



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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14 August 2009

**NGA103197.FE**

Nigeria: Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), including its leaders and the recruitment of its members, whether cards or other documents are issued to members (July 2005 - August 2009)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### Leadership and structure of MASSOB

Formed in 1999 (*American Chronicle* 28 May 2008; RFI 2 July 2006), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) campaigns for the independence of the Igbo people, who are predominant in southeastern Nigeria (BBC 30 May 2007).

Sources consulted by the Research Directorate name Ralph Uwazuruike as the leader of MASSOB (*Daily Champion* 29 June 2009; *Nigerian Tribune* 1 July 2009; *This Day* 19 Aug. 2008; UN 6 Nov. 2007). One media outlet names Uchenna Madu as MASSOB's Director of Information (*The Nation* July 8 2009), and another names David MacDavid as Deputy Director of Information (Africa Masterweb 23 Sept. 2007).

### Recruitment of members

A Biafra independence leader, quoted by Radio France internationale (RFI) in reference to MASSOB, stated that [translation] "no one knows their number, their methods of recruitment or training" (RFI 2 July 2006). Further information on the recruitment of MASSOB members could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

### Cards and other documents issued to MASSOB members

According to the United Kingdom (UK) Home Office, "it is not known whether MASSOB issues membership cards to its members" (UK 18 Jan. 2007, Sec. 3.7.3). However, an article published by the United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) quotes a resident of the Fegge district who witnessed police searches in Onitsha in June 2006 as saying that many people found with weapons or MASSOB identity cards were "'summarily shot dead'" (UN 4 Sept. 2006). Additional reference to MASSOB membership cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Various sources document that MASSOB launched an international passport on 30 June 2009 (*The Source* 13 July 2009; *Vanguard* 1 July 2009; *Nigerian Tribune* 1 July 2009). According to an article published on 1 July 2009 in *Vanguard*, a publication from Lagos, MASSOB launched "the Biafran International Passport" during its 10th anniversary ceremony in Okwe, State of Imo. During the presentation of the document, MASSOB leader Uwazuruike explained that the passports, printed in South Africa, were produced in response to persistent demand by the Biafran diaspora

(*Vanguard* 1 July 2009). Uwazuruike also noted that every Biafran is entitled to use this passport at any time as long as he or she meets the criteria for acquiring it (ibid.). Further information on the criteria for obtaining a Biafran passport or on its actual use by MASSOB members 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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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### **Additional Sources Consulted**

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact MASSOB headquarters and the Biafra Foundation were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), The Guest Media (GM), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group, Nigeriaworld.com, *The Zimbabwe Standard*.

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