

Panic As Soldiers Invade Bayelsa Community

By **Igoniko Oduma** - June 8, 2018



There is anxiety in Bayelsa State after six persons, including a nursing mother and her six-month-old baby, were reportedly killed by armed soldiers during a security operation.

The alleged military invasion of Oluasiri area was said to have been carried out on Thursday in Nembe Local Government Area of the state.

Community sources gave the names of the victims as Wilson Patason, Madam Beauty Christian Gamage and her six-month-old baby, and many others were also confirmed to be in critical condition.

Since the incident, authorities of the Joint Task Force in the Nigeria Delta code-named Operation Delta Safe (OPDS) have not responded to media inquiries and phone calls to Major Ibrahim Abdullahi, its Spokesman.

But security sources said that the security operation was launched to fish out suspected armed militants and sea robbers taking refuge in the community.

Claims in some quarters that the soldiers opened fire on the community to repel gunshot attacks from the indigenes, had been debunked by the Oluasiri community who insisted that the military attack was unprovoked.

It was gathered that the suspected waterways armed bandits and the militants had forced themselves on the community who were helpless over the situation.

The Oluasiri community in a statement described as "reckless and nefarious" the wanton invasion of Ben-Ama and Tengele-Ama by the Nigerian military, which reportedly left four persons dead, including the nursing mother and her six-month-old baby with several others critically injured.

The statement, which was jointly signed by the President of Oluasiri Development Union, Gamage Difurotogu, and the President of Oluasiri Youth Federation, Kienworio Tanga, appealed to the Federal

Government and well-meaning groups to investigate the incident.

The community said, "The incident is a show of stark recklessness and nefarious for the military to invade hitherto peaceful communities with six gunboats, causing undue pandemonium, all in the name of searching for suspected criminals in the area.

"The people of the affected communities are law-abiding citizens. It was malicious for security agents to carry out the act. We urge the Nigerian military to go and search for the criminals at their various hideouts in the creeks, as no Oluasiri community is a safe haven to criminals."

The people of Oluasiri, who said they were always ready to support the Nigerian military and other security agencies in the fight against oil bunkering, piracy and kidnapping, pleaded for adherence to professionalism and rules of engagement and respect for human life.

The statement further commiserated with families of the affected victims and enjoined the people of Oluasiri not to take laws into their hands.

Meanwhile, Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) through Eric Omare, its President, has condemned the invasion of Oluasiri clan by troops in the guise of looking for suspected armed militants, describing the action as dastardly.

The IYC called on the military authorities to comply with the rules of engagement in their operations in the Niger Delta.

"It is only in the Niger Delta that soldiers routinely kill innocent people in the name of looking for criminals. The attention of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) worldwide has just been drawn to the invasion of Ben-Ama and Tengele-Ama Communities in Oluasiri Clan, Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa State by soldiers in the early hours of Thursday June 7, 2018."

"The IYC call on President Buhari who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Minister of Defence to take all necessary actions to immediately bring to the justice the military officers involved in this act of criminality," the youth body stated.

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