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Nigeria: New evidence of human rights violations in oil-rich Niger Delta

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"It is like paradise and hell. They have everything. We have nothing... If we protest, they send soldiers."
Eghare W.O. Ojhogar, chief of the Ugborodo community.

"I was told to kneel down on the beach with some of the chiefs and their hands were tied behind their backs. Then the soldiers started beating them with horsewhips, and told us to eat sand."
Cadbury George Omieh, Igno XXI, Amanyanabo (King) of Odioma.

Ten years after the execution of writer and human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight fellow activists, new evidence shows that the peoples of Nigeria's oil producing Niger Delta continue to face death and devastation at the hands of the security forces.

A report issued today by Amnesty International reveals how poverty-stricken communities, which protest against the actions of companies or are suspected of obstructing oil production, risk collective punishment.

"It is an insult to the memory of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his fellow campaigners that those responsible for killings, beatings and rape are still allowed to escape justice. Their campaign for economic and social rights remains as relevant as ever with 70 percent of Niger Delta inhabitants continuing to live in absolute poverty despite booming oil revenues," said Kolawole Olaniyan, Director of Amnesty International's Africa programme.

Based on a recent Amnesty International mission to the Niger Delta, the report, *Ten years on: injustice and violence haunt the oil Delta*, focuses particular attention on human rights violations committed this year at the Escravos oil terminal and the community of Odioma, both on the Niger Delta coast.

On 4 February, soldiers from Nigeria's Joint Task Force fired on protesters at Chevron Nigeria's Escravos oil terminal from the nearby Ugborodo community. One man was shot and later died from his injuries while 30 other demonstrators were injured, some of them seriously by blows from rifle butts and other weapons. It took several hours to transport the injured by boat to a hospital. Neither the Government, nor Chevron

Nigeria provided adequate medical care or assistance to transport the injured and no thorough or independent inquiry has been carried out into the incident.

On 19 February, at least 17 people were killed and two women were allegedly raped when Joint Task Force soldiers raided the Ijaw community of Odioma. The raid was ostensibly to arrest members of an armed vigilante group but the suspects were not captured and about 80 per cent of homes were destroyed. The previous month, Shell Nigeria had withdrawn plans for oil exploration in the area, reportedly after youths from Odioma demanded a halt to operations and the company became aware that ownership of the land was disputed. An inquiry into the raid has not been made public, no one has been charged and Odioma is now almost deserted.

Amnesty International is calling on the Nigerian Federal Government to conduct thorough and independent inquiries into allegations that the security forces killed, injured and raped civilians, and destroyed their property. The findings should be made public and those responsible for human rights violations brought to justice.

The organisation also demands that Chevron commission an independent and impartial investigation into the company's role during the incidents at Escravos terminal on 4 February, and that Shell investigates allegations of a security arrangement between a Shell Nigeria subcontractor and a criminal group in Odioma.

For a copy of the full report, *Ten years on: injustice and violence haunt the oil Delta*, please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf440222005>

For a copy of the report summary, *Claiming rights and resources - Injustice, oil and violence in Nigeria*, please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf440202005>

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