

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

November 06-12, 2022b

Description

This weekly update highlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult and gang related killings in Rivers State. According to data (see map below), more than 400 cult and gang related fatalities were reported in Rivers State between January 2019 and September 2022. Recent incidents indicate a resurgence of cult and gang related clashes and killings in the State. In October 2022, for instance, some cultists reportedly killed two members of a local vigilante in Ompova Ibaa community in Emohua LGA. Separately, in October, hoodlums suspected to be members of a cult gang reportedly attacked several residents with machetes and robbed many passers-by at Mile 2 in Diobu community, Port Harcourt LGA. In November, commercial activities were reportedly disrupted following violent clashes between two rival cult gangs in Port Harcourt, the state capital. More recently, on November 05, 2022, five persons were reportedly killed during a series of clashes over a battle for supremacy and territorial control between the Greenlander and Icelander cult gangs at a housing estate in Ahoada town, Ahoada East LGA.

Why it Matters

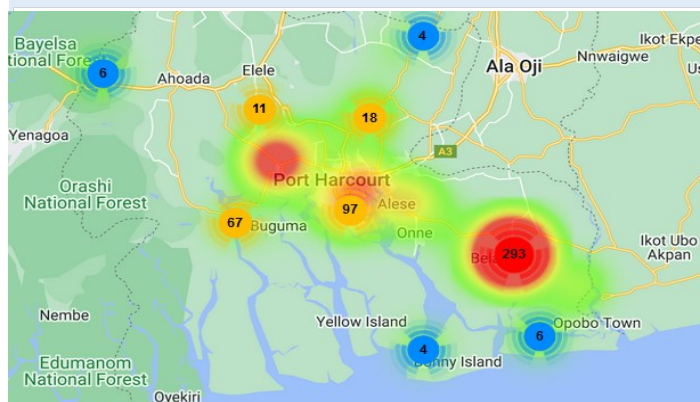
A resurgence of cult and gang related clashes and killings could spark off a series of reprisal violence in the State. This could degenerate into extended battles for supremacy among the numerous cult gangs. The situation could assume various communal, criminal, and political dimensions in the lead up to the 2023 general elections, especially considering the social and political underpinnings of cult gangs.

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

Economic: A rise in 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 livelihoods and economic opportunities.

Political: A resurgence of cult and gang related 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 desperate politicians to attack opponents and to influence election results. Cult gangs could also evolve into politically connected militias that could cause political instability.

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 2019 - September 2022. 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 the State after a period of relative decline. The situation could worsen as rival cult gangs compete for supremacy and territorial control ahead of the upcoming general elections. Stakeholders should work with the relevant 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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