

# Imo, Delta lead as mob violence claims 351 in N'Delta

Godfrey George

Between January 2021 and May 2023, mob violence has claimed over 351 lives in the Niger Delta region, a report by the Foundation Partnerships in the Niger Delta has shown.

In its special edition of the weekly update, PIND spotlighted the growing prevalence of vigilance group and mob violence in the Niger Delta following reported cases in the public domain.

In April 2023, for instance, a 22-year-old male robbery suspect was reportedly set ablaze by a mob in Atimbo community in Calabar Municipal LGA, Cross River State.

In June, a middle-aged woman was reportedly burnt to death by a mob over alleged witchcraft practices at Old Netim community in Akamkpa LGA, Cross River.

In July, a mob reportedly burnt a 32-year-old man to death for allegedly stealing a loaf of bread from a bakery in Tombia community in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State.

Separately, in July, a criminal suspect was allegedly set ablaze by a mob in Itam community in Itu LGA, Akwa Ibom State.

More recently, on July 22, 2023, a robbery suspect was reportedly burnt to death by a mob in Agbor community in Ika South LGA of Delta State.

According to data collated by the P4P Peace Map, Warri in Delta State and Owerri in Imo State have the highest number of cases with 89 cases each.

Calabar, Cross River State came second with 60 cases; Port Harcourt, Rivers State had 43 cases; Yenagoa, Bayelsa State (35); Benin City, Edo State and its environs with 30; and Abia State (five).

The report added that the growing prevalence of vigilante justice and mob violence is a serious threat to public safety and human security in the Niger Delta.

"The tendency of residents to summarily dispense justice without recourse to legal procedures is a dangerous threat to the rule of law.

"The situation has the potential to undermine law enforcement processes and the judicial and penal systems in ways that can cause severe socio-economic, political and security challenges in the region.

"Mob lynching could have serious psychosocial and health impacts on residents. The cruel and horrific nature of mob lynching, stripping and burning of victims - could bring about a lack of respect for human life and a relapse of moral standards in society.

"The horrid experience of mob lynching could cause post-traumatic stress disorder among residents. The prevalence of mob violence could cause lawlessness and human rights violations, including arbitrary killings," part of the report added.

A Port Harcourt, Rivers State-based human rights lawyer, Mrs Selenia Onuoha, advised residents in the region to always report cases of crimes to the government rather than take laws into their hands.