

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide information on the Ijwa group – not necessarily the ethnic group.**

RESPONSE

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The only references to Ijwa in the sources consulted refer to the Ijaw, an ethnic group in Nigeria. According to information sourced from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) Ethno-Net Africa website, the Ijaw are also known as the Ijo, Izon, Izo or Uzo ('Nigeria' (undated), Ethno-Net Africa website <http://www.ethnonet-africa.org/data/nigeria/genpop.htm> – Accessed 2 September 2004 – Attachment 1).

The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary provides the following information on the Ijaw sourced from the 1974 *African Encyclopedia* and the 1987 *Historical Dictionary of Nigeria* by A. Oyewole:

The Ijaw (Ijo) people live in Rivers and Bendel states, Nigeria. Much of their land is located in the Niger Delta and consists of mangrove swamps and farmland. Since the region is crisscrossed by many creeks and rivers, fishing has always been important to the Ijaws. They also produce salt and are known for their trading abilities. During the centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, the Ijaws regularly served as middlemen in their traffic. Ijaw tradition has them moving from the east and north to their present homeland in the fifteenth century, but their language does not resemble other Nigerian languages in the region; ethnologists believe they may have arrived in the area long before the other groups. The Ijaws are divided into a number of subgroups, including the Ibani (Bonny), Okrika, Kalabari, Nemba (Brass), Akassa,

and Defaka. During the past thirty years, Ijaw life has been transformed by the discovery of vast reserves of oil and natural gas in their region. This development has provided large numbers of well-paying jobs, as well as the instant incorporation of the region into the larger commercial economy of Nigeria (Olson, James Stuart 1996, 'Ijaw', *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, p.236 http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=VhuQlawC97sC&dq=%22peoples+of+africa%22+olson&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=zwb3wPRwgs&sig=VPT-vlprM2KiQA5G6JguQUUmDc4&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA236,M1 – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 2).

The Jamestown Foundation's *TerrorismMonitor* dated 10 August 2006 provides the following information on the Ijaw:

The latest guerrilla attacks against the government and international oil interests are being led by the Ijaw, the largest ethnic group in the Niger Delta region.

Out of Nigeria's 137 million people, the Ijaw number approximately 14 million, making them the country's fourth-largest ethnic group. They live primarily in the Niger Delta region. The Ijaw are generally Catholic Christians, although they incorporate traditional tribal religious practices into their beliefs. The major grievances of the Ijaw are the wealth distribution policies of the government. For instance, while most of the energy wealth emanates from the Niger Delta region, the Ijaw live in poverty and suffer from extensive environmental degradation as a result of frequent oil spills and gas flaring operations (the burning of unwanted natural gas that rises when drilling for oil; the fumes are a contributor to air pollution and acid rain). The Ijaw demand that a larger proportion of Nigeria's energy wealth be spent on their communities, rather than distributed throughout the country. For example, under the 1960 and 1963 Nigerian constitution, 50 percent of oil revenue was returned to the states in which the resources were derived. Currently, under the 1999 constitution, this "derivation formula" stands at 13 percent. While the federal government has offered to slightly increase the revenue allocation to the states, the Ijaw community is calling for the derivation formula to reach 20-25 percent. They are also demanding ownership and management of the resources located on their land, including offshore oil fields.

As a result of disagreements, the Ijaw formed militant groups to launch operations against energy infrastructure and energy workers in the delta, as well as against government authorities. They receive support from the local populations, making it difficult for the government to isolate and eliminate them. Their success in damaging oil infrastructure and terrorizing international oil workers resulted in Nigeria's oil exports being cut by approximately 500,000 barrels per day through much of 2006 (Marquardt, Erich 2006, 'The Niger Delta Insurgency and its Threat to Energy Security', *TerrorismMonitor*, Volume IV, Issue 16, 10 August, Jamestown Foundation, p.4 – Attachment 3).

According to an assessment on the Ijaw by Minorities at Risk (MAR) dated 31 December 2003, "the Ijaw do not face any significant cultural discrimination, they do experience high levels of economic and political exclusion". MAR continues:

While the Nigerian government has become more democratic in recent years, the Ijaw have not benefited from this. The group remains excluded from the mainstream of Nigerian politics, economy and society. In 2002 and 2003, the Ijaw complained about malpractices in the voter registration process. Security forces in the Delta region regularly engage in torture, killings and confiscation of property. The group also experiences poor public health conditions and environmental decline, resulting from the activities of oil companies in the Delta region. In 2001 and 2002, there have been reports of intragroup violence, primarily over economic issues. The group engages in regular protest activities against the government and

oil companies (PROT01, 03 = 2, PROT02 = 3). As a result, they face government repression and high levels of police and military presence.

The Ijaw are represented by a number of both conventional and militant organizations. Groups such as the Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw advocate a more peaceful approach to influencing the government. Exile organizations, such as the Ijaw National Council USA, also lobby the Nigerian government on behalf of the group. Groups such as the Ijaw National Congress and a variety of Ijaw Youth movements have resorted to more militant activities. Such actions include attacks against the rival Itsekere community and oil facilities in the Niger Delta. In 2003, attacks against oil facilities reached particularly serious levels (REB01 = 1, REB03 = 2).

Only the most extremist Ijaw groups are demanding complete political independence for the Niger Delta region. The group is primarily concerned with receiving more economic opportunities and resources. They are also pressing for greater compensation from oil companies and protection from polluting activities. In addition, the Ijaw demand greater political representation (Minorities at Risk 2003, *Assessment for Ijaw in Nigeria*, 31 December <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=47506> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 4).

Minority Rights Group's (MRG) *State of the World's Minorities 2008 – Events of 2007* includes a table identifying those groups of peoples most under threat at the beginning of 2008. Nigeria is ranked eighth for peoples most under threat with Ijaw included as one of the groups most under threat. MRG provides the following information on the Niger Delta and the Ijaw:

When he took power, President Yar'Adua identified the crisis in the Niger Delta as one of his top priorities. In November 2007 he unveiled a 'master plan' to develop the region. According to IRIN, this involved doubling the budget of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2008. The NDDC's chairman then proclaimed that the Niger Delta would be 'Africa's most prosperous, peaceful and pleasant region by 2020'. It will be hard to match the rhetoric with the reality because of the worsening problems in the region.

The Niger Delta – a lush region of mangrove swamps, rainforest and swampland – is home to 6 million people including the Adoni, Diouba, Etche, Ijaw, Kalibari, Nemba (Brass), Nembe, Ogoni and Okrika minority groups. It is the site of rich oil and natural gas reserves both offshore and on land. But ethnic groups have protested about the failure of the central government and the international petroleum companies to share the oil wealth with local communities. Little money goes into schools or hospitals. Public services are in a pitiable condition.

In recent years, disaffection has given way to militancy. Kidnappings of local and international oil workers have risen steadily, with the militias even resorting to the kidnapping of children. The situation is complicated by the links that the militias are alleged to have with powerful criminal and political networks. The gangs are known to be actively engaged in oil 'bunkering' – stealing oil from pipelines and using the proceeds to buy arms. Recently, there have been concerns that the oil giants may be further aggravating the problem by paying off the militants to 'protect' their facilities.

...In this context, the new president appointed Goodluck Jonathan – an Ijaw – as his deputy. Jonathan has already been targeted twice for assassination. The government, meanwhile, released the detained leader of Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, and the vice-president embarked on a series of meetings with leaders of the different

communities in the Delta. The main militant group in the Niger Delta, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which claims to represent the interests of the Ijaw community, called a ceasefire which held for a few months from June. By the end of the year the group had resumed attacks (Minority Rights Group 2008, 'Nigeria', *State of the World's Minorities 2008 – Events of 2007*, 11 March, p.74 – Attachment 5).

According to the Niger Delta Technical Committee, the Niger Delta “[h]istorically and cartographically” consisted of Bayelsa, Delta and River States. The Committee notes, however, that the definition of the Niger Delta was extended in the year 2000 by Obasanjo’s regime to also include Abia State, Akwa Ibom State, Cross River State, Edo State, Imo State and Ondo State. The Niger Delta is indicated on the attached map of Nigeria (‘About the Niger Delta’ (undated), Niger Delta Technical Committee website <http://www.nigerdeltatechnicalcommittee.org/> – Accessed – Accessed 8 January 2009 – Attachment 6; and ‘Maps’ 2004, ENigeria website <http://www.e-nigeria.net/maps.html> - Accessed 6 January 2009 – Attachment 7).

For more information on Ijaw militant groups operating in the Niger Delta please see the following documents which are not included as Attachments to this response:

Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND):

- Question 1 of *Research Response NGA30811* dated 2 November 2006 provides information on MEND (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response NGA30811*, 2 November – Link);
- *Research Response NGA32922* dated 4 February 2008 provides information on MEND’s origins, aims, structure, leadership and activities (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response NGA32922*, 4 February – Link); and
- An article dated 29 December 2008 by *Platts* reports that MEND “warned it would cripple the Nigerian oil industry in 2009 if the government of the West African country did not release detained militant leader Henry Okah” (‘MEND threatens to cripple Nigeria’s oil industry in 2009’ 2008, *Platts*, 29 December <http://www.platts.com/Oil/News/8256835.xml> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link).

Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF):

- *Research Response NGA32922* dated 4 February 2008 provides information on the NDPVF (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response NGA32922*, 4 February – Link);
- The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and the Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University provides information on the NDPVF from their database entitled *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies & Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University 2008, ‘The Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF)’, *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* <http://www.armed-groups.org/6/section.aspx/ViewGroup?id=77> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link).

Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF)

- The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and the Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University provides information on the NDVF from their database entitled *Transnational and Non-*

State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies & Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University 2008, 'The Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF)', *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* <http://www.armed-groups.org/6/section.aspx/ViewGroup?id=80> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link).

Egbesu Boys

- A response by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada dated 16 February 2006 provides information on the Egbesu Boys with reference to leadership, membership, recruitment practices, activities and treatment by the Nigerian authorities Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *NGA101034.E – Nigeria: Egbesu Boys; leadership, membership, recruitment practices, activities, and treatment by authorities (January 2005 – February 2006)*, 16 February http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450227 – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link); and
- The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and the Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University provides information on the Egbesu Boys from their database entitled *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies & Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University 2008, 'Egbesu Boys', *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* <http://www.armed-groups.org/6/section.aspx/ViewGroup?id=49> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link).

Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC)

- The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and the Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University provides information on the FNDIC from their database entitled *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies & Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University 2008, 'Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC)', *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* <http://www.armed-groups.org/6/section.aspx/ViewGroup?id=73> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link).

The Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV)

- The Graduate Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University provides information on NDV from their database entitled *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies & Programme on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University 2008, 'The Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV)', *Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses* <http://www.armed-groups.org/6/section.aspx/ViewGroup?id=79> – Accessed 6 January 2009 – Link).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

United Nations (UN)

UN Refugee Agency – Refworld <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Ethnologue: Languages of the World <http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

Minorities at Risk <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/>

Minority Rights International Group <http://www.minorityrights.org/>

International News & Politics

allAfrica.com <http://allafrica.com/>

University Sites

Transnational and Non-State Armed Groups <http://www.armed-groups.org/>

Search Engines

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Google Books <http://books.google.com/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Nigeria' (undated), Ethno-Net Africa website <http://www.ethnonet-africa.org/data/nigeria/genpop.htm> – Accessed 2 September 2004.
2. Olson, James Stuart 1996, 'Ijaw', *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, p.236
http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=VhuQlawC97sC&dq=%22peoples+of+afrika%22+olson&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=zwb3wPRwgs&sig=VPt-vlprM2KiQA5G6JguQUUmDc4&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPA236.M1 – Accessed 6 January 2009.
3. Marquardt, Erich 2006, 'The Niger Delta Insurgency and its Threat to Energy Security', *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume IV, Issue 16, 10 August, Jamestown Foundation.
4. Minorities at Risk 2003, *Assessment for Ijaw in Nigeria*, 31 December
<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=47506> – Accessed 6 January 2009.

5. Minority Rights Group 2008, *State of the World's Minorities 2008 – Events of 2007*, 11 March.
6. 'About the Niger Delta' (undated), Niger Delta Technical Committee website <http://www.nigerdeltatechnicalcommittee.org/> – Accessed – Accessed 8 January 2009.
7. 'Maps' 2004, ENigeria website <http://www.e-nigeria.net/maps.html> - Accessed 6 January 2009.