

Niger Delta Weekly: Mitigating the Risk of Electoral Violence in Bayelsa State

October 29 - November 04, 2023

Description

This weekly update spotlights political violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on the risk of violence in the forthcoming off-cycle governorship election in Bayelsa State. Elections in the State are high stake affairs, often characterized by violence. According to data (see map below), over 80 incidents of election violence and more than 35 fatalities were reported in the State between September 2019 and September 2023. Ahead of the November 11, 2023 governorship election, political tension is already charged with several reported incidents of violence and inciting statements by political actors. In August 2023, for instance, a man was reportedly killed and many others injured in a series of clashes involving gunmen, security forces, and supporters of political parties in Opu-Nembe town, Nembe LGA. In October, supporters of two major political parties allegedly clashed at campaign rallies in Brass Island and Twon Brass communities, Brass LGA. Recently, on October 30, 2023, the deputy governorship candidate of a major political party allegedly made statements capable of inciting violence during a campaign rally in Brass LGA.

Why it Matters

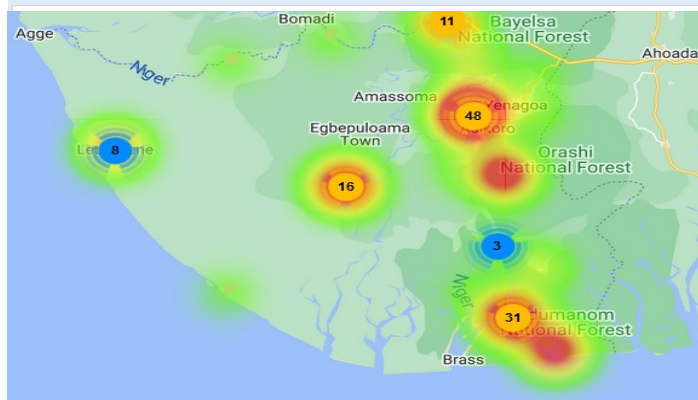
The political situation in Bayelsa State is highly charged ahead of the November 11, 2023 off-cycle governorship election. Several incidents of violence, threat of violence and inciting statements by key actors have been reported. If not mitigated, the situation could escalate in ways that could cause widespread political and criminal violence during the election and beyond. This could undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process, and cause unrest, violent protests and political instability with severe security and socio-economic consequences.

Social: Political tensions and electoral violence could negatively affect the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the State. Politically motivated violence could intensify illicit drug trafficking and use, arms proliferation and organized criminality including clashes between rival cult gangs. Political thugs could also transform into militias and criminal gangs that could commit violence after the election. This could intensify communal tension, social polarization and insecurity.

Economic: Electoral violence could create a climate of insecurity that could negatively impact the local economy. It could provide avenues for opportunistic criminal activities such as arson, robbery, looting and vandalism. This could disrupt economic activities and cause loss of revenue for individuals, businesses and the government. This could consequently undermine the socio-economic wellbeing of residents.

Political: Political violence and election irregularities could weaken public trust in the electoral and political processes, and thus cause voter apathy. Electoral violence could also cause disputes over election results which could trigger protests, riots and political instability.

Incidents Heat Map of Election-related Violence in Bayelsa State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported incidents of election-related violence in Bayelsa State from September 2019 - September 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

The political situation in Bayelsa State has the potential to escalate and cause violence during the governorship election and beyond. Stakeholders should continue to advocate for a non-violent election through popular media outfits. Civil society organizations (CSOs) should work with relevant government agencies to facilitate peace pacts between key actors to defuse tensions, and establish multi-stakeholder conflict early warning systems and election situation rooms to improve early response to potential incidents of violence.

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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.



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