

## Public Statement

### Critics of Ojukwu's Immortalization Are His Enemies In Death-Intersociety Says Today

(Onitsha Nigeria, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2012)-The leadership of International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Rule wishes to condemn groups and individuals including the Action Congress of Nigeria, Anambra State Chapter (see Punch Newspaper, August 24, 2012)for opposing shabbily the bold and commendable steps taken by both Government of Anambra State and Federal Government of Nigeria to rename the Onitsha Niger Bridgehead and Upper Iweka end of the Onitsha-Enugu Federal Dual Carriage Way after the unrivalled liberator of Ndigbo and the only man who saw tomorrow's Nigeria, Great Historian Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the Eze-Igbo Gburugburu! It is saddening and shocking too that the likes of ACN-Anambra State has identified itself as one of the posthumous enemies of this Great African, who was mourned in over 250 cities around the world. It is now clear to all and sundry that the Party's leaders' participation in the Great Ojukwu's funerals was pretentious and for cheap political relevance too. The latest unpopular stance of the Anambra State Chapter of the Party clearly shows that the Great Ojukwu's sad demise gladdened the heart of some individuals for parochial political reasons.

Further, it is totally shocking and disbelieving that the leadership of the largest opposition political party in Nigeria does not understand the common geography of Anambra State including Onitsha. For the avoidance of doubt, the area designated for the Great Ikemba's naming has nothing to do "Iweka Road" or" Upper Iweka". "Iweka Road", which is partly called "Upper Iweka", is a road named after the late Igwe Iweka 1 of Obosi, which shares common boundary with Onitsha. The said Iweka Road starts from Odoakpu part of Onitsha, beginning from Moore Street end, stretching through Modebe Avenue to Ochanja Market Roundabout and ending at Onitsha Flyover. From the forgoing, therefore, it is clear that there is no visible link between the Niger Bridgehead where the renaming begins and the Lagos Park where it presumably ends. Even if it stretches to the Zik's Roundabout, it will still not affect "Iweka Road" in any manner whatsoever. Another stark example is "Uga Street Junction", through which the expected 10-lane Ojukwu Drive passes through. That the 10-lane Ojukwu Drive in making touches Uga Junction does not take away the popular Uga Street/Junction, which starts from Fegge part of Onitsha and ends at the Junction, joining the said dual carriage way with Atani-Ogwuikpere Federal Road, started and completed by the present Government of Anambra State. With the foregoing incontrovertible facts, therefore, it is obvious that the Anambra-ACN's position is clothed in the layers of mischief and hate. This is a clear case of hate and jittery stance, nursemaided by politics of the Yore.

It is therefore our position that the Great Ikemba deserves more than mere road renaming. While the decision to build the 10-lane drive and rename it after him is a welcome development, more befitting public institutions and critical infrastructures in the State should also be renamed after this illustrious Son of Africa. Legislative and executive efforts should be made in this direction to rename Anambra State University and its College of Medicine as well as Ogbaru/Onitsha Harbour Industrial Layout; etc after him. This is because no amount of immortalization will be too big for him. His likes in Asia and former Soviet republics are worshipped as an idol. Other Southeast and South-South Nigerian States

particularly the old Eastern region should immortalize the Great Ikemba by renaming some of their important public institutions and critical infrastructures after him.

It is our observation that the contracting firm handling the reconstruction work at the site, especially at the Onitsha Niger Bridgehead, the CCC Nigerian Limited, has brought the work at ground zero. Apart from the provocative slow pace of work at the said site, pieces of construction equipment deployed are very few and epileptic. The mature way applied by the Government of Anambra State, which domains the reconstruction work for the Federal Government, through a power of attorney, in handling the traders and transporters occupying the two service lanes, particularly those of Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba origins deserves commendation. More commendable step is the designation of a permanent site at Nkwere-Ezunaka, Near Tansian University, Umunya, for the resettlement of those affected and moves to build a befitting Mosque for Muslim worshippers whose shanty place of worship was pulled down. We urge the Government to ensure that the new site is made secured and business and environmentally friendly. Efforts should also be made towards ensuring that the new site accommodates all those affected irrespective of their tribe and religion. The ongoing removal of illegal structures in the State particularly in Onitsha and environs should be carried out in line with modern environmental rights norms including ensuring adequate compensations for those badly affected such as traders whose brick stalls were pulled down recently on Atani Road in Ogbaru LGA of Anambra State. A new permanent site should be found for the Iron Dealers' Market, trading on Uga Street, Port Harcourt Road and Atani Road, all in Onitsha South and Ogbaru LGAs of Anambra State.

**For: International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law, Nigeria**

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