

Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing a Resurgence of Cult and Gang Violence in Bayelsa State

March 27 - April 02, 2022

Description

This weekly update highlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult and gang related killings in Bayelsa State. According to data (see map below), more than 200 cult and gang related fatalities were reported in Bayelsa State between January 2018 and December 2021. Recent incidents indicate a resurgence of cult and gang related clashes and killings in the State. In February 2022, for instance, five persons were reportedly killed and several others injured during a clash between rival cult gangs in Amarata community, Yenagoa LGA. The incident was allegedly triggered by the killing a cultists who doubles as a drug peddler by members of a rival cult gang. In March, a male resident was reportedly killed during renewed clashes over a supremacy battle between members of the Bobos, Greenlanders and Icelanders cult gangs in Sagbama community, the headquarters of Sagbama LGA. More recently, on March 27, 2022, a suspected member of the Bobos cult gang was reportedly killed and set ablaze by members of a rival cult group during a gun battle at a popular market in Swali community, Yenagoa LGA.

Why it Matters

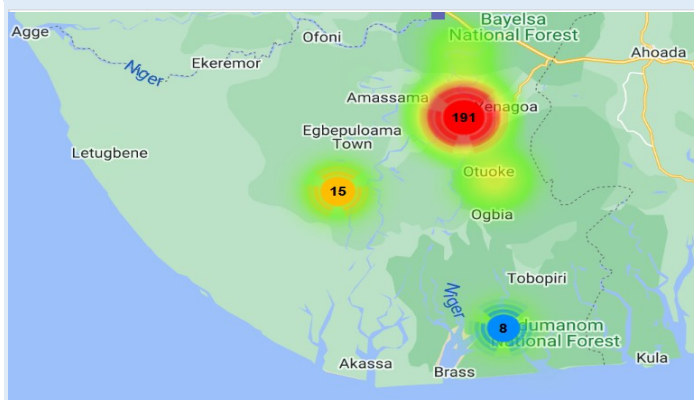
A resurgence of cult and gang related killings could trigger a sequence of armed clashes and reprisal attacks in the State. The situation could degenerate into extended battles for supremacy among the numerous cult gangs. The emerging trend of targeted attacks by cult gangs could also take on various communal, political and criminal dimensions especially in the lead up to the 2023 general elections, considering the socio-economic and political underpinnings of cult gangs.

Social: A resurgence of cult and gang violence and killings could intensify arms proliferation and criminality including piracy, robbery, kidnapping and drug abuse, and consequently intensify insecurity in the State. A rise in cult clashes could embolden cult gangs to enlist more youths to defend their territory. This could provide avenues for cult gangs to permeate more communities and cause insecurity.

Economic: Recurrent cult violence and associated criminal activities could have devastating impact on the economy of the State. Markets could be looted and shop owners robbed or killed during clashes between cult gangs. Cult violence could also prevent residents from patronizing businesses in areas dominated by cult gangs. This could cause loss of funds due to robbery, closure or relocation of businesses, and consequently loss of economic opportunities and livelihoods.

Political: Rising incidents of cult clashes could have adverse impact on politics and governance in the state. Recurrent cult violence could drive up government spending on public security. Also, due to the political underpinnings of cult violence, cult gangs could evolve into politically connected militias which could cause political instability.

Fatalities Heat Map of Cult and Gang Related Violence in Bayelsa State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported cult and gang related fatalities in Bayelsa State from January 2018 - December 2021. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

There is a resurgence of cult and gang related violence in Bayelsa State, driven mainly by battles for supremacy and territorial control among cult gangs. The situation could worsen if preventive actions are not taken. Stakeholders should work with the State government and security agencies to intensify ongoing anti-cultism efforts, and coordinate with media outlets to carry out peace education to encourage renouncement of membership, and discourage the formation, patronage and recruitment of individuals into cult gangs.

Contact Us

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Report Incidents: IPDU Early Warning System

Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system: Text report to **080 9936 2222**

Incident Details: Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and brief incident description.



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