

# Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing Election-related Violence in Rivers State

January 29 - February 04, 2023

## Description

This weekly update highlights political violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on election-related violence in Rivers State. Historically, elections in Rivers State are high stake affairs often characterized by lethal violence. According to data (see map below), over 100 incidents of political and election-related violence were reported in Rivers State between January 2019 and December 2022, including more than 40 fatalities. In the lead-up to the 2023 general elections, political tension has intensified with several reported incidents of lethal violence in the State. In January 2023, for instance, two explosions reportedly occurred and injured three residents at the venue of a political rally in Rumuwoji community, Port Harcourt LGA. Separately, in January, political thugs reportedly attacked the governorship candidate of a political party and his campaign team in Akinima Town, Ahoada West LGA. More recently, on January 31, 2023, political thugs reportedly attacked the campaign team of the governorship candidate of a political party, shot sporadically, and abducted the party's campaign director in Opobo Town, Opobo/Nkoro LGA.

## Why it Matters

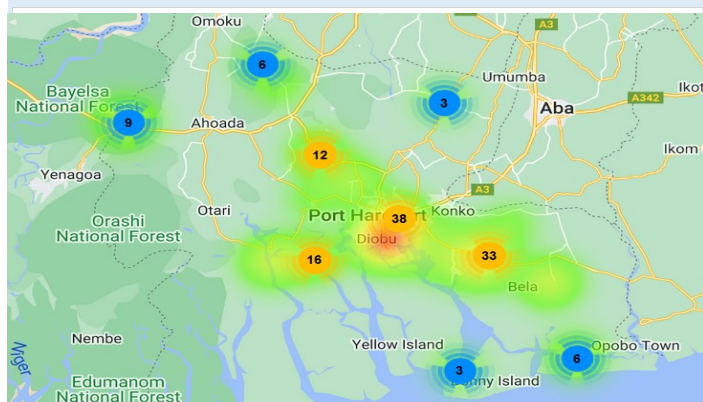
The level of violence that characterizes the ongoing election campaigns underscores an urgent need for measures to mitigate the risk of violence in the State ahead of the 2023 general elections. If not mitigated, the situation could intensify and cause widespread politically motivated killings and clashes between cult gangs in the State. This could negatively impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the State with significant socio-economic and political consequences.

**Social:** Growing political tensions and election-related violence could negatively impact the dynamics of conflict in the State. The situation could intensify arms proliferation, violent criminality, and clashes between rival cult gangs. Political thugs could metamorphose into criminal gangs and ethnic militias that could perpetrate violence after the election, and thus endanger public security. This could also intensify communal tensions and deepen social polarization and disorder.

**Economic:** Rising political violence could create a climate of insecurity that could negatively affect the local economy. It could cause fear and uncertainties which could disrupt business activities, weaken investors' confidence, and cause loss of economic opportunities and revenue. This could also provide opportunities for hoodlums to vandalize and loot properties, and undermine the wellbeing of residents.

**Political:** Election-related violence could have lasting consequences for political attitudes, behavior and participation in the political process. It could cause voters apathy and disenfranchisement which could undermine the electoral process. This could bring about disputed election results which could cause protests and political instability.

## Incidents Heat Map of Political & Election-related Violence in Rivers State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported incidents of political and election related violence in Rivers State from January 2019 - December 2022. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)

## Prognosis

The current political situation in Rivers State is highly charged with the potential to escalate in ways that could intensify lethal violence before and during the 2023 general elections and beyond. Stakeholders should continue to advocate for non-violent elections through popular media outfits and forums. Stakeholders should also create relevant infrastructure for peace messaging, grassroots peace advocacy, and facilitation of peace pacts between key actors to defuse tensions and mitigate political violence in the State.

## 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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