

Ondo riverine communities decry abuse, killing by naval personnel

By Oluwaseun Akingboye, Akure
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• **Akeredolu urges peace, tasks Navy on peaceful engagement**

Over 100 communities in the riverine areas of Ondo State, under the aegis of Ugboland Central Working Committee (UCWC), have decried the high-handedness and gross abuse of their people by officers of the Nigerian Navy (NN).

In a Save Our Soul (SOS) letter written to the state government at the weekend, they said that naval personnel of the Forward Operating Base (FOB), Igbokoda, had been mercilessly invading their communities in Ilaje Local Council of the state.



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Meanwhile, The Guardian gathered that some Naval officers recently sacked a community in Okitipupa Local Council, Okunmo, over land disputes, assaulting and brutalising the residents there. A life was reportedly lost in the attack.

They, however, attributed the invasion to the recent Agge incident in Bayelsa State, which led to the killing of four Naval ratings and abduction of three foreigners in the area.

Meanwhile, the state governor, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, has promptly intervened in the communal face-off between the Navy and the riverine communities, allegedly tied to the retrieval of arms from some youths.

In a statement made available to journalists in Akure yesterday by the Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Mr. Donald Ojogo, the governor expressed concern over the recurrent rift between the people and the Naval Base.



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“For the records, government received a series of reports in respect of this development and has followed up efforts geared toward the recovery of such arms allegedly in the hands of some youths.

“All the same, it is worthy of mention that the desired success in this regard can only be achieved through community-based intelligence gathering. It is believed that under circumstances as such, the communities are possible and likely to be more helpful,” the statement said.

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Ojogo, however, noted that “incessant altercations can only lead to needless fear, create apprehensions and brood friction and inadvertently, sustain suspicion.”

The state government, therefore, appealed to the Nigerian Navy to de-escalate tension by engaging the communities in a manner that would engender a friendly approach to achieve positive results.

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