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**QUESTION: Write an essay on violent conflict on a geo-political zone in Nigeria.**

**ANWSER**

Biafra, officially the Republic of Biafra, was a secessionist state in [West Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa) that existed from May 1967 to January 1970 during the [Nigerian Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War). Its territory consisted of the [Eastern Region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Region,_Nigeria) of [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria).

Biafra's declaration of independence from Nigeria [resulted in civil war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War) between Biafra and Nigeria. Biafra was formally recognised by [Gabon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabon), [Haiti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haiti), [Ivory Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_Coast), [Tanzania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanzania), and [Zambia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia). Other nations, which did not give official recognition but provided support and assistance to Biafra, included [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), [Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain), [Portugal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal), [Norway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norway), [Rhodesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodesia), [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_South_Africa), and [Vatican City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican_City). Biafra received aid from [non-state actors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-state_actor), including Joint Church Aid, [Holy Ghost Fathers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Ghost_Fathers) of Ireland, and under their direction [Caritas International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caritas_International), and U.S. [Catholic Relief Services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Relief_Services). [Médecins Sans Frontières](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9decins_Sans_Fronti%C3%A8res) also originated in response to the suffering.

Its inhabitants were mostly [Igbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people), who led the independence movement due to economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the various peoples of Nigeria. Other ethnic groups included the [Efik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efik_people), [Ibibio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibibio_people), [Annang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annang), [Ejagham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekoi_people), [Eket](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eket_people), [Ibeno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibeno), [Yako](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yak%C3%B6_people), [Bahumono](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahumono) and the [Ijaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people).

After two-and-a-half years of war, during which almost two million Biafran civilians (​3⁄4 of them small children) died from starvation caused by the total [blockade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockade) of the region by the Nigerian government, Biafran forces under Nigeria's motto of "No-victor, No-vanquished" surrendered to the [Nigerian Federal Military Government (FMG)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_military_juntas_of_1966%E2%80%931979_and_1983%E2%80%931998). The surrender was facilitated by the Biafran Vice President and Chief of General Staff, Major General [Philip Effiong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Effiong), who assumed leadership of the Republic of Biafra after the original President, Colonel [Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._Odumegwu_Ojukwu), fled to [Ivory Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_Coast). After the surrender of Biafra, some Igbos who had fled the conflict returned to their properties but were unable to claim them back from new occupants. This became law in the Abandoned Properties Act (28 September 1979). It was purported that at the start of the civil war, Igbos withdrew their funds from Nigerian banks and converted it to the Biafran currency. After the war, bank accounts owned by Biafrans were seized and a Nigerian panel resolved to give every Igbo person with an account only 20 pounds. Federal projects in Biafra were also greatly reduced compared to other parts of Nigeria. In an Intersociety study it was found that Nigerian security forces also extorted approximately $100 million per year from illegal roadblocks and other methods from [Igboland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igboland) - a cultural sub-region of Biafra in what is now southern Nigeria, causing greater mistrust of the Igbo citizenry towards the Nigerian security forces.

[Early modern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern) maps of Africa from the 15th to the 19th centuries, drawn from accounts written by explorers and travellers, show references to Biafra, Biafara, and Biafares. In his personal writings from his travels, a Rev. Charles W. Thomas defined the locations of islands in the Bight of Biafra as "between the parallels of [longitude 5°](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_meridian_east) and [9° East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9th_meridian_east) and [latitude 4° North](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4th_parallel_north) and [2° South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_parallel_south)". People in the region have described Biafra as the land directly adjacent to the [Bight of Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bight_of_Biafra) and also an indigenous state, existing before [European colonialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Conference) created such entities as Nigeria.

In 1960, [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria) became independent of the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). As with many other new African states, the borders of the country did not reflect earlier ethnic, cultural, religious, or political boundaries. Thus, the northern region of the country has a [Muslim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Nigeria) majority, being primarily made up of territory of the indigenous [Sokoto Caliphate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sokoto_Caliphate). The southern population is predominantly [Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Nigeria), being primarily made up of territory of the indigenous [Yoruba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people) and Biafra kingdoms in the West and East respectively. Following independence, Nigeria was demarcated primarily along ethnic lines: [Hausa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hausa_people) and [Fulani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fula_people) majority in the north, [Yoruba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people) majority in the West, and [Igbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people) majority in the East.

Ethnic tension had simmered in Nigeria during discussions of independence, but in the mid-twentieth century, ethnic and religious riots began to occur. In 1945 an ethnic riotflared up in [Jos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos) in which Hausa-Fulani people targeted Igbo people and left many dead and wounded. Police and Army units from Kaduna had to be brought in to restore order. A newspaper article describes the event:

At Jos in 1945, a sudden and savage attack by Northerners took the Easterners completely by surprise, and before the situation could be brought under control, the bodies of Eastern women, men, and children littered the streets and their property worth thousands of pounds reduced to shambles

Three hundred Igbo people died in the Jos riot. In 1953 a similar riot occurred in [Kano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kano) later. A decade later in 1964 and during the Western political crisisdivided the Western Region as [Ladoke Akintola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Akintola) clashed with [Obafemi Awolowo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obafemi_Awolowo). Widespread reports of fraud tarnished the election's legitimacy. Westerners especially resented the political domination of the Northern People's Congress, many of whose candidates ran unopposed in the election. Violence spread throughout the country and some began to flee the North and West, some to [Dahomey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Dahomey). The apparent domination of the political system by the North, and the chaos breaking out across the country, motivated elements within the military to consider decisive action. The federal government, dominated by Northern Nigeria, allowed the crisis to unfold with the intention of declaring a state of emergency and placing the Western Region under martial law. This administration of the Nigerian federal government was widely perceived to be corrupt. In January 1966, the situation reached a breaking point. A [military coup occurred](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_Nigerian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat) during which a mixed but predominantly Igbo group of army officers assassinated 30 political leaders, including Nigeria's Prime Minister, Sir [Abubakar Tafawa Balewa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abubakar_Tafawa_Balewa), and the Northern premier, Sir [Ahmadu Bello](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmadu_Bello). The four most senior officers of Northern origin were also killed. [Nnamdi Azikiwe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nnamdi_Azikiwe), the President, of Igbo extraction, and the favored Western Region politician [Obafemi Awolowo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obafemi_Awolowo) were not killed. The commander of the army, [General Aguiyi Ironsi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnson_Aguiyi-Ironsi) seized power to maintain order.

In July 1966 northern officers and army units staged a counter-coup. Muslim officers named a General from a small ethnic group (the Angas) in central Nigeria, General [Yakubu "Jack" Gowon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakubu_Gowon), as the head of the Federal Military Government (FMG). The two coups deepened Nigeria's ethnic tensions. In September 1966, [approximately 30,000 Igbo were killed in the north](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966_anti-Igbo_pogrom), and some Northerners were killed in backlashes in eastern cities.

In January 1967, the military leaders Gowon, [Chukwuemeka Ojukwu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._Odumegwu_Ojukwu) and senior police officials of each region met in [Aburi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aburi), Ghana and agreed on a less centralized union of regions. The Northerners were at odds with this agreement that was known as the [Aburi Accords](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aburi_Accord); [Obafemi Awolowo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obafemi_Awolowo), the leader of the Western Region warned that if the Eastern Region seceded, the Western Region would also, which persuaded the northerners.

After returning to Nigeria, the federal government reneged on the agreement and unilaterally declared the creation of several new states including some that [gerrymandered](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymandering) the Igbos in Biafra. On 26 May the Eastern Region voted to secede from Nigeria. Four days later, Ojukwu unilaterally declared the independence of the Republic of Biafra, citing the Easterners killed in the post-coup violence as reasons for the declaration of independence. It is believed this was one of the major factors that sparked the war. The large amount of oil in the region also created conflict, as oil was already becoming a major component of the Nigerian economy. Biafra was ill-equipped for war, with fewer army personnel and less equipment than the Nigerian military, but had advantages over the Nigerian state as they were fighting in their homeland and had the support of most Biafrans.

The FMG attacked Biafra on 6 July 1967. Nigeria's initial efforts were unsuccessful; the Biafrans successfully launched their own offensive, occupying areas in the [mid-Western Region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mid-Western_Region,_Nigeria) in August 1967. By October 1967, the FMG had regained the land after intense fighting. In September 1968, the federal army planned what Gowon described as the "final offensive". Initially, the final offensive was neutralised by Biafran troops. In the latter stages, a Southern FMG offensive managed to break through the fierce resistance.

The Republic of Biafra comprised over 29,848 square miles (77,310 km2) of land, with terrestrial borders shared with [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria) to the north and west, and with [Cameroon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameroon)to the east. Its coast was on the [Gulf of Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Guinea) of the [South Atlantic Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Atlantic_Ocean) in the south.

The [Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Actualization_of_the_Sovereign_State_of_Biafra) (MASSOB) emerged in 1999 as a nonviolent and Biafran nationalist group, associated with [Igbo nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_nationalism). The group enacted a "re-launch" of Biafra in [Aba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aba,_Abia), the commercial centre of [Abia State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abia_State) and a major commercial centre on Igbo land. MASSOB says it is a peaceful group and advertises a 25 stage plan to achieve its goal peacefully. It has two arms of government, the Biafra [Government in Exile](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_in_Exile) and the Biafra Shadow Government. MASSOB accuses Nigeria of marginalising Biafran people. Since August 1999, protests have erupted in cities across Nigeria's south-east. Though peaceful, the protesters have been routinely attacked by the Nigerian police and army, with large numbers of people reportedly killed. Many others have been injured and/or arrested.

On 29 May 2000, the Lagos [Guardian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guardian_(Nigeria)) newspaper reported that the now ex-president [Olusegun Obasanjo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olusegun_Obasanjo) commuted to retirement of the dismissal of all military persons, soldiers and officers, who fought for the breakaway Republic of Biafra during Nigeria's 1967–1970 civil war. In a national broadcast, he said the decision was based on the belief that "justice must at all times be tempered with mercy".

In July 2006 the [Center for World Indigenous Studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Center_for_World_Indigenous_Studies) reported that government-sanctioned killings were taking place in the southeastern city of [Onitsha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onitsha), because of a shoot-to-kill policy directed toward Biafrans, particularly members of the MASSOB.

The Nigerian federal government accuses MASSOB of violence; MASSOB's leader, Ralph Uwazuruike, was arrested in 2005 and was detained on treason charges. He has since been released and has been rearrested and released more than five times. In 2009, MASSOB leader Chief Uwazuruike launched an unrecognized "Biafran International Passport" and also launched a Biafra Plate Number in 2016 in response to persistent demand by some Biafran sympathizers in the diaspora and at home. On 16 June 2012, a Supreme Council of Elders of the Indigenous People of Biafra, another pro-Biafra organization was formed, the body is made up of some prominent persons in the Biafra region, they sued the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the right to self-determination, Debe Odumegwu Ojukwu, the eldest son of ex-President / General Ojukwu and a Lagos state-based lawyer was the lead counsel that championed the case.

MASSOB leader Chief Ralph Uwazuruike established [Radio Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_Biafra) in the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) in 2009, with [Nnamdi Kanu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nnamdi_Kanu) as his radio director; later Kanu was said to have been dismissed from MASSOB because of accusations of supporting violence. The Nigerian Government, through its broadcasting regulators, the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigerian and Nigerian Communications Commission, has sought to clamp down on Radio Biafra with limited success. On 17 November 2015, the Abia state police command seized an [Indigenous People of Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_People_of_Biafra) radio transmitter in [Umuahia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umuahia). On 23 December 2015, Kanu was detained and charged with charges that amounting to treason against the Nigerian state. He released on bail on 24 April 2017 after spending more than 19 months without trial of his treason charges. Self-determination is not a crime in Nigerian law.

According to the South-East Based Coalition of Human Rights Organizations, security forces under the directive of the federal government have killed 80 members of the Indigenous People of Biafra and their supporters between 30 August 2015 and 9 February 2016 in a [renewed clampdown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_Pro-Biafra_Protesters_(2015%E2%80%932016)) on the campaign. A report by [Amnesty International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amnesty_International) between August 2015 and August 2016, at least 150 pro-Biafran activists overall were killed by Nigerian security forces, with 60 people shot in a period of two days in connection with events marking Biafran Remembrance Day. The Nigerian military killed at least 17 unarmed Biafrans in the city of [Onitsha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onitsha) prior to a march on 30 May 2016 commemorating the 49th anniversary of Biafra's 1967 declaration of independence.

Another group is the Biafra Nations Youth League (BNYL), which has its members and followers mostly in the Niger Delta and Bakassi Peninsula, the group is led by Princewill Chimezie Richard (aka. Prince Obuka) and Ebuta Ogar Takon respectively, the Organisation also have a Chief of Staff who is a native of the Bakassi Peninsula, BNYL have also recorded a security clamp down in Bakassi Peninsula when soldiers of ‘Operations Delta Safe’ apprehended Princewill in Ikang-Cameroon border area on 9 November 2016 during an attempt to mobilise a protest in support of Kanu's release, he was again rearrested by Nigeria Police Force in the same area on 16 January 2018 along with 20 of their supporters. Many reports has it that BNYL is linked to the Southern Cameroons separatists, although the group confirms this, it denies involvements in violent activities in the region. The Deputy Leader, Ebuta Ogar Takon is an Ejagham native, half Nigerian and half Cameroon. BNYL, which operates more in the riverine areas, has links with Dokubo Asari, a former militant leader, about 100 members of the group were reportedly arrested in Bayelsa during meeting with Dokubo on 18 August 2019.

The Incorporated Trustees of Bilie Human Rights Initiative, representing the Indigenous People of Biafra, have filed a lawsuit against the Federal Government of Nigeria and Attorney General of the Federation, seeking the actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra by legal means. The Federal High Court, Abuja has fixed 25 February 2019 for hearing the suit.

On 31 July 2020, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra / Biafra Independence Movement (BIM-MASSOB) joined the [Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unrepresented_Nations_and_Peoples_Organization)(UNPO).