

## **How Nigerian Army Massacred 150 Pro Biafra Activists & Hurriedly Declared Them Terrorists Using Python Dance II As A Cover To Escape Accountability (1)**

**(Intersociety Nigeria: 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018)**-The combined authorities of the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Air Force are responsible for killing of no fewer than 456 defenseless and unarmed citizens of the country in 2017 alone. The killings included jet-bombing of no fewer than 236 Christian IDPs at Rann IDP camp in Kale-Balge LGA of Borno State on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

There were also no fewer than 20 supporters of Biafra Indigenous People, shot and killed by soldiers at pro Trump Rally in Port Harcourt on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017; no fewer than 50 rural Christians bombed to death in Numan, Adamawa State on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017; and no fewer than 150 mainly supporters of Biafra Indigenous People killed on 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2017 in Afara-Ukwu, near Umuahia (105 deaths), Isiala-Ngwa(20 deaths) and Aba (25 deaths). Over 100 unarmed and defenseless others were also shot and wounded particularly in Afara-Ukwu; which witnessed the highest number of injuries and Aba with the second highest number of injuries.

In 2016, the Nigerian Army, joined by Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies killed no fewer than 200 pro Biafra activists in Aba on 18<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of January and 9<sup>th</sup> of February (60 deaths including 16 slain bodies dumped in two burrow pits and over ten recovered slain bodies) and 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 at Nkpor, Onitsha and Asaba (140 deaths with only about 15% bodies of the slain recovered and buried by their families).

In 2015, the Nigerian Army, joined by Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies killed no fewer than 50 unarmed pro Biafra campaigners. They were killed at Awka and Onitsha on 30<sup>th</sup> August; again in Onitsha and Aba on 2nd December and lastly for the year in Onitsha on 17<sup>th</sup> December at Niger Bridgehead. Out of no fewer than ten killed in Aba on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 along Aba-Port Harcourt Road, five slain bodies were later dumped inside a burrow pit.

The remaining number of deaths associated with army massacre of pro Biafra Campaigners came from other violent crackdowns that greeted their street protests between 2015 and 2016 in Asaba-Delta State, Enugu-Enugu State, Abakiliki and environs-Ebonyi State, Yanogoa-Bayelsa State, Port Harcourt-Rivers State and Uyo-Akwa Ibom State. There are also unreported others technically classified as *dark and grey figures of crimes*. In the above highlighted massacre operations, no fewer than 500 were shot and maimed with some crippled for life and a number of others died from injuries sustained.

The Nigerian Army is also responsible for killing between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2015; of no fewer than 1000 members of Islamic Movement in Nigeria or IMN. The killings took place in Zaria, Kaduna State during the annual sacred procession of the sect. Subsequent killing by security forces in 2016 and above; of the unarmed Islamic sect members also led to no fewer than 120 deaths.

There are also other military killings resulting from custody related deaths in Northeast Nigeria. These deaths perpetrated in conflict environment and outside *military necessity*, clearly constitute war crimes. They include torture-deaths (including starvation and malnutrition) in army detention centers involving hundreds of civilians including new born and others aged not above five. Among such deaths were 240 deaths recorded in the Giwa Military Barracks in 2016 in Borno State. Statistics relating to these custodial deaths are contained in the reports of Amnesty Int'l including its 2016/2017 and 2018 reports on Nigeria.

In all, through illegitimate use of force and its crudity or regime violence, the Nigerian Army, joined by Nigeria Police Force, Nigerian Air Force and other security agencies are responsible for no fewer than 2,150 killings between June 2015 and September 2017. These did not include police custody and torture related deaths which have intensified and risen to national monthly average death of 250 uninvestigated and unprocessed arrested and detained citizens; with yearly average of 3000. That is to say that Nigeria Police Force may most likely have killed as much as 9000 uninvestigated and unprocessed detained citizens since mid 2015. The victims are those arrested and taken into police from where they are tortured to death or shot and killed outside the law. The authorities of the Nigeria Police Force usually refer to them as “slain armed robbers and kidnappers shot in gun duels or via attempted custodial escapees”.

### **Massacre Of 150 Pro Biafra Activists & Ors In Abia During Army Python Dance II**

From our findings following several months of investigation, no fewer than 150 pro Biafra activists and other defenseless members of the public were killed by the Nigerian Army; with 70% of the deaths arising from Afara-Ukwu massacre. In the Afara-Ukwu massacre of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017, no fewer than 105 deaths were recorded.

No fewer than 20 deaths were also recorded at Isiala-Ngwa Army Checkpoint, while 25 others occurred in Aba. The Army massacre operation in Afara-Ukwu; which commenced around 3.26pm of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017, resulting in the death of not less than 105 citizens, was executed in less than three hours during which no fewer than 70 others were shot and injured. No single soldier lost his life in the operation. Sixty (60) unarmed citizens including survivors of the massacre and other members of the public were also arrested during and after the massacre and arraigned at Umuahia Magistrate Court on “terrorism charges”. They were later reminded at Aba Prison Custody.

As it has become the atrocious practice of the Nigerian Army military since mid 2015, approximately 80% of the bodies of those shot and killed in Afara-Ukwu, Isiala-Ngwa and Aba were taken away and dumped in undisclosed locations till date. For instance, days after the Afara-Ukwu massacre, corpses numbering eight were found inside a bush at a location in Umuahia. The dumped dead bodies later identified as supporters of Biafra Indigenous People and its leader, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu by their survivor-colleagues; had their hands tied behind their back with a meter-length of marine rope; technically suggesting that they were arrested alive and later taken inside the bush where they were executed en masse; possibly after being forced by soldiers to bury their slain colleagues at blue law hours.

The corpses possibly buried under duress by their latter-slain colleagues must have been those picked by soldiers at the scene of the Afara-Ukwu massacre; after which the eight executed citizens were commanded while alive to evacuate them to designated hidden locations inside the bush and in late night hours. The eight executed victims may most likely have been shot dead on the spot so as to cover up and erase traces.

Our long investigation covered *forensic* or expert interviews and documentations of survivors, field investigation assistants, relatives of the slain and other key witnesses. Some of the verified facts of those interviewed are deposed before various High Courts of Justice in Nigeria as *affidavits of facts*. Burial posters, photos and video coverage of some of the recovered corpses were carefully studied and analyzed using ICT powered video and photo authentication applications

Some photos of the slain members were also taken from morgues where they were deposited. The army torture video taken at Isiala-Ngwa Army Checkpoint was re-studied and two corpses of those killed at the scene and dumped by the roadside clearly shown in the video were traced and identified. One of them, Ifeanyichukwu (Ifechukwu) Agbayisi was later in the day of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017 dumped at King OO Jerry Mortuary, Isiala-Ngwa, from where he was retrieved by his family and later buried in his hometown in Anambra State on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

As at date, we have identified and investigated 19 names of the Army Abia massacre; out of which bodies of 16 of them have been interred by the families with remaining three being among 120 others taken away by soldiers till date. More names are being compiled and awaited by Intersociety and other concerned rights groups within and outside Nigeria.

Fears of military and other security reprisals including late night raids and arrests have also forced many families of the slain victims to refuse to publicly declare their beloved ones as “missing persons” since 2015. For instance, out of 450 slain pro Biafra activists killed since August 2015; derived from witnesses’ accounts, we have been able to identify at least 100 names. More details including statistics and other public friendly information in connection with Army Python Dance II massacre in Abia will be featured in the second part of this technical report to be released in few coming days

Therefore, it is fact that till date, most Nigerians and members of the int’l community are not aware or bereft of detailed statistics on what actually transpired in Abia State in September 2017 during the so called “Nigerian Army Python Dance II”. It is an incontrovertible fact that the massacre operation was deceptively launched in the Southeast but it was solely targeted at Abia State on account of nonviolent activities of some leading pro Biafra movements including Biafra Indigenous People and its leader, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu.

By the findings of this organization resulting from detailed investigation; the Nigerian Army’s “Operation Python Dance 11” was a huge cover up and a disguised excuse to unleash State violence on defenseless People of Southeast and extend the present central Government’s hate policy against the Igbo Race using physical violence.

Appeared to be a *presidential death warrant against the target population or kill the pigs operation*; the Nigerian Army hurriedly disguised it as *army python dance 11* as a cover or to mechanically legitimize it. Analytically speaking, it was most likely the intelligence sent to the Defense Headquarters on shocking casualty figures arising from the Afaraukwu massacre or at Nnamdi Kanu's home that forced the Defense Headquarters to hurriedly declare retroactively and unconstitutionally the victims and their group as a "terror group designate" on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017; culminating into formal declaration of same as *terror group* two days later by President Muhammadu Buhari. It is most likely correct that Mr. President was fully briefed on "accomplishment of the mission sent" as the C-in-C; leading to his *blue law day* proclamation.

The hurriedly and retroactively presidential proclamation was done on a national day of the blue law or non-public office working day being Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The declaration was solely designed to retroactively legitimize the mass murder so as to cover up the regime atrocity and escape accountability. To make the matter worse, further hurried steps were made; leading to fetching a core pro establishment judge, who was struggling to be confirmed as the substantive Chief Judge of the Federal High Court to hurriedly issued a *coffee tea table order* proscribing the victim group after massacring their unarmed and defenseless members for no just cause.

By Section 36 (8) of the existing 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, *no person shall be held to be guilty of a criminal offence on account of any act or omission, that did not at the time it took place, constitute such an offence, and no penalty shall be imposed for any criminal offence heavier than the penalty in force at the time the offence was committed.* That is to say that the Nigerian Army acting on the order of its C-in-C and COAS, supervised and carried out a massacre operation on 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and got its same C-in-C to label through a blue law day proclamation the victims and their group as "a terror organization".

Also there is nowhere in the Constitution or any other recognized law of Nigeria including the African Rights Charter (Ratification & Enforcement Act, Cap A9) Laws of the Federation 2004, Access to Criminal Justice Act of 2015 or Criminal Code Act of 2004 that empowers Mr. President of Nigeria or Chief of Army Staff or Chief of Defense Staff or any supervising security or defense or policing minister or adviser to order for and supervise the opening of fire on innocent and unarmed citizens or defenseless others that gathered or quarantined in a place for non armed resistance purposes or members of a population trading or working in their places of work or those who retired to bed to sleep.

By Section 33 of the existing 1999 Constitution and the African Rights Charter Law of the Federation, no such atrocious act by any public office holder in Nigeria is permitted. This is also the first time in the history of modern world and democracy unarmed and defenseless nonviolent self determination campaigners and their group; with no traces or records of organized violence or armed resistance or attacks; are presidentially and judicially proclaimed "a terrorist organization".

Our findings also indicate that the military attacks on Nnamdi Kanu's father's royal palace on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 as well as those of Isiala-Ngwa and Aba on 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 were totally a deliberate provocative act; without any form of resistance from the victims or their group. For instance, it is our further finding that the gathering of over two thousands supporters of Biafra Indigenous People at their leader's Afaraukwu home was strictly a vigil and camping activity; only for Nigerian Army to storm the Palace at about 3.26pm on the said 14<sup>th</sup> September and opened fire at the defenseless and unarmed crowd; killing no fewer than 105 defenseless citizens and injuring over 70 others.

Same was the case at Isiala-Ngwa Army checkpoint where soldiers blocked and barricaded commuters traveling to Umuahia and Enugu including supporters of Biafra Indigenous People visiting their leader at Afara-Ukwu near Umuahia. Scores of pro Biafra supporters and others have had their commuter buses and cars grounded; leading to mass arrest and torture including drowning them inside nearby mud water and forcing them to drink same. No fewer than 20 of them; mainly pro Biafra activists were shot and killed at the Checkpoint. Most of them were killed on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Other pro Biafra supporters traveling to Umuahia on 14<sup>th</sup> September dodged the Checkpoint and followed other safer routes following shocking reports of killing of their members two days back.

The case of Aba was not different. As a matter of fact, scores of those shot and killed in Aba had nothing to do with pro Biafra campaigns. Some were dragged out of their sleeping bed in the late night of 13<sup>th</sup> and early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and shot dead; after which their bodies were taken away by the soldiers. Some of those that ran out of their homes following late night raids in their areas as well as others that left their homes in the early morning of 14<sup>th</sup> September to do their early morning businesses were also spotted and shot dead.

A number of 25 defenseless citizens that lost their lives in Aba alone were killed in front and around their places of work or business premises or the way to their trading and hawking businesses. Areas of Aba affected by soldiers' late night and early hours' raids of 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 are residents of Ariaria, Umuode, Osisioma, Power Line and Abayi.

**Signed:**

**For: Int'l Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law**

**Emeka Umeagbalasi, Board Chairman**

**Mobile Line: +2348174090052**

**Email: [botchairman@intersociety-ng.org](mailto:botchairman@intersociety-ng.org)**

**Barr Obianuju Joy Igboeli**

**Head, Civil Liberties & Rule of Law Program**

**Email: [igboeliobianuju@gmail.com](mailto:igboeliobianuju@gmail.com)**

