In Focus: The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

By Eray Basar

A recent attack that claimed the lives of twelve Nigerian policemen in oil-rich Bayelsa state revealed the resurgence of an armed group called the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). In late 2005, the Federation of Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and fighters of cult groups such as the Klansmen Konfraternity (KKK) and Greenlanders merged to form MEND, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. The new group used military force to attack oil installations. Relatively inactive in recent years, MEND has emerged in media reports calling for threats of renewed violence. Eliciting reactions from other armed groups in the country, this recent call to violence could trigger widespread insecurity throughout the country.

Background

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with an estimated 174.5 million people representing about 350 ethnic groups. The country is also the largest oil producer on the continent. However, despite its abundant oil resources, the southern Delta region of Nigeria, with a population of approximately 30 million, remains impoverished and environmentally exploited. Approximately two decades ago, growing domestic frustration with the dire situation, turned violent when peaceful protests and limited concessions to address local needs failed to achieve their desired impact. As a result, the violent responses resulted in increased government repression; the protestors adapted by evolving into armed group insurgencies.

In 2006, two months after their first successful oil attack and kidnapping of four foreign oil workers for ransom, MEND laid out broad objectives. The group focused on four sets of demands for the people of Niger Delta: (i) increased political participation, (ii) increased involvement in the oil and gas industry, (iii) socioeconomic development and (iv) reduced militarisation of the region. The goals specifically required regulation of oil companies and community compensation for damage to land and rivers, proper clean-up of the polluted environment, a fair oil revenue share, the creation of

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Algeria

A terrorist attack reportedly killed three auxiliary policemen in Tipaza region of Algeria on 28 April, reports the Australian Associated Press (AAP). An unnamed official, who informed the Algérie Presse Service (APS) about the incident, declined to give further details. Algeria set up the 90,000-strong auxiliary police force in 1994 in order to support local police in the country’s fight against Islamist rebel groups.

Algerian security forces arrested four members of the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the armed wing of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), for recruiting Algerians to fight in Syria for Jabhat al-Nusra, which recently declared allegiance to al-Qaeda in Iraq, reports Magharebia. The leader of AIS, who is suspected of establishing ties with jihadists in Libya and Tunisia, was among the arrested. Algeria has conducted operations against extremist recruiting networks for over a year, focusing on the provinces Algiers, Biskara, Djelfa, Ghardaia, Illizi, Oued Souf, Tebessa, Tiaret and Tlemcen. Mohamed Smiem, an academic specialising in security affairs, said “these networks use religious discourse first and then financial incentives to bring in fighters to Syria”.

On 23 April, an Algerian court handed death sentences in absentia to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a jihadist leader who was reportedly killed in Mali last month, and four members of his group, reports Agence France-Presse (AFP). In addition, Mohamed Lamine Bencheneb received a posthumous death sentence from his attack on the Amenas gas plant in January. Six other defendants were convicted and sentenced to prison as a result of providing logistical support to Belmokhtar.

Egypt

A regional representative for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Abdel Shakour Shaalan, indicated on 24 April that Egypt and the IMF have agreed on the main principles of a USD 4.8 billion loan, with finalisation expected by the end of May, reports Egypt Independent. An IMF delegation meeting with Egyptian officials in Cairo in mid-April had failed to reach a deal. The loan is contingent on controversial tax and subsidy reforms which the government of President Mohammed Morsi has been slow to implement, and analysts believe that their planned implementation in May and July is “highly unlikely”. On 28 April, Libya announced intentions to ship USD 1.2 billion worth of crude oil to Egypt on soft credit terms, reports Reuters. As Egypt’s economy continues to decline and the country faces growing shortages of fuel, Libya has agreed to provide the oil interest-free for a period of one year, with the first delivery slated for May. Libya plans to deliver one to two shipments a month for refining in Egypt under a deal that involves twelve million barrels of crude over twelve months. Libya, which considers Egypt an important trading partner, is keen to keep the Egyptian economy afloat, and recently also deposited USD 2 billion into the Egyptian central bank.

According to Egypt’s state-run news agency MENA, Egypt withdrew from a nuclear non-proliferation meeting in Geneva on 29 April as a result of the international community’s failure to end the presence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East. According to the state-run media, Egypt has repeatedly urged Israel to sign the NPT and allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear facilities however Israel has refused. According to Aswat Masriya, Israel is widely believed to be the only Middle Eastern state which possesses a nuclear arsenal. Hisham Badr, assistant to Egypt’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, said, “The withdrawal step aims at sending a strong message about the unsatisfaction of Egypt concerning the non-seriousness of the international community in dealing with such critical issue that influence the Egyptian and Arab peace and security”. According to Voice of America, the United States expressed its regret that Egypt opted out of the non-proliferation talks, but hoped all sides will hold a conference on banning nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Libya

Libya’s Foreign Ministry was surrounded by gunmen on 28 April, reports Reuters. About twenty pickup trucks with anti-aircraft guns and people with automatic rifles surrounded the ministry, demanding a law banning former Gaddafi regime officials. Another group also tried unsuccessfully to storm the Ministry of Interior and the state news agency. Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said: “These attacks will never get us down and we will not surrender” and added, “those who think the government is frustrated are wrong. We are very strong and determined”. The Libyan government’s campaign to dislodge armed groups from Tripoli has raised the tensions in recent weeks.

A police station in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi was bombed on 27 April, reports Associated Press (AP). The non-lethal explosion at Barka police station was the second bombing incident at the site this year. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.
AP also reported increased infighting amongst militant groups in the country; on 26 April, gunmen attacked the headquarters of Uqba ibn Nafi, a pro-government group in the city of Darnah, leaving one member of the group dead.

The French Embassy in Libya was partially destroyed and two guards were injured by a car bomb on 23 April reports New York Times. The attack is considered the most serious attack against Western diplomatic missions since the 11 September 2012 attack in Benghazi that killed US Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. Both Libya and France denounced the attack as a terrorist act. Islamist militants reportedly used social media to express their anger against the French intervention in Mali. Professor George Joffe, a Libya scholar at Cambridge University, said that many Islamist militants see Western involvement in their country as an attempt to “seize the revolution” to “recreate Libya in a Western image of secular democracy”.

Morocco
A major opposition group in Morocco threatened the government with an “explosion” among disaffected youth due to poor economic and social conditions, reports AFP. Fathallah Arsalane, spokesperson for Charity and Justice (al Adl Wal-Ihsan or AWI), said: “We believe in democracy and we believe that we could become a political party but the government does not allow it”, adding, “there is a shadow government that controls everything, and the members of the current government are nothing more than a front”. Morocco officially banned AWI for criticising the king’s wealth and power; however, it is tolerated in practice. According to Arsalane, the youth are better educated but have nothing to lose because they have “no work, no house and no future”, which might lead to an uncontainable youth explosion. He also insisted democracy must guarantee freedom of expression which must include the freedom to criticise the king and emphasised the importance of redistributing the country’s wealth.

A fatwa of Morocco’s higher council of religious scholars (CSO), published in the Arabic language daily Akhbar al-Youm on 16 April, caused a stir within the country, reports AFP. The fatwa demands the death penalty for those who denounce Islam. Local media said the fatwa dates back to April 2012, but it was not published at that time. In a statement to the official Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP) news agency, Mahjoub El Hiba, a senior human rights official in the government, denied the claims of Akhbar al-Youm that the government had requested any such fatwa. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs reportedly declined to comment on the issue.

An inflatable boat carrying 34 people capsized 9 km offshore from the Moroccan town of Hoceima on 16 April, leaving 11 dead, reports AFP. Twelve more were hospitalised in Hoceima. All were Sub-Saharan migrants of unknown nationality thought to be travelling to either mainland Spain or the Spanish enclave of Melilla.

Tunisia
Brahim Slimani a young, unemployed Tunisian set himself ablaze on 28 April in front of Sidi Bouzid town hall, the same location that launched the Arab Spring in 2011, reports AFP. Slimani reportedly suffered third degree burns on most of his body. Suicide attempts multiplied in Tunisia since Mohamed Bouazizi committed self-immolation in December 2010 to protest police harassment. Two years after the revolution that toppled President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, approximately a quarter of the country’s population still lives in poverty and unemployment sits at about eighteen per cent.

Salafists broke into a female student hostel in Tunis on 17 April to prevent the women from staging a weekly dance and music show, reports Middle East Online. The assault reportedly lasted about an hour, but resulted in no arrests. “This is unacceptable...The police were present and did not move. It just raises anger and fear”, said Ameni a student who did not want her last name used. The Ministry of Interior, which oversees the police, did not offer any immediate comment.

The US Department of State’s annual “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices”, released on 19 April, criticises the human rights conditions in Tunisia, reports Tunisia Live. The report highlights “security force laxity regarding extremist crimes, the use of excessive force during protestor arrests, and some constraints on freedom of the press”. It also criticises the government for being slow to investigate police brutality cases, interfering in the judiciary, improperly addressing human rights violations and “instances of impunity for Salafist extremists”.

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Cross-border Issues between South Sudan and Sudan

On 26 April, the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, welcomed the internal rules of procedures adopted by the Joint-High Level Committee (JHLC) on the status of each state’s nationals in the other state and related issues between Sudan and South Sudan, reports Sudan Tribune. Zuma stated, “The work of the Joint High-Level Committee on the status of nationals is critical for realizing the freedoms of the nationals of each state to move within, reside or to undertake economic activity in the other state”. The two countries originally signed the framework agreement on 27 September 2012, but subsequent disagreements between South Sudan and Sudan delayed its implementation. The recent development comes just days after the two countries agreed to establish ten crossing points along their shared border, eight of which are to be open effective immediately, reports Sudan Tribune.

South Sudan warned on 27 April that, without immediate intervention, escalating tensions with Sudan over the contested Abyei border region could turn violent, reports Sudan Tribune. Chol Changath, the Secretary General in Abyei of the Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM), reported that rebel groups with links to the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) attacked a village east of Abyei town and that two other attacks, which included cattle raiding, were carried out in the area. Deng Mading Mikaj, South Sudan’s deputy co-chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) said that the region has recently experienced high tension, due to the alleged activities of “armed” Arabs nomads. Mikaj requested that the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) take full responsibility of the volatile security situation, stating “[UNISFA] is the one responsibility for the provision of the security and protection of civilian as agreed by the two parties. They should be seen doing their work so that the area becomes arms free”. The AU mediation team proposed a referendum in October 2013 on ownership of the region in 2012, but consensus has not been reached regarding voter eligibility.

South Sudan

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) applauded the negotiated peace deal between the South Sudanese government and local armed rebel groups in the states of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile, reports the UN News Centre. A spokesperson for the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA) and the South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) announced that a peace treaty was reached on 26 April and that the three armed groups would begin “interacting” with the government army of South Sudan, Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) “without any confrontation”. The peace deal followed the 24 April amnesty issued by President Salva Kiir as part of efforts to expedite peace.

Sudan

Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) rebels from Sudan’s Darfur region, reportedly took Um Rawaba, a city in neighbouring North Kordofan state, about 500 km south of the capital Khartoum on 27 April, reports Al Jazeera. The SRF includes the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North), which formed an alliance in 2011 to topple Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. SLA spokesperson Abdel Wahid Mohammed al-Nur indicated that the rebel alliance plans to push to Khartoum to topple the government, saying, “this is a significant shift in the war in Sudan”, and “we are heading to Khartoum”. Sawarmi Khaled Saad, spokesman for the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) said government troops confronted the rebels after they reached Abu Kershola in the far north of South Kordofan; however, rebels raided Kareem Allaha village before targeting Um Rawaba. Saad accused SRF rebels of destroying a power plant, petrol stations and a telecommunications tower, and indicated that the rebels had been unable to hold the town and had fled south. A spokesperson for JEM Gibril Adam contradicted Saad, saying that rebel forces controlled Um Rawaba and other parts of North Kordofan state.

The African Union-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) delivered almost eighty tonnes of “critical humanitarian aid” to civilians in the towns of Labado and Muhagiriya in Darfur on 23 April, reports Agence France-Presse (AFP). The aid consisted mainly of food rations, bottled water and medical supplies, with a second shipment planned in the near future. Humanitarian access in southern Darfur is extremely limited given the tenuous security situation; however, approximately 20,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) relocated to areas adjacent to UNAMID bases for safety after fleeing fighting and air strikes by the Sudanese government.

Qatar offered USD 135 million to the Sudanese government on 27 April in efforts to restore 100 archaeological sites in the states of Northern and Nahr Alneel, informs Sudan Tribune. The Sudanese tourism minister, Mohamed Abdul-Karim Al-Had, announced that...
Eritrea
A female Eritrean military pilot defected to Saudi Arabia on 22 April, reports Reuters. The pilot was sent by the Eritrean government to retrieve a plane in Saudi Arabia that was abandoned in October 2012 when its two pilots sought asylum in the Gulf state. According to reports, her father lives in Saudi Arabia. As Reuters notes, political asylum-seekers are fleeing Eritrea in droves: “Mass defections are common in Eritrea, considered one of the world’s most repressive states where dissent is dealt with harshly. Thousands of Eritreans abandon the country each year, escaping unlimited conscription and poverty in the Red Sea state”. Women face especially dangerous obstacles when attempting an escape from the notoriously militant Eritrean state. Abuse, exploitation and violence are common, according to Sudan Tribune. However, conditions in the country are grave enough to pressure thousands of female refugees to risk fleeing the country each year.

Ethiopia
US Secretary of State John Kerry announced plans to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the Organisation for African Unity (OUA), predecessor of the African Union (AU). An anniversary summit takes place 19-27 May in Addis Ababa. Before making the announcement, Kerry testified before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee and outlined a need for strategic engagement with AU countries due to the growing influence of Iran and China on the continent. “China is now out-investing the United States significantly in Africa...So we’re going to have to be more engaged”, Kerry said. European Union President José Manuel Barroso released a statement after meeting with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn on 18 April, commending the Ethiopian government on its security and political engagements in the Horn of Africa, especially with regard to Somalia and Sudan. Barroso also announced plans to deepen economic and development cooperation, including the expansion of a maternal health initiative estimated at EUR 30 million (approximately USD 39 million). Barroso urged Ethiopia to provide more access to journalists and freedom of the press, stating “Ultimately economic growth can only be sustained if it is achieved in an open society respectful of fundamental rights and also freedom, from freedom of expression to freedom of the press”. Finally, Ethiopia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted a statement made by Prime Minister Desalegn that the country had renewed its efforts to withdraw troops from Somalia, reports Sudan Tribune. Ministry spokesperson Dina Mufti said, “[The prime minister] said Ethiopian Defence Force has to be transferred to those areas where there is need for more stability. He has never said we are going to withdraw”. The announcement by Desalegn on 23 April was met with concern from international monitors due to the widely held belief that Ethiopia has been instrumental in routing al Shabaab terrorists from the countries’ shared border.

Kenya
President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy, William Ruto, nominated six women to powerful positions in the Kenyan Cabinet, reports The Star. Nominations for twelve ministerial positions were publicised on 24 and 25 April. Fourteen additional nods are expected in the coming days, informs All Africa. Amina Mohamed, a highly regarded lawyer and Assistant Secretary-General for the United Nations, was tapped as Foreign Secretary. Furthermore, Deutsche Welle reports that, if approved, Rachel Omamo will become the first female defence minister in the country’s history. Kenyatta also nominated women to four other prominent positions, including Land, Housing and Development, and Health. Nominations must still be vetted and approved by parliament. In other governance news, a judge for the International Criminal Court (ICC) asked to be excused from the case against Kenyatta, reports Al Jazeera. Christina Van Den Wyngaert cited an improper investigation by the court that failed to produce sufficient evidence against Kenyatta.

Somalia
Masked men shot and killed Somalia’s deputy chief prosecutor, Ahmad Shaykh Nur Maalin, on 26 April after he left a mosque, reports BBC. He is the most senior official killed in the country this year. The attack came one week after the assassination of the 34-year-old, award-winning journalist Mohamed Ibrahim Rage as he returned home with his daughter, informs Al Jazeera. The event outraged media activists and spurred Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon to offer an award of USD 50,000 for information leading to an arrest.

Following the spate of recent attacks, an American jihadist in Somalia asserted al Shabaab leader Abu Zubeyr was insane and intent on inciting a civil war. According to the AP, Omar Hammami, a self-identified “Mujahid in Somalia” who possesses US citizenship, tweeted a photograph of himself on 25 April and added that he had been injured, but not killed, by al Shabaab assassins. Hammami’s twitter account, warns of attacks on the Somali national army.

Despite the recent security setbacks, Western countries continue to invest in Somalia’s unfolding stabilisation project. United Kingdom Foreign Secretary William Hague opened a new British embassy in Mogadishu on 25 April, reports BBC. Since 1991, British diplomats to Somalia reside in Nairobi rather than Mogadishu. Describing the reason for re-opening an office in Somalia, Hague told BBC, “We will help bring development needed for long-term peace and prosperity”. To that extent, the UK welcomes Somali political and civil society leaders to London for a much-anticipated state-building conference on 07 May. Abdirahman Sheikh Hamud Farole, president of the semi-autonomous Puntland territory, welcomed Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on 28 April in advance of the London conference. Officials hope the visit will kick-start a national reconciliation dialogue. Somalia was touted as the next standard for a new paradigm in peacebuilding, reports The Guardian. On 19 April, a global consortium of officials, NGOs, and academics met in Washington, DC at the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding to outline a New Deal for engagement with fragile states. Following the 15 April attack by al Shabaab on the country’s Supreme Court, experts pointed to the need for training and technical assistance of the Somali national army (SNA). According to The Guardian, Uganda has trained the SNA for years, largely due to the fact that most countries did not want to engage in the difficult and dangerous task of reconstituting a military that consists largely of young, under-equipped men.
three or more federating states in the region, state control of natural resources, infrastructure development and the provision of basic needs. MEND has since garnered sympathy from the people of Niger Delta, thus affording them protection and secrecy. Unlike other militant groups, such as Boko Haram, MEND is perceived by many as a “justice-seeking” movement rather than a terrorist organisation.

Between early 2006 and the end of September 2008, MEND militants carried out several attacks and kidnappings, according to the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). During this period, the federal government’s Joint Task Force (JTF) carried out numerous military operations in the restive Delta region against MEND militants, many of which resulted in fatal clashes. MEND’s tactic of choice is kidnapping foreign oil workers. The group has also carried out several car bombings and attacks on oil pipelines. Such attacks and kidnappings reportedly disrupted the oil exports of Nigeria, resulting in losses of hundreds of thousands of barrels per day (bpd). MEND tends to release kidnapped oil workers after negotiations. However, the group has denied seeking ransom money in an effort to disassociate themselves from criminal activities of smaller militant groups.

Due to persistent militant attacks, President Yar’Auda ordered a military crackdown in the region in June 2008. The Niger Delta subsequently saw its heaviest clashes in two years after MEND declared an “oil war” on 16 September. On 21 September 2008, MEND declared a unilateral ceasefire, although the JTF remained cautious about the group’s move. However, on 30 January 2009, MEND called-off the ceasefire following a JTF attack on one of their camps the same day. The group said they would retaliate with attacks on the oil sector in an operation called “Hurricane Obama”. Despite attacks on oil pipelines in May 2009, tensions remained low throughout 2009. The situation appeared to be ameliorating as the government offered an amnesty programme for the militants and held negotiations to develop the restive region. However, on 19 December 2009, MEND attacked a major crude pipeline as a “warning” strike to show their frustration over the stalled peace talks attributed to President Yar’Auda’s worsening health. In a statement, the group explained: “A situation where the future of the Niger Delta is tied to the health and well-being of one man is unacceptable.” The following month, MEND called-off another ceasefire, which had been in place for three months.

Aside from three significant attacks in 2010, renewed threats of violence in 2011, and attacks in February and March 2012, the group has remained mostly dormant in recent years. However, on 05 April 2013, MEND spokesman Jomo Gbomo threatened to resume attacks after a South African court sentenced the group’s presumed leader, Henry Okah, to 24 years in prison on terrorism charges. Okah denies being the leader of MEND; however, he has said that he “commands the support of many armed factions” in the Niger Delta region. On 06 April 2013, the group attacked security forces, and killed fifteen policemen, while suffering two casualties. The Operation Barbarossa. Following renewed threats by MEND, government forces were put on “red alert”, MEND said that its attacks, perpetrated under codename “Hurricane Exodus”, will be “a direct repercussion of a forged threat letter, contrived by the Nigerian and South African governments, purporting to have originated from MEND. The fake letter was used as evidence against Henry Okah, for which a thirteen-month sentence was passed” and added, “We are now determined to conjure this imaginary trumped-up threat into a painful reality”.

Moving Forward

The size of the membership of the armed groups in the region remains unclear. Currently, the Niger Delta is estimated to have over 60,000 militants. A recent study conducted by the Delta State government in 2007 found 48 recognisable groups in the state for a total of over 25,000 militants who possess 10,000 weapons. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) puts the total number of such groups at 120. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the groups are motivated by the exploitation of resources by oil companies and government.

The leadership structure of MEND also remains unclear, but a START profile indicates the group is led by a “notoriously shadowy and secretive elite cadre”. According to the report, communication with MEND is still managed by Jomo Gbomo, former MEND spokesman. Ike Okonta, a research fellow in contemporary African politics at the University of Oxford, says he has spoken to the leaders of MEND, who choose to remain anonymous for security reasons. “They have to work in such a way that the government does not get into their working structure,” said Okonta. According to Olly Owen, a research associate at the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) in Nigeria, MEND leadership maintains anonymity due to the arrest of NDPVF leader Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. The leader was captured in 2004 following his public threat of war against the Nigerian government. Owen also argues that MEND leaders are “recycled from other organizations” such as Asari’s group and the Ijaw Youth Congress.

Most recently on 22 April, MEND issued warnings that it would take action to save Christians from Boko Haram violence in the north of the country, according to All Africa. A statement by the group said: “On behalf of the hapless Christian population in Nigeria, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta will from Friday, May 31, 2013, embark on a crusade to save Christiani-ty in Nigeria from annihilation” and added “the bombings of mosques, hajj camps, Islamic institutions, large congregations in Islamic events and assassinations of clerics that propagate doctrines of hate, will form the core mission of this crusade code named Operation Barbarossa”. The National President of the Arewa Youth Forum, Alhaji Ibrahim Gambo Gujungu, sent a warning message to MEND on behalf of northern youths, saying that the group is ready to fight back if MEND realises its threats. On the other hand, the Nigerian government’s JTF in the Niger Delta issued a statement dismissing the MEND threat, arguing that the group ceased to exist since the 2009 amnesty and the current threats are merely imposters.

Conclusion

MEND evolved as an effort to redress social inequality and injustice for the people of the Niger Delta, a cause that is as relevant today as it was in 2006. While the group may have the support of the people for whom it fights, the possible ramifications of the re-emergence of MEND include major disruptions to oil production in the country, loss of life, and reduced security in the Niger Delta region, as seen in the past. Moreover, the threats of retaliation by other armed groups in the country against MEND, combined with the government security forces’ scepticism regarding MEND’s very existence, may create insecurity for the country if left unaddressed. The government must act quickly to not only ensure peace and security in the region, but to address the root causes of MEND’s insurgency, including social equity and protection of the environment in regard to the country’s abundant oil resources.

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1MEND carried out an attack on a government building in Delta state on 15 March, detonated two car bombs in the capital Abuja during Independence Day (02 October), and claimed responsibility for an attack on an oil pipeline in November 2010.