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NEWS

## Four soldiers, militants killed in Bayelsa clash

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<sup>B</sup>ayelsa State Governor Seriake Dickson

## Simon Utebor, Yenagoa

Four soldiers and some militants have been reportedly killed in the ongoing military operation to dislodge the militants in Toru-Ndoro community in Ekeremor Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The military authorities reportedly deployed their men on Saturday in Toru-Ndoro in search of suspected militants, who decapitated a soldier and displayed his head round the community.

The military was also said to be after the militants' leader, identified as 'General' Karaowei.

The four soldiers, it was gathered, lost their lives in a shootout with the militants.

Efforts to get the reaction of the spokesman for the OPDS, Major O. Abdullahi, were not successful as his mobile phone was switched off. But a senior military officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed the killing of four soldiers.

Meanwhile, the Bayelsa State Government has described the killings as barbaric, lawless and totally condemnable.

A government statement signed by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security Matters, Dr Boma Spero-Jack, said Governor Seriake Dickson condemned the crude, barbaric and reprehensible act in Toru-Ndoro.

Spero-Jack added that the governor found the act completely unacceptable and counterproductive to the security efforts of the state government.

The statement called on the fleeing members of Toru Ndoro community to return and go about their normal and legitimate business, assuring them that the government was on top of the situation.

It also called on the military authorities to be professional in the ongoing operation and abide by the rules of engagement in order to avoid collateral damage.

The statement advised the Army to consider the lives of innocent and law-abiding citizens, especially women and children.

Similarly, the Chairman of Ijaw Youths Council, Central Zone, Mr. Tari Porri, condemned the violent attitude of the youths.

He said, "Cutting the head of a human being and celebrating with it is an abomination and we condemn it. We call on our community leaders and rulers to stop celebrating criminals. I am worried that if the military doesn't succeed in apprehending the young man and his boys, their return will be deadly."

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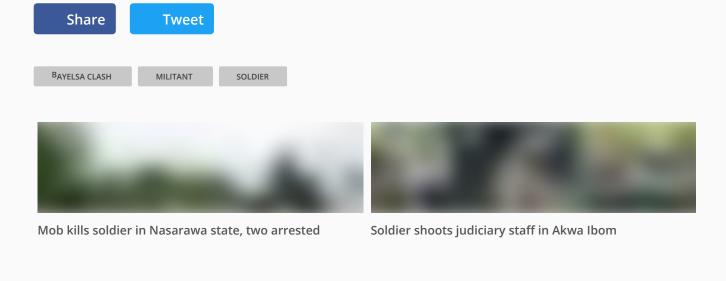
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