Niger Delta Weekly: De-escalating Rising Political Tensions in Edo State

August 30 - September 05, 2020

Description

This weekly update highlights political violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on rising political tensions in Edo State. According to data (see map below), over 80 incidents of political violence were reported in Edo State between January 2016 and July 2020, including over 30 incidents of violence during the 2016 off-cycle gubernatorial election in the State. Ahead of the upcoming gubernatorial election scheduled for September 19, 2020, the political situation in the State is already charged with several reported incidents of violence and inciting utterances by key actors. In July 2020, for instance, several persons were reportedly injured and many vehicles destroyed during a clash between supporters of two major political parties at the palace of a prominent traditional ruler in Benin City, the state capital. In August, there were reported incidents of shootings by political thugs at campaign rallies in Jattu and Apana communities, Etsako West LGA. Also, in August, about 15 persons were reportedly shot during clashes between supporters of two major political parties in Igarra, Ekpe and Ososo communities, Akoko-Edo LGA.
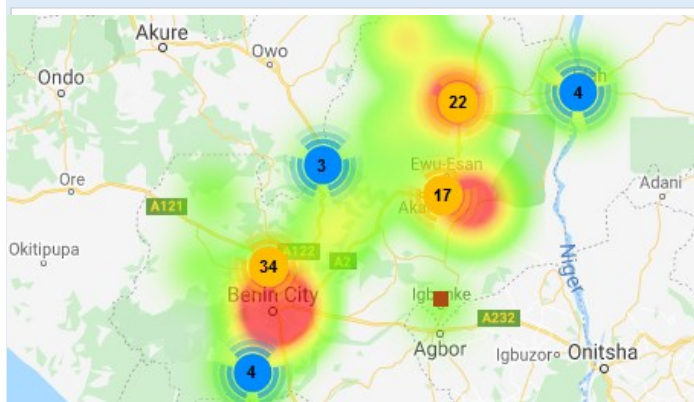
Why it Matters

The current political situation in Edo State has the potential to escalate in ways that could cause widespread violence during the upcoming gubernatorial election and beyond. This could undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process and threaten public peace and security, with long-term socio-economic and political repercussions.

 Social: Rising political tensions could adversely impact local conflict dynamics in the State. Political violence could intensify criminal activities, rival cult clashes, and proliferation of arms. Political thugs and armed youths could mutate into ethnic militias and criminal groups that could perpetrate violence and endanger public security. Also, politically motivated hate speeches could spur polarization with wide-ranging consequences for social cohesion and communal stability.

Economic: A tensed political situation could create anxiety and uncertainties that could negatively impact the economy of the State. Political violence could provide an opportunity for hoodlums and criminals to rob, loot and vandalize properties. This could disrupt business activities, weaken investors' confidence in the State, and cause loss of revenue, livelihoods and economic opportunities.

Political: Rising political tensions could have long-term consequences for political attitudes, behavior and participation in the State. It could lead to increased voters' apathy and disenfranchisement, distort the formal mechanisms of political competition, and undermine the electoral and political processes. This could cause political actors and their supporters to use violence to challenge election results.

Incidents Heat Map of Political Violence in Edo State, Nigeria

Heat Map shows concentration of reported incidents of political and election-related violence in Edo State between January 2016 - July 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

Recent data shows rising political tensions ahead of the upcoming gubernatorial election in Edo State. The patterns of violence that typifies ongoing election campaigns could worsen and continue through the election day and beyond. Stakeholders should monitor the situation and respond appropriately. Peace actors should continue to advocate for non-violent elections, and design appropriate electoral violence management strategies in synergy with peace building initiatives, including peace pacts by key political actors.

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.