

# MOSOP, JTF trade blame over killing of Ogoni youth

DENNIS NAKU, Port Harcourt

**M**OVEMENT for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) codenamed 'Operation Restore Hope' are at loggerheads over alleged killing of an Ogoni youth, during a confrontation with the soldiers in B-Dere Community, Gokana Local Government, Rivers State.

While MOSOP said in a text message to *Daily Champion* in Port Harcourt, Rivers state capital by its Press Officer, Sunny Zorvah, that the victim, 20-year-old Bariara Vurasi Lemon, was coldly killed by the JTF but the security outfit swiftly disagreed.

Spokesman of the JTF, Lt. Col. Timothy Antigha in a telephone chat with our correspondent admitted that although his men had a confrontation with a group of hoodlums, "who had been struggling to take over Shell's well head for bunkering activities, available facts contradict the claim by MOSOP."

But MOSOP, spokesman identified the victim, Lemon as "among a group of community youths engaged at the project site by the SPDC workers" and was killed by "soldiers attached (as guards) to some Staff of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)."

He said, Lemon was engaged by a Shell personnel working in the area to help in sharing of food to others, saying, "SPDC's personnel were working in the Dere communities on the company's coking and killing operations on existing oil wells in Ogoni, a process aimed at neutralising the company's facilities in the area."

"Things went wrong. When a minor disagreement on food sharing formula, a situation which attracted the attention of the soldiers and the eventual killing of Lemon."

"A minor disagreement on method of sharing the food packs among the youths themselves attracted the attention of the armed guards (Soldiers) who swooped on the youths, tortured some of them, while in an attempt to run away from the soldiers' brutality, Mr. Lemon was felled by the Soldiers' bullet, as they shot the youths", MOSOP alleged.

Reacting to the claim by MOSOP, the JTF spokesman, Lf. Col. Antigha said his men did not confront youths sharing food, but a hoodlums who were attempting to take over the well head forcefully.

Antigha said the bullet that killed Lemon was not fired by any of the men attached to the JTF, rather he said it was being suspected that one of the youths was armed and must have fired the shot that killed Lemon, who was shot from the back.

He said: "The deceased person in question was shot from the back, how that could have been JTF, which was facing the hoodlums from the front? Besides, after the operation and by the time the stock of the arms and ammunition released was taken, not even a round of ammunition was missing. So that bullet was not fired by the