Niger Delta, Ken Saro-Wiwa, & Current Conflict

 

Key Questions:

1. What is the Niger Delta region and why is it important?
2. What is the history / impact of multinational oil companies on the region?
3. How have oil drilling, oil spills, and gas flares impacted the local environment and the ability of people to live?
4. How has the oil resource led to corruption?
5. How have the people of the region resisted?
6. Who is Ken Saro-Wiwa? What is his background? What did he do? What happened to him?
7. What conflicts continue in the region? What groups are involved?

Map of Nigeria numerically showing states typically considered part of the Niger Delta region: 1. [Abia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abia_State), 2. [Akwa Ibom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akwa_Ibom_State), 3. [Bayelsa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayelsa_State), 4. [Cross River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_River_State), 5. [Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_State_%28Nigeria%29), 6. [Edo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_State), 7.[Imo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imo_State%22%20%5Co%20%22Imo%20State), 8. [Ondo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ondo_State), 9. [Rivers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_State)

The Niger Delta is the [delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_delta) of the [Niger River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_River) sitting directly on the [Gulf of Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Guinea) on the [Atlantic Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean) in [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-1) It is typically considered to be located within nine coastal southern Nigerian states, which include: all six states from the [South South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_South_Nigeria) geopolitical zone, one state ([Ondo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ondo_State)) from [South West](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_West_Nigeria) geopolitical zone and two states ([Abia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abia_State) and [Imo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imo_State)) from [South East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_East_Nigeria) geopolitical zone. Of all the states that the region covers, only [Cross River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_River_State) is not an oil-producing state.

Niger Delta is a very densely populated region sometimes called the Oil Rivers because it was once a major producer of [palm oil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm_oil). The area was the British [Oil Rivers Protectorate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_Rivers_Protectorate) from 1885 until 1893, when it was expanded and became the [Niger Coast Protectorate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Coast_Protectorate). The delta is a petroleum-rich region, and has been the centre of international controversy over pollution, [corruption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleptocracy) (notably by the [Abacha](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sani_Abacaha&action=edit&redlink=1) regime), and [human rights violations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_violations).[

The Niger Delta, as now defined officially by the Nigerian government, extends over about 70,000 km2 (27,000 sq mi) and makes up 7.5% of Nigeria's land mass. Historically and cartographically, it consists of present-day [Bayelsa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayelsa_State), [Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_State), and [Rivers States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_State). In 2000, however, Obasanjo's regime included [Abia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abia_State), [Akwa-Ibom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akwa-Ibom), [Cross River State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_River_State), [Edo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_State), [Imo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imo_State) and [Ondo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ondo_State) States in the region. Some 31 million people[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-2) of more than 40 ethnic groups including the [Bini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bini_people), [Efik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efik_people), [Esan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esan_people), [Ibibio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibibio_people), [Igbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igbo_people), [Annang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annang), [Yoruba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people), [Oron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oron_people), [Ijaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people), [Ikwerre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ikwerre_people), [Itsekiri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Itsekiri), [Isoko](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isoko_people), [Urhobo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urhobo_people), [Ukwuani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukwuani_people), [Kalabari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalabari_people), [Okrika](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okrika) and [Ogoni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogoni_people), are among the inhabitants of the political Niger Delta, speaking about 250 different dialects.

The Niger Delta, and the [South South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_South_Nigeria) geopolitical zone (which contains six of the states in Niger Delta) are two different entities. The Niger Delta separates the [Bight of Benin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bight_of_Benin) from the [Bight of Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bight_of_Biafra) within the larger [Gulf of Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Guinea).

Non-violent resistance

See also: [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Survival_of_the_Ogoni_People)

During the next phase of resistance in the Niger Delta, local communities demanded environmental and social justice from the federal government, with [Ken Saro Wiwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro_Wiwa) as the lead figure for this phase of the struggle. Cohesive oil protests became most pronounced in 1990 with the publication of the Ogoni Bill of Rights. The indigents protested against the lack of economic development, e.g. schools and hospitals, in the region, despite all the oil wealth created. They also complained about environmental pollution and destruction of their land and rivers by foreign oil companies. Ken Saro Wiwa and other oil activists from Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) were arrest and killed under Sani Abacha in 1995. Although protests have never been as strong as they were under Saro-Wiwa, there is still an oil reform movement based on peaceful protests today.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-3)

Recent armed conflict

Main article: [Conflict in the Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta)

Unfortunately, the struggle got out of control, and the present phase has become militant.

When long-held concerns about loss of control over resources to the oil companies were voiced by the [Ijaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people) people in the [Kaiama Declaration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiama_Declaration) in 1998, the Nigerian government sent troops to occupy the Bayelsa and Delta states. Soldiers opened fire with rifles, machine guns, and tear gas, killing at least three protesters and arresting twenty-five more[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*].

Since then, local indigenous activity against commercial oil refineries and pipelines in the region have increased in frequency and militancy. Recently foreign employees of [Shell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Dutch_Shell), the primary corporation operating in the region, were taken hostage by outraged local people. Such activities have also resulted in greater governmental intervention in the area, and the mobilisation of the [Nigerian army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_army) and [State Security Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Security_Service_%28Nigeria%29) into the region, resulting in violence and human rights abuses.

In April, 2006, a bomb exploded near an oil refinery in the Niger Delta region, a warning against Chinese expansion in the region. [MEND](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Emancipation_of_the_Niger_Delta) stated: "We wish to warn the Chinese government and its oil companies to steer well clear of the Niger Delta. The Chinese government, by investing in stolen crude, places its citizens in our line of fire."[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-4)

Government and private initiatives to develop the Niger Delta region have been introduced recently. These include the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), a government initiative, and the Development Initiative (DEVIN), a community development non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta. Uz and Uz Transnational, a company with strong commitment to the Niger Delta, has introduced ways of developing the poor in the Niger Delta, especially in Rivers State.

In September 2008, MEND released a statement proclaiming that their militants had launched an "oil war" throughout the Niger Delta against both, pipelines and oil-production facilities, and the Nigerian soldiers that protect them. Both MEND and the Nigerian Government claim to have inflicted heavy casualties on one another.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-5)

In August 2009, the Nigerian government granted amnesty to the militants; many militants subsequently surrendered their weapons in exchange for a presidential pardon, rehabilitation programme, and education.

## Nigerian oil

Main article: [Petroleum industry in Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_industry_in_Nigeria)

Nigeria has become West Africa's biggest producer of petroleum. Some 2 million barrels (320,000 m3) a day are extracted in the Niger Delta. It is estimated that 38 billion barrels of crude oil still reside under the delta as of early 2012.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-6) The first oil operations in the region began in the 1950s and were undertaken by multinational corporations, which provided Nigeria with necessary technological and financial resources to extract oil.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-7) Since 1975, the region has accounted for more than 75% of Nigeria's [export](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Export) earnings.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*] Together oil and natural gas extraction comprise "97 per cent of Nigeria's foreign exchange revenues".[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-8) Much of the [natural gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_gas) extracted in oil wells in the Delta is immediately burned, or [flared](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas_flaring), into the air at a rate of approximately 70 million m³per day. This is equivalent to 41% of African natural gas consumption, and forms the largest single source of [greenhouse gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_gas) emissions on the planet.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*] In 2003, about 99% of excess gas was flared in the Niger Delta,[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-9) although this value has fallen to 11% in 2010.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-10) (See also [gas flaring volumes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas_flaring#Volume)). The biggest gas flaring company is the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd, a joint venture that is majority owned by the Nigerian government. In Nigeria, "...despite regulations introduced 20 years ago to outlaw the practice, most associated gas is flared, causing local pollution and contributing to climate change."[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta#cite_note-11) The environmental devastation associated with the industry and the lack of distribution of oil wealth have been the source and/or key aggravating factors of numerous environmental movements and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, including recent guerrilla activity by the [Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Emancipation_of_the_Niger_Delta) (MEND).

In September 2012 [Eland Oil & Gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eland_Oil_%26_Gas) purchased a 45% interest in OML 40, with its partner Starcrest Energy Nigeria Limited, from the Shell Group. They intend to recommission the existing infrastructure and restart existing wells to re-commence production at an initial gross rate of 2,500 bopd with a target to grow gross production to 50,000 bopd within four years.

### Oil revenue derivation

Oil revenue allocation has been the subject of much contention well before Nigeria gained its independence. Allocations have varied from as much as 50%, owing to the [First Republic's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_First_Republic) high degree of regional autonomy, and as low as 10% during the military dictatorships. This is the table below.

|  |
| --- |
| Oil revenue sharing formula |
| Year | Federal | State\* | Local | Special Projects | Derivation Formula\*\* |
| 1958 | 40% | 60% | 0% | 0% | 50% |
| 1968 | 80% | 20% | 0% | 0% | 10% |
| 1977 | 75% | 22% | 3% | 0% | 10% |
| 1982 | 55% | 32.5% | 10% | 2.5% | 10% |
| 1989 | 50% | 24% | 15% | 11% | 10% |
| 1995 | 48.5% | 24% | 20% | 7.5% | 13% |
| 2001 | 48.5% | 24% | 20% | 7.5% | 13% |

The current conflict in the Niger Delta first arose in the early 1990s over tensions between [foreign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multinational_corporation) [oil corporations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_industry) and a number of the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta)'s minority ethnic groups who feel they are being exploited, particularly the [Ogoni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogoni_people) and the [Ijaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people). Ethnic and political unrest has continued throughout the 1990s despite the conversion to [democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy)[[*clarification needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3APlease_clarify)] and the election of the [Obasanjo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obasanjo) government in 1999. Competition for [oil wealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_politics) has fueled violence between [ethnic groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups), causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups, [Nigerian military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_Nigeria) and police forces, notably the [Nigerian Mobile Police](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Mobile_Police).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-3)

From 2004 on, violence also hit the oil industry with piracy and kidnappings. In 2009, a presidential amnesty program accompanied with support and training of ex-militants proved to be a success. Thus until 2011, victims of crimes were fearful of seeking justice for crimes committed against them because of a failure to prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses.

Nigeria, after nearly four decades of oil production, had by the early 1980s become almost completely economically dependent on petroleum extraction, which at the time generated 25% of its [GDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_product). This portion has since risen to 60%, as of 2008. Despite the vast wealth created by petroleum, the benefits have been slow to trickle down to the majority of the population, who since the 1960s have increasingly been forced to abandon their traditional [agricultural](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agricultural) practices. Annual production of both cash and food crops dropped significantly in the later decades of 20th century. [Cocoa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cocoa_bean) production dropped by 43% for example; Nigeria was the world's largest cocoa exporter in 1960. [Rubber](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubber) production dropped by 29%, [cotton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton) by 65%, and [groundnuts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peanut) by 64%.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-vultures-5) While many skilled, well-paid Nigerians have been employed by oil corporations, the majority of Nigerians and most especially the people of the Niger Delta states and the far north have become poorer since the 1960s.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-6)

The Delta region has a steadily growing population estimated at more than 30 million people in 2005, and accounts for more than 23% of Nigeria's total population. The population density is also among the highest in the world, with 265 people per square kilometre, according to the [Niger Delta Development Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Development_Commission). This population is expanding at a rapid 3% per year and the oil capital, [Port Harcourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Harcourt), and other large towns are also growing quickly. [Poverty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty) and [urbanization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbanization) in Nigeria are growing, and official [corruption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption) is considered a fact of life. The resulting scenario is one in which urbanization does not bring accompanying economic growth to provide jobs.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-vultures-5)

Kenule Beeson "Ken" Saro-Wiwa (10 October 1941 – 10 November 1995) was a Nigerian writer, television producer, environmental activist, and winner of the [Right Livelihood Award](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_Livelihood_Award) and the [Goldman Environmental Prize](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldman_Environmental_Prize). Saro-Wiwa was a member of the [Ogoni people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogoni_people), an ethnic minority in Nigeria whose homeland, [Ogoniland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogoniland), in the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta) has been targeted for [crude oil extraction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extraction_of_petroleum) since the 1950s and which has suffered extreme [environmental damage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_damage) from decades of indiscriminate petroleum waste dumping. Initially as spokesperson, and then as president, of the [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Survival_of_the_Ogoni_People) (MOSOP), Saro-Wiwa led a [nonviolent campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent_resistance) against [environmental degradation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_degradation) of the land and waters of Ogoniland by the operations of the [multinational](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multinational_corporation) [petroleum industry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_industry_in_Nigeria), especially the [Royal Dutch Shell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Dutch_Shell) company. He was also an outspoken critic of the [Nigerian government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_government), which he viewed as reluctant to enforce environmental regulations on the foreign petroleum companies operating in the area.

At the peak of his non-violent campaign, he was tried by a special [military tribunal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_tribunal) for allegedly masterminding the gruesome murder of Ogoni chiefs at a pro-government meeting, and [hanged](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanged) in 1995 by the [military dictatorship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_dictatorship) of General [Sani Abacha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sani_Abacha). His execution provoked international outrage and resulted in Nigeria's suspension from the [Commonwealth of Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations) for over three years.

### Early life

As a son of [Ogoni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogoni) chieftain [Jim Wiwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Wiwa), Ken was born in [Bori](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bori%2C_Nigeria), in the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa#cite_note-born-1) He spent his childhood in an Anglican home and eventually proved himself to be an excellent student; he attended secondary school at [Government College Umuahia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_College_Umuahia) and on completion obtained a scholarship to study English at the [University of Ibadan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Ibadan). He briefly became a teaching assistant at the [University of Lagos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Lagos).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa#cite_note-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa#cite_note-3)

However, he soon took up a government post as the Civilian Administrator for the port city of [Bonny](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonny%2C_Nigeria) in the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta), and during the [Nigerian Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War) was a strong supporter of the federal cause against the [Biafrans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biafra). His best known novel, [*Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sozaboy%3A_A_Novel_in_Rotten_English), tells the story of a naive village boy recruited to the army during the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970, and intimates the political corruption and [patronage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronage) in Nigeria's [military regime](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_regime) of the time. Saro-Wiwa's war diaries, [*On a Darkling Plain*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=On_a_Darkling_Plain&action=edit&redlink=1), document his experience during the war. He was also a successful businessman and television producer. His satirical television series, [*Basi & Company*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basi_%26_Company), was wildly popular, with an estimated audience of 30 million.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa#cite_note-4)

In the early 1970s Saro-Wiwa served as the Regional Commissioner for Education in the [Rivers State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_State) Cabinet, but was dismissed in 1973 because of his support for Ogoni [autonomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomy). In the late 1970s, he established a number of successful business ventures in retail and real estate, and during the 1980s concentrated primarily on his writing, journalism and television production. His intellectual work was interrupted in 1987 when he re-entered the political scene, appointed by the newly installed dictator [Ibrahim Babangida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim_Babangida) to aid the country's transition to democracy. But Saro-Wiwa soon resigned because he felt Babangida's supposed plans for a return to democracy were disingenuous. Saro-Wiwa's sentiments were proven correct in the coming years, as Babangida failed to relinquish power. In 1993, Babangida annulled Nigeria's general elections that would have transferred power to a civilian government, sparking mass civil unrest and eventually forcing him to step down, at least officially, that same year.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*]

### Activism

In 1990, Saro-Wiwa began devoting most of his time to human rights and environmental causes, particularly in Ogoniland. He was one of the earliest members of the [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Survival_of_the_Ogoni_People) (MOSOP), which advocated for the rights of the Ogoni people. The Ogoni Bill of Rights, written by MOSOP, set out the movement's demands, including increased autonomy for the Ogoni people, a fair share of the proceeds of oil extraction, and remediation of environmental damage to Ogoni lands. In particular, MOSOP struggled against the degradation of Ogoni lands by [Royal Dutch Shell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Dutch_Shell).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa#cite_note-5)

In 1992, Saro-Wiwa was imprisoned for several months, without trial, by the Nigerian military government.

Saro-Wiwa was Vice Chair of the [Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unrepresented_Nations_and_Peoples_Organization) (UNPO) General Assembly from 1993 to 1995.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa#cite_note-6) UNPO is an international, nonviolent, and democratic organisation (of which MOSOP is a member). Its members are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognised or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts which affect them.

In January 1993, MOSOP organised peaceful marches of around 300,000 Ogoni people – more than half of the Ogoni population – through four Ogoni urban centres, drawing international attention to their people's plight. The same year the Nigerian government occupied the region militarily.

Military repression escalated in May 1994. On May 21, soldiers and mobile policemen appeared in most Ogoni villages. On that day, four Ogoni chiefs (all on the conservative side of a schism within MOSOP over strategy) were brutally murdered. Saro-Wiwa, head of the opposing faction, had been denied entry to Ogoniland on the day of the murders, but he was detained in connection with the killings. The occupying forces, led by Major Paul Okuntimo of [Rivers State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_State) Internal Security, claimed to be 'searching for those directly responsible for the killings of the four Ogonis.' However, witnesses say that they engaged in terror operations against the general Ogoni population. [Amnesty International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amnesty_International) characterized the policy as deliberate [terrorism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism). By mid-June, the security forces had razed 30 villages, detained 600 people and killed at least 40. This figure eventually rose to 2,000 civilian deaths and the displacement of around 100,000 [internal refugees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_refugee).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-10)

In May 1994, nine activists from the movement who later became known as 'The Ogoni Nine', among them Ken Saro-Wiwa, were arrested and accused of [incitement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incitement) to murder following the deaths of four Ogoni elders. Saro-Wiwa and his comrades denied the charges, but were imprisoned for over a year before being found guilty and sentenced to death by a specially-convened tribunal, hand-selected by General [Sani Abacha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sani_Abacha), on 10 November 1995. The activists were denied [due process](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Due_process) and upon being found guilty, were [hanged](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanged) by the Nigerian state.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-11)

The executions met with an immediate international response. The trial was widely criticised by [human rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights) organisations and the governments of other states, who condemned the Nigerian government's long history of detaining its critics, mainly pro-democracy and other political activists. The [Commonwealth of Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations), which had pleaded for [clemency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clemency), suspended Nigeria's membership in response to the executions. The [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), and the [EU](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union) all implemented [sanctions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_sanctions)—but not on petroleum, Nigeria's primary [export](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Export).

Shell claimed to have asked the Nigerian government to show clemency towards those found guilty,[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-12) but said its request was refused. However, a 2001 [Greenpeace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenpeace) report found that "two witnesses that accused them [Saro-Wiwa and the other activists] later admitted that Shell and the military had bribed them with promises of money and jobs at Shell. Shell admitted having given money to the Nigerian military, who brutally tried to silence the voices which claimed justice".[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-Greenpeace-13)

Ijaw unrest (1998–1999)

The December 1998 All Ijaw Youths Conference crystallized the Ijaws' struggle for petroleum resource control with the formation of the [Ijaw Youth Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_Youth_Council) (IYC) and the issuing of the [Kaiama Declaration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiama_Declaration). In it, long-held Ijaw concerns about the loss of control over their homeland and their own lives to the oil companies were joined with a commitment to [direct action](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_action). In the declaration, and in a letter to the companies, the Ijaws called for oil companies to suspend operations and withdraw from Ijaw territory. The IYC pledged "to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination and ecological justice," and prepared a campaign of celebration, prayer, and direct action, *Operation Climate Change*, beginning December 28.

In December 1998, two warships and 10-15,000 Nigerian troops occupied [Bayelsa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayelsa) and [Delta states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_state) as the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) mobilized for Operation Climate Change. Soldiers entered the Bayelsa, the state capital of [Yenagoa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yenagoa), announced they had come because youths trying to stop the oil companies. On the morning of December 30, two thousand young people processed through Yenagoa, dressed in black, singing and dancing. Soldiers opened fire with rifles, machine guns, and tear gas, killing at least three protesters and arresting twenty-five more. After a march demanding the release of those detained was turned back by soldiers, three more protesters were shot dead including Nwashuku Okeri and Ghadafi Ezeifile. The military declared a state of emergency throughout Bayelsa state, imposed a dusk-to-dawn [curfew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curfew), and banned meetings. At military roadblocks, local residents were severely beaten or detained. At night, soldiers invaded private homes, terrorizing residents with beatings and women and girls with [rape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape).

On January 4, 1999 about one hundred soldiers from the military base at [Chevron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chevron_Corporation)’s Escravos facility attacked [Opia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opia) and Ikiyan, two Ijaw communities in Delta State. Bright Pablogba, the traditional leader of Ikiyan, who came to the river to negotiate with the soldiers, was shot along with a seven-year-old girl and possibly dozens of others. Of the approximately 1,000 people living in the two villages, four people were found dead and sixty-two were still missing months after the attack. The same soldiers set the villages ablaze, destroyed canoes and fishing equipment, killed livestock, and destroyed churches and religious shrines.

Nonetheless, Operation Climate Change continued, and disrupted Nigerian oil supplies through much of 1999 by turning off valves through Ijaw territory. In the context of high conflict between the Ijaw and the Nigerian Federal Government (and its police and army), the military carried out the [Odi massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odi_massacre), killing scores if not hundreds of Ijaws.

Subsequent actions by Ijaws against the oil industry included both renewed efforts at [nonviolent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolent) action and attacks on oil installations and foreign oil workers.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-Nigeria_Online-16)

## Timeline

### Emergence of armed groups in Niger Delta (2003–2004)

The ethnic unrest and conflicts of the late 1990s (such as those between the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri), coupled with a peak in the availability of small arms and other weapons, led increasingly to the militarization of the Delta. Local and state officials offered financial support to the paramilitary groups they believed would attempt to enforce their own political agenda. Conflagrations have been concentrated primarily in [Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_State_%28Nigeria%29) and [Rivers States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_State).[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-Where_Vultures_Feast-17)

Prior to 2003, the epicenter of regional violence was [Warri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warri%2C_Nigeria).[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-Where_Vultures_Feast-17) However, after the violent convergence of the largest military groups in the region, the [Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_People%27s_Volunteer_Force) (NDPVF) led by [Mujahid Dokubo-Asari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mujahid_Dokubo-Asari) and the [Niger Delta Vigilantes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Vigilante) (NDV) led by [Ateke Tom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ateke_Tom) (both of which are primarily made up of [Ijaws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people)), conflict became focused on [Port Harcourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Harcourt) and outlying towns. The two groups dwarf a plethora of smaller militias, supposedly numbering more than one hundred. The Nigerian government classifies these groups as "cults", but many began as local university [fraternities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraternities). The groups have adopted names largely based on [Western culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_culture), some of which include Icelanders, Greenlanders, KKK, and Vultures. All of the groups are constituted mostly by disaffected young men from Warri, Port Harcourt, and their suburban areas. Although the smaller groups are autonomous, they have formed alliances with and are largely controlled from above by either Asari and his NDPDF or Tom's NDV, who provide military support and instruction.

The NDPVF was founded by Asari, a former president of the Ijaw Youth Council, in 2003 after he "retreated into the bush" to form the group with the explicit goal of acquiring control of regional petroleum resources. The NDPFV attempted to control such resources primarily through oil "bunkering", a process in which an oil [pipeline](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pipeline_transport) is tapped and the oil extracted onto a barge. Oil corporations and the Nigerian state point out that bunkering is illegal; militants justify bunkering, saying they are being exploited and have not received adequate profits from the profitable but ecologically destructive oil industry. Bunkered oil can be sold for profit, usually to destinations in [West Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa), but also abroad. Bunkering is a fairly common practice in the Delta but in this case the militia groups are the primary perpetrators.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-HRW05-18)

The intense confrontation between the NDPVF and NDV seems to have been brought about by Asari’s political falling out with the NDPVF’s financial supporter [Peter Odili](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Odili), governor of [Rivers State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rivers_State) following the April 2003 local and state elections. After Asari publicly criticized the election process as fraudulent, the Odili government withdrew its financial support from the NDPVF and began to support Tom’s NDV, effectively launching a paramilitary campaign against the NDPVF.

Subsequent violence occurred chiefly in riverine villages southeast and southwest of Port Harcourt, with the two groups fighting for control of bunkering routes. The conflagrations spurred violent acts against the local population, resulting in numerous deaths and widespread displacement. Daily civilian life was disrupted, forcing schools and economic activity to shut down, widespread property destruction resulted.

The state campaign against the NDPVF emboldened Asari who began publicly articulating populist, anti-government views and attempted to frame the conflict in terms of pan-Ijaw nationalism and "self-determination." Consequently, the state government escalated the campaign against him by bringing in [police](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Mobile_Police), [army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_of_Nigeria), and [navy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navy_of_Nigeria) forces that began occupying Port Harcourt in June 2004.

The government forces collaborated with the NDV during the summer, and were seen protecting NDV militiamen from attacks by the NDPVF. The state forces failed to protect the civilian population from the violence and actually increased the destruction of citizens' livelihood. The Nigerian state forces were widely reported to have used the conflict as an excuse to raid homes, claiming that innocent civilians were cahoots with the NDPVF. Government soldiers and police obtained and destroyed civilian property by force. The NDPVF also accused the military of conducting air bombing campaigns against several villages, effectively reducing them to rubble, because they were believed to be housing NDPVF soldiers. The military denies this, claiming they engaged in aerial warfare only once in a genuine effort to wipe out an NDPVF stronghold.

Innocent civilians were also killed by NDPVF forces firing indiscriminately in order to engage their opponents. At the end of August 2004 there were several particularly brutal battles over the Port Harcourt waterfront; some residential slums were completely destroyed after the NDPVF deliberately burned down buildings. By September 2004, the situation was rapidly approaching a violent climax which caught the attention of the international community.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-HRW05-18)

### Nigerian oil crisis (2004-2006)

After launching a mission to wipe out NDPVF, approved by [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Nigeria) [Olusegun Obasanjo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olusegun_Obasanjo) in early September 2004, [Mujahid Dokubo-Asari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mujahid_Dokubo-Asari) declared "all-out war" with the Nigerian state as well as the [oil corporations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_industry) and threatened to disrupt oil production activities through attacks on [wells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_well) and pipelines.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-19) This quickly caused a major crisis the following day on September 26, as [Shell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Dutch_Shell) evacuated 235 non-essential personnel from two oil fields, cutting oil production by 30,000 barrels per day (4,800 m3/d).

Nigeria was the world's tenth [largest oil exporter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_oil_exports). The abundant oil reserves resulted in widespread exploitation. The Niger Delta region encompasses about 8% of Nigeria’s landmass and is the largest wetlands region on the African continent. Oil drilling in the region began in the 1950s. In the beginning, the oil drilling in the region really stimulated Nigeria’s economy and was extremely beneficial to the country. Numerous multinational corporations established oil operations in the region and made a conscious effort to not violate any environmental or human rights regulations. Shell began drilling in the Niger Delta region in 1956. Over time, Shell’s presence in Nigeria has been very detrimental.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-20) These negative consequences are the result of thousands of oil spills, human rights violations, environmental destruction, and corruption. Over the past half century, Nigeria has become a plutocracy; political power is concentrated solely in the hands of the socioeconomic elite. Shell’s strong presence has played a major role in the absence of democracy in Nigeria. According to the documentary *Poison Fire*,[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-21) one and a half million tons of oil have been discharged into the Delta's farms, forests, and rivers since oil drilling began in 1956. This is equivalent to 50 [Exxon Valdez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exxon_Valdez) disasters. Hundreds of kilometers of [rain forest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rain_forest) have been destroyed by the oil spills. When petroleum is discharged into the soil, the soil becomes acidic, which disrupts [photosynthesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photosynthesis) and kills trees because their roots are not able to get oxygen. Moreover, the fish population has also been negatively affected by oil drilling. The region is home to over 250 different fish species, and 20 of these species are found nowhere else in the world.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-22) If oil spills continue at this rate entire species will become extinct and the entire Nigerian fishing industry will be decimated.

#### Royal Dutch Shell controversy

[Platform London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platform_%28art_group%29), Friends of the Earth Netherlands ([Milieudefensie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milieudefensie)) and [Amnesty International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amnesty_International) have launched international campaigns aimed at having Shell clean the oil spills in the Delta. The organisations are concerned about the economic and health consequences for the people in the region. Shell's inability to respond effectively has led Friends of the Earth Netherlands and Amnesty International to believe it actively contributes to the human rights violations in the region. Because of the large area affected, the environmental consequences are vast.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-23)

### Piracy and kidnapping (2006–2014)

Main article: [Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piracy_in_the_Gulf_of_Guinea)

Starting in October 2012 Nigeria experienced a large spike in piracy off its coast. By early 2013 Nigeria became the second most-pirated nation in [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa), after [Somalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia). The [Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Emancipation_of_the_Niger_Delta) is thought to be behind most of the attacks.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-24) Since October 2012 MEND has hijacked 12 ships, kidnapped 33 sailors, and killed 4 oil workers. Since this started the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) has sent soldiers to train Nigerian soldiers in maritime tactics against pirates. Since this 33 pirates have been captured. Although the [Nigerian Navy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Navy) now has learned new tactics to use against pirates, attacks still occur on an almost regular basis.

Main article: [Foreign hostages in Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_hostages_in_Nigeria)

Since 2006, militant groups in [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria)'s [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta), especially the [Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Emancipation_of_the_Niger_Delta) (MEND), have resorted to taking foreign employees of [oil companies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_companies) [hostage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hostage). More than 200 foreigners have been kidnapped since 2006, though most were released unharmed.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-25)

### Military crackdown (2008–2009)

In August 2008, the Nigerian government launched a massive military crackdown on militants. They patrolled waters and hunted for militants, searched all civilian boats for weapons, and raided numerous militant hideouts.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-26)

On May 15, 2009, a military operation undertaken by a Joint Task Force (JTF) began against MEND militants operating in the Niger Delta region.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-27) It came in response to the kidnapping of Nigerian soldiers and foreign sailors in the Delta region.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-28) Thousands of Nigerians have fled their villages and hundreds of people may be dead because of the offensive.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-29)

### Presidential amnesty program (2009-2016)

Pipeline attacks had become common during the insurgency in the Niger Delta, but ended after the government on June 26, 2009 announced that it would grant amnesty and an unconditional pardon to militants in the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta) which would last for 60 days beginning on 6 August, ending 4 October 2009. Former Nigerian President [Umaru Musa Yar'Adua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umaru_Musa_Yar%27Adua) signed the amnesty after consultation with the National Council Of State. During the 60-day period, armed youths were required to surrender their weapons to the government in return for training and rehabilitation by the government.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-30) The program has been continued into the present.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-31)[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-32) Militants led their groups to surrender weapons such as rocket-propelled grenades, guns, explosives, and ammunition. Even gunboats have been surrendered to the government. Over 30,000 purported members signed up between October 2009 and May 2011 in exchange for monthly payments and in some cases lucrative contracts for guarding the pipelines. Though the programme has been extended through this year, the new government of [Muhammadu Buhari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammadu_Buhari) sees it as a potentially enabling corruption and so feels that cannot be continued indefinitely.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-forcados-33) The amnesty office has worked to reintegrate the fighters into society, primarily by placing and sponsoring them in vocational and higher education courses in Nigeria and abroad.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-CG2016-34)

The Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP) program proved to be a success, with violence and kidnappings decreasing sharply. Petroleum production and exports have increased from about 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) in mid-2009 to between 2.2 and 2.4 million bpd since 2011.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-CG2016-34) However, the program is costly and chronic poverty and catastrophic oil pollution that which fueled the earlier rebellion, remain largely unaddressed. With Nigerian President [Goodluck Jonathan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goodluck_Jonathan)’s defeat in the [March 2015 elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_general_election%2C_2015), the amnesty program seems likely to end in December 2015 and with patronage to former militant leaders terminated, local discontent is deepening.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-CG2016-34)

### 2016-present conflict

Main article: [2016 Niger Delta conflict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict)

A February 2016 explosion in a pipeline operated by Shell Petroleum Development Corporation, a Royal Dutch [Shell subsidiary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell_Nigeria) to the Shell Forcados export terminal halted both production and imports. Speculation centered on militants using divers. [Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emmanuel_Ibe_Kachikwu), the minister of state for petroleum and the head of Nigeria’s oil company[*[who?](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AManual_of_Style/Words_to_watch%22%20%5Cl%20%22Unsupported_attributions%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3AManual%20of%20Style/Words%20to%20watch)*], said Nigerian production was down 300,000 barrels a day as a result.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-forcados-33) On May 11 Shell closed its [Bonny](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonny%2C_Nigeria) oil facility. Three soldiers guarding the installation were killed in an attack, said Col. Isa Ado of the Joint Military Force.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-Seattle-35) A bomb had closed down Chevron's [Escravos GTL](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escravos_GTL) facility a week earlier.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-Seattle-35) On May 19 [ExxonMobil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ExxonMobil)'s [Qua Iboe](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Qua_Iboe&action=edit&redlink=1) shut down and evacuated its workers due to militant threats.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-36)

The [Niger Delta Avengers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Avengers) (NDA), a [militant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insurgent) group in the [Niger Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta), publicly announced its existence in March 2016.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-BBCMay16-37) The NDA have attacked oil-producing facilities in the delta, causing the shutdown of oil terminals and a fall in Nigeria's oil production to its lowest level in twenty years.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-BBCMay16-37) The attacks caused Nigeria to fall behind Angola as Africa's largest [oil producer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_oil_production).[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-BIMay16-38) The reduced oil output has hampered the Nigerian economy and destroyed its budget,[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-39) since Nigeria depends on the oil industry for nearly all[*[clarification needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3APlease_clarify%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3APlease%20clarify)*] its government revenue.[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-40)

In late August 2016, NDA declared a ceasefire and agreed to negotiate with the Nigerian government.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-41)[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-42) After declaration of ceasefire by Niger Delta Avengers, Reformed Egbesu Fraternities comprising the three militants groups Egbesu Boys of the Niger Delta, Egbesu Red Water Lions and Egbesu Mightier Fraternity; announced a 60-day ceasefire.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-43)

On 9 August 2016, [Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Greenland_Justice_Mandate) declared its existence and threatened to destroy refineries in [Port Harcourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Harcourt) and [Warri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warri) within 48 hours, as well as a gas plant in [Otu Jeremi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otu_Jeremi) within a few days.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-44) The next day, the group reportedly blew up a major oil pipeline operated by the [Nigerian National Petroleum Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_National_Petroleum_Company) (NNPC) in [Isoko](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isoko_region).[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-45) On 12 August, the group warned that it will blow up additional oil installations in the future.[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-46)

* On 19 August, the group reportedly blew up two pipelines belonging to NPDC in the [Delta State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_State).[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-47)
* On 30 August, the group blew up the Ogor-Oteri oil pipeline.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-48) On 4 September, the group claimed it had rigged all marked oil and gas facilities with explosives and warned residents living near them to evacuate[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-49)

The NDA has been described as "the nation's tormentor-in-chief."[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-50)[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_in_the_Niger_Delta#cite_note-51)

## Conflict

### February - August 2016

A spate of bombings on oil installations started in February 2016.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-Seattle-12)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-13) The [Niger Delta Avengers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niger_Delta_Avengers) (NDA) then publicly announced its existence in March 2016.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-BBCMay16-14) The NDA's declared aims are to create a sovereign state and they have threatened to disrupt Nigeria's economy to achieve their goals. The group has also criticised [President of Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Nigeria) [Muhammadu Buhari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammadu_Buhari) for never visiting the region as well as for his detention of the [Indigenous People of Biafra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_People_of_Biafra) (IPOB) leader [Nnamdi Kanu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nnamdi_Kanu),[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-BBCMay16-14) who said he was not affiliated with either MEND or the NDA.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-15) A militant group calling itself Red Egbesu Water Lions later emerged in May 2016 and demanded his release, as well as that of former [National Security Advisor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Advisor_%28Nigeria%29) [Sambo Dasuki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sambo_Dasuki). It also demanded that the [Economic and Financial Crimes Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_and_Financial_Crimes_Commission) de-freeze the bank accounts of Government Ekpemupolo, as well as unconditional compensation to the victims of the [Bonga oil spill](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bonga_oil_spill&action=edit&redlink=1) and Chevron gas explosion. It further threatened to shut down all oil exploration activities in the region of its demands were not met.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-16) Another group calling itself Egbesu Mightier Fraternity emerged in the same month, demanding the release of Kanu and Dasuki in 14 days and that the Nigerian military leave the Gbaramatu Kingdom and stop harassing Ekpemupolo. It also threatened to blow up all offshore facilities in the region if the government did not meet its demands.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-17)

A group calling itself Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force emerged in early June 2016 and vowed to launch six missiles in the Niger Delta on 7 June. It further warned that it will bring down any helicopter deployed in the area and that it might shut down the Nigerian satellite orbit within a week so that telecommunications within the country would be cut off. It also demanded that the Nigerian military leave the [Ijaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijaw_people) communities.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-18) On 7 June, it renewed its threat claiming that it was going to target national buildings and infrastructure of oil companies in [Lagos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagos), [Abuja](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abuja) and [Kaduna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaduna), as well as all military formations in Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna and [Benue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benue_State).[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-19)

A dispute then developed between the militant factions as one of the groups calling itself Reformed Egbesu Boys of the Niger Delta unilaterally announced a ceasefire on 13 June. Although the group agreed with other groups over cessation of hostilities, it was opposed to demands regarding Kanu and Dasuki.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-20)

A group calling itself the Niger Delta Red Squad declared its existence in late June 2016. The group claimed that it had blown up two pipelines belonging to Shell in the Asa/Awarra axis and also threatened to attack major oil pipelines in Oguta Council area, as well as shutdown all oil wells in [Imo State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imo_State).[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-21) A few days later, another group calling itself Adaka Boro Avengers emerged, threatening to destroy oil producing facilities and warned all oil companies to leave the Niger Delta within a week[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-22) In July, the group announced that it would declare an independent state on 1 August and warned all northern Nigerians to leave the region.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-23) It however abandoned its bid on the same day it was supposed to declare an independent state.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-24)

A group calling itself Asawana Deadly Force of Niger Delta also emerged in late June 2016 and demanded independence for the region within a few days while threatening to shut down oil production in the region if it failed to achieve its goal.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-25)

On 8 July, a new group called Niger Delta Revolutionary Crusaders (NDRC) bombed the Brass Creek Manifold in [Bayelsa State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayelsa_State).[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-26) On 13 July, the group then declared a two-week ceasefire.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-27) On 1 August, the group released a statement in which it accused northern Nigerians of plotting to Islamisise the region in order to take control of its oil.[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-28) After the new [Boko Haram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram) leader [Abu Musab al-Barnawi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Musab_al-Barnawi) threatened to increase attacks on Christians and destroy churches, the NDRC, on 6 August, threatened to kill Muslims and destroy mosques if Boko Haram carried out its threats.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-29)

On 9 August, Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate declared its existence and threatened to destroy refineries in [Port Harcourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Harcourt) and [Warri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warri) within 48 hours, as well as a gas plant in [Otu Jeremi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otu_Jeremi) within a few days.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-30) The next day, the group reportedly blew up a major oil pipeline operated by the [Nigerian Petroleum Development Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nigerian_Petroleum_Development_Company&action=edit&redlink=1) (NPDC) in [Isoko](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isoko_region)[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-31) On 12 August, the group warned that it would blow up more oil installations in the future.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-32) On 19 August, the group was reported to have blown up two pipelines belonging to NPDC in [Delta State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_State).[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-33)

#### Ceasefire

In late August 2016, the NDA declared a unilateral ceasefire and agreed to negotiations with the Nigerian government.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-34)[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-35) After the declaration of a ceasefire by the Niger Delta Avengers, the Reformed Egbesu Fraternities comprising the three militants groups Egbesu Boys of the Niger Delta, Egbesu Red Water Lions and Egbesu Mightier Fraternity also announced a 60-day ceasefire.[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-36)

### Operation Crocodile Smile (August 2016-September 2016)

Nigeria's Army launched "Operation Crocodile Smile" in late August to get rid of all criminal activities in Niger Delta. On 26 September, five militants were killed in clashes while 23 were arrested.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-37) On 30 August, NDGJM blew up the Ogor-Oteri oil pipeline in the Delta state and declared the launch of "Operation Crocodile Tears" in response to the military's operation.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-38) On 1 September, the Nigerian Army captured Gabriel Ogbudje, a supposed ex-militant who they claimed had now become leader of a new militant group Otugas Fire Force.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-39) 14 oil workers and their driver on their way to [Port Harcourt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Harcourt) were kidnapped by unknown gunmen on 2 September after the vehicle transporting them was hijacked on Omoku-Elele road.[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-40)

On 4 September, NDGJM claimed it had rigged all the marked oil and gas facilities with explosives and warned residents living nearby to evacuate.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-41) [Chief of Army Staff](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_of_Army_Staff_%28Nigeria%29) [Tukur Yusuf Buratai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tukur_Yusuf_Buratai) officially launched the opeartion on 5 September.[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-42) Niger Delta Avengers mocked the operation on 8 September claiming 20 soldiers were killed in it and also claimed that the Nigerian military was harassing citizens of Niger Delta.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-43) The operation concluded on 11 September.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-44) During the operation, 23 militants were killed while 38 militant camps, 91 illegal refineries and bunkering sites were destroyed during the operation.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-45)

### Continued insurgency (September 2016-present)

The oil workers kidnapped in early September were released by 18 September after the police engaged in a shootout with the kidnappers.[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-46) On 13 September, NDGJM stated they had blown up the Afiesere-Iwhrenene pipeline belonging to NPDC in [Ughelli North](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ughelli_North).[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-dailypost1-47) On 19 September, the group stated they had blown up a crude oil pipeline belonging to NPDC near Ekuigbo in Ughelli North.[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-dailypost1-47) On 20 September, Abraham Suru, one of the suspected leaders of NDA was arrested.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-48)

On 24 September, Niger Delta Avengers claimed they had blown up the [Bonny](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonny%2C_Rivers) pipeline.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-49) On 27 September, a militant group calling itself Niger Delta Volunteers (NDV) warned the government that it will cripple all its infrastructure that generated income, describing the bombing by Avengers on Bonny pipeline as a "child's play". It also warned oil companies to evacuate their staff and suspend their operations, adding that their next strike will be deadly.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-50) Meanwhile, Niger Delta Justice Defence Group (NDJDG) blew up an oil pipeline in [Gokana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gokana%2C_Rivers).[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-51) On 28 September, NDJDG warned Buhari that they will destroy any national asset he tries to sell.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-52) Meanwhile, a militant was killed in clashes between NDA and [Imo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imo_State) Security Network in [Owerri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Owerri).[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-53) On 29 September, NDGJM claimed it had blown up the Unenurhie-[Evwreni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evwreni) pipeline belonging to the NPDC.[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-54)

On 9 November, Niger Delta Avengers said it was behind an attack on Shell's [Forçados](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For%C3%A7ados) crude pipeline a day earlier.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Niger_Delta_conflict#cite_note-55)

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