

# Niger Delta Weekly: Highlighting Renewed Cult Violence in Bayelsa State

June 21-27, 2020

## Description

This weekly update highlights cult violence in the Niger Delta with a particular focus on violent clashes between rival cult gangs in Bayelsa State. Recent data indicates an increase in violent clashes and supremacy battles among rival cult gangs in the state. According to data (see map below), over 130 cult related fatalities were reported in Bayelsa State between January 2016 and May 2020. Since the beginning of June 2020, there has been a sharp rise in rival cult clashes and reprisals in the state, particularly in Yenagoa LGA. On June 09, 2020, for example, four persons including a 17-year old boy who was a bystander, were reportedly killed during a clash between rival cult gangs in Amarata, Yenagoa LGA. In a separate incident, on June 15, 2020, three persons including a 50-year old man were reportedly killed during a clash between rival Icelanders and Bobos cult gangs at a drinking spot in Biogbolo, Yenagoa LGA. Five others including a woman suffered gunshot injuries during the incident. These incidents indicate that cult violence in the State is increasingly becoming intense and predatory including targeted killings.

## Why it Matters

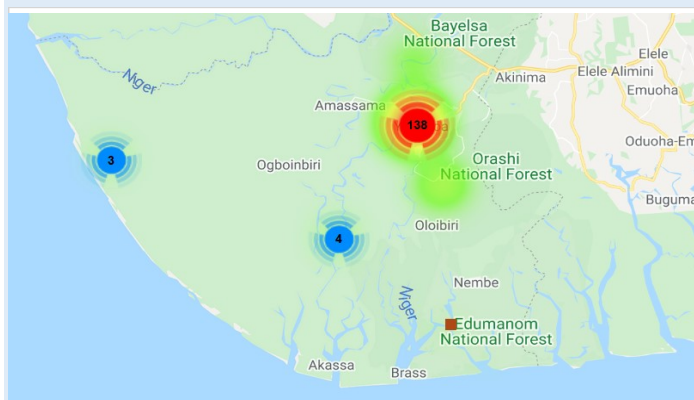
The recent rise in cult clashes could trigger recurring cycles of armed clashes and reprisals that could threaten the safety of residents and cause general insecurity in the State. This could bring about serious socio-economic and political repercussions, especially considering the political and socio-economic underpinnings of cult gangs in the State.

**Social:** Frequent cult clashes could result in a sequence of violent clashes and reprisals, which could encourage arms proliferation, embolden cult gangs to recruit more youths to defend their territory, and promote a culture of violence. Also, considering that cult groups and criminal gangs intersect, the ongoing cult clashes could reinforce criminal activities such as robbery, piracy, kidnapping, gun for hire and political thuggery, which could threaten the safety of residents.

**Economic:** Recurrent cult violence and associated criminal activities could have debilitating impact on the economy of the State. Markets could be looted and shop owners robbed or killed during clashes between cult gangs. Cult violence can 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 therefore loss of economic opportunities and livelihoods.

**Political:** Rising incidents of cult clashes could have adverse impact on politics and governance in the state. Recurrent cult violence 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 Related Violence in Bayelsa State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported fatalities caused by cult violence in Bayelsa State from January 2016 - May 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org).

## Prognosis

Cult violence in Bayelsa State is increasingly becoming frequent and intense, especially in Yenagoa, the state capital. The situation could worsen if appropriate preventive actions are not taken. Stakeholders should work with security agencies and the State government to intensify ongoing anti-cultism efforts, and coordinate with media outfits and community leaders 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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