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BENIN

# Three killed, houses burnt over pipeline protection largesse

Three people were feared killed while many houses were burnt at the weekend in oil bearing Ijaw communities of Edo State over diversion of funds for the pipeline security contracts in coastal states of Niger Region.

Ijaw youths, torn apart by the diversion of the funds running into several millions of naira, stormed Safarogbo riverine community in Ovia South West Local Government Area where they killed three persons and set ablaze three buildings belonging to former militant leaders.

It was learnt that a similar crisis had occurred in one of the oil bearing communities in Ondo State which led to the burning of a residential building belonging to an Army officer.

Many of the residents of the affected communities fled their homes.

Already, some key actors among the former militants involved in the alleged conspiracy and fraudulent activity have been arrested by policemen attached to Zone 5, Benin, and are said to be returning part of the money.

Among those fingered in the diversion is a former Presidential Adviser on Niger Delta Affairs and National Coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme.

His firm was said to have been actively involved in the diversion of the money paid as contract sum for the protection of oil pipelines across the country by former militant groups in the Niger Delta.

The diversion has raised concerns over renewed hostility and tension among stakeholders and members of the first and third phase former militants' leaders

in Edo State, leading youths from some oil bearing communities to go for one another's jugular.

In a petition by members of the third phase of the amnesty programme through their counsel, Paul Osarenhoe, they alleged that over N250 million was diverted by some of the former militants' leaders of Ijaw extraction in Edo State.

They also accused one of the first phase former militant, Mr. Henry Binidodogha aka Egbema 1, of short-changing them in the deal.

But, in a swift reaction, Binidodogha exonerated himself from the allegations.

He said that the oil pipelines protection deal, which was initiated a few months to the end of the President Goodluck Jonathan administration, was terminated by the present administration on assumption of office as it was deemed to have been awarded as a political patronage for the 2015 elections.

He said: "The then Coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme... was the one that actually got the contract through his outfit..."

"We were informed that the contract would be split into two parts - one part to the Benin speaking area while the other part would be for the youth of Ijaw extraction."

According to him, most of the former militants had to obtain bank loans to enable them to execute the projects.

He added that interest accruing to the banks on the loan was enormous, while the contract was terminated barely a month later,

leaving them with the short end of the stick.

One of the former militants' leaders of Ijaw extraction cum Niger Delta activist, Mr. Don Ben, confirmed the development yesterday.

He said: "It beats my imagination why some former militants will divert the money for personal use without remorse. The total money accruable to Edo State communities is about N250 million; surprisingly they went and shared the money among themselves."

Also, General Godstime Ogidigba insisted that those who diverted the money must return it for peace to prevail in the Ijaw communities of Edo State.

The Zonal Police Public Relations Officer, Zone 5, Benin, DSP Emeka Iheanacho, could not be reached for confirmation as his mobile telephone was switched off.



Obaseki



Baroh

## 'South Africa must stop torture, killing of Nigerians'

Juliana Francis

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) has condemned the increasing cases of extra-judicial killings of Nigerians by South Africans.

The CDHR President, Malachy Ugwummadu, condemned the recent killing of two Nigerians by South African police after the victims were tortured and subjected to inhumane and degrading treatments.

He noted that on August 30, a 27-year-old Nigerian business-

are particularly concerned that no fewer than 116 Nigerians are believed to have been killed in South Africa unjustly and with impunity within the last two years. 70 per cent of the killings were perpetrated by men of the South African police. It is indeed unfortunate that avoidable deaths of Nigerians as a result of xenophobic attacks have continued in South Africa without any reasonable reprieve and check," Ugwummadu said.

He added that the South Africa government had failed to guarantee the protection of lives

government of South Africa for the wanton killings of innocent Nigerians who at the time of their deaths bore the burden of mere allegations most of which could be in furtherance of the xenophobic attacks.

"The routine, verbal and pedestrian reactions of Hon. Abike Arewa, Special Assistant to President Buhari on Diaspora and Foreign Affairs are no longer enough to stem this wanton killing of Nigerians in circumstances that can be stopped."

According to Ugwummadu, very little has been heard from

## Robbers kill family of five.