

# Soldiers Kill Two, Injure Others In Rivers Protest

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At least two persons have been confirmed dead and scores of others injured as protesting youths of Ahoada in Rivers State clashed with men of the Joint Task Force (JTF) deployed to restore order in the community.

Youths from Ochegba were said to have embarked on a protest against what they saw as in-

sensitivity of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) to the infrastructural needs of its host communities in the area.

The protesters were said to have barricaded SPDC's oil location, preventing ongoing repair works on a pipeline on Tuesday. *Daily Independent* gathered that while the protest was on, JTF men were deployed to the scene.

Sources claimed that on arrival, a disagreement ensued be-

tween the soldiers and the protesters.

The latter were said to have resisted JTF's order to quit the scene.

The development, it was gathered, angered the Joint Task Force, which reportedly opened fire on the crowd.

Report said two persons died instantly, while scores of others were injured. They were rushed to different hospitals, where they

are now receiving treatment.

Spokesman of Ochegba community claimed the soldiers shot the youths while protesting their neglect by Shell.

The spokesman decried the attitude of the oil operators in the area, saying Ochegba had been suffering neglect by the oil firms.

He said the community had appealed to SPDC to rehabilitate some roads in the area to no avail.

Some of the roads, he said, were damaged by heavy trucks used by the company in its op-

erations.

SPDC officials could not be reached for comments on the issue at press time.

However, JTF's spokesman in Rivers State, Major Musa Sagir, confirmed the incident.

He said the soldiers shot to disperse the protesters in self-defence.

He also claimed the soldiers were drafted to Ochegba community to ensure continuation of ongoing repairs by SPDC, but the protesters attacked them and barricaded the gate of the company.