

Poland Introduces Ban on Carrying Weapons in Warsaw During Biden's Visit

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Nigeria Urges Helsinki to Clip Wings Of Finnish Politician Pushing for Secession

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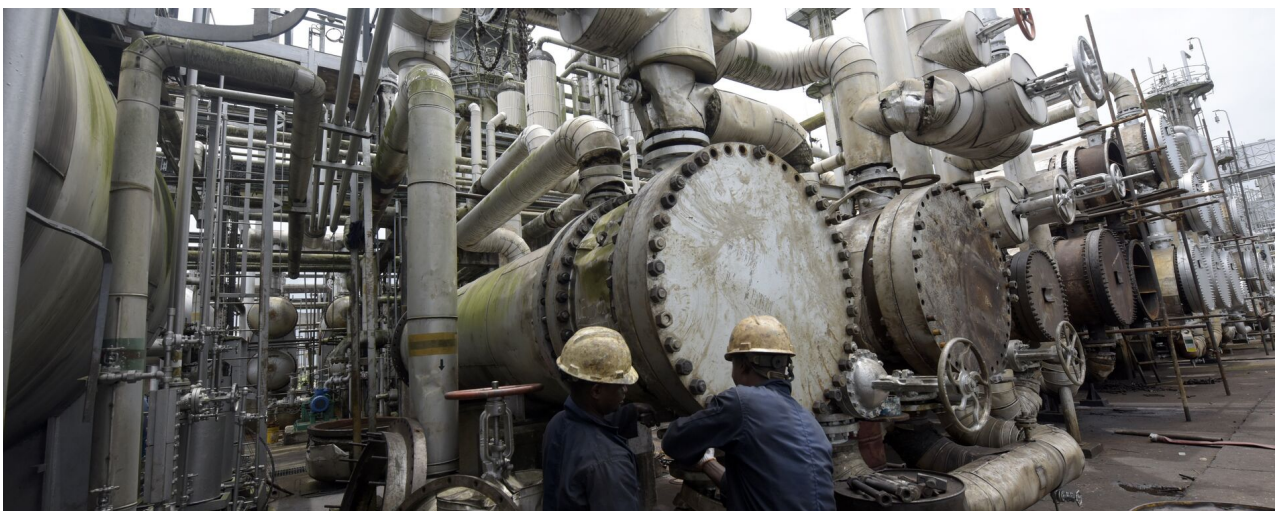
The separatist movement in Eastern Nigeria, in which a Finnish politician from the city of Lahti appears to be playing a key part, has been denounced by fellow Africans living in Finland, who warned that the situation was in danger of escalating into a Rwanda-style 1994 genocide.

Nigeria has called on Finland to stop a Finnish politician from leading an armed revolt in the south-eastern part of the African country, where the short-lived republic of Biafra once existed.

According to Nigeria, Simon Ekpa, a councilor from the Finnish city of Lahti representing the center-right National Coalition Party, happens to be among the leaders of a separatist movement called the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which is pushing for the secession of Biafra, a province in south-eastern Nigeria populated mostly by the Igbo people, **who in the past unsuccessfully declared independence.**

The separatist movement previously urged millions of locals to boycott Nigeria's approaching general election and is even said to have allied itself with a feared armed paramilitary group. According to Nigeria, Ekpa has personally called on millions of Nigerians to participate in anti-government protests over the past months.

In order to quell the potential violence, Nigeria has asked Finland to stop Ekpa's activities, for fear that they could interfere with the 2023 general election.



Africa

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Finland's ambassador to the African country Leena Pylvanainen said that the police had been notified of the accusations made against Ekpa and are aware of the situation. At the same time she ventured it was not a diplomat's job to assess whether a Finnish citizen has committed a crime by calling for boycotts or supporting separatist movements.

The National Coalition Party, which Ekpa represents in Lahti, voiced its surprise over the recent development and said it is conducting an investigation of its own. The party also said that if Ekpa is found to be genuinely involved in armed activities, his position in the party will be evaluated.

The Igbo Union of Finland, which represents hundreds of Nigerians living in the Nordic country, has distanced itself from Ekpa's actions. It also warned that if Finland fails to stop Ekpa's activities, **the situation could potentially escalate into a tragedy not unlike Rwanda's 1994 genocide**. The union leader called on Ekpa to stop inciting violence and stoking conflict, stressing that many Igbos living in Finland have family members back in Nigeria who are at risk of being caught in the ensuing violence.

Nigerian-born former award-winning athlete Simon Ekpa is a Finnish lawyer and political activist who at present lives in Lahti. His website contains posts of his "sermons" in support of Biafra.



9 December 2022, 13:56 GMT

Biafra, also referred to as the Republic of Biafra, was a **partially recognized secessionist state in West Africa that existed from 1967 until 1970**, having proclaimed independence from Nigeria. This led to the Nigerian Civil War, during which a short-lived Republic of Benin was also created. In 1970, the government forces proclaimed victory, after which Biafra was disbanded. **The two-and-a-half-year war resulted in about 100,000 military casualties and the death of up to 2 million civilians because of starvation.**

Biafra was formally recognized by fellow African nations of Gabon, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Zambia. Several European nations, including France, Spain, Portugal and Norway, although stopping short of officially recognizing it, provided diplomatic or military support. It also enjoyed popular support from left-leaning movements across the Western world.