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Oil communities raise alarm over missing fishermen

Yinka Oladoyinbo, Akure – 13.04.2009

Oil producing communities in Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State on Friday raised the alarm over the disappearance of four fishermen operating in the coastal area of the state.

The fishermen were said to be part of a team that went to the field platform of Agip Oil Producing Company to deliver a letter of protest to the company.

The communities have, therefore, petitioned the Presidency and the National Security Adviser over the development, saying the fishermen were attacked by the security operatives attached to the oil company.

According to the chairmen of the Ilaje Fishermen Association and Association of Ilaje Coastal Fishermen, Apostle Lemomu Lawrence and Chief Benjamin Abiodun respectively, those who were attacked while approaching the oil field were Erukusi Goddey, Orisamakin Akin, Mesogborinwon Olumide and Oyo Samuel.

Counsel for the associations, Mr. Idowu Mafimisebi, said the people had written several letters to the oil company, requesting for its assistance without any response.

Mafimisebi said it was when the letters did not get the needed attention that the fishermen decided to visit the platform of the company located at the Atlantic Coast of the state to drop the letter.

According to him, the people had informed the security operatives, including the navy, army, police and the State Security Service (SSS) of their intention to drop the letter at the platform.

He, however, alleged that "on sighting the fishermen at the Abo oil field, the company ordered its security men to open fire on the fishermen to the extent of blowing up one of their boats."

He added that since the incident, the four fishermen had not been seen, saying that the conclusion was that the people were dead.