

for publishing a story against the governor's wife, Olufunso. Adegboruwa said the police institution must stop seeing itself as a 'force' but as a service-oriented agency.

inhuman manner. It states that nobody must be subjected to torture such as flogging and beating and that once that happens, it is an assault and the only remedy is exemplary

and not just from the purse of the Nigeria Police." Another activist, Mr. Fred Agbaje, commended *The PUNCH* for dedicating two pages daily to report and

access to those in power. He said, "The press must continue to be an uncompromised mouthpiece of the people against all forms of brutality against the helpless

He said, "Police cover up their colleagues who are responsible for abuse and this is where a civilian external oversight mechanism, such as the PSC is important."

It was observed that there was traffic congestion from Ibafo inwards Lagos and vice versa due to the potholes which were gradually evolving into craters.

## Two killed, scores injured as militants invade A'Tbom market

Etim Ekpimah, Uyo

**G**UNMEN suspected to be militants have killed two women and injured scores of others at T-Junction Market, Itu, in the Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Our correspondent, who visited the area on Monday,

### Yelsa, demand N30m

over two weeks in their den."

It was learnt that the kidnappers had contacted the pastor's family and demanded N200,000 as cost for phone calls made and N30m as ransom for his freedom.

She added, "It has been almost two weeks and I have not heard or seen my husband, but some of our family members, who live in the village told me that they had spoken with them."

"I planned to contact the police but the family members said that I should not involve the police to avoid incurring the wrath of

gathered that the militants struck at the market around 8am on Saturday.

An eyewitness and cyclist, Mr. Moses Philips, told *PUNCH Metro* that the militants, who wore military uniforms, emerged from the river on two speedboats loaded with machine guns and other weapons.

He stated that as soon as

the kidnappers.

"Their reason is that my husband may be killed by the hoodlums if the police are involved in the matter. It is very painful.

"I am worried and I am praying that my husband will come back alive."

When contacted on the development, spokesman for the Bayelsa State Police Command, Mr. Asinim Butswat, said the family had not reported the matter to the police.

"They have not reported the incident to us, but if they come to us, we are ready to help them," Butswat said.

the militants' boats berthed at the river bank, they shot into the air indiscriminately.

Philips said the militants blocked all avenues leading into the busy market for hours.

He added that many of the people wounded were not actually touched by bullets from the militants' firearms, but got injured due to a stampede which was caused by frantic traders and customers.

The eyewitness stated that one of the deceased women was just coming into the market when the bullet from the militants' guns hit her in the head. He added that the other woman, whom the bullet pierced through her thigh, died on the way to the hospital.

He stated that the militants pillaged market stalls, shops and even those trading on the roadside. He noted that the thieves only stole food items and fuel in drums.

"The militants ordered motorcycle operators and



• T-Junction Market

Photo: Etim Ekpimah

other young men and women to carry all the things they had stolen into their boats. The items they stole were essentially food items like rice; garri; fish; crayfish; palm oil.

"They also carried fuel stored in drums which we

believe they will use in the creeks. It is unfortunate that the two women died. The militants did not shoot into the crowd, they shot only into the air but what I believe is that the bullets that killed the women, were stray bullets," he said.

He stated that the policemen including soldiers went to the scene after the bandits had left.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Cordelia Nwawe, confirmed the attack but denied the number of casualties.

She stated that the Akwa Ibom State Police had already mapped out strategies to curtail attacks by the militants. She said the command had also reached out to commands in other states to block their waterways against militants' infiltration into Akwa Ibom.

She said, "While there was an attack by militants at the T-Junction Market in Itu, I do not agree with the number of casualties. As soon as the incident happened, the police were quickly mobilised and they repelled the attack."

"This is a warning to all Nigerians; if you hear any gunshots fired by armed robbers, do not run, lie flat on the ground to avoid stray bullets."