Nigerian oil workers threaten to strike if government doesn't stem theft

By Camillus Eboh

9 Sep 2022

Members of a Nigerian oil workers' union are threatening to go on strike if the government does not do more to stem widespread oil theft they say is putting their safety at risk and has cut exports by hundreds of thousands of barrels.

Source: Reuters/Akintunde Akinleye

Workers with the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) held rallies across the country on Thursday to demand that authorities stop "cartels" from tapping pipelines.

"The lives of our members are even at risk," PENGASSAN president Festus Osifo said, adding that the thieves were so organised that they call the union's members and threaten them when pipelines or production are shut.

"If after this rally, there is no traceable progress, as an association, we may be forced to withdraw our workforce from the operating companies," he said in recorded remarks that Reuters confirmed with him.

Nigeria to send more LNG to Europe by next winter
8 Sep 2022

Theft affecting country's revenues 'enormously'

Nigerian authorities have said that thieves who take crude from the nation's network of pipelines cost the country $1bn in the first quarter alone.

Some fields are now shut due to the theft, and oil company Shell said a key pipeline had not processed oil since June for that reason.

Osifo said that the methods of tapping the pipelines were too sophisticated for common criminals, and demanded that security services tackle collusion within their ranks.

A spokesman for state oil company NNPC did not immediately respond to a request for comment, nor spokesmen for Nigeria's navy and army.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has previously called on security agencies to tackle theft, which he said was affecting the country's revenues "enormously".

NNPC last month hired several companies, including those owned by ex-militants, to protect the pipelines.