

Bakassi Returnees: Death Toll Rises In Bayelsa

The death toll of Bakassi returnees in Bayelsa State increased to five yesterday, a situation which forced hundreds of the returnees to take to the streets of Yenagoa in a violent protest.

The returnees block the only main road in the state capital from the Government House to the Gloryland Cultural Centre, thereby prevented motorists and other road users from gaining access to the state government secretariat.

THISDAY gathered that the action of the returnees

BAYELSA

*From Segun James
in Yenagoa*

followed their continued neglect by officials of the state government despite the promise by Governor Goodluck Jonathan on Sunday when report of a possible protest reached him.

Jonathan had promised the returnees N1000 per adult to alleviate their sufferings.

But the returnees took to the streets when two new cases of sick returnees were

reported.

The violent move caught the police unaware as civil servants and visitors to the various ministries were temporarily held hostage until the police led by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), 'A' Division, Mr. Percy Dodi came with anti-riot policemen to dispatch the protesters with canisters of tear gas.

Lamenting their situation, one of the protesters, Kenneth Ebiriade who was one of those camped at the Women Affairs Ministry Camp, said since arriving a

week ago, they have been abandoned by the government even though they are Bayelsans.

All effort to confirm the incident from the State Police Boss, Mr. Hafiz Ringim by THISDAY proved abortive as at the time of writing this report.

Unions Yet to Notify

A Ministry of Labour and Productivity official has said the two unions in the oil sector, NUPENG and PENGASSAN, are yet to notify the ministry of their inten-