

Niger Delta Weekly: Highlighting a Resurgence of Cult Violence in Rivers State

August 23-29, 2020

Description

This weekly update highlights cult violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on the resurgence of cult related killings in Rivers State. According to data (see map below), over 700 cult related fatalities were reported in Rivers State between June 2016 and June 2020. After a few months of relative decrease in reported incidents in early 2020, recent data shows a resurgence of cult related killings in the State. In May 2020, for instance, 3 persons were reportedly killed during a series of clashes between members of Icelanders and Deybam cult gangs over the collection of levies from traders in a market in Diobu town, Port Harcourt LGA. In July, 2 persons were reportedly killed during a clash between members of Greenlanders and Icelanders cult gangs in Amadi-Ama town, Port Harcourt LGA. A commercial tricycle operator was also reportedly shot during the incident. More recently, on August 18, 2020, over 7 persons including 2 community leaders were reportedly killed during a series of clashes and battles for supremacy between Icelanders and Greenlanders cult gangs in Bangha, Baa-Loore and Luebe communities, Khana LGA.

Why it Matters

The recent rise in incidents of cult related killings and violence in Rivers State could escalate and take on various criminal, communal and political dimensions. A resurgence of cult clashes and associated violence could slide the State back into a climate of worsening insecurity with grave socio-economic and political consequences.

Social: Considering that cult gangs and criminal syndicates overlap, a resurgence of cult clashes could intensify criminal activities such as piracy, robbery, kidnapping and sexual violence. Also, given that cult gangs permeate many communities, recurrent cult clashes could encourage arms proliferation, trigger communal conflict, and embolden cult gangs to enlist more youths to defend their territory. This could promote a culture of violence and endanger communal peace.

Economic: A resurgence of cult violence could create an atmosphere of insecurity that could be detrimental to economic activities. Some of the recent cult clashes in the State were triggered by conflict over the collection of illegal levies from traders. Cult clashes and associated criminal and illegal economic activities could weaken the economy and result in loss of revenue, livelihoods and economic opportunities.

Political: Cult clashes and political violence are mutually reinforcing - cult gangs are often funded and used by politicians to attack political opponents and influence elections results - and many of the hotspots of cult violence are located in the center of political activities such as the state capital and local government headquarters. A resurgent of cult violence could destabilize politics and governance in the State.

Fatalities Heat Map of Cult Related Violence in Rivers State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported cult related fatalities in Rivers State from June 2016 - June 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

Recent data shows a resurgence of cult violence and an increasing involvement of cult gangs in intra-communal conflict, banditry and illicit economic activities in the State, driven largely by tussles for supremacy, economic hardship and criminality. Stakeholders should work with the State government to address the drivers of cult violence and intensify ongoing anti-cultism efforts. Stakeholders should also work with media outfits to carry out peace education and raise awareness on the negative effects on cult activities.

Contact Us

Inquiries: Afeno Super Odomovo, Research Coordinator

Telephone: 08172401595

Email: afeno@pindfoundation.org

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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