

Niger Delta Weekly: De-escalating Rising Criminal and Political Violence in Bayelsa State

August 13-19, 2023

Description

This special edition of the weekly update spotlights organized criminality in the Niger Delta with a focus on criminal and political violence in Bayelsa State. According to data (see map below), political and criminal violence caused over 150 fatalities in Bayelsa State between January 2021 and June 2023. In the lead-up to the upcoming governorship election scheduled for November 2023, the political situation in the State is already charged with several reported incidents of political and criminal violence. In June 2023, for instance, gunmen reportedly attacked a divisional police headquarters in Ogbia town, Ogbia LGA. In August, some armed men were allegedly arrested by soldiers at a security checkpoint in Otakeme community, Ogbia LGA. Separately, supporters of two major political parties reportedly clashed over political mobilization in Opu-Nembe (Nembe Basambiri) community, Nembe LGA. More recently, on August 13, 2023, a resident was allegedly killed and several others injured during an operation by government security forces to mop up illegal arms in Opu-Nembe (Nembe Basambiri) community, Nembe LGA.

Why it Matters

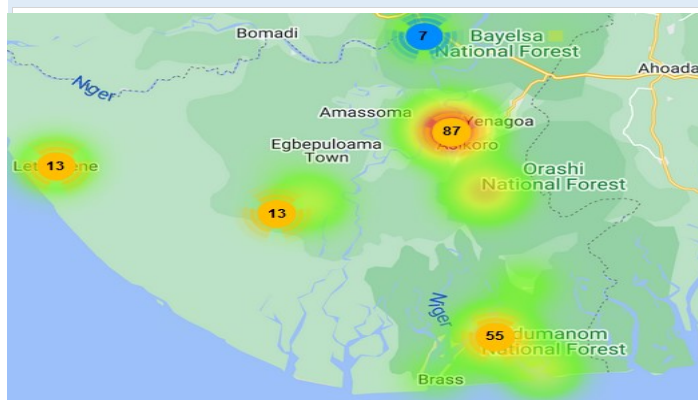
The recent escalation of political tensions in Bayelsa has the potential to escalate in ways that could cause widespread violence before and during the upcoming gubernatorial election and beyond. If not de-escalated the situation could trigger a sequence of criminal violence and targeted killings in the State. This could adversely impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the State with serious social, economic and political consequences at the state and regional levels.

Social: Political violence could cause unrest and a breakdown of law and order which could negatively impact the dynamics of organized crime and insecurity in the State. Politically motivated violence could intensify arms proliferation and criminal violence including clashes between rival cult gangs. Political thugs could transform into militias and criminal gangs that could commit violence after the election. This could intensify communal tension and social polarization in the State.

Economic: Rising political and criminal violence could create a climate of insecurity that could negatively impact the local economy. Political violence could provide avenues for hoodlums and criminals to rob, loot and vandalize properties. This could disrupt economic activities and cause loss of revenue for individuals, businesses and the government. This could undermine the economic wellbeing of residents.

Political: Politically motivated violence could have lasting consequences for political socialization and public confidence in the political process. It could cause voters apathy and disenfranchisement which could weaken the electoral process. This could result in disputed election results which could cause protests and political instability.

Fatalities Heat Map of Organized Criminality and Political Violence in Bayelsa State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of fatalities caused by criminal and political violence in Bayelsa State from January 2021 - June 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

The situation in Bayelsa State is highly charged with the potential to escalate in ways that could intensify political and criminal violence before and during the November 2023 governorship and beyond. Stakeholders should continue to advocate for non-violent elections through popular media outfits and forums. Peace actors should also establish relevant infrastructure for grassroots peace advocacy, peace messaging and facilitation of peace pacts between key actors to defuse tensions and mitigate political violence in the State.

Contact Us

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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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