



## STATE REPRESSION AND MILITARIZATION OF SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The advent of democratic regime in Nigeria coupled with its principles of freedom of speech, expression, and association, spark up the rebirth of the Biafra secessionist movements in the southeast geopolitical zone. Such groups like the Movement or Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have stepped up struggles for the actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra through protests and other forms of social mobilization. The protests have triggered tension and heightened insecurity, with the security agencies often applying excessive force to quell the protests. The extant literature is awash with narratives regarding the recent upsurge and persistent centrifugal demands by pro-Biafra secessionists, fifty years after the Nigerian civil war; scholars agreed that Nigeria state has at one time or the other applied repressive measures to quell secessionist agitations in southeast Nigeria, this in turn have led to increased militarization of these separatist agitations. But none have concretely showed how state repression have aggravated this secessionist agitation in southeast Nigeria. This work is guided by one research questions: How is state repression implicated in the increased militarization of secessionist agitation in southeast Nigeria? This is qualitative research that made use of the Expo-facto research design. Data was collected through secondary sources and analyzed using content analysis and the Gellnerian theory of nation and nationalism. Our findings showed that state repression is to a great extent implicated in the increased militarization of secessionist agitations in southeast Nigeria. Our recommendation was the government should be proactive towards secessionist movements, and instead of the use of force, should adopt a non-kinetic method in tackling such cases, to avoid further militarization of these agitations in southeast Nigeria. Government should also ensure that every ethnic group is included and build the spirit of a nation-state in every citizen.*

**KEYWORDS:** Secessionist Movement, Sovereign State of Biafra, State Repression, Southeast Nigeria.



## INTRODUCTION

The state is an organization or set of processes that carry out necessary purposes for its social formation. A valid general conception of the state needs to explain its roles- “agent”, “the public good”, and “interest of the state”- by the same concepts and social processes used to explain political life (Marenin, 1988). More precisely, the conception needs to show how the state arises from and remains linked to its social formation in such a way that it can and does function managerially, that is, exercise power, authority, and discretion in the promotion of different and multiply interests; and it needs to show the type of state and state rule which result. According to Ojiako as cited in Osaretin (2019) the Nigeria state was a creation of the British colonial master, when they forcefully amalgamated the Southern and Northern protectorate in 1914. This arrangement was made by Lord Lugard for commercial benefit of the British administration. The arrangement did not give special attention to then diverse nature of the different, cultures, languages and religion that made up the polity. This arrangement which tends to favor a particular group against another has created the feeling of marginalization for those groups who feel that their interest was not considered enough, and this is the beginning of secessionist movement in Nigeria.

For more than 20 years now, groups like the Movement for Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have stepped up struggles for the actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra through protests and other forms of social mobilization. This agitation took a drastic measure since 2015, which coincided with the inception of the regime of President Muhamadu Buhari. This was as a result of coming into existence of IPOB, with mass support especially from diaspora. The group that is led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu has always accused President Buhari of marginalisation and victimization of the Igbos on account that he got only about five percent of the votes cast in the region during his electoral contest with then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015. This thus, formed the basics for the period of this study, which is from 2015 till 2021. Gradually, the activities of IPOB have oscillated from peaceful to non-peaceful means and their grouse has often been couched in terms of the alleged unconscionable marginalization of the region by the Buhari administration. Also, the recent abduction of the leader of IPOB from Kenya by forces believed to be acting at the behest of the Nigerian government and his subsequent arraignment in a federal high court in Abuja on charges of treason has resulted to issuance of a weekly sit-at-home order by the group in the five states of the southeast region of the country with unquantifiable economic losses to the region and the nation at large.

Portraying more about the marginalization of the Igbo people, Nsoedo(2019) highlighted the following factors: lack of rehabilitation after civil war, twenty pounds flat fee refund, Indigenization Decree, manipulated population census, federal character principle, creation of states and local government areas, deliberate underuse of seaports in south east, lack of international airport in south east and other impediments. These points were supported by Awofeso(2017) and Osaretin(2019) Taiwo and Ariyo(2020) Alumona et al(2017) and many more.

Poor leadership, marginalization and victimization of the Igbo race, instability of the Nigeria federal system and many more gave birth to the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and later Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as well as other socio-cultural groups. MASSOB and IPOB have an agenda for a separate state of Biafra. At inception



of MASSOB in 1999, the group proclaimed a non-violent approach (Fasan, 2017). MASSOB seeks to protect the interest of the Igbo people of the south east against marginalization and lack of representation in the central government of Nigeria. According to Obasi (2018) in Alalade and Ayomola (2019) MASSOB sought to pressure the federal government to conduct a referendum in the south east determine whether the people would be willing to remain part of Nigeria or secede and form the Biafra nation. IPOB on the other hand came out with different approach, making use of radio broadcasts and social media at its inception in 2015 to propagate its mission (Alalade and Ayomola, 2019). Emergence of IPOB in the self-determination quest marked a paradigm shift and a monumental departure from MASSOB demand and methodology.

Since the inception in 2015 and up till 2020, IPOB have adopted different approaches which have now given them a radical and aggressive nature. This is evident in massive IPOB protests resulting in casualties due to clashes with security agencies (Alalade and Ayomola, 2019). Udeze (2018) cited in Alalade and Ayomola (2019) pointed out that March 2016 IPOB protest turned violent as protesters turned on the security officials who were sent to monitor their activities, resulting in the deaths of two policemen and many IPOB members while several others were arrested on different parts of Nigeria. And this kind of clashes have persisted till 2020, and this informed the formation of a Para-military arm of the group in December, 2020 known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN).

To ascertain how state repression implicated the militarization of Biafra secessionist movement is the basics of this study. Scholars like Onuoha (2012) noted that Biafra agitation gained momentum from the increased repression from Nigerian state since the inception of democracy in 1999. Ukiwo (2019) argued that state repression rather than cultural division which triggered Biafra secessionist movements is the same factor that has continued to threaten national unity in Nigeria. Scholars has also failed to identify those instruments of state repression used against this secessionist movements, such instruments as illegal detention, police brutality, and extrajudicial killings which this study tried to bring out. This work is divided into eight parts, following this introduction is the second part that deals with the methodology, the third part is the conceptual framework, this is followed by the theoretical framework, the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> parts analyzed how state repression implicated in the militarization of Biafra secessionist movement. Following that is the conclusion and recommendations.

## **Methodology**

The study relied on the secondary source of data which refers to a set data including books, journals, online materials and other hard and soft articles. The study also made extensive use of materials from the internet that contains information on the topic under investigation.

The choice of employing the documentary method of data collection is due to the surpassing advantages evident in its application which first and foremost, eliminates "the research effect", ensures availability of materials for the work, affordability and reliability of data which could not be gotten otherwise, saves time and ensures cost effectiveness of data collection. Data collected was analyzed using content analysis. This study equally adopted the Expo-facto research design, this is because the work is meant to establish cause and effect relationship without any manipulation.



## Conceptual Clarification

The major concept that formed the topic of this work will be briefly explained below.

**State Repression:** According to Collin's dictionary is the use of force to restrict and control a society or other group of people. Like other forms of coercion according to Davenport (2007) repressive behaviour is based on threat and intimidation to force a targeted group or persons, although it does not involve all coercive measures, but rather, it involves mostly the use of state power in violation of right, and due process in the application and implementation of law, personal integrity, or security. Harassment, surveillance, spying, bans, arrests, torture, and mass killings are all indicator of state repression. Because the state has the monopoly use of coercion and physical force including repression. Thus, all government have coercive capacity. They have agents of repression that have the assets available to them. This repressive agent includes, the police, the military, mercenaries and other agents of the state. Military repression in southeast is of the major factors why Biafra secessionist movement took a more militarized approach. The southeast zone has been more militarized over the years, this is as the IPOB formed the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 12, 2020 (Nwangwu, 2021). For instance, Amnesty International in 2016, accused the federal government of extrajudicial execution and violence against the pro-Biafra groups. This action according to them, has resulted in the killing of over 150 Biafra protesters over the years (Amnesty International, 2016). According to Nwagwu (2021) Kanu's IPOB has set out three routes to sovereignty, which includes, armed secession, civil disobedience and finally referendum.

## Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, Gellnerian theory of Nation and Nationalism as modified by D.V Kumar is adopted to explain the reasons why nationals of a state engage in nationalist movement to seek self-determination and secession out of their state. Ernest Gellner popularized this theory in 1983 in his work titled "Nations and Nationalism". In his work titled "Gellnerian Theory of Nations and Nationalism: A Critical Appraisal" published in 2010 in Sociological Bulletin, D. V. Kumar modified this theory. The basic assumption of this theory is that components of a nation-state must be in harmony in their interest. This is what Gellner called political congruency. Gellner (1983) claims that nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones and separate the power-holders from the rest. Gellner saw a society in which the people are of uncommon culture and possess uneven economic prospects as a forced association of people just like in the case of Nigeria.

According to Kumar (2010) nations has a dialectical quality about it:

1. It is both inclusionary and exclusionary at the same time. The very process of including people who share the same objectives and subjective characteristics in the political community of nation inevitably excludes those who do not share these.
2. It is also dialectical in another way; it can be constructive as well as destructive. To Kumar, Nationalism can have an enormous emancipatory potential in term of mobilizing oppressed, disadvantaged and deprived groups under the rubric of nationalism and motivating them to struggle for their own social, economic, and political betterment, just like the state of Biafra.



Gellner's theory of nationalism looks at behaviour of people of a nation in different dimensions. Nation in this sense being a component of a state. The socio-economic and political dimensions explain the reaction of people towards self-determination within a state.

In the **socio-economic** dimension as identified by Alalade and Ayomola (2019), the theory addresses the activities of citizens regarding perceived marginalization and deprivation. Kumar (2010) asserts that because of uneven development of capitalism and multi-ethnic nature of states, certain groups and region continue to remain in a backward state. As a result, groups living in these regions suffer from a sense of relative deprivation, which gets ethnicized. Ethnic sentiments get aroused and mobilization of people take place along ethnic (nationalist) lines. Fundamentally, therefore, the economic forces lead to the emergence of ethnic/nationalist movements (Hechter, 1975. In Alalade and Ayomola, 2019).

In the political dimension, the theory hinges on relations between state and the communities within it. The state in this regard is the government, which is an organized institution for achieving the will of the state. The state has communities within it and has the responsibility to protect the interest of the communities. Gellner's political variety of modernism argues that nations and nationalism emerged out of the changing dynamics of the relations between the state and the society. Groups and communities which do not wish to be part of any particular state due to precarious state-society relations try to secede from that (Kumar,2010).

The assumption that if ethnic boundaries cut across political ones, it will separate power holders from the rest; which also corresponds with the socio-economic dimension of Gellner's theory applies to Nigeria. As a host of minority ethnicities seem lost within the Nigerian system and they appear ready to embark on self-determination adventure in order to address age-long perceived marginalization that has deterred their socio-economic development process. Several authors attributed reasons for the persistence of Biafra secessionist agitation to the nature of state-society relations in Nigeria, Ukiwo and Ibeanu (2012) in Alalade and Ayomola (2019) attribute the re-emergence of Biafra secessionist movement to the state violence-defined as 'any act by the state or its agents that causes physical or mental injury against the person or property of its law-abiding citizen or group of citizens' (page 4). In this process, Kumar posits further that new nations and nationalism emerge emphasizing the principle of autonomy and sovereignty. The feeling of dissatisfaction and deprivation in certain regions of a state lead to deteriorating state-society relations such as in Nigeria. Historically, the amalgamation of Nigeria is just like a forced marriage of people that do not have any common ancestral origin, no common language, no common culture and no common goal. Each group tends to be pursuing their own different goal and interest, thereby leading to ethnocentrism.

In Nigeria, when one ethnic group take hold of the state power, other ethnic group will be left out, the feeling of us as against others sets in. Other ethnic groups will be excluded, and their interest suppressed. Another ethnic group feels marginalized, maltreated and not involved. This is the idea that the north had during the first military coup, that made them termed it Igbo coup, leading to them retaliating in the second coup and followed by the massacre of the Igbos in the north. This informed the first call of the state of Biafra and Igbo secessionist movement. According to Obi-Ani (2009) in Alalade and Ayomola (2019) the issues that gave rise to Biafra are still very prevalent in Nigeria today, injustice, unequal participation, ethnicity and insecurity. Which set the pace for the reemergence of secessionist agitations in southeast Nigeria. The birth of MASSOB and IPOB. State Repression by the Nigerian Government using



Armed Forces, has also transformed this secessionist agitation from a peaceful movement to its aggravated state now.

### **Police Brutality and Formation of Eastern Security Network (ESN)**

According to Amnesty International (2016), police brutality involves all kind of illegal and unwarranted use of force by the police against the civilians in order to suppress them, this can be done through unlawful killings, illegal detention, torture or use of tear gas against a protesting group. This might amount to torture or other ill-treatment. Factors which can lead to police brutality includes, but not limited to, lack of rule of law, discrimination based on race, language religion or others, insecurity, and entrenched impunity. The mentioned factors are evident in Nigeria, which have led to series of police brutality report in Nigeria.

In 2020, for instance, the streets of Nigeria were filled of men and women, who were protesting against police brutality over the accused of sexual assault, violence, and kidnapping by a group of Anti-Robbery squared known as SARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad). This protest began on October 8, 2020, calling on the Federal Government and the Nigeria Police to abolish SARS. Reports have it that those protesting against SARS were victims of Police brutality by those who suppose to protest them. Even in the cause of exercising the right to, protest, Nigeria Police used tear gas, water cannons, and live round against the protesters (Amnesty International, 2021).

In response to the protest, the government and Nigerian Police disbanded the group, and promise to reintegrate its members into other police unit after they might have gone through psychological test. But up till now, nothing has been done to those who were perpetrators of police brutality. Or did they prosecute those who clampdown on END-SARS protesters.

The SARS experience is not the only case of police brutality in Nigeria. Southeast Nigeria in particular has experienced cases of police brutality, especially since the formation of IPOB and their secessionist agitation. Nigeria government, with the use of police and other state security apparatus intensified a clampdown on separatist agitators in southeast since 2015 especially against IPOB and their leaders. Maximum force have been used against defenseless civilians across southeast, leading to extra-judicial killings of a great number of persons in Onitsha, Aba, Enugu, Umuahia, and the rest (Premium Times Report of June, 2016).

The intention of the government to use military force to clamp down on secessionist agitations of the Igbos was made clear through the statements of President Buhari. The President, in an interview with Arise TV broadcast on June 10, 2021 said, ‘That IPOB is just a dot in a circle, even if they want to exist, they will have no access to anywhere. And the way they are spread all over the country, having businesses and properties, I don’t think IPOB knows what they are talking about’ he went further to say that, “in any case, we say we will talk to them in the language that they understand. We will organise the police and the military to pursue them” (Tolu-kolawole. 2021). This statement by the President can as well be described as threats to the Igbos, in fact it demonstrates his intent for a genocide action against Ndigbo. According to Uche Mefor, the head of information and communication of the De-Facto Customary Government of Biafra, the statement by the President is an unfortunate manifestation of his insatiable desire to, genocidal intent and ethnic cleansing of the Igbo Biafra (Uzoaru, 2021).

On August 23, 2020, when IPOB members were having their meeting in Emene in Enugu state, the officers of the state security services stormed the area, leading to a clash between them and



members of the IPOB. In a statement by its spokesperson, Peter Afunanya, the SSS reported to Premium Times, that they lost two of their personnel in that attack. The IPOB on their own claimed to have lost 21 of its members and 47 arrested by the SSS. According to Emma Powerful, the spokesperson of IPOB, 'this rampart killing of innocent members of IPOB will be reciprocated in due cause...those responsible for this barbaric killings in Enugu today must pay for their actions against IPOB at the appropriate time' (Premium Times, August 23, 2020, Paragraph 24). Those words seem not to be an empty threat, because on December 12, of that same year IPOB launched their para military group, which they called Eastern Security Network (ESN).

Then leadership of IPOB claimed that ESN was a para-military and a regional security network, formed to protest the southeast region against the Fulani herdsmen. But the Nigeria government regarded the group a threat to its authority, and interest, to this end, the government employed the army to locate and destroy ESN bases. This escalated to what we know today as Orlu massacre a month later. To stop the military killings in Orlu, ESN declared a cease fire, but according to Sahara Reporters (2021, January 27) that did not completely stop the killings in Orlu. In fact, as of today Orlu is regarded as one of the dead zones in southeast Nigeria. And yet, IPOB leaders have maintained the ESN is not different from Amotekun (a regional security network of the western Nigeria), and Miyetti Allah in the north (Daily Post of December 13, 2020).

According to Vanguard Report (2021, August 6), Amnesty International gathered evidence to prove that Federal government and its security agencies have used excessive force in Imo, Anambra, and Abia, against ESN, which have resulted in killings and violence. This threat which the government represent to the entire population is not only for the Igbos in Southeast but everyone in South-South, and so, self-preservation which is the greatest unconscious and innate human response to danger remains the safest fallback for the population of the Igbos of both regions.

### **Human Right Abuse and Threat of Armed Secession**

There has been evidence of ruthless excessive use of force by the Nigeria security force in southeast in reaction to the rebirth agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra in the southeastern region. The crackdown has led to violation and abuse of human right and freedom of citizens without a sincere civil effort on the part of government to approach the needs of the region as well as investigate and bring the culprit to book.

Article 3 of the UDHR stated that 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of persons'. In corresponding to that, Section 33(1) of the Nigerian constitution stated that 'Every person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria'. But, according to Special Report on Premium Times of June 8, 2016, between August 2015 and February 2016, about 170 'unarmed citizens' were shot dead or critically injured by Nigerian police force. The table below shows the statistics of the recorded number of deaths.

**Table 1: Cases of extrajudicial killings in Southeastern Nigeria between 2015 and 2016**

Dates	Place	Number of persons killed
August 30, 2015	Awka and Onitsha	4
December 2, 2015	Onitsha	13
December 17, 2015	Onitsha	12
January 18, 2016	Aba	8
January 29, 2016	Aba	6
February 9, 2016	Aba	22

Source: *Premium Times Special Report of June 8, 2016. www.premiumtimesng.com*

In addition to the killings recorded above, between August 2015 and February 2016, about 400 innocent civilians in southeast were either arrested, charged, or detained without trial. Amnesty International documented at least 115 persons killed by Nigeria security forces between March and June 2021 in southeast. Most of those victims were innocent citizens, who were not part of the group attacking the Nigerian security agencies (Amnesty International 2021).

These cases of Human right violation have made the Biafra agitation to take a more violent approach in the quest to secede from Nigeria. IPOB being the group at the frontline of the struggle have at different times threatened for armed secession. In his speech titled ‘ I am Nnamdi Kanu Letter’ published through his Radio Biafra page Facebook on the 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2015, said ‘I knew a day like this will come, this is why I have preached to each and every one of you to get ready as a volunteer force for the Army of Biafra, your mental toughness, consistency, doggedness, resolve, and resoluteness shall never be intimidated by any act of threat by the Nigeria forces put together, as we all know, freedom is never free, we shall fight to get it as stipulated by nature...’ this he said when he was arrested in 2015. He also said in that speech “...if anything happens to me, sink the zoo, I mean kill every governor and ministers in Biafra land including their family members from A-Z...”.

From the evidence gathered above, the Nigerian security agencies have actually violated numerous human rights regulations in order to quell the secessionist groups in southeast Nigeria. Such as, denial of fair hearing, political prisoners and detainees, arbitrary arrest and detention, among others. Even the proscription of IPOB as a terrorist group is seen by many as arbitrary and violation of rights of members. In retaliation of the arbitrary arrest and killing of its members, IPOB and ESN have resulted into the use of arms in attacking security personnel, police station and innocent civilians.

### **Detention and Civil Disobedience**

Arrest and detention have been a major tool which the Federal Government of Nigeria has persistently used in tackling the secessionist agitations in southeast zone, this approach is a means to suppress and disempower group members. Before 2015, there have been clashes between Nigerian security forces and MASSOB (as the first group that agitated for Biafra secession from 1991). Which led to several arrest of members and leader? In fact, according to Country Policy and Information Note on Nigeria (2020), the leader of MASSOB, Raph Uwazuruike, has been arrested on at least four occasions since 1999, while participating in





MASSOB events. During this time, Nigeria authorities did not see IPOB as a threat, rather allowed them to carry out their rallies, but according to Amnesty international (2016), from September 2015 onwards, the authority have claimed that IPOB is a threat to the security of Nigeria, despite the fact that the IPOB protests and gathering documented by Amnesty International were largely non-violent.

Since 2015, Nigerian authority have arrested severally persons who were suspected to be members of IPOB, starting from the arrest of their leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in October 17, 2015. According to Vanguard (2015, October 18), he was arrested in Lagos. The table below shows few cases of detained suspected IPOB members

**Table 2. Detained IPOB Members**

DATE	PLACE OF DETENTION	NO. OF IPOB MEMBERS	REASON FOR ARREST AND DETENTION	DURATION OF DETENTION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
October 17,2015	Lagos	IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu	Offenses relating to “preparation to secede from Nigeria”	More than 1 year	<a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/10/breaking-radio-biafra-director-nnamdi-kanu-reportedly-arrested/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/10/breaking-radio-biafra-director-nnamdi-kanu-reportedly-arrested/</a>
2015	Abuja	4 top members of IPOB	Offenses relating to “preparation to secede from Nigeria”	3years	<a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/07/4-detained-ipob-members-return-home/amp/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/07/4-detained-ipob-members-return-home/amp/</a>
May 31,2018	Umuahia	21 members of IPOB	Charged for terrorism		<a href="https://punchng.com/police-arrest-and-trial-of-praying-ipob-members/?amp">https://punchng.com/police-arrest-and-trial-of-praying-ipob-members/?amp</a>
August 17,2018	Owerri	114 women alleged to be IPOB members	Protesting for the whereabouts of IPOB leader	1 week	<a href="https://guardian.ng/news/imo-court-releases-114-detained-ipob-women/">https://guardian.ng/news/imo-court-releases-114-detained-ipob-women/</a>
August 12,2020	Abuja	67 suspected IPOB members	Unlawful assembly	5 months	<a href="https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/441598-67-ipob-members-regain-freedom-after-five-months-in-detention.html">https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/441598-67-ipob-members-regain-freedom-after-five-months-in-detention.html</a>



January 7, 2021 February 17, 2021	Orlu Imo state Ihiala Anambra	7 suspected IPOB members  14 suspected IPOB members	Illegal possession of arms and killing of security personnel		<a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/breaking-troops-arrest-20-ipob-members-recover-arms-hand-them-to-police/amp/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/breaking-troops-arrest-20-ipob-members-recover-arms-hand-them-to-police/amp/</a>
March to June, 2021	South East	50 persons arrested during raid in south east		7 months	<a href="https://saharareporters.com/2021/09/23/breaking-court-orders-immediate-release-alleged-ipob-members-illegally-detained-7-months">https://saharareporters.com/2021/09/23/breaking-court-orders-immediate-release-alleged-ipob-members-illegally-detained-7-months</a>
May 31, 2021	Ebonyi	6 suspected IPOB members	Enforcing sit at home order		<a href="https://guardian.ng/news/police-arrest-6-suspected-ipob-members-recover-arms-in-ebonyi/">https://guardian.ng/news/police-arrest-6-suspected-ipob-members-recover-arms-in-ebonyi/</a>
June ,2021	Abuja	Nnamdi Kanu	Accused of treasonable felony		<a href="https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/475923-timeline-nnamdi-kanu-long-battle-with-nigeria-government-continue.html">https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/475923-timeline-nnamdi-kanu-long-battle-with-nigeria-government-continue.html</a>
June 17, 2021	Owerri Imo state	A girlfriend to suspected IPOB member	Accused of being an informant	7 months	<a href="https://www.thecable.ng/21-year-old-woman-detained-for-being-friend-with-ipob-member-igp-orders-probe/amp">https://www.thecable.ng/21-year-old-woman-detained-for-being-friend-with-ipob-member-igp-orders-probe/amp</a>
July 4, 2021	Lagos	A man	Suspected IPOB member		<a href="https://humanglemedia.com/detaining-suspected-ipob-member-for-months-without-access-to-family-members/">https://humanglemedia.com/detaining-suspected-ipob-member-for-months-without-access-to-family-members/</a>

*Compiled by the authors*

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), has accused the federal government of applying delay tactics to frustrate court cases involving its detained members in various parts of the court (Daily Post online news, 2017). Emma Powerful who is the media publicity secretary of IPOB made this known on November 6, 2017, according to him, there has been endless adjournments and postponement of court cases involving the group in Nigerian court, as well as the ECOWAS court sitting in Abuja (Daily Post, of November 7, 2017). And till today, the case has been the same, or has gotten worse. The present court case involving the FG and Nnamdi which have lingered since June 2021 till the date of this publication is an evident to prove the delay tactics.

It is based on the above assertion, that the pro-BIAFRA group has adopted methods to show their grievance towards illegal and long detention. These approached can as be 'Civil Disobedience'. Pro-Biafra groups, especially the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) since



2015 have adopted several approaches that can be classified as forms of civil disobedience to portray their grievances over the response of government towards their agitation for a separate state of Biafra. Such as mass protest, election boycott, and the popular Sit-at-home.

The Sit-at-home which started as a once in a while activity, took a drastic form in 2021, when IPOB group now used it as a tool to draw the attention of the populace to the arrest and detention of their leader (The Cable, 2022). This regular Monday Sit-at-home order by the IPOB which started in August 2021, have become public holiday in southeastern states of Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Anambra, and apart of Mondays, IPOB also declares sit-at-home any day Nnamdi Janu will be going to court, including every 30<sup>th</sup> of Maym (Nigerian Tribune, 2020). The sit-at-home has become so frequent one, even though IPOB has declared an end to the regular Monday sit-at-home. This is because of the fierce enforcement with the force or arms, which is mostly link to the unknown gunmen saga currently taking place in south-east.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The refusal of the federal government to grant to the pro-Biafra group the independent of the south-east region, and the use and application of illegal detection of IPOB members have gradually plugged the region into a crisis ridden one, ungovernable and make peaceful live difficult in south east of Nigeria. This can in one way collaborate with Ernest Gellner (1983) when he noted that "... a territorial political unit can only become ethnically homogeneous... if it either kills or expels, or assimilate all non-nationals. Their unwillingness to suffer such fates may make the peaceful implementation of the nationalist principle difficult" p.2.

State repression is to a great extent implicated in the increased militarization of secessionist agitation in southeast Nigeria. This is as the work was able to prove that, polices brutality, human right abuse and detention which are all tools of the state in repressing the secessionist movement, all brought about, the formation of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), threat of armed secession and civil disobedience. Military repression in southeast is of the major factors why Biafra secessionist movement took a more militarized approach. First is the formation of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 12, 2020 by the IPOB group. Thus, according to Nwangwu (2022), the south eastern zone has become highly militarized over the years. This finding corresponded with the work of Alalade & Ayomola (2019), that the federal government deployment of military measures to quell the Biafran secessionists on several occasions has aggravated the fragile nature of peace in the country. Adibe (2017), noted that the typical response of Nigeria government over the years to secessionist groups is to brand them "troublemakers" and send law enforcement agencies to use force and quell their agitations. As shown by the Ethiopian/Eritrean case, repressive means end up radicalizing movements who initially were demanding for only relative autonomy (Idachaba and Nneli, 2018). Thus, the military campaigns in civil-related conflicts had caused more harm and damages than solve the problems that warranted the operations, and it violates human rights of many Nigerians.



In the light of the above, this paper recommends the following;

1. The government of the day should try as much as possible to be responsive, transparent and accountable to the people, and in addition run inclusive governance. This, if not eradicate, will minimise secessionist agitations in South East and other regions in Nigeria.
2. The government should be proactive towards secessionist movements, and instead of the use of force, should adopt non-kinetic method in tackling such cases. This is to avoid further militarization of these agitations in South East and other regions in Nigeria.

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