

NIGER-DELTA

Militants killed my father for nothing — Oritonye

By Jimitola Onoyume

A SHIP Captain James Oritonye was recently murdered by some suspected militants prompting the son Tarila, to wonder what the death of his father a Niger Deltan had to do with the struggle for resource control. Tarila spoke just as the River State national Assembly has launched a war against idnapping.

MY name is Tarila James Oritonye from Bayelsa state. I am the son of late Captain James Oritonye that was killed on January 17th this year in a vessel, Lamnaco Nigeria limited in Bonny by militants.

Those who saw what happened said the militants went into the boat, grounded it and then took one person hostage who was later released after some days. My father was the only one that was shot dead in the vessel

Do you suspect any funny thing since he was the only one that was shot dead?

No. He had no problem with anybody. My father was a nice person. He was meek and gentle. Every body that heard the news was sober. It is worst for us because after now we will still go to see him in the mortuary. He has not been buried. His colleagues and others at the work place lamented the death. They said they were not expecting the sad development.

At the moment the family is deeply mourning this great loss. My father worked as a sea man for over thirty years. He sailed on international routes nothing happened, only for him to be attacked in his own region.

Incidents like this have been connected to effort by some to free the region from poverty etc. What do you say?

I don't really know what to say. I am not happy about the criminality going on in the region in the name of the struggle. Youths of the region should have a

change, turning children into orphans I think has nothing to do with the struggle. It is all criminality. They killed my father in his

Tarila James Oritonye, son of the victim.

prime, a very gentle man, what kind of struggle is that? My father was just killed; I don't know anything about any

struggle. And I cannot even see the connection

How many are you in the family?

He has nine children.

And the ages are between eight to twenty seven.

The above is just one of the sad pictures in the

region being caused by militants. They have virtually held the area under siege.

... Awonisi mourn their son as Assembly go tough

LAST week Thursday was another sad moment at the Port Harcourt cemetery as eleven years old Miss Oduayo Awonisi killed by militants in Port Harcourt was interred. The parents, Mr. and Mrs. Awonusi cried profusely. Even the vicar from the Redeemed Christian church, Pastor Somoye Bola could not hold back tears as he gave his graveside sermon. Those present pleaded passionately with media men on ground not to add to the sorrows of the Awonisi by taking photographs. "They are still afraid. Because it cannot be explained why little Miss Oduayo would be shot by the militants. Please please gentlemen do not add to the pain of the family by taking photographs. You can see that everybody is still in shock and rattled by the incident. We beg you"

Pastor Somoye urged those behind the brutal murder to repent from their evil ways in order to enjoy forgiveness. According to him, the late Oduayo loved the things of God as she was very to church programmes.

"We won't query God, because He has a purpose for everything, including what happened. God refused to intervene in the case of John the Baptist because He has a reason," As he spoke tears flowed

freely.

The gathering was mainly made of friends and relatives of the Awonusi. Some of them who offered comments called on government to exercise the necessary political will to put an end to tension and criminality in the region.

heavily armed militants reportedly pulled their car in front of the children and ordered them to move in. Suspecting that they were kidnappers little Miss Oduayo allegedly held on her to younger brother, screaming at the same time that they should be left

Like that of late captain Oritonye there is certainly no connection between the killings of the little girl with the struggle of the region for better attention from the federal government.

Meanwhile, the rising rate of kidnapping and other

kidnappers with an intention to secure ransom or any thing of value for the release of any hostage should be liable on conviction to seven years imprisonment without an option of fine.

Speaker of the House, Tonye Harry who presided over the session also urged the federal government to pass similar law just as he expressed hope that the new law in place would assist in the crusade against abduction and other related crimes in the state.

Shockingly barely twenty four hours after the law was passed militants again struck, this time in Bonny. They kidnapped a boat driver and his conductor. And then abandoned passengers in the boat at a mangrove forest in the area. Public relations officer of the Rivers state Police Command, Mrs. Rita Inoma Abbey who confirmed the development to news men said rescue however came the way of the passengers. At press time she said effort was on to track down those behind the abduction.

Between January to date no fewer than nine cases of abduction have been recorded in Rivers state alone. And the sad situation is telling on the economy of the area. How and when this era of abduction will come to end appears to be a major question on the lips of many.

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"This is not a lawless country, so a few people cannot be allowed to make life miserable for others. The law is no respecter of persons; hence the law must be made to come very hard on kidnappers. They should work more on intelligence gathering so that they don't keep taking us by surprise." It would be recalled that Miss Oduayo was murdered by militants three weeks ago in Port Harcourt while on her way to school in company of her nine years old brother, Emmanuel. The

alone. Before anybody could even realize what was happening, the kidnappers had pumped bullets into the eleven years old child. And then disappeared with her nine years old brother. Curses and condemnation have continued to trail the action of the kidnappers. Though they released the little hostage in their custody after about one week but the pain of the Awonusi is still there. The kidnappers have stolen the joy of that home.

related crimes have started causing many to ask if peace will ever return to the region. In what appears a move to address this security challenge in Rivers state, the state House of Assembly last week passed the kidnapping prohibition bill 2008 into law. With the new law in place any one arrested for kidnapping risk life imprisonment while any one caught for attempted kidnap will be jailed for twenty years.

It also provides that anyone caught fronting for