

Niger Delta Weekly: Spotlighting a Resurgence of Cult and Gang Related Killings in Rivers State

August 29-September 04, 2021

Description

This weekly update spotlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult and gang related killings in Rivers State. According to data (see map below), over 500 cult and gang related fatalities were reported in Rivers State between January 2018 and June 2021. Recent data shows a resurgence of cult and gang related killings in the State, after a few months of relative decline in reported incidents. In June 2021, for instance, four persons including a local vigilante leader were reportedly killed during clashes between rival cult gangs in Ebubu and Nchia communities, Eleme LGA. In July, the leader of a vigilante group was reportedly killed and decapitated by cultists in Umudioga town, Emohua LGA. In August, three residents including a chief were reportedly killed during a clash over a supremacy battle between Iceland and Greenlander cult gangs in Luebe town, Khana LGA. Separately, in August, six residents were reportedly killed by cultists in Gwara and Kono-Boue community, Khana LGA. Recently, on August 29, 2021, three persons including a woman were reportedly killed by cultists in Ka-Bori community, Khana LGA.

Why it Matters

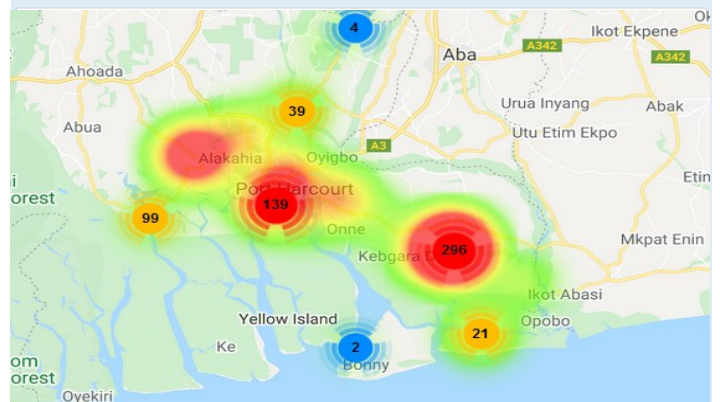
The current spate of cult and gang related violence and killings could trigger a sequence of armed clashes and reprisal attacks in the State. The situation could degenerate into extended battles for supremacy among the numerous cult gangs in the State. The emerging trend of targeted attacks by cult gangs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

Social: The resurgence of cult and gang violence and killings could intensify arms proliferation and criminality including piracy, kidnapping, robbery and sexual violence, and therefore intensify insecurity in the State. A rise in cult clashes could embolden cult gangs to enlist additional members to defend their territory. Attacks on communities by cultists could also intensify communal tensions and thus allow cult gangs to permeate more communities and cause instability.

Economic: Growing incidents of cult related violence and killings can create an unstable and insecure environment that is detrimental to economic development. Rival cult clashes and related violence can disrupt the local economy and cause loss of revenue, livelihoods and business opportunities. Properties could be destroyed, shops looted and residents robbed, killed or displaced during rival cult clashes.

Political: A rise in cult violence could destabilize politics and governance in the State, especially considering that cult clashes and political violence are mutually reinforcing - cult gangs are often funded and used by politicians to attack opponents and influence election results.

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



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

Prognosis

Rivers State is currently confronted by a resurgence of cult and gang related killings, driven mainly by battles for supremacy among rival cult gangs. Peace and security actors should work with the State government to address the triggers and underlying drivers of the current wave of violence. Law enforcement agencies should also carry out a mop-up exercise to rid the state of illegal arms, and collaborate with local residents for early warning and intelligence gathering to support 'hot spot policing' in affected communities.

Contact Us

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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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