

Niger Delta Weekly: **Spotlighting the Resurgence of Gang Violence in Bayelsa State**

April 18-24, 2021

Description

This edition of the weekly update spotlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult related killings in Bayelsa State. According to data (see map below), gang violence caused over 170 fatalities in Bayelsa State between 2018 and 2020. Recent incidents show a resurgence of cult related killings in the State, after a relative decrease in reported incidents during the last quarter of 2020. Over the last three months, more than five residents have been killed in a series of clashes between rival cult gangs in the State. In January, for instance, a resident was reportedly killed during a clash between two cult gangs from Oruma and Otusega communities, Ogbia LGA. In February, two persons were reportedly killed and many others injured in two separate clashes between rival cult gangs in Erepa and Agudama-Epie communities, Yenagoa LGA. In April, a residents was reportedly killed and several others injured during a clash between two rival cult gangs in Obele community, Yenagoa LGA. Recently, on April 14, 2021, a male university student was reportedly shot dead by a cultist in Amassama community, Southern Ijaw LGA.

Why it Matters

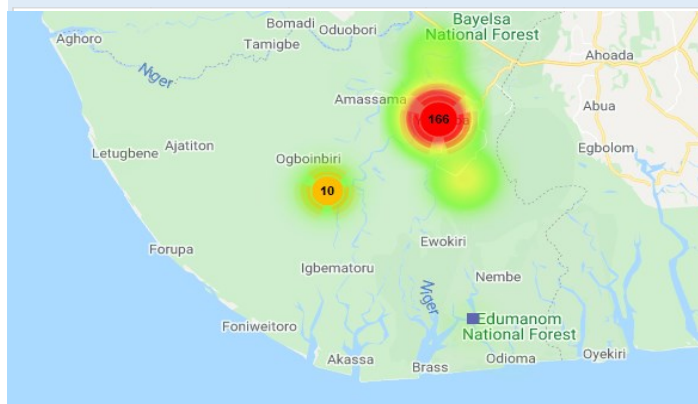
The recent rise in cult related violence and killings could escalate and take on various criminal, communal and political dimensions in the State. Rising incidents of gang violence could trigger a cycle of reprisal killings and battles for supremacy and territorial control among the numerous cult gangs in the State. This could exacerbate insecurity with serious socio-economic and political consequences for the State.

Social: Growing incidents of gang violence could set off a sequence of armed clashes and reprisal killings which could embolden cult gangs to enlist more youths to defend their territory. This could provide avenues for cult gangs to permeate more communities and endanger communal peace and stability. Recurrent incidents of gang violence could also intensify arms proliferation and violent criminality including sea robbery, banditry, kidnapping for ransom and sexual violence.

Economic: The prevalence of gang violence could be economically devastating for residents. Properties could be destroyed, markets looted and shop owners robbed or killed during clashes. Cult clashes could cause the closure of businesses and loss of economic opportunities and revenue. For instance, many shops were reportedly closed during one of the recent cult clashes in Yenagoa, the state capital.

Political: Gang violence could destabilize politics and governance in the State. Cult clashes and political violence are mutually reinforcing - cult gangs are often hired by politicians to attack their opponents and influence election results - and many hotspots of cult violence are located in the center of political activities such as the state capital.

Fatalities Heat Map of Gang Violence in Bayelsa State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows the geographical concentration of lethal gang violence in Bayelsa State from January 2018 - December 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

Gang violence is increasingly becoming prevalent in Bayelsa State, driven mainly by battles for supremacy and territorial control among rival cult gangs. Stakeholders should work with the State government to address the underlying drivers of gang violence. Peace actors should collaborate with media outfits to raise awareness on the negative effects of violent cult activities. Law enforcement agencies should also collaborate with local residents for early warning and intelligence gathering to reinforce 'hot spot policing'.

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.



FOUNDATION FOR PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES IN THE NIGER DELTA



FOUNDATION FOR NIGER DELTA PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE