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Lori-Ogbemor condemns killing of 4 Itsekiri by Ijaw youths

●Calls for Federal Government's intervention

BY DAPO AKINREFON & JONAH NWOKPOKU

LAGOS—SOCIAL critic and activist, Chief Rita Lori-Ogbemor has condemned the killing of four Itsekiri youths by suspected Ijaw youths, Tuesday in the riverine areas of Warri, Delta State. She called on the Federal Government to nip the crisis in the bud before it escalates.

Addressing newsmen in Lagos, yesterday, Chief Lori-Ogbemor, said aside those killed, houses and property were also destroyed by the Ijaw youths.

She said: "The crisis in Delta State started on Tuesday morning, when Ijaws launched an attack on Itsekiri villages. The first village is a place called Ayurode (Mount Zion), where 16 houses were razed. They proceeded to Gbokoda where they razed 26 houses. The most beautiful house there was brought down by a rocket launcher. They went on to Ajamita, where they razed seven houses and killed six people. Three of those killed are in Sapele mortuary.

"They went on to Udo, where they shot a man and threw a five year old boy into fire, a man called George was also killed. In the afternoon, they continued their raid. The Ijaw/Itsekiri crisis is with us again. History is repeating itself because in February 27, 1997, the Warri crisis started. The reasons were not known. Some said the Itsekiri were the only benefactors of the oil wells in Delta State, some said the matter was about the creation of a local government area for the Itsekiri.

"Today, we know that all the al-

legations are not true, the Itsekiri did not benefit from the oil bloc allocations. They were not the big contractors. They were not the big illegal oil bunkerers, they did not even participate in the petty illegal oil bunkering nor are they petty oil thieves, who supply the mother ship in the high sea. The local government area created from the Itsekiri land was supposed to have been the other reason, but today, the headquarters of that council has been moved to Ogbelge-Ijaw."

Calling on Ijaw leader, Chief

Edwin Clark to intervene in the renewed crisis, she appealed to security operatives to unravel the cause of the hostility.

"We do not know the cause of renewed fighting, which started Tuesday morning. We are baffled. At this stage, we are asking the Ijaw leaders, especially Chief Clark to find out and call his people to order. We ask Chief Clark to urgently do something about the situation because the Ijaws have been preaching the unity of the so-called Niger Delta.

"It is a big test for the region which they have conjured. We

know that there is nothing like Niger Delta. It is a region conjured by the Ijaws for their own good. There are so many reasons we don't believe in the Niger Delta or how else do the Ijaws terrorise, frighten, kill and maim people. The challenge of the conjured Niger Delta region is left for the Ijaws to convince us that there is something like that."

She accused the Ijaws of wanting to acquire lands of other tribes to create their Toru-ebe state.

This ambition, she maintained, had brought them into conflict with all tribes of the so called Niger-Delta. She also called on President Goodluck Jonathan to intervene in the crisis before it gets out of hand.



COMMENDATION SERVICE: From left: Princess Ifueko Eweka; Prince Festus Eweka, husband; Mr. Harris Igiehon and Princess Ehi Eweka, during the the commendation service for late Princess Miranda Oni Eweka, at the First Baptist Church, Festac, Lagos, yesterday. Biodun Ogunleye.