

## Nnamdi Kanu



Nnamdi Kanu is the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a non-violent independence movement that advocates for the restoration of the former Republic of Biafra. Kanu was born in 1967 to a royal, middle-class Igbo family in Abia State, Nigeria. He had his early education in Nigeria before moving to England and receiving a degree in Political Economics from London Metropolitan University. In time, he became a naturalized British citizen.

After founding the IPOB in 2012, Kanu has, through various nonviolent means, sought to raise awareness of the aggravated institutional marginalization and exploitation of the Biafran people at the hands of successive Nigerian governments.

His radio program, Radio Biafra, reaches millions of IPOB supporters and other disaffected Biafrans each week. By many credible accounts, Kanu commands the following of tens of millions of Biafrans within Nigeria and in the diaspora, and the admiration of a significant population of non-Biafrans across Nigeria.

Upon his return to Nigeria in October 2015, Mr. Kanu was detained by Nigerian forces on charges of treason and belonging to an unlawful society. Kanu was held at an undisclosed location until April 2017, when he was released on bail after being detained for nearly two years. After his release from prison, Kanu's home was raided by Nigerian military officials, forcing his escape from Nigeria in order to save his life.

In 2017, the administration led by Muhammadu Buhari declared the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra a terrorist organization, arguing that the group had formed a secret militia, used weapons, and extorted money from civilians at illegal road blocks. This characterization contradicts human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which have documented human rights abuses perpetrated against peaceful IPOB protestors. The U.S. Embassy in Nigeria has also reiterated that Nigeria's classification of the IPOB as a terrorist organization is improper. In March 2019, a Nigerian judge ordered Kanu to be arrested again over his failure to attend hearings nearly two years after his release on bail. The Judge's reluctance to consider the reasons for Kanu's absence from his trial was criticized by many.

Biafra was a region that sought independence from Nigeria in the 1960's, and nearly 2 million Biafran civilians perished during the Nigerian Civil War, a conflict which many international human rights advocates argue constituted a genocide targeted against ethnic and religious minorities in Biafra. Many of these civilians were killed by a blockade that cut off resources to Biafrans in southern Nigeria, forcing the starvation of millions.

It is the objective of Mr. Kanu and the IPOB to commemorate those who lost their lives and strive to promote human rights and freedom of speech for all Nigerian citizens including the right to decide the Biafra question through referendum.

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