



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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24 June 2008

### NGA102877.E

Nigeria: The address of the head office of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and when it was acquired; the address of the MASSOB International head office and when it was acquired; whether MASSOB writes letters of support on behalf of MASSOB members; if so, the appearance and content of the letterhead of the MASSOB head office

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### MASSOB headquarters

Several sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that the headquarters of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are located in Okwe, Imo State (*Europa* 2007 2007, 3414; *Vanguard* 16 May 2008; AFP 30 Jan. 2007). Okwe is situated in southeastern Imo State (AFP 30 Jan. 2007), in the Okigwe district (*Global Insight Daily Analysis* 29 June 2007; Maplandia.com n.d.). Information on when the headquarters were established in this area could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The headquarters of MASSOB are commonly referred to as the "Biafran Freedom House" (*Vanguard* 16 May 2008; *The News* 1 Nov. 2004). According to a 2005 press release and a 2001 report posted on the pro-MASSOB website Biafraland.com, the group's national headquarters are located at 153 Owerri Road, Okigwe, Biafra (Biafraland.com 26 Oct. 2005; *ibid.* Nov. 2001). However, more recent or corroborating information concerning the address of the MASSOB headquarters could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Two news sources from 2004 indicate that MASSOB also has several "zonal" offices in major towns and villages, including Aba, Umuahia, Owerri, Abakaliki, Enugu, Awka, and Nnewi, among others (*P.M. News* 22 Oct. 2004; *The News* 1 Nov. 2004).

### MASSOB International

A 21 February 2007 article in the Lagos-based *Daily Champion* newspaper indicates that a controversial "acting leader" of the MASSOB (i.e., who was reportedly acting for the group's leader, Chief Ralph Uwazuruike, while he was in prison) authorized the creation of MASSOB International. According to the article, the new organization is "responsible for mobilizing world-wide support for the noble cause of actualizing Biafra" and would be based in London (*Daily Champion* 21 Feb. 2007). The London-based address of MASSOB International could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to a 12 May 2008 article in *Vanguard*, another Lagos-based newspaper, MASSOB International made a statement claiming it had removed Uwazuruike as leader because he was "ineffective" and had lost "focus" (*Vanguard* 12

May 2008). However, MASSOB has reportedly "disowned" the faction and maintains that Uwazuruike remains the group's leader (ibid.).

## Letters of support

During its March 2006 fact-finding trip to Nigeria (Abuja, Lagos and Benin City), Norway's Landinfo - Country of Origin Information Centre interviewed MASSOB lawyer Festus Keyamo (Norway Aug. 2006, 16). On behalf of MASSOB's leader, Keyamo made the following statement regarding letters issued to MASSOB members:

The MASSOB leadership has decided that members should stay in Nigeria and fight for self-determination within the country. No decision has been taken to send MASSOB activists abroad to continue the struggle from outside. ... When people contact MASSOB for support and substantiations of their asylum claims (either while still in Nigeria or from abroad), MASSOB turns them down. This is also the case when (potential) asylum seekers offer MASSOB money for such letters of support. ... The MASSOB policy is to stay in Nigeria to dare all consequences and fight for self-determination. (ibid.)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

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### **Additional Sources Consulted**

**Publications:** *Political Handbook of the World 2008; Report on Human Rights Issues in Nigeria: Joint British-Danish Fact-Finding Mission to Abuja and Lagos Nigeria, 19 October to 2 November 2004; Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World.*

**Internet sites:** Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), ReliefWeb, Small Arms Survey (SAS), United Kingdom Home Office, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).

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