

## EDO... THE HEARTBEAT OF

By Ozioruva Aliu

**I**YOWA, a community in Ovia North-East Local Government Area, near Benin City, has been deserted by its inhabitants, due to the activities of suspected kidnappers, who allegedly operate with impunity, targeting settlers, killing those who resist, and demanding ransom in millions of naira.

Last week, residents of the community took to the streets, blocking the Benin-Lagos Highway for several hours to protest the invasion of their community. According to eyewitnesses, a man identified as Fatai Musa, an Islamic teacher, his wife, and a neighbour were taken away by the kidnappers.

Musa, a father of four and an indigene of Yagba West in Kogi State, was reportedly shot dead and his corpse discovered two days later. A seven-year-old girl who was also shot in the leg during the incident is still receiving treatment.

The Edo State Commissioner of Police, Monday Agbonika, intervened to clear the road and restore traffic flow. The kidnapped victims were released six days after various amounts were paid.

### Huge loss for our family

—Victim's brother laments

Abiodun Musa, the elder brother of the deceased, recounted the ordeal saying his brother was shot trying to resist the kidnappers adding that they paid N2.5 million to release the wife, "it's a huge loss for our family"

His words: "On the day of the incident, around 9:00pm, somebody called me that there was a kidnapping incident in Iyowa and that my brother and his wife have been kidnapped. On getting there, I saw their children, they said they took their daddy and mummy away and that the people carried guns. I took the children to my house and the next morning,

# Edo community abandoned as kidnappers target settlers

....Residents cry out for help

we went to the Police station to report the matter and started waiting for any call.

"The first day, there was no call, the children said the kidnappers went with their parents' phones, they also took away a woman in the next street whose husband was able to escape. Later that day, we saw a missed call from the other woman's number so my uncle called the number and then spoke with them and

they demanded for ransom.

"It was then we spoke to my brother's wife who begged that we should look for money to release them. She told us that they shot her husband at the back of their house. We checked and saw the dead body of my brother.

"We took his body into the house; as Muslims we cannot keep the body in the mortuary so we called our family at home and

they gave us the go ahead to bury him.

"After that, the kidnappers called that we should go and look for N50m to release his wife, they told us that he has a car that we should go and sell the car to raise the ransom. They warned that if we don't look for the money, they will kill the wife. We begged and they said we should bring N15 million but at the end of the day, we paid N2.5 million after six days, to release her."

### Residents cry out for help

I am appealing to the government to wake up to their responsibility of protecting the people because that Iyowa is now a deadly area, nobody is sleeping there again, once it is 4:00 pm, everybody leaves and look for where to sleep and when it is dawn, they come back to work, that is the situation. What I also observed is that those kidnappers are not taking indigenes away, it is mostly non-indigenes that build houses there that are victims," said Abiodun Musa, the elder brother of the deceased.

Rev. Agho Eghosa who spoke with NDV, said: "We have faced so many problems here, and we beg the governor and the Police to come to our aid." Another resident, Dr Lucky Omonaghiese stated: "We need help to take care of this situation so that we can be free."

# Delta/Bayelsa fishermen, farmers threaten oil firm over destruction of livelihoods

...Vow to stage mother of all protests protest in the creeks

## DELTA.. THE BIG HEART OF THE NATION

By Chancel Sunday

**B**OMADI—Stakeholders in the coastal enclave under the aegis of Delta/Bayelsa Riverine Farmers and Fishermen Association, DEBARIFFA, have given Sterling Exploration and Energy Production Company Limited, SEEPCO, 14 days to compensate them for damages to their fishing nets, canoes, and ecosystem, or face a mass protest on the waterways.

SEEPCO is responsible for operating crude oil lifting barges that load their vessels at the Kwale Gas and Oil Field in Ndokwa West LGA of Delta State.

NDV findings reveal that these barges navigate the River Niger and River Forcados, passing through the Ramos Creek and its tributaries, to transfer their cargo into larger ships at the Agge shore of the Atlantic Ocean in Bayelsa State.

Though the oil firm



• Damaged fishing nets destroyed by SEEPCO operations in the Delta/Bayelsa riverine areas.

### adherence to navigational regulations

"We will not be silenced," the association President, Mr. Oweilaemi John and Secretary, Mrs. Ebimoboere said in a communiqué. "We have tried to reason with SEEPCO, but they have ignored our

Creek.

"We insist that SEEPCO, without further delay, provide compensation for the devastation of our livelihoods as fishermen and farmers—claims that the association submitted to them long ago, yet remain unanswered to this day. Meanwhile, the

### intervention

"Despite these endeavours, the difficulties continued, and we have appealed for the intervention of our esteemed Senators to bolster the efforts of the Senate Committee on Local Content and to ensure the implementation of