

# Niger Delta Weekly: Spotlighting Artisanal Oil Refining Related Fire Outbreaks in Rivers State

December 05-11, 2021

## Description

This special edition of the weekly update spotlights human-induced environmental disasters in the Niger Delta with a focus on artisanal oil refining related fire outbreaks in Rivers State. According to data (see map below), artisanal oil refining related violence and fire outbreaks caused over 120 fatalities in the Niger Delta between January 2018 and October 2021. More than 55% of these fatalities reportedly occurred in Rivers State. Recent incidents also indicate the prevalence of artisanal oil refining related fire outbreaks in Rivers State. In October 2021, for instance, over 20 persons were reportedly killed in a fire outbreak allegedly caused by illegal artisanal oil refining activities, also known as 'Kpofire' in Rumuekpe community, Emohua LGA. In November, more than 10 persons were reportedly killed and many boats destroyed by fire supposedly caused by illegal petroleum products at the Nembe/Bille/Bonny Jetty in Port Harcourt LGA. More recently, on December 02, 2021, several shops, vehicles and goods were reportedly destroyed by fire allegedly caused by artisanal oil refining activities in Elele town, Ikwerre LGA.

## Why it Matters

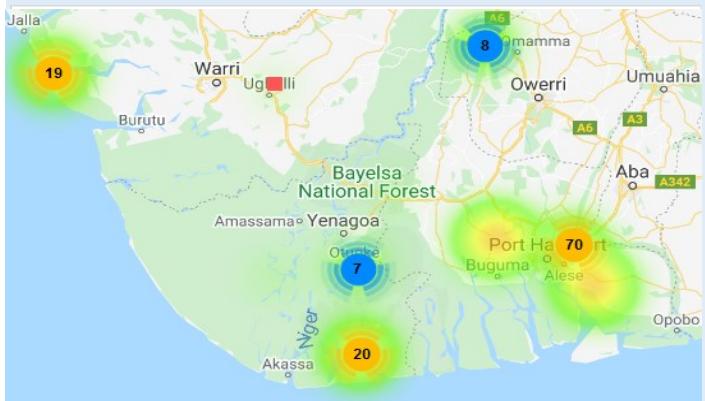
The rising spate of fire outbreaks in Rivers State is disturbing, especially the recurrence of artisanal oil refining related fire incidents. Recent data shows that fire disasters caused by illegal activities of artisanal oil refiners are becoming more frequent and geographically dispersed in the State. The prevailing situation could intensify environmental pollution and worsen human insecurity. This could have significant social, economic and political repercussions in the State.

**Social:** The prevalence of illegal oil refining related fire outbreaks could have serious impact on the lives, safety and health of residents. It could intensify environmental degradation including soot pollution which could cause cancer and respiratory tract infections. Recurrent fire outbreaks could also cause social dislocations and internal displacements which could escalate communal conflict and insecurity.

**Economic:** Fire disasters caused by the activities of illegal artisanal oil refiners could bring about severe economic consequences for individuals, businesses and the government. Fire outbreaks often result in the loss of human and material resources, and the disruption of livelihoods and economic activities in communities. It could also result in shut-ins and shut-downs of operations by oil companies, and therefore cause loss of revenue to businesses and the government.

**Political:** Illegal artisanal oil refining activities and related fire disasters could present additional security challenges for the government. Environmental pollution including the menace of soot caused by artisanal refining could trigger unrest and violent protests in the State.

## Fatalities Heat Map of Artisanal Oil Refining Activities in the Niger Delta of Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of artisanal oil refining related fatalities in the Niger Delta of Nigeria from January 2018 - October 2021. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map [www.p4p-nigerdelta.org](http://www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)

## Prognosis

The prevalence of artisanal oil refineries and related fire outbreaks has the potential to intensify environmental conflicts and human insecurity. Stakeholders should work with the national and state governments to integrate artisanal refining into the mainstream oil and gas sector, through modular refinery operations, to curb illegal refining activities and reduce environmental pollution. Stakeholders should also raise public awareness of the effects of illegal artisanal refineries and educate residents to be environmentally friendly.

## 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.