

Army Invasion of Ogoni: 'How they murdered my pregnant wife'

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- Residents desert Yeghe, Bori
- 2 soldiers, 9 others feared killed
- Royal fathers endorse military presence in Ogoni

By Davies Iheamnochor

OGONI—MR. Ledee Meyakau, the husband of Mrs. Lesi, an eight month old pregnant woman killed last week during the gun-battle between the military and militants has called for justice over the killing of his wife.



File: Ogoni land

Narrating his loss, Meyakau said: "The Nigerian Army came to our village and killed my wife and my eight month baby in her womb. I want the whole world to hear it because it is painful. I was not around when she was shot. I met my wife dead I came back.

"I don't know what to do. They killed innocent people. Since my wife died I have not been myself. I have been living in the bush."

Also, Mr. Justus Tambari, who lost one of his brothers and two friends during the crossfire said he would have also been a victim.

"I would have also died because we were together when the army entered Bori with armoured vehicle so I ran into the gutter.

"I saw them when they killed about five people including my brother. They went to my shop looked inside they did not see anybody but I was looking at them from my hideout.

"After shooting these people they waited long before they left. If they had left early after the shooting, we would have saved them. One of them is still in the hospital.

"In Bori, they shot Mr. Kenneth, Mr. Joel, Mr. Linus Nwafor and Kelechi Nwafor."

Military invasion

About 12 lives were reportedly lost during the military operation that lasted two days.

According to reports, the soldiers were in search of an ex-militant leader, Mr. Solomon Ndigbara, popularly called Osama Bin Laden.



Some of the persons who lost their relations during the crossfire

The soldiers, were said to have stormed the home of the ex-agitator based on intelligence reports that the ex-militant was in possession of ammunition.

It was gathered that when the soldiers arrived the community (Yeghe) some boys allegedly loyal to Ndigbara opened fire and killed two of the soldiers.

The army who were infuriated by the actions of the suspected militants, reinforced and tackle the assailants head on killing at least five persons in Yeghe.

Niger Delta Voice learnt that deafening gunshots from the crossfire between the army and the militants caused the natives to scamper for safety leaving the

community deserted.

Army reacts

The Public Relations Officer of the 2 Brigade, Port Harcourt, Capt Lazarus Eli confirmed the development but stated clearly that no life was lost in the incident.

Eli disclosed that the visit of the army was in line with the command's target to get the communities rid of dangerous weapons.

He said the military maintained high sense of responsibility and professionalism in its duties, adding that their visits to communities was peaceful.

But the residents of Yeghe community and Bori in Khana LGA insisted that over nine persons lost their lives during the raid.

Yeghe monarch condemns killing of army, others

Meanwhile, the Paramount Ruler of Bua Yeghe, His Royal Highness, Chief Barinada Gbaranee has condemned the alleged killing of two soldiers and other innocent Ogonis in Bori and Yeghe communities.

The monarch who spoke through his aide, Mr. Konfidence Ati expressed sadness over the destruction of properties belonging to sons of Ogoniland.

Gbaranee called on the Chief of Army Staff and the Rivers State Government to intervene and stop further destruction of lives and property in the area.

He described Ogoni as a peaceful nation and should not be turned into a war zone.

Yeghe, Bori residents still live in fear

After the military raid, the people of Yeghe and Bori are still living in fear as many have fled their homes.

In an interview with Niger Delta Voice, HRH. Chief Barinada Gbaranee disclosed that there is heavy tension in the community over alleged plot by the military to again storm the area for mass arrest.

The monarch pleaded with the state and federal governments and other well-meaning individuals to intervene, adding that the community could be sacked if nothing was done.

“We don’t know what their mission is again in this place. We are afraid. If not that today is Sunday you wouldn’t have seen anybody around.

“I want to plead with the army authorities and the government to help us remove the army because we are not fighting war here,” he said
Ogoni women condemn

Killing of pregnant mother

A women’s group has condemned the attacks and killings in Ogoni, especially that of the pregnant woman.

The women under the auspices of Dap Doo Women Association expressed concern that Ogoni was on the verge of experiencing 1994 again, where some sons of the area were murdered.

Secretary of the women, Ewonubari Damgbor said they would not fold their hands and watch another round of mischief makers create another evil history in Ogoniland.

Damgbor regretted that some people are happy over the current development because of their political ambition.

CENTREP to drag Army before UN Rapporteur

A Human Right Organisation in the Niger Delta region, Centre for the Vulnerable and the Underprivileged, CENTREP, said it would drag the Nigerian Military before the United Nations Rapporteur over the killing of an eight month pregnant woman and eight other persons in Bua Yeghe and Bori communities in Ghokana and Khana Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

CENTREP in a statement released by its Executive Director, Mr. Oghenejabor Ikimi, condemned the act, adding that it was wrong for the military to overrun all the communities in search of one man.

Ikimi who described the invasion as collective punishment condemned the

killing as extra judicial, adding that the organization would take up legal action against the army after its investigations.

Ogoni royal fathers endorse military presence

Meanwhile, the Supreme Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers has endorsed the presence of the military in the area, stating that it was in the interest of the people of the oil rich region.

The monarchs unanimously disclosed their position on the military presence and invasion of some communities in Khana and Ghokana, Friday, when the Minister of Environment, Mrs. Amina Mohammed, in company of Ahmed Jubril, Minister of State for Environment and Sen. Magnus Abe visited the area in preparation for the commencement of implementation of the United Nations Environmental Assessment Programme report on Ogoni.

The President of Ogoni Supreme Council of Traditional Rulers, HRM, King Godwin Giniwa said that the presence of the military in the area was to tame crime, kidnapping, killings and fear in Ogoni Communities.

Giniwa said that the level of gun running in the area was heart rending and out of hands, adding that the military intervention was necessary and timely.

The Royal father stated that criminals almost took over the oil rich Ogoni nation, stressing that the military was there to mop up every arm illegally owned by hoodlums in the area.

The monarch said anyone not in support of the military presence in the area is an enemy of Ogoni.