



National

'Rivers community may resort to self-defence against pirates' attacks'

By Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt
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The Council of Chiefs and people of Opu-Kula in Akuku-Toru Local Council of Rivers State have threatened to resort to self-defence if government fails to address the incessant killings of their people by pirates along the Kula waterways.

They lamented the attacks by some assailants on a convoy of boats conveying some prominent chiefs and sons along the Kula waterways at the weekend, in which no fewer than three persons were killed.

They described the attack as one too many aimed at eliminating prominent sons and daughters of Opu-Kula and other communities in Kula.

A statement by the Amayanabo of Opukula, Hope Opusingi, noted that gunboats in the area should not only protect oil facilities and expatriates, but should also protect the host communities and seafarers.

He blamed the attack on the failure of security agencies, especially the Joint Task Force (JTF), Navy and police to protect lives and property of the citizens.

He, however, charged the security agencies to thoroughly investigate the attack and prosecute those behind the killings and their sponsors.

He said: "We will not fold our hands and allow the killing to be swept under the carpet like other killings in the past. If all tiers of government fail to address the issue, it will leave us with the alternative means to secure ourselves."

He said government's continued silence over the recurring menace, would be interpreted to mean an automatic licence for the people of the area to resort to self-help, which may have its consequences.

The statement further urged Governor Nyesom Wike to replicate the same measure adopted to restore security in Igba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Council to the Kula waterways.

"The governor should deploy personnel of the recently constituted Rivers State Neighbourhood Watch to the Kula waterways to work with security agencies to stem the tide of attacks.

"This was an assassination attempt on the lives of Rivers State Chairman of the Petroleum Taskforce, Kenneth Opusingi, Rivers State Chairman of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Sukubo Sara-Igbe and other prominent sons and daughters of Kula who narrowly escaped death.

"We call on the government, especially the Federal Government and the Nigerian Army to improve security on the Kula waterways in a bid to forestall further attacks and killings on the Kula waterways," the statement reads.

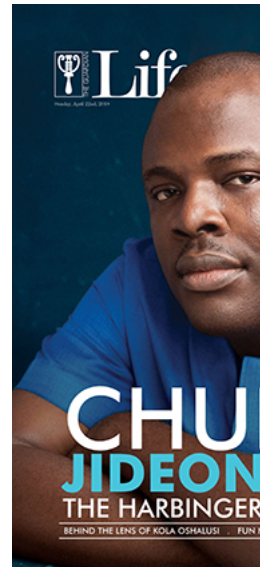
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