

# NIGER DELTA VOICE

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## 1 shot dead as tension brews between Delta town, PRESCO

•Produce remains of my son, Cyril, for burial — Awotu, grieving father •Our security agents didn't kill anybody; our vehicles razed —PRESCO

By Paul Olayemi

**O**VRE-EKU - There is growing apprehension between PRESCO Plc in Edo State, which specialises in cultivation of oil palm trees, extraction, refining and fractioning of crude oil into finished products and neighboring Ovre-Eku community, Ethiope East Local Government Area, Delta State, over the killing of a 15-year-old student, Master Cyril Obruche, purportedly by security agents attached to the company.

The Nigerian Army denied accusation that soldiers killed Obruche, a Senior Secondary School, SSS student of Baptist Medical Centre Staff Secondary School, Eku, while PRESCO said the matter was under investigation by the authorities.

### How Obruche was killed —Agbro, best friend

Obruche's best friend, Master Okeoghene Agbro, whose cheeks were tear-soaked, said they were returning from an errand when they met a group of people protesting, adding: "We were not even part of it and the next thing I heard was gunshot and Obruche fell, and we all ran away. From where I was hiding, I saw them bring a motorcycle and they carried him away."

### Mobile policemen attacked us

— Okiemute, Eku youth

A youth in Eku, who participated in the protest, Believe Okiemute, said: "We were protesting the erection of the gate by Presco; it was a peaceful protest and the mobile policemen attached to the company

shot at us directly. As I speak to you, the gate is still there; we cannot go into the community and those inside cannot come out, they are turning us into slaves in our land."

### PRESCO people killed my son —Awotu

Mr. Cyril Awotu, 42-year-old father of the victim, said it was just 11.23 am, March 28, when he got a call from one of his sons at Ughelli that his younger brother had been shot by securitymen attached to Presco.

"Tension was high and despite my efforts, I could not find his corpse, there were protests and armed security men were everywhere.

"I later saw the picture of my 15-year-old son on somebody's phone, his body was lifeless and some persons were carrying him away on a motorcycle with his head dangling, soaked in blood.

"Let them bring my son to me, I am begging them so that we can bury him. They killed him, Presco people killed my son," he said trying to hold back tears.

### Victim not part of protest — Ukueku

The most senior man in the community, Chief Joseph Ukueku, said Obruche was not even part of the protest, and was the third victim the community has lost to Presco.

"They do nothing about it and at the end, if we go demanding our freedom by protesting, they bring police to arrest us from Edo State and lock us away on trumped-up charges and they have done that many times to us," he said.

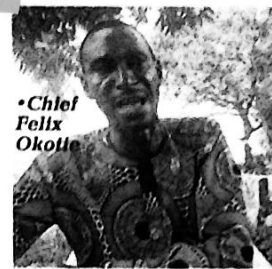
### Release dead body — LG boss

However, Chairman, Ethiope East Local Government Area, Rt. Hon. Victor Ofobrukueta, has called on security agencies attached to Presco and the company to release the corpse of Master Cyril Obruche.

### Igbakpa calls for investigation

Meanwhile, the member representing Ethiope Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Ben Igbakpa, last

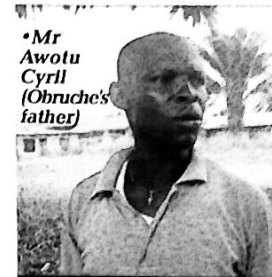
### DELTA... THE BIG HEART OF THE NATION



•Chief Felix Okotie



•Obruche's friend, Master Okeoghene Agbro



•Mr Awotu Cyril (Obruche's father)



•Ovre Eku Community

Tuesday, in a motion of urgent public importance, enjoined the House to order thorough investigation into Obruche's death. Hon. Igbakpa also said the Chief of Army Staff should withdraw all soldiers attached to the company and the Inspector-General of Police should order the company to pull down the gate it erected on the road, said to have sparked the protest that led to the brutal killing of the boy.

### Army refutes distorted report

Director, Army Public Relations, Brig.-Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu, in a statement in Abuja, described the report as misleading, false and orchestrated to present the Army in bad light.

Nwachukwu said troops were not deployed during the protest when the unfortunate incident allegedly occurred at PRESCO Plc in the border community, reiterating that the corpse of the deceased was not in the custody of the Nigerian Army.

### Okotie traces storm to land annexation

A community leader, Chief Felix Okotie, told NDV that the council boss was forced to issue the entreaty after the company at first denied that anybody died. "They (Council Chairman and Divisional Police Officer) went there countless times and when they found out the company did not want to release the corpse, they had no option than to

raise that plea," he asserted.

"The issue of Presco and Ovre-Eku community started when some persons discovered oil in the land and they are now using Presco to annex the land. We are Urhobo and they want us to start answering Odionwere, instead of Okpakooro. What has administrative boundary got to do with traditional boundary?

### Iwevbo, Eku youths involved in scuffle, says Uwajeh

Reacting, Human Resource Manager, PRESCO, Mr. Tony Uwajeh, said: "Our security men do not carry arms, there was a confrontation between youths from Iwevbo and Eku community at the company Sakpoba Estate, last Monday.

"The allegation is that some of the youths had their own

local guns and they were daring the police who were preventing them from pulling down the gate at Presco, about two hours after the incident, a corpse, a young boy was brought to our gate.

"I was not there, so I cannot tell you if our securitymen shot someone or not. For us, as a company, we consider it a very sad incident, life is precious and that the life of a young boy was lost in that incident is highly regrettable," Uwajeh said.

### Company's vehicles burnt

He also alleged that youths from the community, last Monday, attacked some of the company's vehicles and trucks, burning them down and after days of tension, the company has started reaching out to the family as life was involved.

### PRESCO meets Obruche family

"On Wednesday, the company succeeded in reaching out to the father of the late boy and there are other steps the company is taking to calm frayed nerves," he added.

Uwajeh repudiated the allegation that community residents were not allowed out or to come in, saying: "Following the meeting we had this morning, the company has directed that the gate be removed, so as not to be misunderstood.

"At the appropriate time, proper engagement will follow and many people will realise the importance of the gate," he mooted.

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