

Niger Delta Weekly: Spotlighting a Resurgence Cult and Gang Related Killings in Edo State

July 09 - 15, 2023

Description

This weekly update spotlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult and gang related killings in Edo State. According to data (see map below), over 140 cult and gang related fatalities were reported in Edo State between January 2020 and April 2023. Recent data shows a resurgence of cult and gang related killings in the State, after a few months of relative decline. Over the last three months, more than 8 persons have been killed in a series of clashes between rival cult gangs in the State. In April 2023, for instance, a male student of the University of Benin was reportedly killed by a rival cult gang in a hostel in Ugbowo community, Egor LGA. In July, four persons were reportedly killed in a series of clashes between the Black Axe and the Supreme Vikings cult gangs at different locations in Auchi community, Etsako West LGA. Separately, in July, a middle-aged man was allegedly killed by a cult gang in front of a church in Amagba community, Oredo LGA. Recently, on July 10, 2021, three persons were reportedly killed in a series of clashes between rival cult gangs at different locations in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

Why it Matters

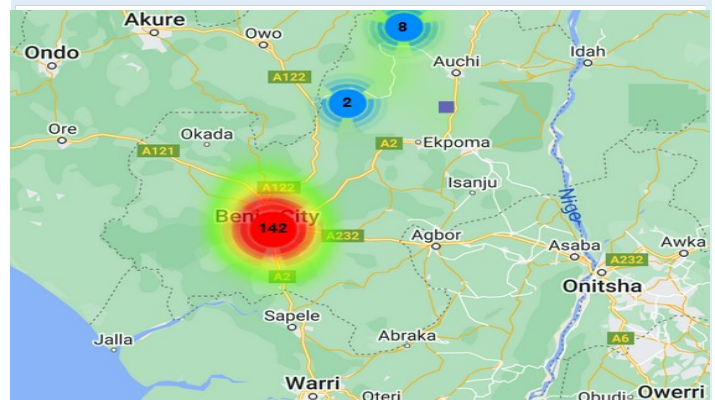
The current spate of cult and gang related violence and killings could trigger a sequence of armed clashes and reprisal attacks in the State. The situation could degenerate into extended battles for supremacy among the numerous cult gangs in the State. The emerging trend of targeted killings by rival cult gangs could also take on various political, communal and criminal dimensions in the State, especially considering the socio-economic and political underpinnings of cult gangs.

Social: The resurgence of cult and gang violence and killings could intensify arms proliferation and criminality including robbery, kidnap for ransom, drug abuse and sexual violence, and therefore intensify conflict risk and insecurity in the State. A rise in rival cult clashes could embolden cult gangs to enlist additional members to defend their territory. This could intensify communal tensions and insecurity.

Economic: Recurrent cult clashes and killings and related criminal violence could create an insecure environment that is detrimental to economic development. Properties could be destroyed, markets and shops looted and residents robbed or killed during cult clashes. Cult clashes could also prevent residents from patronizing businesses in areas dominated by cult gangs. This could result in the closure of businesses, loss of revenue, livelihoods and business opportunities.

Political: The resurgence of cult and gang related violence and killings could destabilize local politics and governance in the State, especially considering that rival cult clashes and political violence are mutually reinforcing - cult gangs are sometimes funded and used by desperate politicians to attack their opponents and influence election results.

Fatalities Heat Map of Cult and Gang Related Violence in Edo State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows the geographical concentration of reported cult and gang related fatalities in Edo State from January 2020 - April 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

The recent resurgence of cult and gang related violence and killings has the potential to escalate and intersect with communal tensions and criminality in ways that could adversely impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the State. Peace and security actors must adopt an integrated approach, involving community leaders and security agencies to tackle the situation. The risk of cult and gang violence should also be considered along with other crucial conflict risks and security issues such as criminal and communal 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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