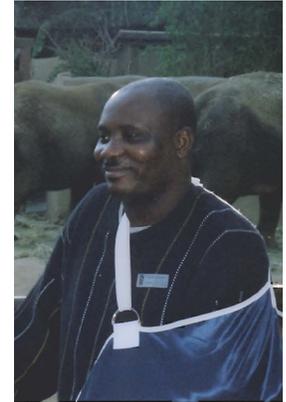


# First They Poisoned Our Land When We Protested, They Shot Us

The *Bowoto v. Chevron* case arises from simple facts: On May 28, 1998, Chevron participated in the murder, shooting and subsequent torture of Nigerian villagers engaging in environmental protest against the oil giant. Chevron paid the Nigerian police and soldiers who conducted the attack, ferried them to the attack zone and “closely supervised” them during the attack. The case seeks justice for the villagers injured and killed in the attacks.



Arolika Irowarinun  
killed



Larry Bowoto  
shot multiple times

## The Attack: What Happened on May 28, 1998

In late May, 1998, Nigerian villagers from the Ilaje tribe went to Chevron’s offshore Parabe Platform to protest the destruction of their environment and traditional fishing and farming activities by Chevron’s oil activities. These include the destruction of the freshwater supply, erosion and pollution of the land. The impact on the communities has been devastating. For instance, some villagers must travel many kilometers to find potable water.

The protestors sought compensation including environmental reparations, jobs, medical assistance and scholarships. Their elders and Chevron Nigeria officials negotiated during the protest. Chevron Nigeria officials reported to the U.S. Embassy that “the villagers were unarmed and the situation has remained calm since their arrival.”

On the afternoon of May 27, 1998, after the protestors had already agreed to leave the next morning, Chevron summoned the military and police and directed them to go to Parabe. Very early on the morning of May 28, 1998, when the protestors were just waking up, Chevron Nigeria and its lead security officer flew members of the Nigerian Forces to Parabe in Chevron-Nigeria-leased helicopters. Chevron had told the workers on the platform to hide. The Nigerian police and soldiers opened fire on the unarmed civilians. Chevron Nigeria’s security officer directed the soldiers’ activities using a bullhorn. The police and soldiers shot and killed two people, one of whom is Arolika Irowarinun, whose family is among those bringing this lawsuit. The other protester who was killed was shot in the back. The security forces shot and injured at least two more, including Larry Bowoto, who was shot multiple times. None of the individuals who were shot or injured posed any threat.

After the attack a number of protestors were locked in a small container on the Chevron platform and held without food or water, while Chevron Nigeria officials looked on. They were subsequent-

ly taken in Chevron boats to jails onshore where they were imprisoned, tortured, and beaten by the police and military. One of the protestors, Bola Oyinbo, was hung from a ceiling fan and repeatedly beaten to the point where he could not stand and blood was coming from his mouth. Another described how, immediately after the shootings, the security forces beat him with a gun and a horse whip, until he fell down and bled through his nose. The protestors were kept in inhumane jail conditions for weeks. During their imprisonment, the beatings and torture continued.

### **The Protestors**

The Ilaje are a small tribe of Nigerians, many of whom live in relatively remote swamplands and river areas in Nigeria's Ondo State in the southwest Niger River delta region. Many of these communities can only be accessed from the air or by water. Ilajeland, as it is called, has been severely disrupted by the presence of Chevron Nigeria in the region. Chevron's activities have depleted traditional food supplies, destroyed the water supply, and put villages under water due to erosion. The destruction of the natural environment has meant great hardship and unemployment for many Ilaje people, as well as the loss of traditional food supplies.

### **Attempts at Negotiation**

In 1998, an Ilaje community organization made up of representatives from nearly all of the 42 affected communities sent a series of letters to Chevron Nigeria detailing the problems facing the Ilaje communities, including environmental and economic degradation. Chevron failed to respond. The local government authorities even attempted to set up a meeting between the villagers and Chevron, but Chevron failed to attend.

Finally, on May 25, 1998, over 100 unarmed and peaceful Ilaje protestors went to a Chevron offshore Parabe oil platform and barge. Nigerian Navy and mobile police stationed at the platform, who were armed, allowed the protestors aboard. Armed Nigerian forces remained on the barge and in control at all times. The protestors told Chevron Nigeria to negotiate with their elders on shore, and the company representatives eventually did meet with them. At the end of that time, the elders believed that Chevron had begun to address their concerns and sent messengers out to the protestors on the platform instructing them to come home the next morning, which the protestors told Chevron they would be doing. The protestors were preparing to leave when the attack occurred at daybreak on May 28, 1998.

### **Chevron-Paid Security Forces Continue to Use Violence Against Nigerian Villagers**

Long after this incident, Chevron has continued to use the Nigerian police and military to attack civilians protesting its activities. The United Nations Special Rapporteur and Amnesty International reported that in 2005 Chevron security forces attacked civilians protesting Chevron's activities. One person was shot and killed and at least 30 others were seriously injured.

— Report of United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Commission on Human Rights, Jan. 7, 2006; Amnesty International, Nigeria, Ten Years On: Injustice and Violence Haunt the Oil Delta, Nov. 3, 2005.