

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

November 15, 1968

The Honorable  
Richard M. Nixon  
450 Park Avenue  
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Nixon:

Observers returning from Nigeria, including the United States relief team which accompanied Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Palmer on his recent visit to Africa, report that the starvation conditions resulting from the civil war in the former Eastern Region are rapidly entering a new and desperate phase.

The loss of life from starvation continues at more than 10,000 persons per day, over 1,000,000 lives in recent months. Without emergency measures now, the number will climb to 25,000 per day within a month, and some 2,000,000 deaths by the end of the year. The new year will only bring greater disaster to a people caught in the passion of fratricidal war. Crop exhaustion in combat areas will put nearly 8,000,000 men, women and children in the clutches of total starvation.

I fully recognize that our government, and others, has contributed significantly in funds and supplies to the relief effort being made by the Federal Nigerian Government, the International Committee for the Red Cross, UNICEF and several private voluntary agencies. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the relief agencies do not have at their disposal adequate funds, food, medicine, personnel and delivery capability to meet current needs, let alone those far greater needs anticipated by the end of the year.

I cannot accept the view that the deteriorating situation and the extraordinary loss of life in Nigeria-Biafra is primarily an internal or African concern, and must be met within that context, however desirable this objective. The mere fact that arms are pouring into the area from many parts of the world to needlessly prolong violence at the expense of innocent millions should tax the conscience of all mankind - especially that of our own Nation, whose traditions and ideals call for a maximum effort in the service of peace and the welfare of humanity.

The Hon. Richard M. Nixon  
November 15, 1968  
Page Two

The United States has always found a way to make its weight felt in the affairs of others when our political self interest and national security have been at stake. In the historic tradition of our Nation, I would also hope that we can still exert our powerful influence when great human tragedy strikes our fellowman.

Because the humanitarian problems in Nigeria-Biafra are expected to reach a climax during the current transition to a new Administration, and because I deeply believe that our government should take firm leadership in doing what it can to avert impending disaster for millions of innocent people, I strongly urge, Mr. Nixon, that the awesome situation be given high priority on your agenda for joint consultation with the President.

I especially recommend that our government energize its diplomatic initiatives to end immediately the flow of arms to either side, to pursue without delay a ceasefire on the battlefield, and to support earnestly and without prejudice to either side the renewed effort by His Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and the Organization for African Unity, to bring the warring parties to the conference table.

Secondly, I recommend that our government, solely for humanitarian purposes, and in cooperation with the parties to the conflict, substantially increase its contributions to the relief effort. I share the view of many Americans, that nothing should be lacking in the commitment of the United States, especially in a positive response to the appeals for help by the religious agencies operating the air bridge into the besieged Biafran enclave with its starving millions. A massive commitment by the United States to make available funds, personnel, aircraft and supplies will do much to relieve a truly desperate situation. And let us forcefully enlist the help of others in an international humanitarian alliance.

Thirdly, I recommend that you and the President consider the appointment of a special presidential representative to galvanize this Nation's active commitment to do what must be done in Nigeria-Biafra, and to help mobilize an international humanitarian alliance in behalf of the starving millions. In the tradition of earlier missions carried out by Herbert Hoover, Herbert Lehman, and others who have served humanity, the special representative must be qualified by a deep compassion for those in dire need.

I fully understand the many difficulties in taking new initiatives to relieve the situation, especially those relating to the overriding need for a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement. But I also believe

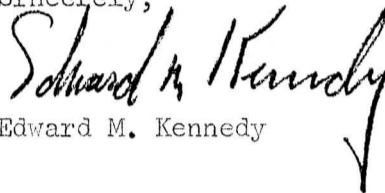
The Hon. Richard M. Nixon  
November 15, 1968  
Page Three

that, while intensified measures to feed a starving people can surely save additional lives, only an early end to the conflict will avert the impending disaster of total famine and produce the conditions for a more effective relief and reconstruction program.

Knowing of your personal concern, and that of our government, in the vast humanitarian problems of Nigeria-Biafra, I am extremely hopeful that the United States will take whatever measures it can to help relieve these problems. In so doing, we will be heeding the historic role of this Nation and strengthening the hope of all mankind for a better world.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Best wishes,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward M. Kennedy". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name below it.

Edward M. Kennedy

BIAFRA

December 13, 1968

DEC 16 1968

Dr. K.

Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

The President-Elect has read your letter and recommendations on the Biafran situation with much interest. He has asked me to let you know of his concern over the situation and that he is taking your recommendations under advisement as he undertakes an evaluation of the United States' position in the world.

It is simply not possible at this moment to say what specific actions he will recommend be implemented. As the U.S. capability to act becomes more clear, I know that as the President he will continue to be concerned about the situation.

I am placing your letter in the hands of the appropriate people for their use in making proposals to the President-Elect.

Thank you very much for your expression of concern in this matter and your interest in bettering the situation. The President-Elect is most appreciative.

Sincerely,

Bryce N. Harlow  
Assistant to the  
President-Elect

BNH:ph

*no reply*

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

DWIGHT  
CHAMBERLAIN

The Honorable  
Richard M. Nixon  
450 Park Avenue  
New York, New York

Edward M. Kennedy

U.S.S.

ABBANAT

Bispra

January 7, 1969

Mr. Robert F. Abbanat  
4 James Street  
Winchester, Mass.

Dear Mr. Abbanat:

Thank you for your letter of  
January 2, in which you request a meeting  
for Mr. Joseph Edozien and Dr. Ukwenu Udo.

My schedule between now and January  
20 is extremely busy, but if you wish to  
make an appointment with my Executive  
Assistant, Mr. Lawrence Eagleburger, I am  
sure he would be glad to meet with you.  
You may contact him through my office at  
(212) HA 1-3100.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Kissinger

4 James Street  
Winchester, Massachusetts  
Telephone: 648-0793

January 2, 1968

Henry A. Kissinger  
Hotel Pierre  
New York, New York

Dear Dr. Kissinger:

I am writing with the hope that somehow a short meeting with you concerning Biafra and the Nigerian Civil War can be arranged. I am a professor from the Boston area and would be accompanied by two Biafrans, currently professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who are involved in various important activities related to the war. We are approaching you at this time as the President Elect's advisor on foreign policy, who could communicate directly with Mr. Nixon or his Secretary of State. The discussion would center on recent unpublished developments of the war in Nigeria.

Mr. Joseph Edozien, M.D., was the Dean of a major university in Biafra when he had to flee for his life, necessarily leaving his family in Biafra. (He is well known in his native land and also well known by Colonel Ojukwu.) Mr. Ukwenu Udo, M.D., who came to this country via England, recently lost several members of his family as a result of the war.

In view of the need for prompt action by the Nixon administration, we would hope to discuss several courses of action with you and would appreciate meeting in New York, or where convenient, to do so.

Sincerely,

*R. F. Abbanat*

Robert F. Abbanat

RFA/gfa

*RSE*

*Biafra*

January 10, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR Mrs. Nixon

From: Henry A. Kissinger  
Subject: Your Meeting on Biafra

I understand that you will be meeting tomorrow with Governor Rockefeller and Senators Javits and Goodell to discuss food for Biafra.

The attached memo may be helpful to you in preparing for the meeting.

CONFIDENTIAL

BIAFRA

The West African country of Nigeria has been undergoing a civil war for the past 18 months, and there are no signs of an early end to the fighting. The war began when the Eastern part of Nigeria seceded, calling itself Biafra. The Biafrans, who are predominantly members of the Ibo Tribe, are convinced that the Federal Nigerian authorities intend to exterminate them as a tribe. They appear to be willing to starve to death rather than renounce their secession.

As a result of the war, a serious refugee problem has arisen in Biafra. As the Federal troops advanced into the secessionist territory, the Ibos retreated. Today approximately 7 million people are crammed into Biafra, which is only about one-quarter of what it was when the secession was declared. Starvation is a major problem and will probably get worse (some 3 to 4 million people could die within the next few months), unless more relief aid is sent.

There are several international relief agencies now aiding Biafra, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and several religious organizations,\* but these agencies are facing numerous problems. Biafra now has no sea ports and all supplies must be airlifted into its one airstrip. The US and UK have for some time been urging that relief be moved to the Biafrans over ground routes, but the Ibos fear that Federal forces would use these routes for military purposes. The Nigerians are suspicious that the agencies flying relief to the Biafrans may also be transporting arms, and have therefore not given whole-hearted support to the present relief effort. Some type of land relief routes will have to be worked out if the problem is to be dealt with satisfactorily.

The Nigerian Government, which like all new countries is very sensitive of its sovereignty, has been suspicious of the US role in Nigeria, mainly because of the US has worked to aid the refugees. At the same time, the USSR has been building a reputation of Nigeria's friend in need by supplying military assistance to the Nigerians. The Nigerians have strong ties with the West, however, particularly with the UK, and it seems unlikely at this point that they will break these ties, and establish closer relations with the Soviet Union.

The civil war itself has been a stalemate since last September, and it does not appear that either side will score any major military victories within the near future.

---

\* Total international relief has already cost over \$30 million, about 65 percent from public and private US sources.

CONFIDENTIAL