

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

December 11-17, 2022

Description

This weekly update spotlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult and gang related clashes and killings in Akwa Ibom State. According to data (see map below), over 150 cult and gang related fatalities were reported in Akwa Ibom State between January 2018 and October 2022. Recent data shows a resurgence of cult and gang related clashes and killings in the State. In March 2022, for instance, a male student was reportedly stabbed to death by a cultist during a disagreement at a secondary school in Aka Offot community, Uyo LGA. In April, a clash between rival cult gangs allegedly sparked off violence between Yoruba residents and indigenes of Ibeno community in Ibeno LGA. Five persons were reportedly killed and several properties destroyed during the inter-ethnic conflict. More recently, on December 13, 2022, five persons were reportedly killed and many others injured during a clash between two rival cult gangs at a sport betting center along Ikot Ekpena Road near Ibom Plaza in Uyo, the state capital. The clash reportedly spread to other locations in the area and caused anxiety among residents.

Why it Matters

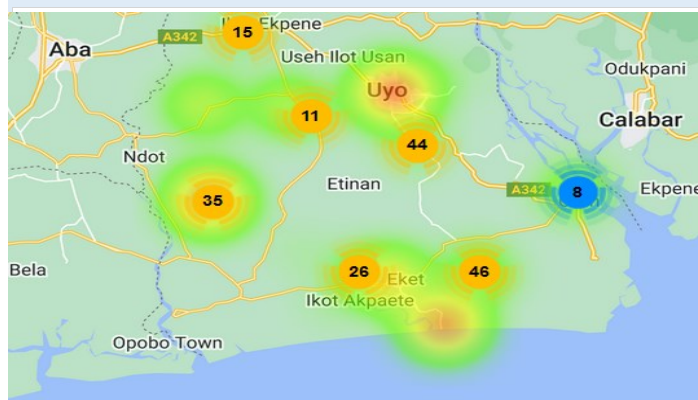
A resurgence of cult and gang related killings could trigger a sequence of armed clashes and reprisal attacks in the State. The situation could degenerate into extended battles for supremacy and territorial control among the numerous cult gangs. The emerging trend of violence could also take on various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

Social: A resurgence of cult and gang violence could increase arms proliferation and organized criminality including piracy, robbery and kidnapping, and consequently intensify 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 permeate more communities and thus cause communal instability.

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: Growing incidents of cult clashes could have adverse impact on politics and governance in the state. Recurrent cult clashes 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 Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows geographical concentration of reported cult and related fatalities in Akwa Ibom State from January 2018—October 2022. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

The recent resurgence of cult and gang related killings could trigger a sequence of reprisal attacks that could converge with organized criminality as well as communal and political tensions to intensify insecurity in the State. Stakeholders should work with the State government and security agencies to intensify ongoing anti-cultism efforts, and coordinate with media outfits for 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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