

Mr. Ogechukwu Nkere
Biafran-American Political and Human Rights Activist
7200 Belair Road
Suite #2
Baltimore MD 21206 USA

Written Statement Submitted for the Record
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing
Transnational Repression: Trends and Policy Approaches
June 24, 2025

**Mr. Ogechukwu Nkere's Submission To Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
Regarding Nigeria's trans-national repression campaign against Biafrans**

Purpose:

1. To highlight Nigeria's trans-national repression of free speech, association, and criminalization of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Biafra Republic Government In Exile's (BRGIE) peaceful campaign for the right to self-determination of the people of Biafra
2. Encourage the U.S. government to pressure the Nigerian government to end its trans-national repression against Biafrans, including advocating the release of IPOB Supreme Leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and BRGIE Leader Simon Ekpa.

1, Introduction And Background:

Nigeria is an oil-rich country and a continental power in Africa. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country with a population of about 200 million people.

There are three major ethnic groups, the Igbo, the Yoruba, and the Hausa-Fulani; and 250 other smaller ethnic groups. The Hausa-Fulani are predominantly Muslims, and live in the Northern (Sahelian) part of Nigeria; the Yoruba who live in the Southwest are split almost evenly between Muslims and Christians.

The Igbos, along with related tribes, whom we refer to as Biafrans (the centerpiece of this submission) inhabit the Southeastern part of Nigeria with a combined population of over 70 million. Biafrans are predominantly Christians and traditional worshippers, with a constituency also practicing Judaism. Their land is blessed with human and mineral resources including vast hydrocarbons. Biafrans are very commercially- inclined, industrious and are given to scholarly and professional pursuits in addition to their first nature as gifted mercantilists. They had an established grassroots democratic order (known as the Umunna system) before the advent of colonization.

They are very republican and egalitarian in nature, and coexisted peacefully with their

neighbors (including northern Nigerians and Cameroonians) prior to their amalgamation with the rest of Nigeria in 1914. Before then, there was no single massacre of Biafrans anywhere in pre-amalgamation Nigeria. This is noteworthy.

The foretaste of the pogrom that was levied on Biafrans, particularly the Igbos amongst them happened in 1948 in Northern Nigeria when Biafrans were, without any justification, massacred just for being Biafrans or merely looking like one. It turned a genocidal corner in 1966, soon after the world commemorated the 21st anniversary of the liberation of hapless Jews from Auschwitz and made the customary solemn declaration of 'Never, Never Again'. Pivoting on a false narrative of a so-called "Igbo coup" and "Igbo plot to dominate Nigeria", Nigeria's military officers, the police, and notable civilians (mostly from the North) planned and executed the Biafran genocide. This was Africa's most devastating genocide of the 20th century. The more recent one in Rwanda that shocked the conscience of nations paled in comparison. An estimated of over three million Biafrans were murdered between 29th May 1966 and 12th January 1970. And had the Biafrans not resisted by unilaterally declaring its independence, the massacre would have been incalculable and more horrendous. There is credible evidence that sectional Nigeria provoked the Nigerian civil war as a cover to accomplish the genocide that had begun against Biafrans, generally and the Igbos, in particular as far back as 1948 in northern Nigeria. The difference this time was to take it to their homeland where they had fled and taken refuge under the heartily declared Republic of Biafra, a nation borne in dire necessity and the desperation to survive a genocide.

The following excerpt from recently declassified US Embassy diplomatic dispatches of the era on the pogroms and the war that followed is instructive and it states that: "*The North was minded to use the war as a tool to reassert its dominance of national affairs. Mallam Kagu, Damboa, Regional Editor of the Morning Post, told the American consul in Kaduna: "No one should kid himself that this is a fight between the East and the rest of Nigeria. It is a fight between the North and the Ibo."*

The perpetrators of this genocide, who subsequently seized federal power and deployed it to enabling themselves to pillage the enormous oil and gas deposits that lie within the Igbo territories, got off scot-free from any form of retribution for what are, unquestionably, crimes against humanity. Suffice it to say that it is the same set of people that have directly or indirectly controlled the government and resources of Nigeria since then.

The contents of this submission are neither news, nor new. At the time, there was an extensive coverage of the Biafran genocide in the international media throughout its duration. All you need to do is to do basic research, using google or even AI. Robert Melson, a foreigner, a Holocaust survivor and a Nigerian expert who witnessed what happened between 1967-1970, in his book, '*Revolution and Genocide*', states that: "*I could not help but make the connection between their experience and my own. Biafrans were being killed purely for their identity: it was as if the twenty-some years after the Second World War had been compressed into a few minutes. The Holocaust monster was on the prowl again, and it was no use trying to escape its implications in Africa or elsewhere*".

The scale of the carnage was such that had the Rome (or the International Criminal Court) Statute been enacted, Nigeria's entire military leadership and its top civilian enablers would have been prosecuted for genocide and crimes against humanity for orchestrating the destruction of Biafrans in whole or in substantial part because of their ethnicity. And to make it worse, those that oversaw the genocide and their natural political successors continued to control Nigeria and thus ensured that no accountability was exacted for a crime of such shocking scale. And to date, no apology or remorse has emanated from official Nigeria or any of the prime State actors. It is this state of affairs and the post-war political suppression of Biafrans that grandfathered the resurgence of the Biafran agitation in recent times.

2. Statement Of The Facts:

There is this running narrative emanating from some quarters that the neo-Biafran struggle for self-determination is an ethnic backlash by the Igbo against the non- Igbos that have controlled the levers of Nigerian federal power since 1970. This is false and petty. The neo-Biafran movement surfaced in 1999 with the creation of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in 1999 by Chief Ralph Uwazuruike. In 2012, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, a protégé of Chief Uwazuruike, then created the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2012, which became the predominant Biafra independence organization. Post-War agitation for Biafra and support for IPOB accelerated in late 2015 when former President Muhammadu Buhari systematically embarked on widespread anti-Igbo policies, coupled with his open toleration of Fulani Islamic terror that was breaching the northern reaches of Igbo land. It was in the face of this that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the idea of a Biafran government in exile gained much traction as protectors and defenders of a people that have

been disdained by the government of the day.

It is to be noted that virtually all of us presently at the vanguard of pushing for Biafra were borne after the Nigerian civil war ended in 1970. So, in our renewed quest for Biafra, we are not driven by any sense of personal loss (of the war), revenge or bitterness; but by, instead, a sense that our people are being mistreated badly and are verging in again becoming the victims of another creeping genocide. Vast

majorities of the Biafrans share the same view, even so quietly because of fear of retribution by the Nigerian government or other non-State actors in alliance with the government.

Amnesty International reports that since the advent of the former Buhari administration in 2015, Nigerian security forces have killed more than 300 Biafrans and wounded many more while they held peaceful protests against the killings and for self-determination. Amnesty International says that many of those pro-Biafra protesters were shot and killed in their sleep and others while they gathered in churches to pray. Many of the protesters were shot and killed from behind while they tried to escape. Contemporaneous Country Reports released by the US State Department confirmed much of these, particularly the Nigerian government's declaration of IPOB as a terrorist organization in October 2017 which gave a dubious legal cover to Nigeria's security forces to resort to extrajudicial killings of Biafrans perceived to be self determination agitators or members of IPOB.

As you are reading this, the other killings of Biafrans by Fulani Islamic terrorists is on-going, especially in the northern boundaries of Igbo land, such that several innocent villagers were murdered in Ebonyi State in February 2025. Igbos continue to bury their brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters almost every month; and oftentimes, the violence is maliciously and falsely attributed to unknown gunmen or faceless Biafran 'separatists'. In the face of all these and in the perception that rogue elements of the security forces are complicit, the Biafran government in exile emerged as beacons of hope for Biafrans that have become distrustful of the government. It bears mentioning that when the agitation for Biafra accelerated in late 2015, the response of the Nigerian government was disappointingly non-pragmatic. Instead of acknowledging the burgeoning popularity of the agitation and take bonafide measures to contain it through constructive engagement or dialogue, the government went wild with deadly and extrajudicial law enforcement actions that backfired by fueling the agitation to levels not seen since the end of the Civil War in 1970. These misguided law enforcement

actions turned a dangerous corner and boomeranged when the government went rogue by renditioning Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (the Biafran leader) from Kenya in late June 2021. No doubt, this is an avoidable overreaction that has convulsed Nigeria's legal system, triggered the international legal order against Nigeria and birthed the government-driven insecurity that has rocked Southeast Nigeria to this day. In between, Fulani Islamic terrorists have capitalized on the situation to disquiet Southeast Nigeria to no end.

After Mazi Nnamdi Kanu's illegal kidnapping, one of Nnamdi Kanu's protégé's, Finland-based Biafran activist Simon Ekpa, took charge of the Biafra independence movement and created the "Biafra Republic Government in Exile" (BRGIE), of which he is the "Prime Minister", as the next iteration of the Biafra independence movement. The BRGIE has galvanized the support of the Biafra population, and has engaged in high-level dialogue in Washington, DC, having retained top lobbying and law firms to engage the U.S. government. Furthermore, BRGIE organized a 'self-referendum', in which more than 50 million Biafrans voted in favor of independence. BRGIE held an independence convention in Lahti, Finland November 29-December 2nd, 2024, in which BRGIE declared the independence of Biafra on December 2nd, 2024.

The government of Nigeria, according to Mr. Ekpa, has orchestrated five assassination attempts against his life. After allegedly failing to assassinate Mr. Ekpa, the government of Nigeria successfully pressured the government of Finland to arrest Mr. Ekpa in November of 2024 on politically motivated charges. The government of Finland then issued an indictment against Mr. Ekpa, which demonstrated the political nature of the prosecution at the instigation of the government of Nigeria. The indictment by Finland, issued in May of 2025, alleged that Mr. Ekpa participated and supported a terrorist organization, even though pro-Biafra organizations are not designated as terrorist groups in Finland or in the European Union. In fact, the only country in the world where pro-Biafra organizations are deemed as 'terrorist' groups is Nigeria. The indictment highlighted many internal issues within Nigeria as part of the allegations and labeled them "unlawful" without justification-for example, the prosecutor asserted Mr. Ekpa's alleged goal of reforming or repealing Nigeria's constitution was "unlawful", as well as labeling the position that the Nigerian State should withdraw its armed forces from South-Eastern Nigeria as "unlawful". For the government of Finland to assert that a Finish citizen holding political positions regarding internal policy matters within Nigeria is somehow a criminal offense in Finland is nonsensical and absurd, and demonstrates that Finland is engaging in a politically motivated persecution. Dr. Michael Rubin, a senior think-tank official with the prestigious American Enterprise Institute, has written at length on how Scandinavian

countries have a poor record of selling out African political exiles and dissidents, and that Finland's case against Mr. Ekpa is politically motivated. Dr. Rubin also highlights other examples, including Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC) leader Dr. Cho Lucas Ayaba, who has been detained by Norway since August 2024 without an indictment.¹ Nigeria's conduct towards both Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and Simon Ekpa demonstrates trans-national repression.

3, CONCLUSION:

We shall conclude this submission by saying this: At the moment, the issue of Biafra, the insecurity in Southeast Nigeria and all the unpleasant aftermaths cannot be resolved while the Federal Government of Nigeria persists in the detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, Finland persists in its detention of Simon Ekpa, and thousands of young Biafrans, despite the international tribunal pronouncements in their favor, as set out below:

I. The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights - ACHPR) had, in March 2018, rendered Decision against the GON's summary designation of IPOB as a terrorist group and consequently issued a cease and desist request to the GON, stating that the said terror designation and arrests/prosecutions of IPOB members constituted "**gross violation of the provisions of the African Charter, in particular Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7, 9,10, 11, 12,14,19, 20 of the Charter, as well as other regional and international human rights laws and standards**". To this day, the violations persist and have even become escalated to horrid dimensions.

¹ <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/why-finland-norway-and-sweden-shouldnt-top-freedom-rankings/>

II. Further to the Decision of the **ACHPR**, mentioned above, the United Nations (through its Special Rapporteurs), in October 2020, transmitted a Communication/Decision (No: **AL NGA 5/2020**), to the GON, stating that: *“We understand that IPOB, established around 2012, is an organisation whose political objective is for the five majority Igbo States in South- East Nigeria to secede from the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Nigeria) through a regional referendum and to re- establish an independent sovereign state of “Biafra”. We note that proscription is a serious legal step which prima facie impinges on a range of association, expression and political rights. Lawful proscription should only be carried out when absolutely necessary and subject to rigorous due process. Proscription should not be used as a means to quell legitimate political opinion and expression, nor to prevent individuals from exercising their rights of peaceful assembly and of association. We are concerned that these growing restrictions **on fundamental freedoms**, that have seemingly accelerated with the official designation of IPOB as a terrorist group, may be indicative of a growing climate of intolerance towards the Igbo and Christian minorities in certain segments of Nigerian society.”*

III. Despite the recorded disapprovals of the United Nations (as set out above), the Government of Nigeria (GON) - pivoting on its questionable designations of IPOB and BRGIE as terror groups - persists in its deadly persecutions of Biafrans in their homeland. This persecution has resulted in hundreds of extrajudicial killings, horrendous torture, arbitrary arrests/detentions and enforced disappearances of IPOB and BRGIE members. Despite the tempo of mass arrests, **it is instructive that - to this date - no single Biafran has been convicted of any crime in any Court in Nigeria.** The reason is obvious and that is: Despite its institutional challenges, no court in Nigeria has found any actionable or reliable evidence that can ground a conviction of any Biafran, including Nnamdi Kanu, which is one of the major reasons his trial has been stalled since 2015.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

On the basis of the foregoing, we most respectfully request for the following:

- (1) Urge the United States to invoke the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of P.L. 114-328) to identify and impose travel and financial restrictions on all officials of the Federal Government of Nigeria and any Nigerian non-State actors implicated in the killings of Biafran Christians in their homeland in Southeast Nigeria;
- (2) Urge the U.S. government, including through targeted sanctions and/or tariffs, to pressure the government of Nigeria to release Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and allow him safe passage out of Nigeria.
- (3) Urge the U.S. government to pressure the government of Finland, including through targeted sanctions and/or tariffs, to end its politically motivated trial against pro-Biafra activist Simon Ekpa.
- (4) Urge the United States to deny all bilateral assistance and visas to officials of GON if it continues to engage in trans-national repression against pro-Biafra activists, and if Simon Ekpa and Nnamdi Kanu continue to be held in detention.

Please reach out to myself, as well as our voices in Washington, DC, international attorney Arman Dabiri and Washington, DC political consultant Elias Gerasoulis of Moran Global Strategies, if you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Mr. Ogechukwu Nkere
Biafran-American Political and Human Rights Activist