



**International Society For Civil Liberties & The Rule Of Law**



Phone: +2348182411462, +2348174090052

E-mail: [info@intersociety-ng.org](mailto:info@intersociety-ng.org)

Website: [www.intersociety-ng.org](http://www.intersociety-ng.org)

Follow Us:     

### **Inside Ogwe-Ukwa West Forest Where Defenseless Citizens Were Slaughtered And Rested In Pieces During Army Python Dance 11 In Igbo Land**

**(Intersociety Nigeria: 27<sup>th</sup> August 2018)**-No fewer than seven secret and criminal graveyards have been independently located in three old Eastern Region of Delta, Anambra and Abia States. These criminal graveyards have arisen as a result of the present central Government of Nigeria's military and other forms of violent crackdown targeted at unnamed and defenseless pro Biafra activists and other members of the civilian population. The regime atrocities or crimes against humanity were perpetrated using lopsidedly composed Nigerian Army and Nigeria Police Force as well as other members of the country's security forces.

The crackdowns were specifically carried out in the periods of 30<sup>th</sup> August 2015, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015, 29<sup>th</sup> January and 9<sup>th</sup> February 2016, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The most atrocious and horrific part of the violent crackdowns were the massacre of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 during which over 140 defenseless citizens were slaughtered and the Army Python Dance 11 of September 2017 in Abia State (Asa, Aba, Isiala-ngwa and Umuahia) resulting in the death of no fewer than 180 defenseless citizens of Igbo extraction.

A total of not less than 150 defenseless citizens were shot and terminally injured in Anambra and Delta States on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 while no fewer than 140 others got same terminal fate in Abia State in September 2017. The perpetrators are still on the prowl with chronic impunity till date. As if the above regime atrocities were not enough, the same central Government has defiantly concluded plans to embark on another massacre operation in Igbo Land, code-named "Army Python Dance 111". The referenced regime atrocities constitute "crimes against humanity" and fundamental breach of int'l human rights and humanitarian laws.

The locations of the seven secret and criminal graveyards in Igbo Land are: (1) Asaba Airport location/swamps, (2) Onitsha Military Cantonment Cemetery, (3) Nkpor-Umuoji Road environs, (4) Umuahia Forest/Afara-ukwu Palace, (5) Aba National High School/Aba-Port Harcourt Road Burrow Pits, (6) designated gravesites where hospital mortuaries dispose "unclaimed" or "state property" corpses and (7) the Ogwe-Ukwa West Forest graveyard discovered in the first week of August 2018.

There are also more undiscovered criminal graveyards in Uyo (Akwa Ibom State) and Port Harcourt (Rivers State) where dozens of slain pro Biafra activists and other collateral victims (missing) must have been disposed by hospital mortuaries under the cover of "unclaimed" or "state property" corpses; or where security forces particularly the Army must have secretly dumped or buried those they shot and killed and have their corpses taken away from murder scenes.

Victims of such criminal graveyards also include those taken alive by security forces particularly soldiers of Buratai's Army to such criminal graveyards and shot dead and dumped. Several findings by our organization have further shown that such victims are majorly drawn from those arrested alive and taken to the graveyards and killed on the spot or those captives forced to carry their slain colleagues to the graveyards after which they are tied or blindfolded and shot dead to erase traces of culpability.

**Defining Criminal Graveyard:** This is a crime scene where unarmed or defenseless citizens are shot dead or a place (i.e. bush, forest, swamp, river or cremation spot) where corpses of same category are dumped or dismembered through burning and use of acid substances; or buried in shallow graves. Such graveyard is abominable and criminal because due processes are never followed or applied from the circumstances of the victims' death to disposal of their bodies in the criminal graveyards. Apart from the fact that the victims are killed outside the law, the lawful and rightful processes of their interment including consent, cooperation and presence of their families/relatives, independent medical examinations (i.e. autopsy and corona inquest) into their killing and committing their corpses to mother earth through befitting interment are never followed or applied.

**Witnesses' Accounts:** In the Asaba spillover massacre of 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016, wife of one of the fifteen slain victims dumped at the Asaba branch of the Federal Medical Center had in June 2016 narrated her ordeal and frustration to Intersociety. She had explained several efforts she made to retrieve the body of her husband whom she identified among 14 other slain victims at the FMC, hours after the massacre. Her husband died while being conveyed with corpses of six others to the FMC by soldiers of the Onitsha Military Cantonment. He was allowed to call his wife having been shot and battered with military bullets. He breathed last while talking to his wife.

His wife later went to the FMC in company of her landlord where she was tightly allowed to identify him in the morgue section. She did all she could to retrieve the body for burial but all to no avail and was told that her husband corpse "is a state property". She was later told by a mortuary attendant that her husband was around 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016 disposed alongside 14 others and buried somewhere near the Asaba Airport Road under the cover of "state property". A number of other slain citizens felled and died inside Asaba swamps after being shot while remains of others found in a state of decomposition near the swamps got buried near the same swamps by sympathizers, days after the Asaba spillover massacre.

In the Onitsha and Nkpor massacre of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016, not less than 90 slain citizens were buried in one of the two cemeteries inside the Onitsha Military Cantonment. Witnesses' accounts also abound.

Not less than 30 pro Biafra activists were killed at the National High School, Aba with 16 bodies found inside Aba-Port Harcourt Burrow Pits; comprising those already shot and killed before their dumping as well as those taken to the Pits alive and shot dead. No fewer than 105 pro Biafra activists were again shot and killed at the Afara-ukwu Palace of Eze Israel Okwu Kanu on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Most bodies of those killed in the Palace by soldiers of the Nigerian Army were taken away by soldiers and remained un-located till date.

Barely one week after the genocidal “Army Python Dance 11”, eight bodies of pro Biafra activists were located and found inside an Umuahia Forest. They had had their hands behind their back and tied with marine ropes before being shot dead and dumped; suggesting that they must have been forced to carry their dead colleagues to the scene in the dead of the night after which they were shot and killed to avoid traces. The sad news of their discovery was much later published by Sun Newspaper on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2017, prompting Intersociety to seek for its authentication which was later found to be correct.

### **38 Bodies Of Victims Of Army Python Dance 11 In Ogwe-Ukwa Forest:**

**Background:** A native and local resident of Ogwe Community in Ukwa West LGA of Abia, who is also a pro Biafra activist, had three weeks ago raised alarm over his shocking discovery of dozens of decomposed corpses inside the Umu-Ura Village Forest in Ogwe Community. He told his colleagues that his resolve to spy on the forest was as a result of suspicious movements of soldiers on patrol vans into the forest which have been on for past several months.

As Okada rider plying the area from Ogwe Junction along Aba-Port Harcourt Federal Road to Ogwe Community including its Umu-Ura Village, which is about three kilometers from Ogwe Junction; he was used to observing their suspicious movements into forest and sometimes sounds of gunshots in late night and in the same direction. Located close to the forest is the Ugwuachi Military Checkpoint, mounted by soldiers of 144 Battalion, located at Asa Community in the same Ukwa West LGA of Abia State.

The whistle blower was further quoted by his colleagues as having seen over 30 decomposed corpses in a ditch within the forest. As his fellow pro Biafra activists who had earlier after the Army Python Dance 11 of September 2017 in Abia State organized search parties for possible location of dozens of their missing colleagues; were getting ready to storm the forest for proper identification and documentation; most of the corpses were reportedly gathered and set ablaze by suspected authorities of the Nigerian Army and the Government of Abia State.

The corpses were said to have been set ablaze about three days after the alarm was raised by the pro Biafra whistle blower. It was on account of the above that the leadership of the Biafra Indigenous People raised a global alarm via its statement of 14<sup>th</sup> August 2018. Undeterred, another search party comprising five members of the print media and pro Biafra activists was organized to storm the forest on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August 2018, but the pressmen reportedly cited security concerns and withdrew; forcing the pro Biafra activists to storm the forest later same day through Obiawon Village in the Community where they found five other corpses littered in different parts of the forest.

It was further discovered that four corpses found in a location in the same forest the previous day by a second eyewitness when he visited had also gone missing, suggesting strongly that the suspected authorities must have organized a field team to ransack the forest, retrieve all the corpses and burn them beyond recognition to erase traces of culpability.

The five corpses met on the ground were videoed and pictured. It is vividly recalled that the suspected agents of the Government of Abia State had similarly on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016 caused 13 corpses of slain pro Biafra activists dumped inside a burrow pit along Aba-Port Harcourt Federal Road to go up in flames. This occurred two days the receipt of our public interest letter to Governor Okezie Victor Ikpeazu over the same issue. By the time we went back to the site in July 2016, we were told that the Government of Abia State brought a bulldozer and filled the spot with red sands.

**Our Visit to Ogwe Forest Graveyard:** On Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2018, Intersociety went to the forest for further crime scene analysis and found three corpses remaining. It is most likely correct to say that the remaining three corpses met when we visited must have been removed and possibly burnt days after our last visit. The first corpse seen was located about eight to ten meters away from two others located four to five meters apart. One of the three corpses still bears shackle marks before being shot and killed; suggesting strongly that many must have been taken to the forest as slain or dead bodies while the rest including the former must have made it to the forest alive before they were shot and killed; after they must have been forced to carry their slain colleagues to the forest.

Facial and primary evaluation of the discovered corpses by independent medical experts especially their state of decomposition suggests that they must have been shot and killed eleven months ago. Field interviews were also conducted in four different locations: Ogwe Junction, Umu-Ura, Awaza and another village near Umu-Ura Village and among those interviewed are regular users of the link road and the forest such as Okada and Keke riders.

They collectively confirmed the frequent patrol and encroachment into the forest of soldiers using Hilux vans especially between the hours of 8pm, 9pm, 10pm, 11pm and 12am and 2am and that sometimes residents are awoken by military gunshots inside the forest as late as 2am and 1am lasting for 10-13minutes. The forest is about a kilometer away from residential area of the Community and very large as well. On the fate of burnt and disappeared corpses, it was linked to the said authorities by some of those interviewed with one of them querying "if we think Government will still allow them to be there after such alarm was raised and reported in the media".

**Intersociety Findings:** (1) there is no evidence of intra or inter-communal conflict in the area; either stretching back to Aba and environs or up to Asa (Abia)/Obigbo (Rivers) boundary areas. (2) Ugwuachi Military Checkpoint located inside Ogwe Community is a searchlight checkpoint controlled by the Asa main Military Checkpoint located in Asa Community, Ukwa West LGA of area of Abia State and situated along Aba-Port Harcourt Federal Road in the same Abia State. (3) There is 144 Battalion of the Nigerian Army located in Asa Community, Ukwa West LGA of Abia State; a community sharing boundary with Obigbo in Rivers State. (4) The 144 Battalion is a unit of 14 Brigade of the Nigerian Army, Ohafia, in Abia State, commanded as at September 2017 by Lt Col Umar Sidi Kassim (Commanding Officer). (5) The 14 Brigade of the Nigerian Army, located in Ohafia is under the command of Brig Gen Khalifa Ibrahim (Brigade Commander). (6) The ethno-religious or Fulani-Hausa Muslim identities of the heads of the two military formations in such part of Igbo Land are a clear evidence of high risk of perpetration of hate killings or ethnic cleansing targeted at unarmed and defenseless Igbo citizens.

Others are: (7) From Asa Community where 144 Battalion is located to Ogwe Community is about four to five kilometers and from Ogwe Junction by Aba-Port Harcourt Federal Road to Umu-Ura Village forest where the corpses were dumped is about 1.2kilometers. (8) There is a designated settlement in the same large Community Forest for Fulani Herdsmen which is about 1.5kilometers from the crime scene within the Forest. (9) There is steady heavy military presence and patrol for protection of the Herdsmen which must have prompted the setting up of Ugwuachi searchlight Military Checkpoint inside Ogwe Community. (10) The military policing architecture of the Area especially the Forest must have made it possible to serve as another criminal graveyard of the Nigerian Army where bodies of the murdered Igbo citizens are dumped late night or those arrested alive taken to and killed. (11) The over 30 burnt corpses and others found inside the Ogwe Forest are most likely those that went missing during the Army Python Dance 11 in Abia State.

The rest are: (12) the bulk of them must have been those arrested at Asa main Military Checkpoint under stop and search especially those coming from Rivers and Akwa Ibom and traveling to the Umuahia residence of Mr. Nnamdi Kanu of the Biafra Indigenous People on 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017. (13) Others must have been those arrested alive or shot dead by soldiers in Aba and environs during the Army Python Dance 11. (14) There are most likely other undetected or undiscovered criminal graveyards scattered in other forests and bushes located between Aba and Asa areas, Aba and Isiala-ngwa areas and Isiala-ngwa and Umuahia areas. (15) One of the unrevealed motives behind “Army Python Dance” in Igbo Land is most likely to be for purpose of designating and securing forest locations for settlement and permanent occupation by the Fulani Herdsmen and their patrons.

We further found that: (16) Authorities of the Nigerian Army under Lt Gen Tukur Buratai (COAS) are chiefly held inescapably and undeniably responsible for all located and yet-to-be located criminal graveyards in Igbo Land and their associated atrocities. (17) The discovery of the corpses and hasty efforts of the suspected authorities of the Nigerian Army and the Government of Abia State to destroy evidence is not only the first or the last of such discoveries but also a clear vindication of Intersociety which had in its recent report on Army Python Dance 11 informed the global community that corpses of most of the slain victims were taken away by soldiers and either decimated with acid substances or dumped/buried in shallow graves inside bushes or forests; or thrown off bridges into the river to erase traces of culpability.

**Photos of the three decomposed corpses found inside Ogwe-Ukwa West Forest by Intersociety on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2018 and marked “1”, “2” and “3” are attached below.**

**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)**

**Obianuju Joy Igboeli, Esq.**

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

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

**Barr Chinwe Umeche**

**Head, Democracy & Good Governance Program**

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



