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1.2.2. Militant groups in the Niger Delta

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last updated: February 2019

[*Targeting*, 2.2]

The Niger Delta comprises of the states of Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, Abia, Akwa Ibom and Cross River. A number of militant groups operate in the area. Their members demand an improvement of the conditions in the region and protest against its environmental degradation due to oil exploitation.

Between 2006 and 2009, after the decline of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the most active militant group was the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (**MEND**). MEND is an umbrella organisation whose political objectives have focused on demanding local control over oil resources and development of the region. The group has made use of kidnapping and car bombing with the aim of kidnapping of foreign oil workers, attacks against oil pipelines, oil bunkering.

Currently, MEND has a limited presence due to the imprisonment of some of its leaders and due to a large-scale amnesty and Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programme introduced in 2009. The DDR has also provided financial benefit for approximately 30 000 former militants.

The cut to the programme funding in 2015, along with the government's failure to improve the socio-economic conditions in the Delta region, and actions by security guards of oil installations, led to a new insurgency in 2016 and to the emergence of several militant groups, in particular of the Niger Delta Avengers (**NDA**). NDA is currently active in the Niger Delta. Although it shares the same objectives as MEND, it distances itself from the latter, and calls for the autonomy of the region. In 2016, the group launched a large number of attacks on oil infrastructures. The tactics of NDA mainly focus on attacks on oil and gas installations.

Although MEND and NDA perpetrate violent acts, those usually involve the targeting of infrastructure and do not result in harm to individuals. Therefore, in the context of the Niger Delta, the armed groups would rarely be considered actors of persecution or serious harm.

The reach of a specific non-State actor and their ability to trace and target the applicant depend on the individual case. The individual power positions of the applicant and the actor of persecution or serious harm should be assessed, taking into consideration their social status,

wealth, connections, gender, level of education, etc.

Finally, it should be noted that persecution or serious harm by non-State actors has to be assessed in light of the availability of protection according to Article 7 QD.

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