

Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki (right), unveiling the improved seeds to be used for the maize cultivation project during the launch of 200 agripreneurs scheme in Benin City.

Lagos: Outrage as one dies in Otodo Gbame demolition

• It's to forestall future environmental disaster

By **Adetutu Folasade-Koyi**

A resident of Otodo Gbame, a waterfront fishing community in the Lekki area of Lagos, Daniel Aya, was allegedly shot dead during a demolition by a Task Force from the state's Ministry of Environment, yesterday.

Another resident, Monday Idowu, had a blood-soaked white cloth shielding bullet wounds on his chest, while a baby was trapped in plastic, for protection from the rain.

A report from Justice and Empowerment Initiatives (JEI), a non-governmental organisation, indicated a stray bullet hit Aya, who was rushed out of the scene, but died hours later.

The organisation shared pictures of residents who were fleeing the commu-

nity as a result of the demolition.

In series of tweets, JEI showed how hundreds of the evictees were seen leaving the shambles of what used to be a haven of safety through canoes.

Some of the fleeing residents were trapped on water, as men of the marine police, in the team of the task force, prevented them from going back to the land.

The state government had, on March 17, evicted residents of Otodo Gbame and demolished some houses. The state government said the demolition, then, was to forestall disaster.

But, human rights groups faulted government's action.

Another report said the task force, which carried out the demolition, came from the Environment min-

istry and, reportedly, invaded the community as early as 6:00am, with security operatives, and proceeded to set houses ablaze as residents fled.

In another series of tweets@AmnestyNigeria, Amnesty International (AI) described the demolition as "clear violation of rights... Forced eviction is record-setting and violates right to housing, right to life and right to dignity of Nigerians.

"Refugees in boats at #OtodoGbame with nowhere to go. Police in blue speedboat tell them to leave. Where are they supposed to go?" AI added.

"This brutal and illegal act flies in the face of human dignity as well as a High Court ruling which prohibited the eviction and instructed the authorities

to, instead, seek a settlement with the affected communities," AI's Nigeria researcher, Morayo Adebayo said.

The state government had earlier defended the demolition, saying the action was carried out in order to forestall environmental disaster and another round of deadly skirmishes which led to the razing of the Otodo Gbame community in November 2016.

In his reaction to the demolition on Tweeter, Olabode Matthew Olu@Matoosa said: "A shame to Lagosians who keep quiet in the face of injustice," while Oloye Bini simply added: "I understand the emotions and sentiments and can see unacceptable inhumanity in #OtodoGbame. But, what are the facts about the land ownership?"

...the ... results Presidency