

HOME / COVER / NATIONAL / **BLOODY BIAFRA DAY AS SOLDIERS KILL 2 IPOB MEMBERS***...Banks, schools shut, markets deserted*

Our Reporters

The sit-at-home exercise ordered by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), yesterday, for Biafra Heroes Remembrance Day, turned bloody as soldiers shot dead a young man believed to be one of the members of the pro Biafra group in Aba, Abia State.

This was even as a member of the pro-Biafra group was allegedly shot, following a clash between the group and a combined team of the army and police at St Mary's Anglican Church Junction, in Nnewi, Anambra State. Eyewitnesses said the clash occurred when the IPOB members came out that early morning and blocked major roads to Nnewi from Onitsha axis, making burn fires to enforce compliance to the sit-at-home.

In Aba, it was gathered that soldiers had approached from Port Harcourt Road/Uratta Junction, where some IPOB members had reportedly gathered in the morning of yesterday, as part of the sit-at-home protest.

Reports said as the soldiers got close to the junction, they started shooting indiscriminately, which forced the IPOB members to leave the vicinity.

As the soldiers continued shooting, a stray bullet, according to report, hit the young man, identified as Nnamdi, from Mbano, in Imo State, and a resident of Chigbu Street off Uratta Junction by Port Harcourt Road, who was said to have come out from his house to buy something.

Immediately he was shot dead, the soldiers were reported to have dragged his corpse into their patrol van and sped off, preventing Nnamdi's younger brother from carrying his corpse.

When Daily Sun visited the scene of the incident, an eyewitness, who wouldn't want his name mentioned said: "Early this morning (yesterday), some boys believed to be IPOB members gathered at that junction as part of the sit-at-home protest; suddenly we started hearing gunshots and men on army uniform, with their hilux van, parked around Onyike Street, and from there started shooting and coming down to Uratta Junction.

"On getting here, we all were watching from our houses when their bullet hit a boy called Nnamdi from Chigbu Street."

Elsewhere, at Ngwa Road, newspaper vendors who went for the day's business, had bitter experience as soldiers from a nearby military post harassed and tore their newspapers into shreds.

Meanwhile, banks, schools, shops and some other usually busy centres in Aba were shut in total compliance to the order.

When Daily Sun went round the commercial city, major markets like Ariaria, Eke Oha (Shopping Centre), Eziukwu and Ahia Ohuru, all had their gates opened by market union leaders, but the markets were deserted.

At some minor markets, like school Road Market, Saint Michaels Road Phone Accessories Market, Ehi Road Market, Ngwa Road Market, Nsulu Market and Akwette Streets Markets there were no sign of business.

Many banks visited in Aba metropolis were under lock and key except the Automated Teller Machines (ATM) that remained active.

Pupils and students were at home, while many private and public schools visited were deserted as no teachers were on sighted.

In Anambra State, the exercise received substantial compliance.

Except for the state capital, Awka, which recorded partial compliance, other major cities like Onitsha, Nnewi, Ekwulobia and Ihiala had full or near full compliance.

Commercial activities and vehicular movement were paralysed. However, all the markets in Onitsha and its environs and banks were shutdown, though the exercise coincided with the mid term break of schools in the area as schools were closed.

The Ogidi Building Materials Market, Nkpor New Auto Spare Market, Obosi Old Spare Parts Market, Nkpor Main Market and other roadside markets serving the satellite towns around Onitsha and environs were also completely shut .

In Awka, during the usual morning rush hours, motorists and workers stayed away from the parks and roads just as markets remained under lock and keys.

Security operatives were seen moving around the city in convoy, apparently to ensure that no one was molested into closing shop by members of IPOB.

The situation at Onitsha, Nnewi, Ekwulobia and Ihiala was a total compliance until afternoon, when vehicles began to show up on the roads.

Ebonyi State recorded minimal compliance. Some locations in the state which used to be busy with economic activities didn't record as much traffic as it used to be.

In Abakaliki, compliance was minimal as various markets, like Abakpa market, Meat Market, Rice Mill, Mechanic Village, Kpirikpiri Market and some others were all open for business activities. But, major transport companies closed route for major cities in the South East, such as Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Aba and Owerri.

Also, the order was observed in parts of Asaba, Delta State capital. There was partial paralysis of socio-economic activities at the popular Ogbogonogo Market along Nnebisi Road.

Even the ever busy Asaba-Onitsha Expressway and Nnebisi roads were scanty as motorists, especially the Asaba-Onitsha intra state buses, were not on the road when Daily Sun monitored the level of compliance.

In Akwebulu and Okwe axis considered to be the stronghold of IPOB adherents, the exercise was successful as shops were not only locked-up, private schools in the areas were also shut.

Meanwhile, security operatives in the early hours of yesterday embarked on a military exercise code-named 'Operation show of force'. The exercise, which involved the army, police, civil defence, saw security agencies patrolling major streets of the metropolis.

Public Relations Officer of the state police command, DSP Andrew Aniamaka urged residents not to panic, explaining that the exercise was an evidence that security agencies were on top of any situation in the state.

Regardless, residents of Nsukka town and its environs, yesterday ignored the sit-at-home order.

Daily Sun gathered that residents were seen as early as 6am going about their normal lawful businesses as government offices, banks schools, market and shops opened for business as usual.

Also, commercial bus drivers, tricycles and motorcycles were busy picking and dropping passengers at their destinations and bus-stops.

Jude Amadi, a trader said IPOB does not feed him and his family and as such, the group has no right to give him order when to open or close his shop.

A commercial bus driver who identified herself as Peter Ozioko said if there was anything like IPOB sit at home order he was not aware as nothing concerns him and IPOB.

When contacted, Serve Yabanet, Nsukka Police Area Commander, commended residents of the area for obeying police directive to ignore the IPOB sit at home order and go about their normal businesses.

Despite the non-compliance of the sit- at-home order in Imo State, leader of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign States of Biafra (MASSOB), Uchenna Madu described it as a "plus" to the struggle for Biafra.

Madu, in a telephone chat with Daily Sun said the group is happy by getting at least some Igbo sons and daughters to obey the order.

Although Madu explained that the sit-at-home order was issued by IPOB, notwithstanding, its partial compliance in some parts of the South East is a sign that the actualisation of Biafra is near.

Our correspondent who monitored the order by IPOB revealed that all public institutions, including schools and markets were bubbling with activities, except for some schools in the rural areas.

Meanwhile, IPOB has expressed satisfaction with the level of compliance of people to the sit-at-home order, describing the exercise as successful.

Media and Publicity Secretary of the group, Emma Powerful, in a statement conveying the group's gratitude commended the people for their uncommon courage, determination and resoluteness in the face of intimidation by the Nigerian security agencies and governors of the South East states.

"We the family members of IPOB worldwide wish to congratulate all Biafrans and lovers of freedom all over Biafraland and various parts of Southern Nigeria who contributed immensely towards the successful outcome of our heroes remembrance day by sitting at home as directed by the leadership of IPOB."

In a related development, a civil society and human rights group, International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of law (Intersociety), has described yesterday' sit-at home protest as a huge success and a strong message to the Muhammadu Buhari administration to buckle up.

Intersociety, in a statement signed by its Board of Trustees Chairman, Emeka Umeagbalasi said the sit at home was a huge success divided between physical success and success of the mind.

This was even as the coalition of pro-Biafrans groups called on the Federal Government to immediately remove the terrorist tag and proscription of IPOB.

The group demanded the reverse of the alleged wrong labelling of the peaceful non-violent unarmed people as terrorists and urged the federal government to hang the label on those who truly qualify for that title like Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen.

The group comprised MASSOB, Eastern People Congress (EPC), Billie Human Rights Initiative, Biafra United Libration Council (BULCO), Biafra Actualisation and Defence Squad (BAADS), Biafra Revolutionary Organisation (BRO), Biafra Nations Youth League (BNYL), Movement of Biafra in Nigeria (MOBIN), Biafra Revolutionary Force (BRF) and Biafra War Veteran.

The coalition which gathered at the Rojenmy Tourist and Games Villages Oba, Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State in a convention to mark this year's 51st Biafra Day celebration with the theme "51 years after Biafra Declaration between Territorial Sovereignty and Cultural Identity," asked for the unity of Ndigbo to achieve the goal of actualising the state Biafra.

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