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

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: February 2019
*Minor updates added October 2021

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 had been largely non-violent, the movement was banned by the Nigerian government as a terrorist organisation in September 2017. 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 Nigerian authorities tend to respond to MASSOB and IPOB meetings and demonstrations in the same way, including through arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, harassment, discrimination, etc.

In 2020 and 2021, the Nigerian government has been deliberately targeting persons suspected to be IPOB members. Since August 2020, violence between IPOB and the Nigerian security forces has escalated, with reported killings of (suspected) members of the group and retaliatory

security incidents. In December 2020, IPOB established a paramilitary wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and armed clashes with Nigerian state forces ensued. The security situation in relation to IPOB in South-East Nigeria, is rapidly deteriorating, as several incidents in Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, and other south-eastern states have shown. In 2021, security forces increased operations against ESN and in January of the same year, IPOB declared that the 'second Nigeria/Biafra war' had begun. On 18 February 2021, helicopters and hundreds of troops were deployed in Imo state, razing several ESN camps. [Security situation 2021, 1.3.2.5, 1.4.1.1, 2.25]

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

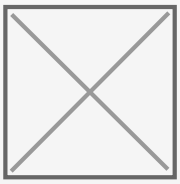
Risk analysis

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 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 highly likely to be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion.



Exclusion considerations could be relevant to this profile (see the chapter on Exclusion).

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