

Niger Delta Weekly: De-escalating Cult and Gang Related Violence in Akwa Ibom State

May 07-13, 2023

Description

This weekly update highlights gang violence in the Niger Delta with a focus on cult and gang related killings in Akwa Ibom State. According to data (see map below), cult and gang related violence caused over 100 fatalities in Akwa Ibom State between January 2021 and March 2023. Latest incidents indicate a resurgence of cult and gang related killings in the State, largely driven by battles for supremacy and territorial control among rival cult gangs. In December 2022, for instance, five persons were reportedly killed and many others injured during clashes between rival cult gangs at a sport betting center along Ikot Ekpene Road in Uyo, the state capital. In January, 2023, six persons were reportedly injured during a series of clashes between rival cult gangs at different locations in Uyo. More recently, on May 09, 2023, about 15 persons were reportedly killed and several properties destroyed in a series of clashes between the Black Axe and the Klaans cult gangs over the control of a motor park in Nwaniba community, Uruan LGA. Members of the two rival cult gangs allegedly clashed over the collection of levies in the motor park.

Why it Matters

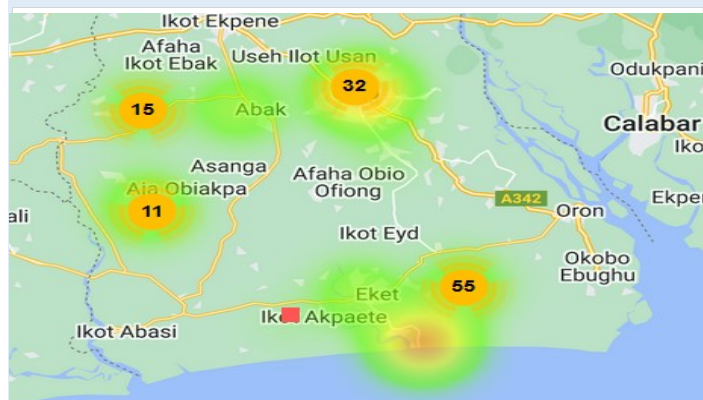
The recent spate of cult and gang related clashes could trigger a cycle of reprisal violence and killings by rival cult gangs in the State. The situation could escalate into prolonged battles for supremacy and territorial control among the numerous cult gangs. This could intersect with organized criminality and social tensions in ways that could negatively impact the dynamics of conflict and insecurity in the State.

Social: If not de-escalated, the current wave of gang violence could threaten communal peace and stability, especially considering that cult gangs are increasingly permeating the streets and communities in the State. The situation could embolden cult gangs to recruit more youths to help defend their territories and consequently intensify organized criminal violence and lawlessness including arms proliferation, targeted killing, drug abuse, robbery and kidnap for ransom.

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

Political: The prevalence of gang violence could have adverse impact on politics and governance in the State. It could present additional security challenges and drive up government spending on public security. Cult gangs could also evolve into organized criminal groups and politically connected militias that could destabilize governance.

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



Heat Map shows the geographical concentration of cult and gang related fatalities in Akwa Ibom State from January 2021 - March 2023. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org

Prognosis

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

Contact Us

Inquiries: PINDfoundation.org

Contacts: info@PINDfoundation.org +234 (0) 9 291 0454

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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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