

Niger Delta Weekly: Preventing a Resurgence of Cult Violence in Edo State

November 15-21, 2020

Description

This weekly update spotlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on the resurgence of cult related killings in Edo State. According to data (see map below), over 260 cult related fatalities were reported in Edo State between January 2016 and September 2020, particularly in Benin City, the state capital. Recent data indicates a rise in cult related killings in the State, reportedly driven by the buildup of criminals and proliferation of arms as a result of prison breaks and the looting of armories in the aftermath of the 'EndSARS' protests in the State. In October 2020, over 1,900 inmates reportedly escaped from two correctional facilities in the State. Cult related killings and robbery have increased since the mass prison breaks. Recently, over 18 persons were reportedly killed in a series of clashes between rival cult gangs at different locations in the State. Between November 09 and 14, 2020, for instance, 12 persons were reportedly killed during clashes between rival cult gangs at different locations in Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Egor and Ovia North East LGAs. Three police officers were reportedly shot during one of the incidents.

Why it Matters

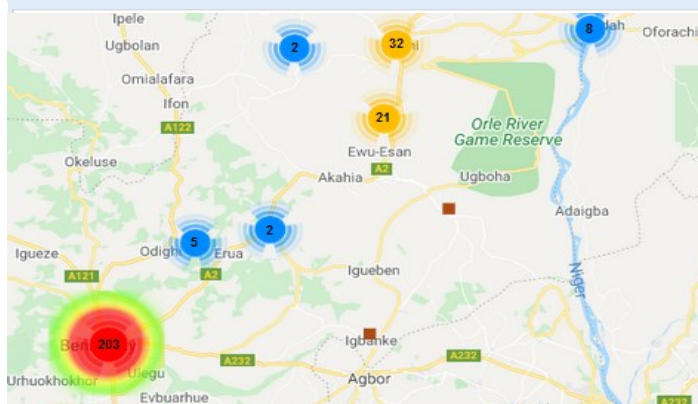
A resurgence of cult related killings and associated violence could dangerously affect the peace and security dynamics in the State. The emerging situation has the potential to escalate and intersect with organized criminality and social tensions to cause socio-economic and political instability in the State, especially against the backdrop of civil unrest and hooliganism in the wake of the 'EndSARS' protests.

Social: A resurgence of cult violence could trigger a cycle of reprisal killings by rival cult gangs in the State. This could intensify the proliferation of arms and a consequent rise in gun violence. Also, given that cult gangs often intersect with violent street gangs and criminal groups, a rise in cult violence could reinforce organized criminal activities including robbery, kidnapping for ransom and gun for hire. This could cause general insecurity and threaten the safety of residents.

Economic: An increase in cult related killings and associated violence could be economically devastating for the State. Markets could be attacked and shop owners robbed or killed during rival cult clashes. This could cause the closure of businesses and therefore loss of revenue, economic opportunities and livelihoods. Following recent cult clashes, for instance, many markets, shops and banks were reportedly closed and vehicular movements halted in parts of the State.

Political: A resurgence of cult related violence could present additional security challenges for the State, particularly against the backdrop of civil unrest and hooliganism in the aftermath of the 'EndSARS' protests. This could increase government spending on public security.

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



Heat Map shows the geographical concentration of cult and gang related fatalities in Edo State from January 2016 - September 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

Data shows a resurgence of cult related violence in Edo State, driven mainly by mass prison breaks and arms proliferation in the aftermath of the 'EndSARS' protests. Stakeholders should work with the State Government and the relevant security agencies to arrest escaped criminals and retrieve looted arms and ammunition. Stakeholders should also work with community leaders and media outfits to carry out peace education, raise awareness on the negative effects of cult activities, and discourage recruitment into cult gangs.

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