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2.3. Members of separatist movements and individuals perceived as supporting them

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last updated: February 2019

This profile focuses on members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the two main groups aiming for the independence of Biafra.

COI summary

[*Targeting,* 3.3]

MASSOB emerged in the late 1990s. The movement has actively pursued independence by organising rallies, hoisting Biafran flags, using its own identity cards and currency, etc. Although it defines itself as non-violent, the movement has been repeatedly involved in clashes with the police. MASSOB was banned by the Nigeria authorities in 2001. Over the years, police and security agencies have clashed with MASSOB members, arresting and killing many, in particular during manifestations and rallies.

IPOB grew out of MASSOB in 2014. Nowadays, the movement is more active than MASSOB. IPOB's activities include distribution of flyers, awareness-raising among the population, marches and other gatherings. Despite the fact that the actions of IPOB have been largely non-violent, it was banned by the Nigerian government as a terrorist organisation in September 2017.

The Nigerian authorities tend to respond to MASSOB and IPOB meetings and demonstrations in the same way, including through arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, etc.

Clashes between the security forces and IPOB predominantly take place in Anambra, Abia, Rivers, Imo and Delta. Violent incidents mainly occur during meetings, in particular related to the Biafra Day (23th or 30th May, according to the different factions). In one particular incident, which occurred during the celebrations of the Biafra Remembrance Day on 30 May 2016, security forces in Onitsha raided homes the night before the event, and shot at a crowd of around 1 000 people, killing 'at least' 60 persons. In the gathering on 23 May 2018 in Rivers state, more than 100 protesters from a MASSOB faction were arrested by the security forces.

Supporting separatist movements, including by displaying Biafra symbols, such as flags and other insignia, may lead to arrest and ill-treatment.

Based on the ban on IPOB from 2017, all its activities were declared illegal and can lead to arrest and prosecution. Several members of IPOB have been charged with treason, which is punishable by the death penalty.

The government reported having deployed soldiers under special operations to Abia state and Rivers state to tackle ‘violent agitation and kidnapping’.

Risk analysis

The acts to which individuals under this profile could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. killing, death penalty, arbitrary arrests).

Not all individuals under this profile would face the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution. The individual assessment of whether or not there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: level and nature of involvement, visibility of the applicant (e.g. high profile, prior arrest, media appearance), participation in gatherings or manifestations, etc.

Nexus to a reason for persecution

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile is for reasons of (imputed) political opinion.

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