

# Gunmen Abduct Bayelsa Speaker's Mother

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Three Nigerians and an American have become the new targets in the Niger Delta, in violence which muddles up the agitation for justice in the degraded region that produces the national wealth.

One Nigerian is dead, one is in hospital nursing wounds; the whereabouts of the third are unknown. The American is also in hospital, wounded.

Hansel, the 70-year-old mother of Bayelsa Speaker, Werinipre Seibarugu, was on Tuesday night kidnapped by gunmen in Akaibiri in the state, another statistic in the spate of abductions of relatives

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of powerful people in the deep South.

The three-year-old son of a traditional ruler was released

on July 13 after the captors had extorted money from the

man.  
In the latest incident, five gunmen stormed the riverine community in a speed boat about 8 p.m. when Hansel was in her daughter's shop close to the river.

They fired shots into the air, grabbed and took her away. The gunmen may have abducted her for financial gain.

Seibarugu is currently in South Africa for a Parliamentary conference.

No group has claimed responsibility, but Police Commissioner,

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Julian Okpaleke, confirmed the incident, saying an arrested suspect "is giving us information to track down the gunmen now at large".

Governor Timipre Sylva described the kidnap as barbaric.

"(Seibarugu), I want you to be strong in this time of trial. We share your pain and I can assure you that I will use all the resources available to me to help find your mother and bring these criminals to justice", he said.

He regretted that the actions of a few criminal elements are damaging the economy of Bayelsa, but said security operatives are out to

secure the release of Hansel.

Seibarugu's Media Assistant, Jonah Okah, described the incident as a bad omen for a young state like Bayelsa yearning for development.

He gave an assurance that the government is making efforts to unravel the incident and appealed for her early release.

In neighbouring Rivers, residents of Olunike Street, Port Harcourt, woke up on Wednesday to behold the lifeless body of S. Echendu in a pool of blood.

Echendu, 53, was an Accountant with Global International in Port Harcourt.

His younger brother narrated that he was returning from work about 10.50 p.m.

when, on reaching his garage, four young men came close to his car and shot him.

The attackers, who came in a Peugeot 406 car, left off with Echendu's Toyota Camry car.

They had snatched the Peugeot car from another fellow, probably a lawyer, since there was a lawyer's wig and gown in the car, which they came with and abandoned.

Police Public Relations Officer, Ireju Barasua, confirmed the murder, as well as the fact that Echendu was a member of the Police Community Relations Committee.

His car has been recov-

ered, the police stated.

The assassins later confessed through telephone calls that they did not mean to kill Echendu, and apologised that it was a case of mistaken identity.

They spoke with his relations who dialed his mobile telephone left in the car.

The criminals described where they had abandoned the car and requested Echendu's relatives to go and pick it up.

The latest brings to three within one month the number of assassinations in the Ogbunabali area in Port Harcourt, the city where armed robbers shot an American Professor and a se-

curity guard on Wednesday.

Michael Watts, based in Berkeley, California in the United States – an expert on oil-related violence in the Niger Delta – was hospitalised with bullet wounds in the hand after a newspaper office he was visiting came under attack, one of his friends said.

The security guard, a Nigerian, is also in hospital with bullet wounds.

"About eight or nine armed robbers were trailing him. They shot the security guard, gained access to the office which they ransacked and stole \$600 from the Professor," said the friend, who was at his bedside in hospital and asked not to be named.

**Reps Summon**