She said the police later reinforced with over ten trucks and arrested over 50 of her members at the church gate.

"They were shooting at us but we were approaching them until we rescued our members. We did not provoke them. But they decided to attack us," one of the MASSOB members at the scene of the incident.

Meanwhile, Aba zone of the movement, yesterday were undeterred by police presence as they held their scheduled thanksgiving service.

The Movement effectively beat police strategy as it successfully held the service in three churches in the city.

The police had as early as 6.00am, stationed armoured personnel carrier (APC) and fierce looking mobile and regular policemen in and around the Christ the king (CKC) Catholic Church where MASSOB had

initially planned to hold the service.

*Daily Sun* gathered that members of the Movement got information days earlier about the police plan not to allow them access to CKC and made alternative arrangements for different venues which they kept to themselves.

But unknown to the police, as they were keeping watch over CKC and its environs, members of MASSOB were at three different churches within the Obobia Road/Crystal Park Hotel axis holding the thanksgiving service. The celebration was also peaceful in Okpoko, Anambra State when MASSOB members marched through the streets, in disguise without putting on MASSOB regalia or symbol. However, they chant-

ed freedom songs. They later converged on a secluded field where they hoisted the Biafran flag, displayed banners and addressed journalists.

MASSOB zonal leader for Anambra Central, Chief Vincent Iloh in a speech said that it calls for celebration and glory to God that the struggle which started on 13th September 1999 has clocked 16 despite several bruises. He announced the news of death of one of their member, Bartholomeo Onyeagba allegedly shot by the police in Awka that morning and another member also killed in Nnewi. He disclosed that they will continue fighting for the liberation of Ndigbo. He said that the struggle for self determination is a legal fight noting that those who fought for the independence of Nigeria from British colonialists were not hounded every time like their group.

## Osun: PDP, APC bicker over N20bn bailout fund

**THE** State of Government of Osun on Sunday asked Nigerians to watch out for series of distortions, misinformation and outright lies as part of the strategies of the Peoples Democratic Party and their allies to distract the Rauf Aregbesola government in the aftermath of the receipt of the bailout funds.

The Bureau of Communication and Strategy in the Office of the Governor said on Sunday that the PDP and its allies are irrevocably committed to a shameful assignment of manipulations of the minds of the people through a litany of lies and concoctions as they embark on their fruitless journey to pull down the government.

The statement, signed by the Bureau's Director, Mr. Semiu Okanlawon, said the latest of the PDP's falsehood is the allegation that the government of Aregbesola has paid a sum of N20billion to a construction company, Slava

Yeditepe, the construction company handling the Oba Adesoji Aderemi Second By-Pass Road out of the N34.988billion received as bailout funds.

"Nothing could be more ridiculous as an allegation! First, Governor Aregbesola commenced the construction of the Adesoji Aderemi Road in July 2013 at the total cost of N14.5billion and this was publicly announced.

"What then would be the reason for the payment of N20billion to the contractor in 2015?

"Secondly, the PDP has shot itself in the foot and punctured its own lies of last week where it accused Aregbesola of fixing the bailout funds in a deposit account for interests to accrue. If its claim of fixing the N34.988billion in a deposit account was true, how then was the governor able to pay N20billion to Slava Yeditepe? This stands logic in the head.