

Rivers shooting: Casualties rise to 18

From Tony John, Port Harcourt

OVER 18 persons have been killed in the heavy shoot-out between soldiers and militants suspected to be supporters of the former Niger Delta agitator, Solomon Ndigbara, in Yeghe community in Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Daily Sun investigation indicated yesterday that, about 18 persons were killed in the shooting.

Sources in the area said casualties might increase as a result of scores who suffered severe bullet wounds in the three days shooting in the two local government areas.

It was further gathered that the crisis has escalated in Gokana, following the use of bulldozer to level Ndigbara's buildings, allegedly by the military.

Chairmen of Gokana and Khana Local Government Areas, Austin Sor and Tambari Sydney respectively, have condemned the military invasion in their areas.

Reacting to the killings and destruction of property, Sor accused the military of claiming that there was no casualty, stressing that the level of destruction in Yeghe community was provocative.

Similarly, his Khana counterpart, Sydney, has said they were yet to ascertain the number of deaths, believing that the figure would increase.

Some of the families of the deceased have condemned the statement from the 2 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, that no life was lost.

John Baridon countered the military's claim. Baridon confirmed his younger brother was shot dead in Zaakpon community in Khana council area, while returning from work.

Meanwhile, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), has condemned the military's operations in the affected areas and called on the Federal Government for an immediate withdrawal of the soldiers.

On Monday, February 22, soldiers invaded Yeghe community, specifically Ndiagbara's country home, in Gokana local government, which resulted in the killing of many natives, inflicted severe gunshot injuries on other victims.