

Niger Delta Weekly: Spotlighting Vigilante Violence and Killings in the Niger Delta

May 14-20, 2023

Description

This special edition of the weekly update spotlights the growing trend of vigilante violence and killings in the Niger Delta. There has been a proliferation of vigilantes at the local, state and regional levels as a result of rising criminality and insecurity, perceived policing vacuum, and public distrust in the judicial and penal system in Nigeria. Violence and extrajudicial killing by vigilantes is increasingly becoming prevalent in the Niger Delta. According to data (see map below), vigilante violence caused over 350 fatalities in the region between January 2021 and March 2023. In February 2023, for instance, a 47-year-old taxi driver was reportedly killed by a vigilante at 2nd Junction in Oredo LGA, Edo State. In March, a 27-year-old man was reportedly killed by a vigilante over a missing phone in Umuahia, the Abia State capital. In April, a 36-year-old commercial motorcyclist was allegedly killed by a vigilante at Alagbaka in Akure, the Ondo State capital. Recently, on May 03, 2023, a 23-year-old man was reportedly killed during a clash between members of two rival vigilante groups at Eku community in Ethiope East LGA, Delta State.

Why it Matters

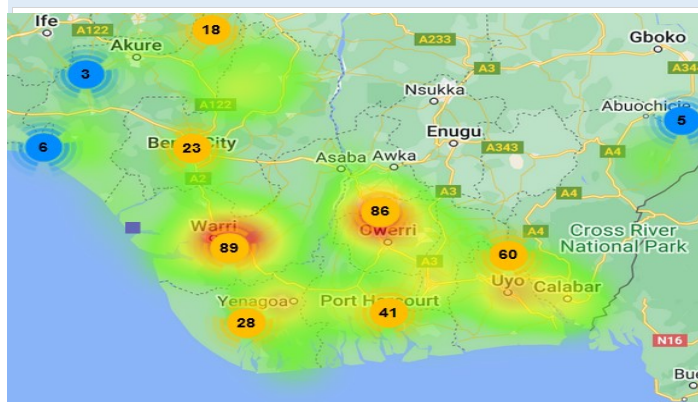
The proliferation of vigilante groups and the growing prevalence of vigilante violence and killings could negatively impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the Niger Delta. If not mitigated the situation could intensify in ways that could entrench a culture of collective violence that could pose serious threats to the rule of law and human security in the region. This could cause far-reaching socio-economic and political repercussions at the local, state and regional levels.

Social: Unregulated proliferation of vigilante groups could embolden residents to resort to vigilante justice and mob lynching as a way of responding to criminality and insecurity. This could promote arms proliferation, spontaneous victimization, and human rights violations which could bring about widespread insecurity and social disorder. This could undermine communal peace and stability as vigilantes could evolve into ethnic militias and criminal organizations over time.

Economic: The prevalence of vigilante violence could create a climate of fear and uncertainty that is detrimental to economic development. Vigilante violence could cause unrest which could result in arson and looting which could disrupt businesses and cause loss of livelihoods. Vigilantes could also resort to extortion as a means of raising funds. This could undermine the overall economic wellbeing of residents.

Political: Unregulated vigilantes could undermine the criminal justice system. It could create a domino effect whereby vigilante justice and mob lynching become the new normal in law enforcement and the criminal justice. This could cause wide-ranging human rights, political, administrative, and security challenges for government in the region.

Fatalities Heat Map of Vigilante Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria



Heat Map shows geographical concentration of fatalities caused by vigilante violence in the Niger Delta from January 2021 - March 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

The current wave of vigilante violence has the potential to escalate in ways that could adversely impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the region, especially given that many of the vigilante groups are largely unregulated and susceptible to ethnic, political and criminal manipulations. Stakeholders should work with the State governments, the relevant security agencies and community leaders to devise appropriate policies to effectively regulate local vigilante groups and other informal security outfits in the region.

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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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