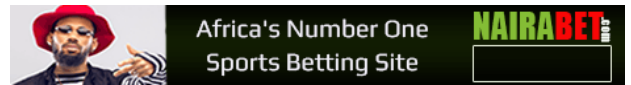


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Biafra protest turns bloody, again

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BY OUR REPORTER ON JANUARY 19, 2016

COVER, NATIONAL

•8 killed, 30 injured in clash with soldiers in Aba

From **Okey Sampson**, Aba

Aba, the commercial hub of Abia State was yesterday literally turned into a war front as soldiers clashed with protesting members of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and a faction of the Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign States of Biafra (MASSOB), resulting in the death of eight people with over 30 injured.

The pro-Biafra groups, who were protesting against the detention of IPOB leader and Director of Radio Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu had the previous day ordered markets, banks, schools and other business centres to close shop in solidarity.

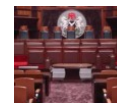
They converged at the National High School, along Port Harcourt Road, Aba, from where they attempted to march and enforce the order, but were quickly dispersed by soldiers and policemen.

The protesters later converged on Asa road and the main motor park area where they set up road blocks along Asa and St. Michael's Road by Mosque and York Streets which obstructed traffic and this led to another confrontation with security agents.

Soldiers were said to have, during this encounter, fired live bullets and in the process, a 20-year-old apprentice, Chidozie Okafor died on the spot on St. Micheal's Road, at about 1:00 pm.

Okafor, said to be the only son of his parents and a native of Omuohu, in Eziagu local government council of Enugu State, reportedly went to a nearby canteen on St. Michael's road to eat and as he stepped out, was hit by one of the bullets. He died instantly.

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Another person who was hit on the belly and was bleeding profusely on the same St. Michael's Road was rushed to an undisclosed hospital where he reportedly died.

Elsewhere, the story was the same. On Azikiwe Road, two IPOB members were said to have been shot dead, the same with Ariaria where four persons were also killed. Although unconfirmed reports indicated that the death toll in Ariaria could be up to 40.

In the midst of the confusion, which ensued, shop owners, including banks, who had opened for business hurriedly closed shops while the roads became deserted. All the markets in the city were shut down.

It was also observed that security was beefed up at the Ariaria Police Division to ensure that the pro Biafra protesters did not burn the station, while soldiers were stationed at Milverton, Azikiwe/Asa and Port Harcourt by Ngwa Road junctions.

Speaking on the development, MASSOB National Welfare Officer, (Uchenna Madu's faction), Jude Chukwu, said the protest was peaceful until soldiers and policemen started shooting guns and tear gas. He added that over 30 members of the pro-Biafra protesters sustained bullet wounds and were being treated in various hospitals.

Meanwhile, the Abia State Police Commissioner, Habila Joshack has said he was not aware of the death of

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Joshack said he was not sure his men used live bullets to control the protest, noting that he told his men to manage the protests in such a way that lives and property are protected and not lost. He warned that protesters in Abia should know that there is a ban on public protests for now, hence, no one is allowed to threaten the lives of others or put them in fear during protests.

...Kanu's spirit high in detention –Lawyer

From **Petrus Obi**, Enugu

Contrary to earlier claims of being ill in detention, leader and founder of the Indigenous People of Biafran (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu is in high spirits.

Kanu is being held by the Department of State Services (DSS). This is even as there was drama in court yesterday when a lawyer, Ifeanyi Ejiofor, said he had been contacted to replace Mr. Egechukwu Obetta.

His lawyer, Obetta, insisted Kanu was not ill, and has not been tortured in custody, contrary to allegations by IPOB that its leader was critically ill and being tortured by the DSS.

"I would like to say that as a solicitor and advocate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I have sworn to an oath, to defend the defenceless and above all, to say the truth and be fair to all, at all times," Obetta said in a statement. Having said that, I must add that I have been inundated with calls and I also read in several media, all manner of ruse about my client; that he has been tortured by the DSS, transferred to a more deadly cell, and also that he has been critically ill. I am still wondering where such information came from. I can authoritatively say that apart from the British government's team that visited him (Nnamdi Kanu) last year, I am, and have been the only one who has been privileged to have access (though limited) to him and all through my visits, there has not been any overt or covert situation pointing to a case of torture on him by the authority of the DSS. He is neither sick nor has fallen sick since his incarceration on October 11, 2015. During my last visit on (January 14), we had robust and cheerful discussions even with his captors..."

Meanwhile, squabbles over Kanu's legal representation, stalled his trial for alleged treason at the Federal High Court, Abuja.

A mild drama ensued as Kanu's younger brother, Emmanuel asked Ejiofor to leave, impressing it on him that Obetta was the legitimate counsel to his brother. Ejiofor tarried a while, but left afterwards.

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In a related development, protest for Kanu's release yielded poor result in Enugu. Most parts of the city were generally calm while people went about their normal businesses without any distraction. There were, however, pockets of protests in the densely-populated Abakpa Nike, a suburb of the town where faithful marched round in demonstration chanting Biafra songs.

The protest started at about 11:00 am and lasted for about three hours as protesters hoisted Biafra flags and chanted Biafra songs and special renditions composed with the name of Kanu. Apart from the traffic jam within the Abakpa Nike axis of Enugu while the protest lasted, the atmosphere was very peaceful as policemen deployed to the area watched and monitored their activities from a close distance.

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