

30 Bakassi returnees drown, 200 missing

TOM MOSES

OVER 30 Bakassi natives sacked by Cameroonian gendarmes from their ceded territory in the Republic of Cameroon yesterday, perished

on their way to Calabar following a mishap involving two ferries which were conveying them along Ineh Obodom channel through the Atlantic Ocean.

Also, over 200 natives of the

area were reportedly missing as at the time of the arrival of the last set of the Bakassi evictees, while four persons including a four year old Miss Endurance Clement died within the period of their transiting from the old

Bakassi Penninsula.

Leader of the Bakassi returnees, Mr. Etim Okon Eneh who said this in a chat with our Correspondent at Ikang Primary School, New Bakassi where they are being kept, lamented the maltreatment meted to them by Cameroon Gendarmes within the past few weeks before their eventual eviction.

According to Eneh, the Gendarmes animosity became really manifest soon after their independent anniversary, a few weeks ago following the questionable disappearance of some Bakassi indigenes from their fishing settlements and some from their canoes.

Such disappearances, he said, made the Bakassi youths to initiate search parties and mount vigilante posts and

even confronted the Cameroon gendarmes on the issue of the missing Bakassi natives.

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55 contractors sue FG

ABOUT 55 indigenous contractors yesterday filed respective suits challenging the constitutionality of the Federal Government's revocation of a N37 billion health care project.

The administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo had approved the project for all the 774

local government councils to improve accessibility to health at the grass roots.

The National Economic Council (NEC) under the President Umaru Yar'Adua's administration, however, revoked the contract on Dec. 10, 2007.

In the suit filed before the Federal High Court, Abuja, the

plaintiffs contended that the revocation of the contract was unconstitutional, null and void and a violation of their rights.

The contractors are seeking the court order setting aside the purported termination of the contract.

Defendants to the suit are, NEC, Attorney General of the

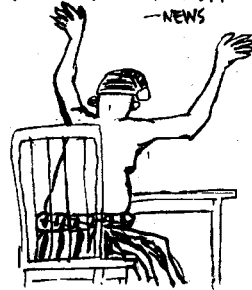
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Group commends INEC P.41

COUNTRYMAN

OIL WILL SOON FINISH

—NEWS



HALLELUJAY! SO
PEACE WILL SOON RETURN
TO THIS COUNTRY

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He said the Gendarmes responded by telling them to quit their territory because their continuous occupation of the territory was becoming dangerous especially as the Cameroon government was planning to build a military camp there.

A day after that disclosure, Eneh said the Gendarmes became very hostile and confrontational to the Bakassi natives by not only harassing them but attacking and arresting the natives.

Aside from the hostile treatments, he said the Gendarmes gave them deadline to quit the territory for their own good and did not even wait for the deadline to elapse when they came, beat them up and throw their things away from their houses.

Bakassi

Eneh said that a total of 2,870 Bakassi natives have returned alive while over 200 of them were missing as at the time of arrival of the last boat from the peninsula.

He implored both the Cross River and Federal governments to do something urgent to provide accommodation for them as well as create jobs for them to eke out a living.

Mr. Charles Ayasang, a Rivers State indigene who was among the returnees said that 1,800 other indigenes of Rivers State were evicted with him.

Ayasang implored the Rivers State government to come to their aid for them to start life again.

Meanwhile, the Bakassi local government has sent relief materials including food items,

clothings, and mattresses and cooking utensils to the returnees just as the state governor, Senator Liyel Imoke promised to bring succour to the people by providing them with permanent accommodation and means of livelihood.

Meanwhile, Cross River State government has pledged its commitment to bring succour to Nigerians that fled the ceded portion of Northern Bakassi in Cameroun to Nigeria following hostilities in that country.

Governor Liyel Imoke stated this yesterday, at Government Primary School Ikang, Bakassi Local Government Area, where the refugees were being camped while calling on the Federal government through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), to assist the state in tackling the problems encountered by the people.