



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Nigeria: Islamist extremist groups in North East Nigeria

Version 3.0

July 2021

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 19 July 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by members of Boko Haram because of a person's actual or perceived opposition to the group, and/or because the person is not compliant with Boko Haram ideology, for example women who work or are in education and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 **Boko Haram** split in 2016 into 2 groups:

- Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA or ISWAP); and
- Jamaat Ahl al-Sunna li-Dawa wal-Jihad (JASDJ) or Boko Haram

1.2.2 These groups are referred to collectively as Boko Haram throughout the assessment section of the note for consistency but sources in the COI section refer to the groups by name (see [Overview and names](#)).

1.2.3 **Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan** is an Islamist terrorist organisation based in northern Nigeria. It is also known as Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa (Ansaru) and al-Qaeda in the Lands Beyond the Sahel. Ansaru reportedly broke away from Boko Haram in 2012 and is now affiliated with al-Qaeda. Ansaru, while active, is smaller and less capable than Boko Haram. This note does not assess the risk of persecution or serious harm arising from Ansaru.

1.2.4 Where a claim from an adult male is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94(3) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Nigeria is listed as a designated state in respect of men only. Such a claim must be certified under section 94(3) if you are satisfied it is clearly unfounded, in line with the Home Office Guidance on [Certification of protection and human rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).

2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

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Official – sensitive: End of section

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Boko Haram have been responsible for serious human rights abuses (see [Conflict related violence](#) and [Targets of violence](#))
- 2.2.2 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.3 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.
- 2.2.4 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 A person's actual or imputed religion, political opinion and/or membership of a particular social group, for example as a LGBTI person or a woman who works or is in education.
- 2.3.2 Establishing a convention reason alone is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the particular person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their actual or imputed convention reason
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Risk

- 2.4.1 Formed in 2002, Boko Haram (BH) is the collective term used to describe militant Islamist groups based in North East Nigeria, primarily in Borno state, and the wider Lake Chad Basin. Their ultimate goals include creating a Sharia state in Nigeria and West Africa, de-stabilising the Nigerian Government and removing western influence from the country (see [Boko Haram](#)).

- 2.4.2 Since 2009 Boko Haram has used violence to achieve its aims, primarily in the areas where it is based and continues to operate. The groups are mainly based in the North East of Nigeria with an increase in insurgent attacks in Borno State, although more recently the insurgency has begun to expand across northern and central Nigeria and into neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger (see [Boko Haram](#) and [Conflict-related violence](#)).
- 2.4.3 Boko Haram has used a variety of forms of violence, including both targeted killings and indiscriminate violence, often in public places where crowds gather. The nature of the violence used has included: armed attacks on, and person-borne improvised explosive devices (IED) and suicide bombings of various locations including military bases, checkpoints, marketplaces, schools, humanitarian centres, churches and mosques. They have also conducted kidnappings (see [Boko Haram](#) and [Conflict-related violence](#)).
- 2.4.4 The groups often attack government, military and civilian targets as well as humanitarian sites and aid workers - as well as attacks against refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The groups have also attacked government figures and those with opposing political beliefs and those interfering with access to resources, focussing on security personnel but also attacking civilians. There have been incidents of indiscriminate violence against civilians but in general the groups target anyone who is (or is perceived to be) challenging or in opposition to the groups including:
- members of the police and military
 - politicians and government employees
 - humanitarian workers
 - individuals perceived as supporting 'western' concepts such as secular education, for example teachers
 - Muslims who do not support its aims (see [Ideology and aims](#))
 - Christians
 - traditional leaders
 - prominent clerics (see [Conflict related violence](#) and [Targets of violations](#))
- 2.4.5 The groups have also forcibly recruited and abducted thousands of men, women and children, subjecting many to intimidation and abuse including sexual violence, forced marriage and using young girls, in particular, to carry person-borne IED's/as suicide bombers (see [Targets of violations](#)).
- 2.4.6 The Government has engaged in a counter-insurgency campaign against Boko Haram, deploying thousands of troops to the North East region. However, the groups still have freedom to operate and move around large areas of North East Nigeria (see [Areas of operation](#), [Targets of violations](#) and [State protection](#)).
- 2.4.7 The ongoing insecurity and violence, and consequential deteriorating socio-economic situation, has led to the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of over 2.1 million people. In 2019 an estimated 5.2 million people received humanitarian assistance in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe

states out of a population of over 9.5 million (see [Geographical regions](#), [Conflict-related violence](#) and [Targets of violations](#)).

- 2.4.8 A person who does not agree with, or support the beliefs of, Boko Haram in Borno state and parts of Adamawa and Yobe states is likely be at risk of serious harm or persecution. This also extends to those who choose to remain in areas under control by the Nigerian State or refuse to take up arms against it, as are women and children. However, within Nigeria Boko Haram's attacks are largely confined to the North East and the groups have limited influence or capacity to target persons outside of the region. Therefore, persons in areas outside of the North East are unlikely to be at risk of serious harm or persecution from the group.
- 2.4.9 Each case needs to be considered on its individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face a risk of persecution or serious harm.
- 2.4.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from non-state actors, including 'rogue' state actors, decision makers must assess whether the state can provide effective protection.
- 2.5.2 Nigeria's security and law enforcement are managed at the federal level through the Nigerian military, the police, and the State Security System (the intelligence services). The government has increased counterterrorism efforts, deploying thousands of troops to North East Nigeria in an effort to curtail the insurgency with civilians being relocated near 'supercamps' and urban IDP camps in a bid by the security services to protect them (see [State protection](#)).
- 2.5.3 The effectiveness of military operations in the North East are undermined by multiple security challenges across the country but the security forces ability to counter all threats simultaneously is severely constrained by available resource. The military have not always succeeded in adequately protecting people from Boko Haram attacks, and have reportedly committed various human rights violations against civilians and those suspected of supporting Boko Haram (see [State protection](#) and [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)).
- 2.5.4 Boko Haram continues to be able to operate in rural areas of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, and to be able to attack targets in rural and urban areas in the North East of the country (see [State protection](#) and [Country policy and information note: Actors of protection](#)).
- 2.5.5 In areas outside of the North East where the threat is from Boko Haram, the authorities are generally able and willing to provide effective protection. Women, LGBTI persons and non-indigenes may face additional discrimination which prevents them from being able to access effective protection (see [Country Policy and Information Note on Actors of Protection](#) and [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression](#)).

- 2.5.6 The standard of protection to be applied is not one that eliminates all risk to its citizens. It is sufficient that a country has a system of criminal law which makes attacks by non-State actors (or 'rogue' state actors) punishable and that there is a reasonable willingness and ability to enforce the law. No country can offer complete protection and certain levels of ill treatment may still occur even if a government acts to prevent it.
- 2.5.7 Each case, therefore, needs to be considered on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that protection would not be available.
- 2.5.8 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 Decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person (see [Country policy and information note: Internal relocation](#)).
- 2.6.2 Nigeria is a large country with a population of over 200 million, covering an area of over 900,000 sq km (around 4 times the size of the UK) comprised of 36 states, and has several large and multicultural cities. There are no legal barriers to internal relocation within the country. Movement may be hampered by safety concerns and curfews, particularly in areas where there are ongoing security issues such as the North East. However, many Nigerians continue to migrate across the country, between states and from north to south for economic and other reasons such as cultural differences and religion (see [Freedom of movement](#) and [Country policy and information notes: Background note and Internal relocation](#)).
- 2.6.3 Boko Haram's influence and activities are largely confined to the North Eastern states, particularly Borno, while areas in central and southern Nigeria are generally not directly affected by its activities (see [Boko Haram](#) and [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 2.6.4 In general, there are parts of the country to which a person can relocate where they would not have a well-founded fear of persecution/real risk of suffering serious harm from Boko Haram and it will be reasonable for a person to relocate there. However, relocation may be more difficult for women and girls, and non-indigenes without access to support networks. Each case will need to be considered on its particular facts.
- 2.6.5 For information relevant to and assessment of internal relocation generally, see the [country policy and information note, Internal relocation](#).
- 2.6.6 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

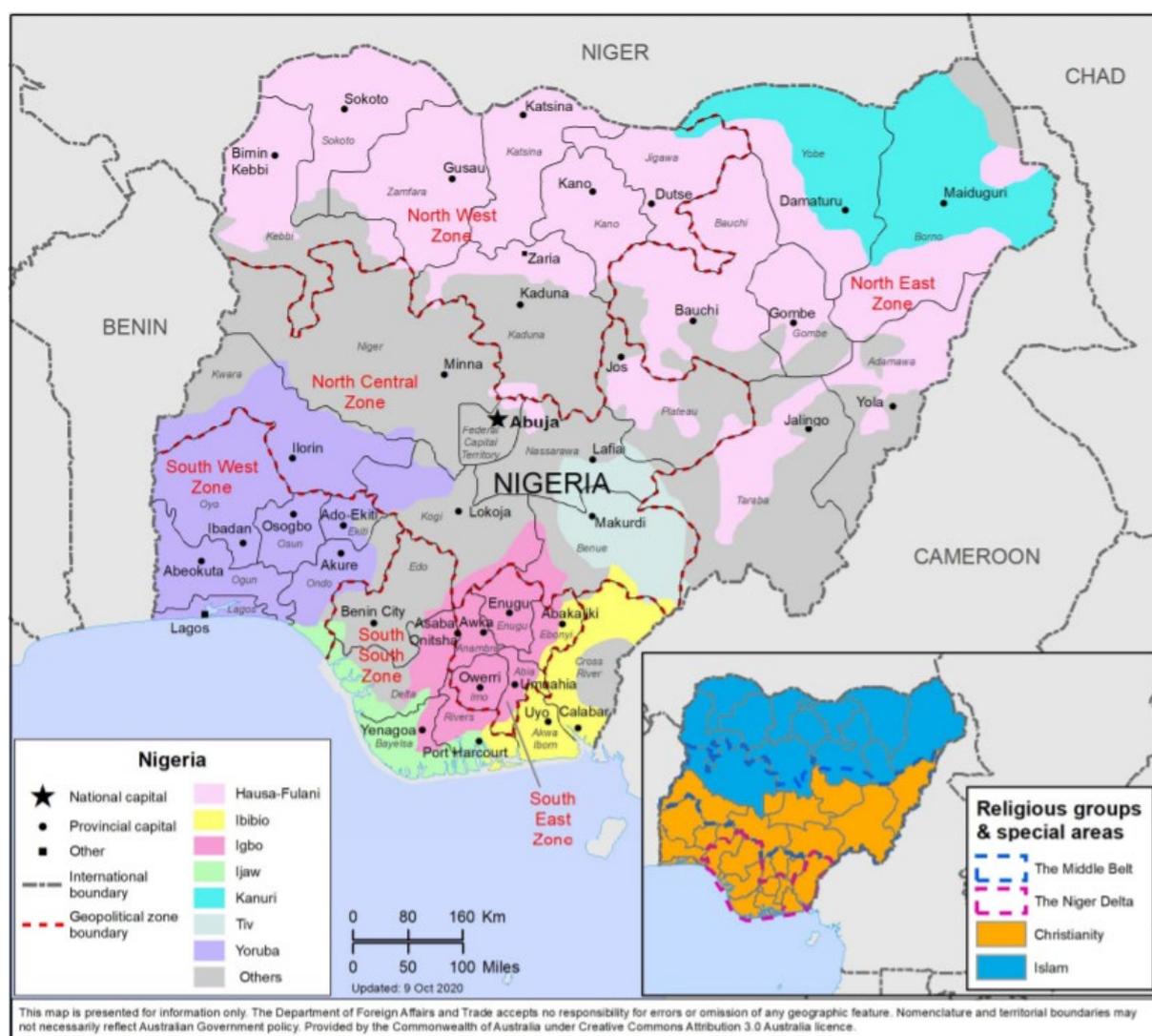
Section 3 updated: 30 June 2021

3. Background

3.1 Geographical regions

3.1.1 The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) country information report of December 2020 stated: 'Nigeria is a federal presidential republic composed of 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The 36 states are grouped into six geopolitical zones: North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East and South.'

3.1.2 DFAT produced a map of the country, describing the administrative boundaries, main cities and ethnic groups²



3.1.3 Nigeria is divided into 36 states and one territory: 'Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Federal Capital Territory, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna,

¹ DFAT, 'Country information report: Nigeria' (paragraph 2.38), updated 3 December 2020

² DFAT, 'Country information report: Nigeria' (page 2), updated 3 December 2020

Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara.’³

3.1.4 The following map produced for the Demographic and Health Survey 2018⁴ shows the states across Nigeria, North East state is shown in green



3.1.5 According to the National Population Commission, Nigeria, Borno’s population was 4,171,547; Adamawa’s 3,179,500 and Yobe’s 2,320,916⁵.

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3.2 Demography

3.2.1 The most significant social, cultural and geographical divide in Nigeria is between the north and the south. A Country of Origin Information Report produced by the European Asylum Support Office in 2017 noted:

‘Nigeria is a large and complex country, with much internal variation, but the main divide that is brought up by Nigerians and foreign commentators alike, is the divide between the country’s south and north. This divide is based on historical, environmental, economic, cultural, linguistic, religious and political

³ CIA World Factbook, ‘[Nigeria](#)’, updated 25 January 2021

⁴ National Population Commission, [Nigeria DHS – 2018 – Final report](#) (page 8), 2018

⁵ National Population Commission, [Nigeria DHS – 2018 – Final report](#) (page 489), 2018

differences between these two parts. Nigeria did not exist as a unified territory before colonial times and was even administratively split between a northern and a southern region for a period under British rule. These differences have continued, despite Nigeria existing as one country for more than a century, and despite widespread internal migration between the regions.

‘According to a 2011 op-ed article by John Campbell, the former American ambassador to Nigeria, political power sharing between northern and southern Nigeria is sensitive due to socio-economic imbalances, as the south is wealthier than the north due to extensive oil reserves in the Niger Delta and well-developed urban commercial wealth in Lagos. In southern Nigeria, there are two main ethnic groups (Yoruba and Ibo), with a majority population who are Christians, and a significant Muslim population in Yorubaland. Local conflicts in the south rarely have a religious dimension and are usually based on ethnic differences or resource competition, especially in the Niger Delta. Northern Nigeria has a larger population, a smaller percentage of whom are educated in comparison to the south. The economy of the north is in decline, and the region has among the weakest health and economic indicators globally.’⁶

3.2.2 The DFAT report 2020 described the demography of Nigeria stated:

‘Nigeria is composed of over 250 ethnic groups [speaking almost 400 different languages⁷]... The Hausa, based predominantly in the north, is the largest, comprising 30 per cent of the population, followed by the Yoruba in the southwest (15.5 per cent), the Igbo in the southeast (15.2 per cent) and the Fulani in the north (6 per cent). English is the official language...

‘While Nigerians of all ethnic backgrounds reside across the country, particularly in major cities, many ethnic groups are concentrated geographically.

‘Nigerians predominantly practise Islam and Christianity, with 51.6 per cent of the population identified as Muslim (majority Sunni) and 46.9 per cent identified as Christian. The population is broadly divided between a Muslim north and a Christian south, although there are communities of each located nationwide.’⁸

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Section 4 updated: 15 July 2021

4. Boko Haram (BH)

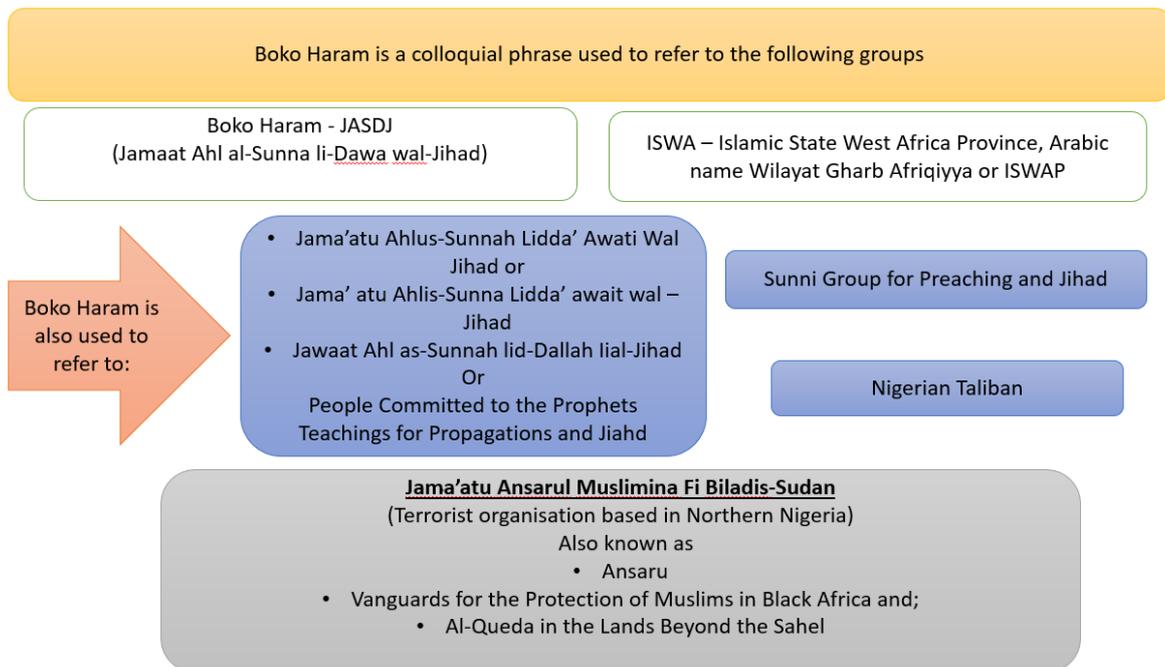
4.1 Overview and names

4.1.1 The graphic below describes the various names and groups linked to Boko Haram:

⁶ EASO [COI Country Focus Report](#) (para 1.2.1), June 2017

⁷ DFAT, [‘Country information report: Nigeria’](#) (paragraphs 3.2), updated 3 December 2020

⁸ DFAT, [‘Country information report: Nigeria’](#) (paragraphs 2.9 and 3.2), updated 3 December 2020



9 10 11 12 13 14 15

4.1.2 The Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) in an April 2020 report stated:

'In July 2009, Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of a movement that called for a more Islamic way of life and protested corruption, inequality, and immorality, was killed by state security forces along with hundreds of his followers. Those that remained re-formed as Jama'atu Ahl al-Sunna li-l-Da'wa wa-l-Jihad (JASDJ), which translates to "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad," and is commonly known as Boko Haram. JASDJ initially focused on targeting security forces and government officials. However, over time the group started attacking entire communities, carrying out mass killings, abductions, forced recruitment, and sexual enslavement of women and girls. JASDJ successfully captured the majority of Borno state, significant parts of neighboring Adamawa and Yobe states, and declared the establishment of their caliphate...'¹⁶

4.1.3 Janes website stated:

'The Islamic State's Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya, or West Africa province, was formed in March 2015 with the Islamic State's acceptance of the pledge of allegiance made by Jamaat Ahl al-Sunna li-Dawa wal-Jihad, more commonly known as Boko Haram. Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya continued Boko Haram's campaign of violence aiming for the creation of territorial control and the implementation of its fundamentalist interpretation of sharia (Islamic law) in

⁹ CIA World Factbook, '[Nigeria – Terrorist organisations](#)', updated 25 January 2021

¹⁰ Danish Immigration Service: '[Violent Extremism in West Africa](#)' (p8-10), 29 June 2020

¹¹ USSD, '[Country reports on terrorism 2019 - Ansaru](#)' (chapter 5) 24 June 2020

¹² USSD, '[Country reports on terrorism 2019 - Boko Haram](#)', (chapter 5) 24 June 2020

¹³ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya - Overview, subscription only, updated 3 December 2020

¹⁴ RULAC, '[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)', 23 November 2020

¹⁵ FCDO, '[Foreign travel advice: Nigeria – Terrorism](#)', last updated 25 June 2021

¹⁶ CIVIC, '[To Defend or Harm? Community Militias in Borno State](#)', Nigeria, 30 April 2020

north-eastern Nigeria. While the majority of Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya operations remain conducted in this area, primarily Borno State, the group has also expanded operationally across the Lake Chad border region, conducting attacks in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. While territory held by the group in northeast Nigeria was recaptured by multinational regional forces in 2015-16, since then Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya has refocused its operations on the security forces, consistently attacking and overrunning military bases and positions throughout northeast Borno and in neighbouring Niger and Cameroon, creating areas of de facto territorial control, while coopting/coercing the local population. In addition to operations in the Lake Chad region, Islamic State activities in the Sahel are also claimed under the Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya aegis, although the full extent of support/assistance between the two distinct groups of fighters is unclear.¹⁷

4.1.4 Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts (RULAC) in a November 2020 country report stated:

'Ansaru is an armed group also known as the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa and al-Qaeda in the Lands Beyond the Sahel. It is a Jihadist splinter group of Boko Haram and is based in the north-eastern part of Nigeria... Following intense fighting in 2012 and 2013, armed confrontations between Ansaru and the government have substantially decreased. Furthermore, in 2016 Ansaru's leader was arrested by Nigerian armed forces... Since January 2020, Ansaru has started operating again and has claimed armed attacks for the first time since 2013. Specifically, on 14-15 January 2020 Ansaru "killed at least six people and destroyed several vehicles during an ambush along the Kaduna-Zaira highway in Kaduna State."... On 5 February 2019, Nigerian police forces raided a camp of Asaru in Kuduru forest, Kaduna state; the operation resulted in the death of over 250 militants and of 2 officers... While the intensity of violence is not enough to conclude that there is a non-international armed conflict between the government of Nigeria and Ansaru, it is worth mentioning this development and monitoring the evolution of the situation.'¹⁸

4.1.5 The DFAT report 2020 observed:

'Boko Haram, which translates roughly to "western education is sinful" in the Hausa language, is a radical Islamist movement that has fought since 2009 to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state in northern Nigeria. The organisation split into two factions in 2016, one pledging allegiance to the so called Islamic State organisation (Da'esh) and calling itself the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP); the other known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'await Wal-Jihad (JAS). Most Nigerians still refer to both groups collectively as Boko Haram.'¹⁹

4.1.6 UK foreign travel advice for UK nationals visiting Nigeria published by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, gives an overview of

¹⁷Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya - Overview, subscription only, updated 3 December 2020

¹⁸ RULAC, '[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)', 23 November 2020

¹⁹ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 2.59), updated 3 December 2020

terrorist groups operating in Nigeria, the website gave the following information:

‘Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA)

‘**Boko Haram or JASDJ** is an Islamist terrorist group operating in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The group aspire to establish a Sharia State in Nigeria and West Africa, de-stabilise the Nigerian government and remove western influence from the country.

‘The group was formerly linked to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). On 12 March 2015, Daesh (formerly referred to as ISIL) accepted a pledge of allegiance by Boko Haram. In August 2016, the group split into 2 factions: Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) and JASDJ or Boko Haram.

‘ISWA is affiliated with ISIS core in Iraq and Syria and has expressed an intention to target Nigerian government, Christian and western interests. ISWA have launched a series of successful attacks against Nigerian military locations, increased their freedom of movement across Borno and Yobe states, and taken multiple hostages.

‘Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Vanguard for the protection of Muslims in Black Africa) (Ansaru)

‘Ansaru is an Islamist terrorist organisation based in northern Nigeria, and is proscribed by the UK. It emerged in 2012 and is motivated by an anti-Nigerian Government and anti-Western agenda.

‘Ansaru is broadly aligned with Al Qaeda. Since 2012, the group has kidnapped at least 8 hostages, mainly Europeans. They are believed to have killed a number of hostages, including 2 British nationals.’²⁰

- 4.1.7 See also USSD TIP report’s definitions: [Country reports on terrorism 2019](#), (chapter 5).

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4.2 Leadership and structure

- 4.2.1 The following table was compiled using information from a number of sources, including CIA World Factbook: Nigeria, the Danish Immigration Service the US Congressional Research Service report Nigeria: Current issues and US policy and Africanews.

Timeline	Group	Event	Leader
2002	Boko Haram also known as JASDJ	Boko Haram formed	Mohammed YUSUF (Muslim cleric)
2009 / 2010	Boko Haram / JASDJ	Appoints new leader	Abubakar Shekau (aka Mohammed Abubakar bin Mohammad)

²⁰ FCDO, [Foreign travel advice: Nigeria – Terrorism](#), last updated 25 June 2021

2015	Boko Haram /JASDJ becomes Islamic State West Africa (ISWAP)	Abubakar Shekau pledges loyalty to Islamic State aka the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL/ISIS –Boko Haram rebranded to Islamic State West Africa Province (IS-WA – aka ISWAP or ISIS-WA)	Abubakar Shekau. Boko Haram has a shura council under Shekau that commands the group’s regionally based cells
2015 / 2016	Islamic State West Africa - ISWAP	Abu Musab al-Barnawi is appointed as the de facto leader of ISWAP. Leading to a dispute as Shekau refuses to accept. The group splits into 2 factions	Abu Musab al-Barnawi
2016	Boko Haram / JASDJ	Shekau’s group adopts groups original name of JASDJ (Boko Haram)	Abubakar Shekau
2016	Islamic State West Africa Province – ISWAP (in Arabic - Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya)	Barnawi’s faction	Abu Musab al-Barnawi (aka Habib ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf) Son of Boko Haram’s deceased founder Muhammad Yusuf
Feb 2019	ISWAP	Successor to Abu Musab al-Barnawi	Abu Abdullah ibn Umar al-Barnawi
March 2020	ISWAP	Leader usurped in a coup	Sha Ima (unconfirmed)
May 2021	Boko Haram / JASDJ	Abubakar Shekau killed during conflict with ISWAP	Bakura Modu, known as Sahaba (unconfirmed)

- 4.2.2 RULAC in a November 2020 country report based on a variety of sources stated: ‘The leader of Boko Haram, the Amir, is the head of the Shura, namely the council of elders. The council has seven members, and each one of them leads a ministry across the administration of the group. Commanders have executive powers and sub-commanders direct and lead foot-soldier operations, called maaskars.’²⁶
- 4.2.3 Janes website stated:
 ‘The group [Boko Haram] has been split into two mutually hostile factions since August 2016, after its leader since 2010, Mohammed Abubakar bin Mohammad (alias Abubakar Shekau), was replaced by Habib ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf (alias Abu Musab al-Barnawi). In March 2020, the leader of the Islamic State-backed mainstream faction and Abu Musab’s successor, Abu Abdullah ibn Umar al-Barnawi, was usurped in a coup, after which the faction’s targeting of civilians has increased.’²⁷
- 4.2.4 With regard the leadership of the two groups referred to as Boko Haram Janes stated:
 ‘Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya was led by Abu Abdullah ibn Umar al-Barnawi, who served as wali (governor) of the province, until a reported coup in March 2020 catalysed by disaffection at the group’s somewhat softened ideological direction. According to regional security sources, Abu Abdullah was appointed wali in February 2019, following the deposing of his predecessor Habib ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf (alias Abu Musab al-Barnawi) by hardline elements of the group’s senior command. Abu Abdullah’s leadership was then confirmed in a 4 March 2019 audio statement from Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya. According to sources contacted by Janes in August 2020, an individual identified only as Sha Ima replaced Abu Abdullah, though this has not been confirmed by the faction, the Islamic State, or independent media sources.
 ‘Abu Musab, the son of Boko Haram’s deceased founder Muhammad Yusuf, had been appointed wali by the Islamic State central leadership in August 2016. This appointment prompted a factional split in the group, with a dissident faction loyal to Abubakar Shekau – who had led Boko Haram since 2010 – splintering away from the mainstream faction led by Abu Musab.’²⁸
- 4.2.5 Africa News reported on 17 June 2021 that the death of the Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau had been confirmed by the presumed new leader

²¹ CRS, ‘[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)’, 18 September 2020

²² Encyclopedia Britannica, [Boko Haram](#), 26 February 2020

²³ Danish Immigration Service: ‘[Violent Extremism in West Africa](#)’ (p8-10), 29 June 2020

²⁴ CIA World Factbook, ‘[Nigeria – Terrorist organisations](#)’, updated 25 January 2021

²⁵ Africanews, ‘[Nigeria: Death of Boko Haram leader Shekau indubitably confirmed](#)’, 17 June 2021

²⁶ RULAC, ‘[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)’, 23 November 2020

²⁷ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya - Overview, subscription only, updated 3 December 2020

²⁸ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Insurgency and terrorism - leadership, subscription only, last updated 19 August 2020

of Boko Haram - Bakura Modu, known as Sahaba. Shekau reportedly died after he blew himself up during 'conflict with the rival Islamic State Nigeria.'²⁹

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4.3 Ideology and aims

4.3.1 The American Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), in a compilation of data 'Boko Haram's Deadly Impact', published on 20 August 2018, noted that Boko Haram continued to challenge government authority in Nigeria's northeast and beyond, and that it reportedly collected taxes and provided some services in areas it controls³⁰.

4.3.2 The EASO report on targeting of individuals of November 2018, based on a range of sources, noted:

'Boko Haram's official Arabic name, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, translates into "People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad". ... Boko Haram is the unofficial name of the organisation... that in Hausa language means "Western education is forbidden" or "Western education is sin"... , depending on the sources...

'Boko Haram is a group of Salafi-jihadist ideology... that defends the replacement of the secular Nigerian state by an Islamic one with strict compliance to Sharia law, throughout the country... The establishment of such state (caliphate) aims at addressing shortcomings in the Nigerian society, including corruption and lack of good governance..., that can be achieved through violence..., not only against westerners, but also against other Muslims, if considered 'violators' (those who do not support the group, including Sufis or Shia)...'³¹

4.3.3 A Danish Immigration Service report 'Violent Extremism in West Africa' from June 2020 stated:

'The group was possibly formed in northeast Nigeria at the turn of the millennium, claiming its opposition not only to Western civilisation but also to the secularisation of the Nigerian state.

'There is a fair consensus that Boko Haram activities in its first years were more or less peaceful and that its radicalisation followed a government clampdown in 2009, in which some 800 of its members were killed. After the attack, the groups leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed while in police custody. In March 2015, the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, pledged allegiance to IS. Five days later, IS recognised the pledge. The same month, IS spokesman Abou Mohamed al-Adnani released an audio message directing individuals who could not enter Iraq or Syria to travel to West Africa. Upon the pledge of allegiance to IS in 2015, Boko Haram formally ceased to exist, and the former Boko Haram group, under the name of ISWAP, increased its violence, especially its suicide bombings and particularly those conducted by women and children.

²⁹ Africa News, '[Nigeria: Death of Boko Haram leader Shekau indubitably confirmed](#)', 17 June 2021

³⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, '[Boko Haram's Deadly Impact](#)', 20 August 2018

³¹ EASO, '[Targeted individuals 2018](#)' (pages 21-22), November 2018

'By August 2016, tension in the relationship between ISWAP and the IS central leadership became apparent. The IS leadership appointed another leading figure within the group, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, as the de facto leader of ISWAP. Abubakar Shekau refused to accept this. Consequently, IS in West Africa split into two factions, al-Barnawi's faction and Shekau's faction...'³²

4.3.4 The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in a July 2020 report stated: 'This idea of killing the "infidel" is at the heart of the ideological narrative of Boko Haram. The group aims to replace the Nigerian secular state with its own version of an Islamic caliphate.'³³

4.3.5 A Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, 'Current Issues and US policy' from September 2020 and citing various sources stated:

'Founded in the early 2000s as a Salafist Muslim reform movement, Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal Jihad (JAS), known as Boko Haram ("Western education is forbidden" in the Hausa language), has evolved and expanded since 2009 to become one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups. It espouses an "exclusivist" interpretation of Islam that rejects as sacrilegious the more moderate Islam practiced in much of northern Nigeria, and has attracted some supporters by stoking a sense of state persecution and victimhood.'³⁴

4.3.6 Janes website stated:

'Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya's [West Africa province or Boko Haram] primary aim is to establish a territorial state entity governed according to the group's fundamentalist interpretation of sharia (Islamic law), which is pursued in the context of the Islamic State's transnational caliphal project. It seeks to achieve this by attacking security forces and creating areas of de facto territorial control, with the aim to establish full control and implement governance...

'Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya does not participate in the Nigerian political system, which it considers heretical according to the group's fundamentalist interpretation of sharia.

'The mainstream faction has increasingly attempted to engage in governance activities in territories under its de facto control, an effort extensively publicised by central Islamic State media, including the provision of basic services and education, and the ability to tax civilians.'³⁵

4.3.7 The DFAT report 2020 observed: 'Boko Haram promotes a strict version of Islam that forbids Muslims from taking part in any political or social activity associated with Western society, including voting in elections, wearing shirts or trousers, drinking alcohol or receiving a secular education.'³⁶

³² Danish Immigration Service: '[Violent Extremism in West Africa](#)' (pages 8-9), 29 June 2020

³³ ISS, '[Making sense of resilience in the Boko Haram crisis](#)', 8 July 2020

³⁴ CRS, '[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)' (page 5), 18 September 2020

³⁵ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya - Aims & objectives, subscription only, updated 17 March 2020

³⁶ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraph 2.60), updated 3 December 2020

- 4.3.8 The CIA factbook stated that the aim of Boko Haram is to ‘establish an Islamic state in Nigeria based on Islamic law.’³⁷

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4.4 Size and capability

- 4.4.1 A Danish Immigration Service report ‘Violent Extremism in West Africa’ from June 2020 stated:

‘In April 2018, estimates from the US Department of Defence put the membership of Barnawi’s IS faction at 3,500 fighters. According to the same source, Shekau’s faction counted 1,500. As of July 2018, Barnawi’s faction was the largest IS faction in Africa with roughly three and a half times as many fighters as the second largest IS cell in Africa, Islamic State-Sinai (in Egypt), and more fighters than all other IS cells in Africa combined. In February 2020, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (CTC at West Point) and the UN estimated that ISWAP had approximately 3,500-5,000 fighters. However, despite its still relatively large fighter base, Barnawi’s ISWAP cell currently has lower fighter numbers than when the Barnawi and Shekau groups were unified under the moniker of Boko Haram before their split in 2016.’³⁸

- 4.4.2 A CRS report from September 2020 stated: ‘As of late 2019, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) estimated IS-WA to have roughly 3,500 members, and Boko Haram to have 1,500. In August 2020, the U.N. Secretary-General’s report on global Islamic State operations noted that IS-WA “remains a major focus of ISIL global propaganda” and described it as “one of the largest and most conspicuous of [ISIL’s] remote provinces.”’³⁹

- 4.4.3 RULAC in a November 2020 report stated: ‘Boko Haram’s military equipment and weaponry includes AK47s, improvised explosive devices, grenades, mortars, petrol bombs and Hilux vehicles.... Furthermore, it has been reported that Boko Haram also uses rocket-propelled grenades and may have the capacity to manufacture weapons.’⁴⁰

- 4.4.4 Janes website stated:

‘The shura and military commanders representing various regions are the organisational centre of the mainstream faction of Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya. While previously local units had seemingly operated with a significant degree of autonomy, the group’s growing capacity since 2016 to mobilise forces from different localities to participate in major assaults on military bases in northeast Nigeria likely indicates a growing extent of centralization under the influence of the Islamic State within the mainstream faction.

‘... A former member of the group told Janes in 2020 that the mainstream faction comprised approximately 3,500-5,000 fighters, and that 40% of the group’s members in total were non-combatants. The dissident Shekau-led

³⁷ CIA World Factbook, ‘[Nigeria – Terrorist organisations](#)’, updated 25 January 2021

³⁸ Danish Immigration Service: ‘[Violent Extremism in West Africa](#)’ (page 9), 29 June 2020

³⁹ CRS, ‘[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)’, 18 September 2020

⁴⁰ RULAC, ‘[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)’, 23 November 2020

faction's fighting strength is unknown, but is assessed to be smaller than the mainstream faction's total.'⁴¹

4.4.5 The CIA factbook Nigeria reported that in 2019 Boko Haram was estimated to have between 1,500 and 2,000 fighters, although it is not clear exactly given the different factions of Boko Haram how many groups are included in these numbers⁴².

4.4.6 EASO in their June 2021 report on the security situation in Nigeria (EASO June 2021 security situation report), and using a range of sources stated: 'It is estimated that whilst JAS has 1 500 – 2 000 members, ISWAP has 3 500 – 5 000 members and is both militarily stronger and expanding its reach...'⁴³

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4.5 Recruitment

4.5.1 See also [6.2 Abductions & disappearances](#) and [6.4.1 Women and children](#)

4.5.2 A CRS report from September 2020 stated: 'Security force abuses appear to have fueled recruitment [into Boko Haram] by playing into such narratives [stoking a sense of state persecution and victimhood], while economic motivations also may play a role.'⁴⁴

4.5.3 Janes in an update of January 2021 stated:

'The group's recruitment base is broad, including local middle-class religious students in Nigeria, forced abductees, and seasoned fighters who have joined the group from West Africa or the Sahel, though the largest demographic group in both factions, particularly the dissident one, are ethnic Kanuri. The affiliation with the Islamic State has likely increased recruitment for the group and boosted its appeal to recruits across the broader region...'⁴⁵

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4.6 Funding

4.6.1 The CFR featured on their website a blog post by John Campbell, a former Ambassador who is described on CFR's expert bio page as 'a senior fellow for Africa policy studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, DC'⁴⁶ the post from November 2020 stated:

'There has long been speculation about how Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations are funded. Some funding clearly comes from criminal activity, with kidnapping particularly lucrative, and from bank robberies. Presumably, protection rackets also play a role. At some times and in some places, Boko Haram has been able to impose "taxes" on the local population. Boko Haram has also been involved in trading, especially in the Lake Chad Basin.

⁴¹ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya, Organisation & recruitment, subscription, updated 6 January 2021

⁴² CIA World Factbook, '[Nigeria – Terrorist organisations](#)', updated 25 January 2021

⁴³ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 32), June 2021

⁴⁴ CRS, '[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)', 18 September 2020

⁴⁵ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya, Organisation & recruitment, subscription, updated 6 January 2021

⁴⁶ CFR, [Expert Bio – John Campbell](#), undated

Weapons—a major expense—appear often to come from government armories, sometimes because "the back gate was left unlocked." In southern, predominantly Christian Nigeria, it is often assumed that northern "big men" provide funding for Boko Haram. Most of this is speculation. It also appears likely that Boko Haram's brand of terrorism is cheap; the organization does not require the levels of funding characteristic of terrorist organizations operating in the Middle East or Europe.

‘Significant, therefore, that the Federal Court of Appeals in the United Arab Emirates, which sits in Abu Dhabi, has sentenced to jail six Nigerians for transferring \$782,000 from Dubai to Boko Haram in Nigeria. Two were sentenced to life imprisonment, four to ten years—all for violation of UAE anti-terrorism laws. Two "Boko Haram agents" in Nigeria received the funds, according to media based on court proceedings. One was a "Nigerian government official" who also funneled "government money" to Boko Haram, according to Nigerian media. The defendants did not deny that they transferred to money but claimed that doing so was not illegal. Media accounts are sketchy and incomplete. The defendants could have maintained that the recipients were not Boko Haram.’⁴⁷

4.6.2 RULAC in a November 2020 country report based on a variety of sources stated ‘In order to survive economically, it [ISWAP] collects taxes that are considered fair by the local population, as ISWAP provides public safety in return. The close ties with civilians are also crucial to “to buy food, fuel and medicine as well as sell its produce, which includes charcoal, cattle, hides and fish.”⁴⁸

4.6.3 Janes stated in January 2021 with regard funding:

‘Since the formation of Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya in March 2015, it has allegedly received an extent of support from the Islamic State’s central leadership, such as personnel, financial support, and procurement assistance, although it is likely that any such support has diminished since the territorial defeat of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq in late 2017. As such, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya is dependent on the extortion of religious taxes from the local population in its areas of operation as a key source of revenue. This is part of a wider effort to develop and showcase its capacity for governance, with the group also raising funds through the taxation of local farming and fishing, selective kidnappings-for-ransom, and ambushes of military forces in order to steal weapons and vehicles. The dissident faction funds itself in a more predatory manner, acquiring supplies through raids on civilian communities, cattle rustling, more indiscriminate kidnap-for-ransom, alongside farming and fishing.’⁴⁹

4.6.4 The CIA factbook Nigeria stated that Boko Haram are: ‘[L]argely self-financed through criminal activities such as looting, extortion, kidnapping-for-ransom, bank robberies, cattle rustling, and assassinations for hire; has

⁴⁷ CFR, ‘[Financing Boko Haram](#)’ – John Campbell, 18 November 2020

⁴⁸ RULAC, ‘[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)’, 23 November 2020

⁴⁹ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya - Funding, subscription only, updated 3 December 2020

seized vehicles, weapons, and ammunition from the Nigerian and Nigerian militaries and has acquired other arms from the regional black market.’⁵⁰

- 4.6.5 EASO in their June 2021 security situation report, and using a range of sources stated: ‘Both groups generate revenue through extortion, looting illicit trade and criminal activities, such as kidnappings for ransom...’⁵¹

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4.7 Areas of operation

- 4.7.1 The map below produced by Africa Centre for Strategic Studies in March 2021 shows the North East states of Borno, Adamwa and Yobe. The hot spots show the geographic concentration of security threats linked with militant Islamist groups.



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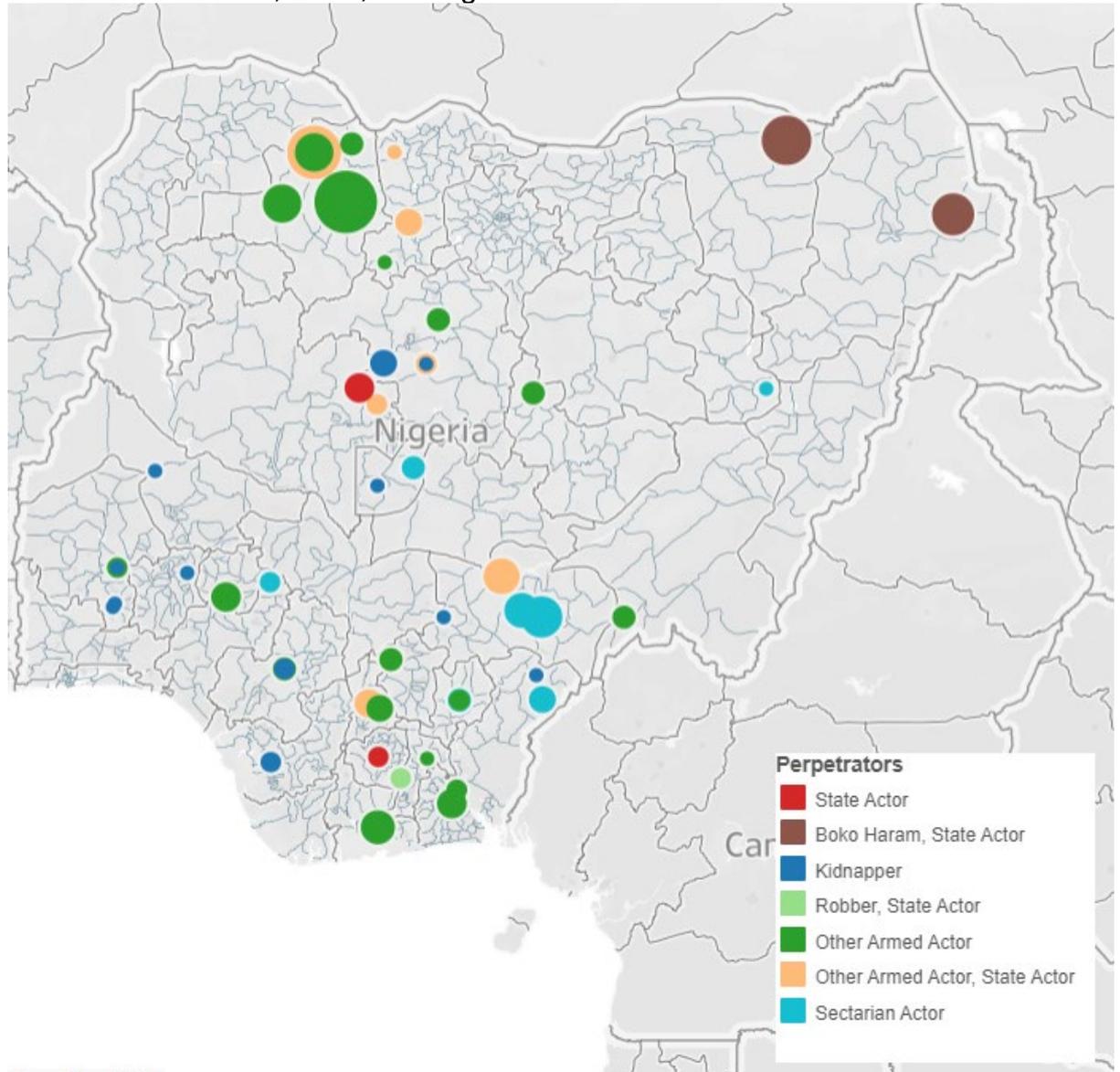
- 4.7.2 The following map from CFR and linked to their [Nigeria Security Tracker](#) is a ‘visualization and description of some of the most significant incidents of political violence in Nigeria from April 17 to April 23, 2021 and showing Boko Haram in brown. This update also represents violence related to Boko

⁵⁰ CIA World Factbook, ‘[Nigeria – Terrorist organisations](#)’, updated 25 January 2021

⁵¹ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 32), June 2021

⁵² ACforSC, ‘[Nigeria’s diverse security threats](#)’, 30 March 2021

Haram in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.⁵³



4.7.3 ACAPS in their Humanitarian Perspective 2019/2020 report stated:

‘Since 2016, Boko Haram has split into two factions. The original group led by Abubakar Shekau operates mainly from its stronghold in Sambisa Forest in southern Borno state. Rivalling splinter group “Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP),” endorsed by the Islamic State in Syria, operates from Lake Chad... Although both groups control less territory overall in 2019 than before the 2015 offensive, they have managed to consolidate their influence in these areas... ISWAP is believed to have gained territory and military strength since 2018... Clashes between both groups have occurred since the split but they have seemingly kept to a ceasefire in 2019 and even carried out some joint attacks early this year [2019].’⁵⁴

4.7.4 A Danish Immigration Service report ‘Violent Extremism in West Africa’ from June 2020 stated: ‘In the following years [since Boko Haram split into two

⁵³ CFR, [Nigeria Security Tracker – weekly update April 17 -23](#), 26 April 2021

⁵⁴ ACAPS, [‘Humanitarian perspectives 2019/2020’](#), 3 December 2019

factions], the branch led by Barnawi primarily operated in the Lake Chad Basin region under the name of ISWAP. Shekau's faction operated near the Sambisa Forest in northeast Nigeria under the name of Boko Haram/JAS but was also sometimes referred to as a second branch of ISWAP.⁵⁵

- 4.7.5 A CRS report from September 2020 stated: 'The conflict also has destabilized adjacent areas of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon in the wider Lake Chad Basin region...

Boko Haram and IS-WA are based in northeast Nigeria, though each remains capable of mounting cross-border attacks in the wider Lake Chad Basin region.⁵⁶

- 4.7.6 Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts (RULAC) in a November 2020 country report stated:

'As of 2019, Boko Haram remains active in northern Nigeria, particularly Borno state with some activity in the neighbouring states, including Adamawa and Yobe...

'Over the years, Boko Haram established control of a significant amount of territory in northeastern Nigeria. This area was declared to be a caliphate, and was used to launch military operations against targets in Nigeria as well as in neighbouring countries... Although the group has suffered crucial losses in terms of territorial control, it still retains control over a small portion of Nigerian territory, notably the Sambisa Forest, the Mandara Mountains and the islands of Lake Chad.'⁵⁷

- 4.7.7 RULAC in the same report stated: 'ISWAP exercises effective control over banks and islands of Lake Chad, where it controls also the civilian settlements and has established a "proto-state." In the areas surrounding its core territory, ISWAP ensures control thanks to "patrols, emissaries and sympathisers." In areas under its direct control, ISWAP has been able to build close ties with the population...'⁵⁸

- 4.7.8 Janes website stated:

'Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya operates primarily in northeast Nigeria, but has also demonstrated a capability since 2014 to stage well-organised assaults on security force and civilian targets in areas of Niger, Cameroon, and Chad bordering the Lake Chad region. While territorial losses in Nigeria in 2015 and 2016 temporarily reduced the group's operational tempo, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya remains capable of staging attacks across its traditional heartland.

'The group has also previously demonstrated an ability to stage mass-casualty attacks in central Nigeria, including the capital Abuja, where it conducted indiscriminate bombings in 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2015.'⁵⁹

- 4.7.9 The DFAT report 2020: 'While initially headquartered in the northeastern city of Maiduguri and still largely centred in Borno state, the Boko Haram

⁵⁵ Danish Immigration Service: '[Violent Extremism in West Africa](#)' (p8-10), 29 June 2020

⁵⁶ CRS, '[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)' (summary and p5), 18 September 2020

⁵⁷ RULAC, '[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)', 23 November 2020

⁵⁸ RULAC, '[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)', 23 November 2020

⁵⁹ Janes, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya, Areas of operation, subscription only, updated 24 November 2020

insurgency has spread across northern and central Nigeria and into neighbouring countries. The group has also carried out attacks against the police and UN headquarters in Abuja.⁶⁰

- 4.7.10 A January 2021 report by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) on security-related developments and threats to the civilian population stated: 'In recent years Boko Haram's attacks have expanded into neighboring countries, killing and displacing civilians in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.'⁶¹
- 4.7.11 The CIA factbook Nigeria stated that Boko Haram are: 'most active in northeastern Nigeria but also operates in northern Cameroon, southeastern Niger, and areas of Chad near Lake Chad; police have arrested suspected Boko Haram members in Chad's capital, N'Djamena.'⁶²
- 4.7.12 The US State Department 2020 Human Rights Practices Report (USSD Human Rights report 2020) stated: 'Boko Haram and ISIS-WA attacked population centers, security personnel, and international organization and NGO personnel and facilities in Borno State. Boko Haram also conducted attacks in Adamawa, while ISIS-WA attacked targets in Yobe... While Boko Haram no longer controlled as much territory as it did in 2016, the two insurgencies nevertheless maintained the ability to stage forces in rural areas and launch attacks against civilian and military targets across the Northeast...'⁶³
- 4.7.13 EASO in their June 2021 security situation report, and using a range of sources stated:

'Boko Haram continues to operate in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states... In 2019, a resurgence and escalation of the Boko Haram crisis was witnessed across north-eastern Nigeria... Since 2019, Boko Haram's reach has extended into north-western Nigeria with attacks taking place in Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara, killing "thousands of people"... In 2020, violence continued to escalate... Commentators note that with the lack of available state protection and growing insecurity, communities in the North-West and North-Central Regions of Nigeria are growing vulnerable to converging threats, including extremism.

'JAS remains confined to its stronghold in south-central Borno around the Sambisa Forest, and along the Cameroonian border... Their attacks focus on south-central Borno, including in Maiduguri and along the Cameroonian border... The group has also been establishing bases in north-western Nigeria, particularly Niger state...

'ISWAP's stronghold lies in Lake Chad... and has a permanent presence in the Alagarno forest... Its influence also extends into the northern Borno countryside... , and southwards into Yobe state and parts of south-central Borno... It has a presence around Maiduguri, particularly in the Konduga local government area. Some commentators suggest operations extend into North Adamawa and that ISWAP is trying to deploy networks into Taraba,

⁶⁰ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 2.60), updated 3 December 2020

⁶¹ R2P Monitor, [Issue 55](#) (page 19), 15 January 2021

⁶² CIA World Factbook, '[Nigeria – Terrorist organisations](#)', updated 25 January 2021

⁶³ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section G), March 2021

Kogi and Jos states... ISWAP is also capacity building radical groups in the north-west of Nigeria in Kebbi state by offering livelihood support... The border between JAS and ISWAP territory is fluid and runs through the Mafa, Dikwa and Kala Balge local government areas... The lesser known Ansaru group claimed several attacks in 2020 in Kaduna state.⁶⁴

- 4.7.14 UK foreign travel advice on Nigeria published by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office gave the following information: 'Most attacks take place in northern and North East Nigeria; there has been an increase in insurgent attacks in Borno State. However, there have been a significant number of attacks elsewhere. Significant attacks have occurred in Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Jos and Bauchi States and in the Federal capital, Abuja. Further attacks are likely...' ⁶⁵

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4.8 Media communications

- 4.8.1 Janes website in a November 2020 entry stated:

'Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya media content has focused on spectacular attack videos and the refuting of government claims. Such productions marked a significant increase in quality and production values following the affiliation with the Islamic State in March 2015. The group's media content, increasingly published through central Islamic State channels, concentrates on attacks against the security forces, but has increasingly focused on governance activities. Moreover, Islamic State activities in the Sahel are also claimed by Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya, and the faction has released media in various languages, in order to appeal to a wider audience.

'Since the faction split in August 2016, Shekau's dissident faction has continued to produce and release media content, albeit with the same lower quality of production that characterized Boko Haram propaganda. Media releases by the dissident faction have, throughout 2020, highlighted the presence of new cells in parts of Nigeria outside the north-east, indicating its possible expansion.'⁶⁶

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Section 5 updated: 30 June 2021

5. Conflict-related violence

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 A Danish Immigration Service report 'Violent Extremism in West Africa' from June 2020 stated: 'Since its formation, ISWAP has carried out numerous attacks in Nigeria. In 2017-2019, the group for instance conducted attacks on Nigerian troops and army bases, and on at least two occasions, it managed to capture towns in northern Nigeria. In February 2018, the group abducted 110 Nigerian schoolgirls, and in March, they kidnapped three aid workers during an attack killing dozens of other people.'⁶⁷

⁶⁴ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 32-33), June 2021

⁶⁵ FCDO, [Foreign travel advice: Nigeria – Terrorism](#), last updated 25 June 2021

⁶⁶ Janes, Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya - Propaganda, subscription only, updated 3 December 2020

⁶⁷ Danish Immigration Service: '[Violent Extremism in West Africa](#)' (pages 9-10), 29 June 2020

5.1.2 The CIA World factbook updated in January 2021 stated

- ‘in 2009, [Boko Haram] launched an insurgency and campaign of terror against the Nigerian Government, its security forces, and civilians; hundreds of BH attacks between 2009 and 2019 killed almost 30,000 people, mostly civilians, and displaced more than 2.5 million...
- ‘between 2011 and 2015, captured territory roughly the size of Belgium in northeastern Nigeria;
- ‘since 2015, the Nigerian military has dislodged BH from almost all of the territory it previously controlled, although the group continues to operate and conduct attacks in Nigeria, as well as in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger;...
- ‘continued conducting attacks and maintained limited safehaven in northeast Nigeria in 2020.’⁶⁸

5.1.3 BBC Monitoring in a February 2021 article stated: ‘A jihadist media outlet recently reported that fighting has broken out between Boko Haram and the regional branch of Islamic State group (IS), which operates in the same area [Borno].’⁶⁹

5.1.4 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated:

‘The insurgency in the Northeast by the militant terrorist groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa continued [in 2020]. The groups conducted numerous attacks on government and civilian targets, resulting in thousands of deaths and injuries, widespread destruction, the internal displacement of more than two million persons, and the external displacement of somewhat more than an estimated 300,000 Nigerian refugees to neighboring countries as of December 14.’⁷⁰

5.1.5 EASO in their June 2021 report on the security situation in Nigeria (EASO June 2021 security situation report), and using a range of sources stated: ‘Covering the first half of 2019, the UN described the security situation in Nigeria as “volatile”..., with ongoing conflict due to Boko Haram’s presence, resulting in a worsening of the existing humanitarian situation and affecting population displacement and food insecurity. Global Rights described Nigeria’s 2019 threshold of violence as “very high”.’⁷¹

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5.2 Level of violence

5.2.1 The DFAT report 2020: ‘The Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries, widespread destruction...’⁷²

⁶⁸ CIA World Factbook, ‘[Nigeria](#)’, updated 25 January 2021

⁶⁹ BBC Monitoring, ‘Boko Haram claims deadly rocket attack...’, 25 February 2021, subscription only

⁷⁰ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#) (section Executive summary), March 2021

⁷¹ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 22), June 2021

⁷² DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraph 2.60), updated 3 December 2020

5.2.2 The same report also stated 'International observers report there was a resurgence of Boko Haram activity in 2019, with Boko Haram responsible for 1,136 deaths in Nigeria in 2019, compared to 872 in 2018.'⁷³

5.2.3 Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts (RULAC) in a November 2020 country report stated:

'... Specifically, before the February 2019 elections there was an increase in attacks by Boko Haram. In January 2019, there was a total of 73 attacks, with 406 associated fatalities. These events were primarily directed towards the Nigerian military, with 71% of the attacks involving Boko Haram and the country's military. This included at least five attacks on military bases in North East Nigeria and the overtaking of military posts in Yobe and three other areas in Borno state... In January 2019, the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) withdrew from the north-eastern town of Rann, thus leaving the Nigerian military responsible for ensuring security in the area. On 28 January 2019, Boko Haram launched an attack in Rann, which resulted in the burning of civilian structures and the killing of those attempting to escape; 60 individuals were killed and over 30,000 people were displaced. Recent similar attacks highlight the key role played by MNJTF in countering the insurgency... Violence between members of Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces has remained elevated through 2019. At the beginning of 2020, armed confrontations between the parties have increased in the north east.'⁷⁴

5.2.4 A CRS report from September 2020 stated: 'Over the past decade, violence between government forces and Islamist insurgents based in the northeast has killed an estimated 38,000 people in Nigeria....'⁷⁵

5.2.5 R2P stated in a January 2021 report on security-related developments and threats to the civilian population:

'According to OCHA, 35,000 people have been killed since 2009 when Boko Haram launched its violent campaign aimed at overthrowing Nigeria's secular government...

'Over the past year [2020] Boko Haram, and the so-called Islamic State West Africa (ISWA), have intensified their attacks on civilian and military targets in the north-east of Nigeria, killing hundreds of people...'⁷⁶

5.2.6 An Amnesty International article published in February 2021 on military operations in Borno State noted:

'The military's operations come amid a surge in Boko Haram activity in areas along the Maiduguri-Damaturu road. In its deadliest attack since the start of year, on 10 February [2021] Boko Haram allegedly killed 30 motorists near Auno village. It was the armed group's sixth assault on Auno in 10 months, demonstrating its disregard for the sanctity of human life as well as the

⁷³ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 2.63), updated 3 December 2020

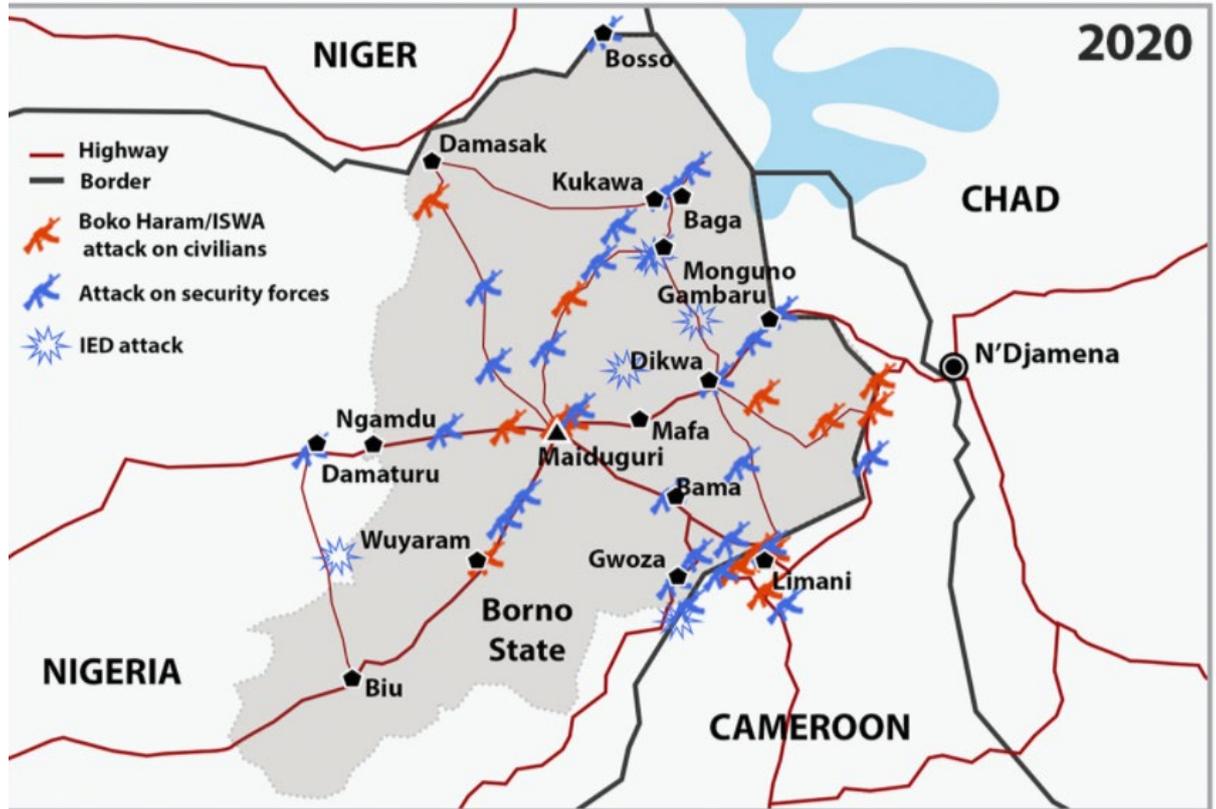
⁷⁴ RULAC, '[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)', 23 November 2020

⁷⁵ CRS, '[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)', 18 September 2020

⁷⁶ R2P Monitor, '[Issue 55](#)' (page 19), 15 January 2021

increasing danger for civilians living along this vital route connecting Borno state to the rest of Nigeria.⁷⁷

- 5.2.7 The following map produced by the Africa Centre for Strategic studies based on data from ACLED shows militant Islamist group highway attacks in and around Borno State⁷⁸.



- 5.2.8 Freedom House annual report on political rights and civil liberties in 2020 (Freedom in the World 2021) stated:

‘Boko Haram continued to attack government forces and civilians in 2020. In March, Boko Haram killed at least 50 soldiers in an ambush in Yobe State. In November, over 70 people in Borno State, most of them farmers, were killed by Boko Haram fighters in an incident the United Nations called “the most violent direct attack against innocent civilians in Nigeria this year.” The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) reported that Boko Haram was responsible for 2,720 deaths in Borno State alone in 2020, compared to 1,136 in 2019.

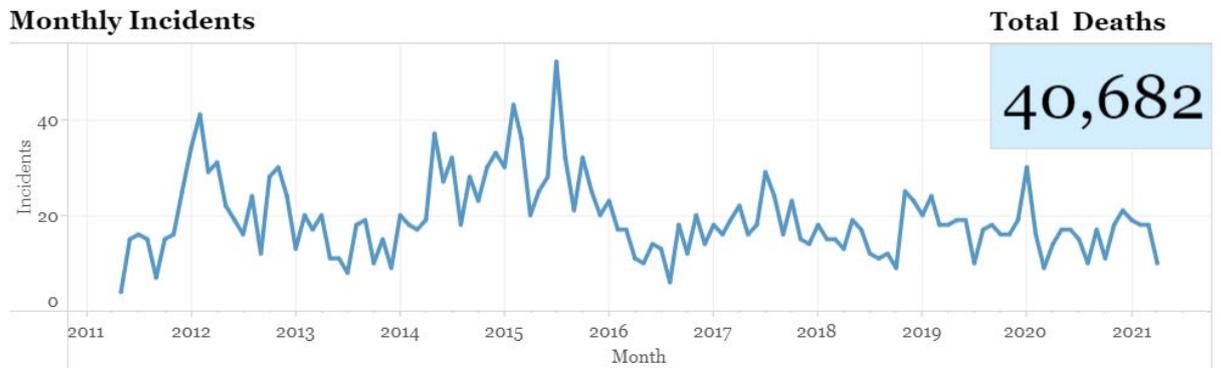
‘ISWAP also attacked officials and civilians in 2020. Borno state governor Babagana Zulum was targeted by the group four times during the year, surviving a July attack on his convoy, two attacks in September, and a late-November attack. ISWAP was also blamed for an attack in Borno State that killed as many as 81 people in June, along with twin attacks that killed dozens more several days later.’⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Amnesty International, [‘Military razes villages as Boko Haram attacks escalate’](#), 14 February 2021

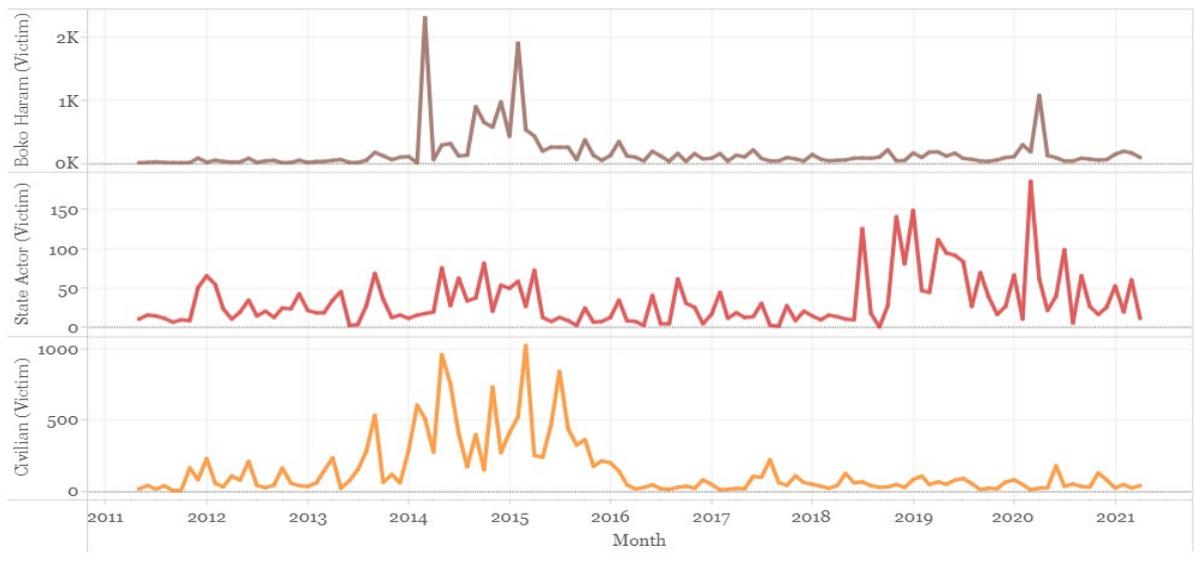
⁷⁸ Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, [‘Boko Haram and the Islamic State in...’](#), 15 December 2020

⁷⁹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the world 2021: Nigeria](#), 3 March 2021

5.2.9 CFR's Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) tracks the impact of the Boko Haram conflict. The tracker estimates the total amount of deaths of Boko Haram, State Actors, and civilians as well as the number of incidents per months from May 2011 to April 2021. Figures given are based on weekly Nigerian and international press reports. NST highlight that given the lack of accurate reporting figures given for deaths are imprecise and are indicative rather than exact⁸⁰.



5.2.10 The following NST chart shows a breakdown of the number of Boko Haram, state actors and civilians killed in the conflict since May 2011 until April 2021. From November 2020 to April 2021 inclusive, 646 Boko Haram, 183 state actors and 351 civilians were killed.



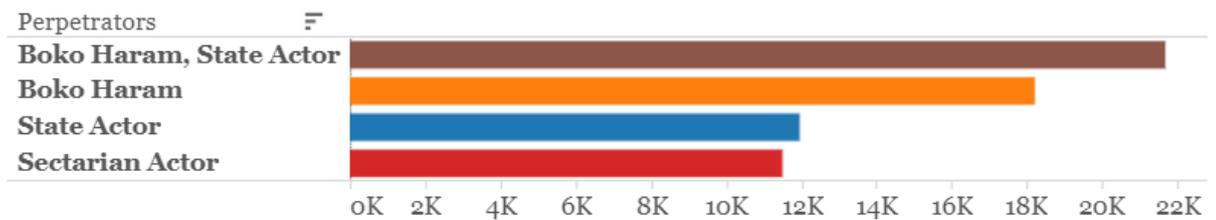
81

5.2.11 The following CFR graph shows deaths broken down by perpetrator between May 2011 and April 2021. Deaths of Boko Haram and State Actors are combined for where there was a clash, and deaths where only one perpetrator was involved is shown separately and is not included in the combined figures⁸².

⁸⁰ CFR, Security Tracker, [Tracking the impact of Boko Haram conflict](#), updated 12 April 2021

⁸¹ CFR, Security Tracker, [Monthly deaths of Boko Haram and State actors](#), updated 12 April 2021

⁸² CFR, Security Tracker, [Deaths by perpetrator](#), updated 12 April 2021



5.2.12 For weekly security tracker updates see [CFR – Security tracker: Nigeria](#)

5.2.13 The EASO June 2021 security situation report stated:

‘Boko Haram and its Islamic State offshoot, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have waged a decade-long insurgency in North-East Nigeria, in which violence has displaced about 2 million people and killed more than 30 000... 1.2 million people live in areas controlled by non-state actor groups, largely inaccessible to humanitarian assistance... The armed conflict in this region has been characterised by gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law...

‘Violence has intensified in 2019 and up to mid-2020, including multiple terror attacks “in Felo, Monguno, and Nganzai in June 2020 that killed at least 120 people and targeted a UN humanitarian facility”, with state security forces failing to protect civilians... In November 2020, Boko Haram killed scores of farmers in Borno state, beheading some of them, in one of the region’s deadliest attack in years... In December 2020 an attack claimed by Boko Haram on an all-boys secondary school in Katsina state, ended with the abduction of 300 boys...’⁸³

5.2.14 Further information on Boko Haram can be found on the regularly updated FCDO, [Foreign travel advice: Nigeria – Terrorism](#)

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5.3 Nature of violence and incidents

5.3.1 The USSD country report on terrorism covering events in 2019 stated:

‘BH and ISIS-WA [Islamic State in West Africa] carried out hundreds of attacks in Nigeria using small arms, captured military equipment, IEDs (including person-borne and vehicle-borne), ambushes, and kidnappings. The following list details only a fraction of the incidents that occurred:

- ‘On February 12 [2019], suspected ISIS-WA terrorists attacked the convoy of then-Governor of Borno State as it drove from the capital of Maiduguri to a town near Nigeria’s border with Cameroon; as many as ten were reportedly killed.
- ‘On June 12, suspected BH terrorists killed at least 30 people and injured 42 when three IEDs were detonated at a market in Konduga, Borno State.
- ‘On July 18, suspected ISIS-WA terrorists attacked a convoy of Action Against Hunger (AAH) and health ministry employees in Borno State.

⁸³ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 59-60), June 2021

One AAH driver was killed, while one AAH staff member, two drivers, and three health ministry workers remained missing, reportedly taken as hostages. On September 25, media reported ISIS-WA said it had executed one of the missing aid workers. On December 13, ISIS-WA said it had killed four of the five remaining hostages.

- ‘On July 27, suspected BH terrorists killed at least 65 people near the Borno State capital. Local officials said that, while some were killed as they returned from a funeral procession, around 40 civilians were killed when they pursued their attackers. Officials also said this may have been a reprisal attack as two weeks earlier, residents had repelled an attack killing 11 suspected terrorists.
- ‘On 26 December, ISIS-WA released a video claiming to show the execution of 11 Christians and claimed the killings were revenge for the killing of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.’⁸⁴

5.3.2 The CFR featured on their website a blog post from December 2020 which stated:

‘Boko Haram warlord Abubakar Shekau claims responsibility for the [November 2020] killing of seventy-eight rice farmers. (Estimates of the exact number of those killed range up to 110 or even more.) Shekau, [according to African media](#), states that the killing was revenge for local people turning over a Boko Haram operative to the Nigerian army. Boko Haram perpetrators resorted to a familiar form of terror: deliberate throat-slitting. The numbers killed guaranteed national and international media attention, perhaps Shekau’s goal. As in other atrocities, local factors unknown to the Borno State government—much less to the federal government and international media—played a role in the killing.’⁸⁵

5.3.3 RULAC in a November 2020 country report stated:

‘Since then [2015 and the creation of Multinational Joint Task Force – MNJTF], the attacks conducted by the armed group [Boko Haram] have changed in nature, relying predominantly on guerrilla warfare strategies and suicide bombings. Yet, its strikes still constitute a significant challenge for the Government of Nigeria and have had devastating effects on civilians... In 2017, suicide bombers targeted markets, universities and displacement camps. Most notably, on 25 July 2017 the group ambushed an oil exploration team from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in Magumeri (Borno State), killing at least 69 people...

‘Suicide bombings and attacks continued in 2018, targeting both Nigerian armed forces and civilians. In north-eastern Nigeria, there were thirty suicide bombings in the first half of 2018, accounting for nearly a third of all casualties... For instance, on 1 May 2018 coordinated suicide bomb attacks at a mosque and a market in the northeast city of Mubi resulted in the death of dozens of people... Towards the end of 2018, Boko Haram's insurgency has gained intensity. While the Government of Nigeria affirmed that it has destroyed several Boko Haram camps, armed attacks by the group have not

⁸⁴ USSD, [Country report on terrorism 2019 – Nigeria](#) (Overview), 24 June 2020

⁸⁵ CFR, [‘Nigeria: Atrocity in the Northeast’](#), 25 March 2020

decreased. Notably, it has been reported that Boko Haram “launched a series of attacks, including on military targets in Borno.”⁸⁶

5.3.4 In the same report RULAC stated

‘In 2019, armed confrontations between ISWAP and Nigerian armed forces took place consistently over the year. For instance, on the night between 21 and 22 March ISWAP fighters attacked a military position at Dangdala; the clashes resulted in the death of 23 Nigerian soldiers.... May 2019 was particularly deadly for Nigerian armed forces, where a number of armed confrontations resulted in the death of reportedly 49 members of Nigerian soldiers... While at first ISWAP limited its military actions along the shores of Lake Chad, recently it has been expanding its reach. Notably, on 23 February 2019, the day of elections in Nigeria, ISWAP launched its first attack in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. The armed group fired rocket-propelled grenades and the attack resulted in the death of one Nigerian soldier, while other 20 soldiers were wounded...

‘At the beginning of 2020, ISWAP has conducted a number of deadly attacks against the Nigerian army. Notably, on 7 January clashes between ISWAP and the governmental forces resulted in the death of 8 soldiers in Monguno town; on 12 January the Nigerian army killed 4 ISWAP commanders in the Lake Chad area; on 24-25 January the Nigerian air force killed a number of ISWAP fighters in the same area. International... Armed confrontations have continued in February 2020.’⁸⁷

5.3.5 The DFAT report 2020 stated: ‘Its insurgent activities have included conventional warfare against state security forces; targeted killings of perceived opponents; bombings of churches, bus ranks, bars and military barracks; and mass attacks on villages and towns, resulting in looting, killing and mass abductions, including of children.’⁸⁸

5.3.6 DFAT also provided examples of Boko Haram activity

- ‘[I]n January 2019, Boko Haram fighters killed at least 60 people in the town of Rann, Borno State;
- in July 2019, suspected Boko Haram fighters killed at least 65 people attending a funeral in Borno state;
- while in the same month a Da’esh-aligned faction of Boko Haram kidnapped six aid workers near Damasak in Borno state, subsequently executing five of them.
- On 28 September 2020, militants from ISWAP overran a Nigerian military base in the northeastern town of Gubio, killing soldiers and seizing materiel.

‘On 28 November 2020, in an attack centred on the village of Koshobe in Borno state, at least 43 farmers were killed in what the UN described as ‘the most violent direct attack against innocent civilians this year’. Some reports claim up to 110 people were killed, including around 30 beheaded...The

⁸⁶ RULAC, ‘[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)’, 23 November 2020

⁸⁷ RULAC, ‘[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)’, 23 November 2020

⁸⁸ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraphs 2.60 & 2.61), updated 3 December 2020

attack occurred relatively close to the state capital of Maiduguri, and is strongly believed to have been carried out by ISWAP.’⁸⁹

5.3.7 The United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, December 2020 stated:

‘Nigeria faced security challenges on multiple fronts. Despite the rainy season, violent extremist attacks against security forces continued in a coordinated and targeted manner. Cooperation between motorcycle bandits and Boko Haram factions across several northern states was observed. On 25 September, Boko Haram factions reportedly attacked the convoy of Governor Babagana Zulum along the Baga Highway in Borno State, killing 15 members of his security detail. The Nigerian defence forces then increased air operations...’⁹⁰

5.3.8 Human Rights Watch in their world report covering 2020 stated

‘Boko Haram and its splinter faction ISWAP continued attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers in the northeast.

‘In one of its deadliest attacks, Boko Haram reportedly killed about 81 people, injured 10 and abducted seven others in Gubio Local Government Area of Borno State in June. Days later, Boko Haram staged additional attacks in Gubio, Ngazai and Mongonu LGAs, killing at least 40 people and damaging a major humanitarian facility.

‘In January, ISWAP released a video of a boy it depicted as a member executing a man identified as a Christian hostage. Also in January, Boko Haram insurgents abducted and executed Reverend Lawan Andimi, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria, in Adamawa State.

‘In the same month, suspected Boko Haram insurgents attacked a United Nations facility housing several aid groups in Ngala, Borno State. At least 20 IDPs awaiting assistance at the facility were killed, according to media reports. In July, five men including three humanitarian workers were executed by the Islamist insurgents, who circulated a video of the execution on social media.

‘Boko Haram also launched a deadly attack against Borno State Governor Babagana Zulum’s convoy on September 27, as he was returning to the state capital, Maiduguri, from Baga. At least 18 people, including four civilians were killed. The attack came two days after the governor survived another attack while traveling to an area near Lake Chad. His convoy was also ambushed earlier in July by insurgents.’⁹¹

5.3.9 BBC monitoring reported in February 2021:

‘Nigeria-based jihadist group Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on the north-eastern city of Maiduguri that killed at least 16 people, including several children on 23 February.

⁸⁹ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraphs 2.60 & 2.61), updated 3 December 2020

⁹⁰ United Nations Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General...](#), (para 24), 24 December 2020

⁹¹ HRW, [World report 2021](#) (Nigeria), January 2021

'The group's leader Abubakar Shekau made the claim in a video released on 25 February via its channel on the messaging app Telegram.

'Local media has reported that Boko Haram militants fired rocket-propelled grenades from the outskirts of the capital of Borno state into densely populated areas, including a playground.

'The reports also said that militants attempted to storm the well-secured city but were pushed back by the military.

'In the Hausa-language message, Shekau took responsibility for the assault and said he was "happy" with the operation...

'A similar long-range rocket attack last July on Maiduguri that killed four people was attributed to Boko Haram.'⁹²

5.3.10 The US State Department 2020 Human Rights Practices Report (USSD Human Rights report 2020) stated: 'Both groups [BH and ISWA - Islamic State in West Africa] carried out attacks through roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs). ISIS-WA maintained the ability to carry out effective complex attacks on military positions, including those in population centers.'⁹³

5.3.11 BBC Monitoring on their Boko Haram timeline list the following events attributable to Boko Haram in March and April 2021.

- **'1 March** - Boko Haram militants take over control of Dikwa in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. The town is about 90km from Maiduguri, the state capital
- **'2 March** - Boko Haram militants pull out of Dikwa town hours after taking control of the town located in Borno State. They razed some public buildings; including primary health care, local government secretariat, part of Shehu of Dikwa palace and a United Nations hub
- **'16 March** - Gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram militants attack Katarko community in Gujba local government area in Yobe State, burning down a school and a health facility within the community
- **'2 April** - Boko Haram releases a video showing footage of its fighters shooting down an aircraft believed to be the Alpha Jet declared missing by the Nigerian Air Force. The jet went missing on 31 March 2021 evening while carrying out a mission against the militants in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria [Although the following day the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) described this claim as "false propaganda"⁹⁴].
- **'9 April** - Suspected Boko Haram militants kill five people and abduct an unspecified number of women during an attack on Kwapre, a village in Hong local government area of Adamawa State in northern Nigeria
- **'13 April** - Suspected Boko Haram militants attack Damasak town in Nigeria's north-eastern Borno State and torch the divisional police

⁹² BBC Monitoring, 'Boko Haram claims deadly rocket attack...', 25 February 2021, subscription only

⁹³ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#) (section G), March 2021

⁹⁴ BBC Monitoring, '[Boko Haram – Armed Organisation](#)', 27 April 2021, subscription only

command, schools, shops and homes as they hoist their flags in strategic locations.

- **‘26 April** - The Nigerian army confirms an attack on one of its bases at Mainok, Borno State by Boko Haram/ISWAP members on 25 April 2021. In a statement by its spokesperson, Mohammed Yerima, the army describes the attack as a multi-directional attack which claimed one officer and six soldiers, injuring five others. The spokesman says that the fighters’ intention was to establish a phantom caliphate in the town. He further says: "In the aftermath of the encounter, scores of Boko Haram terrorists were neutralized with their body part littering the area and a number of their gun trucks destroyed".⁹⁵

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5.4 Displaced persons (IDPs) and humanitarian needs

5.4.1 The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in an undated entry on its Nigeria country page observed:

‘Entering its eleventh year, the conflict continues to uproot the lives of tens of thousands of children, women and men.

‘Today, 1.9 million people are still internally displaced, some living in dire conditions. Over 80 per cent of them are in Borno State – the epicentre of the crisis. Four out of five internally displaced people are women and children, and one in four are under the age of five.

‘Insecurity due to ongoing hostilities and military operations have led to waves of mass displacement and continue to impact humanitarian operations. Vast swaths of Borno State are considered high or very high risk for international humanitarian actors, often constraining access to desperately vulnerable communities. An estimated number of up to 1.2 million people remain inaccessible to humanitarian actors, 81 per cent of whom are in Borno State.

‘Since 2016, humanitarian actors have been working in support of the Government of Nigeria to robustly scale up the response. In 2019 alone, more than 5.2 million people received humanitarian assistance in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.’⁹⁶

5.4.2 A CRS report from September 2020 stated: ‘Over the past decade, violence between government forces and Islamist insurgents based in the northeast has ... displaced over three million throughout the Lake Chad Basin region comprising parts of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.’⁹⁷

5.4.3 The USSD country report on terrorism covering events in 2019 stated: ‘To date [June 2020], terrorist actions by BH and ISIS-WA have contributed to the internal displacement of about two million people within the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, and the external displacement of more than

⁹⁵ BBC Monitoring, [‘Boko Haram – Armed Organisation’](#), 27 April 2021, subscription only

⁹⁶ UNOCHA, [Overview](#), not dated

⁹⁷ CRS, [‘Nigeria: Current issues and US policy’](#), 18 September 2020

240,000 Nigerian refugees to neighboring countries, principally Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.’⁹⁸

- 5.4.4 The DFAT report 2020 observed: ‘The Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in..., the internal displacement of approximately 2.7 million persons and the external displacement of almost 250,000 Nigerians to neighbouring countries.’⁹⁹
- 5.4.5 The Internal displacement monitoring centre also stated on their undated website that as of 31 December 2020 the total number of IDPs were 2,730,00¹⁰⁰.
- 5.4.6 R2P stated in a January 2021 report on security-related developments and threats to the civilian population: ‘At least 2.4 million people remain internally displaced in north-eastern Nigeria as a result of insecurity caused by the group [Boko Haram]. The International Committee of the Red Cross also reported that at least 23,000 people remain missing.’¹⁰¹
- 5.4.7 Human Rights Watch in their world report covering 2020 stated: ‘In August [2020], authorities in Borno State in the northeast announced plans to send 1,860,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees back to their communities despite ongoing safety concerns. Sixteen days after IDPs were returned to Kukawa [North-eastern town in State of Borno] Local Government Area on August 18, Boko Haram insurgents attacked the community and abducted at least 100 people.’¹⁰²
- 5.4.8 A UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs news and press release from March 2021 stated:

‘Ongoing conflict continues to be the main driver of humanitarian needs in northeast Nigeria, where millions of people have been displaced. Longstanding insecurity and violence, compounded by climate change, and the impact of Covid-19 are increasing the vulnerability of close to nine million people. Close to two million people are internally displaced, while millions of people depend on humanitarian partners for basic services, and up to 5.1 million people are facing hunger in the lean season – the worst outlook in four years.

“The humanitarian crisis in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, unfortunately, remains one of the largest in the world and continues to have a profound impact on Nigeria and its people, causing untold suffering and deprivation for millions of vulnerable women, men and children. The year 2021 marks the twelfth year of the conflict and the sixth year of the international community working together with the Government of Nigeria to provide humanitarian support,” said the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon. “Last year was a challenging year for vulnerable people in north-east Nigeria. It was a year marked by a new reality, the COVID-19 pandemic. The socio-economic impact of the pandemic has already diminished the resilience of

⁹⁸ USSD, [Country report on terrorism 2019 – Nigeria](#) (Overview), 24 June 2020

⁹⁹ DFAT, [Country information report: Nigeria](#) (paragraphs 2.60), updated 3 December 2020

¹⁰⁰ IDMC, [Nigeria: Overview](#), no date

¹⁰¹ R2P Monitor, [Issue 55](#) (page 19), 15 January 2021

¹⁰² HRW, [World report 2021](#) (Nigeria), January 2021

millions of people, increasing the fragility of those who were already extremely vulnerable,” he added.’¹⁰³

- 5.4.9 UNHCR gave the IDP population for Nigeria as 2,184,254 as at 19 May 2021¹⁰⁴

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Section 6 updated: 30 June 2021

6. Targets of violations

6.1 General

- 6.1.1 The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in an undated entry on its Nigeria country page observed:

‘Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 36,000 people have been killed in the BAY [Borno, Adamawa and Yobe] states – almost half of them civilians and thousands of women and girls abducted. Violence against women, girls and children, including sexual violence, exposure to trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence, is all too common yet underreported... Thousands of children swell in the ranks of armed actors while predominantly women and children are compelled by non-state armed groups to carry person-borne improvised explosive devices (PBIEDs).

‘Entering its eleventh year, the conflict continues to uproot the lives of tens of thousands of children, women and men.’¹⁰⁵

- 6.1.2 A CRS report from September 2020 stated: ‘In contrast to Shekau’s Boko Haram, which gained notoriety for its indiscriminate assaults on civilian centers and use of female and child suicide bombers, ISWA has focused attacks primarily on security forces and other state targets.’¹⁰⁶

- 6.1.3 Janes on their website updated in November 2020 stated: ‘Humanitarian workers captured by Boko Haram are at high risk of being killed now the government has stopped paying ransoms.’¹⁰⁷

- 6.1.4 RULAC in a November 2020 country report stated:

‘ISWAP’s success might be due to its tactics, different from those of Boko Haram. While the latter targets civilians and rural communities, International Crisis Group reports that ISWAP focuses “primarily on military targets as well as, to a lesser extent, civilian targets associated in one way or another with the state – eg, local officials, chiefs, vigilantes and suspected informers. ... ISWAP’s tactics seem to have contributed to a notable drop in civilian casualties in north-eastern Nigeria since 2016, and a rise in military casualties in 2018.”’¹⁰⁸

- 6.1.5 Janes stated in November 2020:

¹⁰³ UNOCHA, ‘[North-East Nigeria: US\\$1 billion needed...](#)’, 16 March 2021

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, [Operational data portal – Nigeria](#), no date

¹⁰⁵ UNOCHA, [Overview](#), not dated

¹⁰⁶ CRS, ‘[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)’ (p5-6), 18 September 2020

¹⁰⁷ Janes, ‘Sentinel Country risk assessments, Nigeria...’, subscription only, updated 24 November 2020

¹⁰⁸ RULAC, ‘[Non-international armed conflicts in Nigeria](#)’, 23 November 2020

'The ISWAP faction of Boko Haram is now likely pushing to take the upper hand by attacks designed to undermine the morale and operational capability of a Nigerian army in which many units have been in the battleground zone of the three northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa for several years. It coincides with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to severely exacerbate Nigeria's financial difficulties and ability to pay and equip troops amid an oil price collapse that will drastically reduce state revenues. Confrontations with the smaller and less-effective Jamaat Ahl al-Sunnah li-Dawa wal-Jihad (JAS) group of long-time Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, which took place towards the end of 2019, have died down and some reports suggest emissaries from ISWAP and JAS met in March 2020 and agreed to work together against their common enemy.'¹⁰⁹

6.1.6 The DFAT report 2020 noted: 'The Boko Haram insurgency has targeted a range of groups, including those associated with the government (including police, military and politicians); individuals seen as supporting "western" concepts such as secular education or elections; foreign aid workers; and clerics from other Muslim traditions and Christian preachers...'¹¹⁰

6.1.7 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated: 'These groups [BH and ISIS-WA] targeted anyone perceived as disagreeing with the groups' political or religious beliefs or interfering with their access to resources...'¹¹¹

6.1.8 The same USSD report also noted:

'Boko Haram continued to employ indiscriminate person-borne improvised explosive device (PIED) attacks targeting the local civilian populations...

'ISIS-WA increased attacks and kidnappings of civilians and continued to employ acts of violence and intimidation against civilians in order to expand its area of influence and gain control over critical economic resources. As part of a violent campaign, ISIS-WA also targeted government figures, traditional leaders, international organization and NGO workers, and contractors. In multiple instances ISIS-WA issued "night letters" or otherwise warned civilians to leave specific areas and subsequently targeted civilians who failed to depart. During its attacks on population centers, ISIS-WA also distributed propaganda materials.'¹¹²

6.1.9 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated:

'Boko Haram conducted mass abductions of men, women, and children, often in conjunction with attacks on communities. The group forced men, women, and children to participate in military operations on its behalf. Those abducted by Boko Haram were subjected to physical and psychological abuse, forced labor, and forced religious conversions...

'While some NGO reports estimated the number of Boko Haram abductees at more than 2,000, the total count of the missing was unknown since abductions continued, towns repeatedly changed hands, and many families

¹⁰⁹ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Security, subscription only, last updated 24 November 2020

¹¹⁰ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 2.60), updated 3 December 2020

¹¹¹ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section G), March 2021

¹¹² USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section G), March 2021

were still on the run or dispersed in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Many abductees managed to escape Boko Haram captivity, but precise numbers remained unknown.

‘Approximately half of the students abducted by Boko Haram from the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School in 2014 remained in captivity. Leah Sharibu remained the only student from the 2018 kidnapping in Dapchi in ISIS-WA captivity, reportedly because she refused to convert to Islam from Christianity.’¹¹³

- 6.1.10 EASO in their June 2021 security situation report, and using a range of sources stated:

‘ISWAP distinguishes itself from JAS by taking a “hearts and minds” approach towards civilians, and primarily attacking security forces... ISWAP targets civilians less frequently, focussing its targets on government figures, traditional leaders, and contractors... ISWAP has tried to gain the support of local communities by providing services such as digging wells and providing fertilizer, whilst conducting targeted attacks on military structures, government and security personnel... Similarly, the two factions differ ideologically with ISWAP taking a stricter approach to Muslim civilian targeting, focussing instead on government forces and installations... and trying to avoid civilian casualties... However, attacks in 2020 including those in Gubio Monguno, which killed 81 people, and Goni Ismanti, which killed 38, ISWAP showed a shift in stance targeting Muslim civilians...

‘ISWAP owes its military successes in part to its novel, flexible strategy, and improved tactics... Over the years it has developed its military capabilities, attacking larger military bases, and identifying weaker military targets as well as targeting convoys with ambushes and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)...’¹¹⁴

- 6.1.11 UK foreign travel advice on Nigeria published by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) stated:

‘There has been an increase in insurgent attacks in Borno State. Since October 2019, there has been an increasing trend of terrorist groups constructing illegal vehicle checkpoints on major supply and commercial routes in Northern Nigeria and attacking vehicles travelling on major roads into Maiduguri, Borno State, including the A3 Maiduguri-Damaturu road. These attacks have directly targeted civilians, security forces and aid workers. Furthermore, 2020 has seen increased activity by terrorist groups and related violent incidents in the immediate vicinity of humanitarian hubs...’¹¹⁵

- 6.1.12 FCDO continued:

‘Humanitarian staff and assets have been targeted during attacks in the North East, including in garrison towns and on roads. Humanitarian sites have also been targeted. There is a continued threat from extremist groups operating in the region. The al Qaeda-linked terrorist group Jamaat al Ansar

¹¹³ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#) (section G), March 2021

¹¹⁴ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 32), June 2021

¹¹⁵ FCDO, [Foreign travel advice: Nigeria – Safety and security](#), last updated 25 June 2021

al Muslimeen fi Bilad al Sudan, better known as Ansaru, has previously carried out attacks and kidnappings, including that of westerners, across northern Nigeria. The most recent attack was in mid-January 2020 when Ansaru claimed to have killed at least six people, kidnapped dozens, and destroyed several vehicles during an ambush along the Kaduna-Zaira highway in Kaduna State. Details remain unclear.

'...Public places where crowds gather have been targeted, including places of worship, markets, shopping malls, hotels, bars, restaurants, football viewing centres, displacement camps, transport terminals, government buildings, security and educational institutions (schools, further education colleges and universities are all regular targets), and international organisations. Attacks have taken place around religious and public holidays in public or crowded places, including places of worship as well as during election periods.'

¹¹⁶

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6.2 Abductions and disappearances

6.2.1 The DFAT report 2020 noted: 'A number of people, including around ten women, remain missing [following a lethal November 2020 attack on the village of Koshobe in Borno state], presumably abducted.'

¹¹⁷

6.2.2 See also section on [Women and children](#).

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6.3 Religious communities

6.3.1 The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in a July 2020 report stated:

'While many Christians have been killed, Muslims have not been spared either. Several churches and mosques have been attacked and both Christian and Islamic clerics assassinated. Between 2010 and 2013 alone, nearly two dozen clerics in northern Nigeria were victims of Boko Haram's targeted killings. In addition, most of the residents of the states in northern Nigeria where Boko Haram is active are Muslim, and hundreds of thousands of them have lost their livelihoods and suffered internal displacement.'

¹¹⁸

6.3.2 The DFAT report 2020 noted:

'The Boko Haram insurgency has targeted a range of groups, including ...clerics from other Muslim traditions and Christian preachers. Christians are opportunistically targeted by Boko Haram. However, Muslims are also victims of attacks, in greater numbers than Christians, principally because they constitute a greater proportion of the population in the affected northern states.

'Despite claiming an Islamist motivation, Boko Haram has regularly committed attacks against both Christian and Muslim religious communities and institutions during its insurgency in the northeast. Personborne IED attacks have targeted both churches and mosques: according to the Council on Foreign Relations, Boko Haram has destroyed 59 churches and 22

¹¹⁶ FCDO, [Foreign travel advice: Nigeria – Terrorism](#), last updated 25 June 2021

¹¹⁷ DFAT, [Country information report: Nigeria](#) (paragraphs 2.61), updated 3 December 2020

¹¹⁸ ISS, ['Making sense of resilience in the Boko Haram crisis' \(page 4\)](#), 8 July 2020

mosques since 2010. In July 2019, the group ambushed and killed 65 persons returning from a funeral in a predominantly Muslim community, while in December 2019 an ISWAP-affiliated faction released a video of them executing 10 Christians and one Muslim to avenge the death of Da'esh leader al-Baghdadi.¹¹⁹

6.3.3 A US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) February 2021 factsheet stated:

'Boko Haram has committed several egregious violations of religious freedom in its areas of operation during the past year. In January 2020, Boko Haram fighters abducted Rev. Lawan Andimi, local chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Adamawa state, and later beheaded him, reportedly because he would not renounce his faith and because his ransom was not paid. In February 2020, Boko Haram militants attacked Garkida, a town known for the foundation of the Church of the Brethren in the country, burning at least five churches. In northern Cameroon, Boko Haram insurgents attacked community leaders during a prayer service in a mosque in retaliation because those leaders used the Qur'an to encourage villagers not to support jihadist groups.

'[Leader of BH] Shekau also frequently has demonstrated significant intent to enforce his interpretation of Islam on others and target individuals based on their dissenting beliefs. In the aftermath of a Kano Shari'a court sentencing 22-year-old Islamic gospel singer Yahaya Sharif-Aminu to death for insulting the Prophet Muhammad, Shekau publicly condemned the singer's right to appeal the sentence, saying "he should just be killed. If you really sentence him, we should only hear that you slaughtered him." Shekau reportedly added that "Kano is not an Islamic State, calling it a land of infidels where democracy is practiced." In December, Boko Haram threatened to increase attacks on Christian communities during the Christmas season. The U.S. government considers Boko Haram an "entity of particular concern" for engaging in severe, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom within its areas of control.¹²⁰

6.3.4 Referring specifically to the ISWAP faction, the same USCIRF factsheet stated:

'ISWAP also routinely engages in violations against Nigerian citizens' rights to freedom of religion and belief. [Reports indicate](#) that within its area of control, ISWAP compels people to attend prayer, prohibits smoking and the use of drugs, and implements harsh Quranic punishments, including amputations for thieves and killings for adulterers.

'ISWAP has also abducted and executed individuals based on their faith or belief. The group continues to hold 17-year-old Leah Sharibu hostage for her unwillingness to convert to Islam—the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) advocates for Leah Sharibu's release through its Religious Prisoners of Conscience project. In January, ISWAP abducted and executed Ropvil Daciya Dalep, a Christian university student, stating "Christians all over the world must know that we will never

¹¹⁹ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 3.20), updated 3 December 2020

¹²⁰ USCIRF, '[Factsheet: Violent Islamist Groups in Northern Nigeria](#)', 12 February 2021

forget their atrocities against us, until we avenge the bloodshed visited on us." In July, ISWAP soldiers executed five aid workers as a warning to "all those being used by infidels to convert Muslims to Christianity." The U.S. government has also designated ISWAP an "entity of particular concern" for engaging in severe, ongoing, and egregious violations of international religious freedom in its area of operation.¹²¹

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6.4 Women and children

6.4.1 The CFR featured on their website a blog post from March 2020 which stated:

‘Since 2011, when Boko Haram (and its subsequent off-shoots) entered its current violent phase, kidnapping women and girls has been a defining characteristic. Boko Haram seeks women as wives for its fighters—who are often too poor to pay a bride price—as domestic or sexual slaves, and as suicide bombers. Boko Haram’s most notorious kidnapping, at least to those in the West, was the abduction of 276 school girls from Chibok in 2014, more than 100 of whom remain in captivity. The total number of Boko Haram kidnapping victims is unclear, but it is likely in the thousands.

‘As the military dislodged Boko Haram in 2015 from the territory it had captured and occupied earlier, victims of suicide bombers grew as a proportion of those the group killed through August 2018. Between June 2014, when Boko Haram reportedly deployed its first female suicide bomber, and February 2018, about 468 women and girls have been deployed or arrested in 240 suicide attacks, the most by any terrorist movement, killing roughly 1,200 and injuring some 3,000, according to a report by the Counterterrorism Center. These numbers have no doubt climbed in the years since. The number of women and girls involved in suicide attacks, most likely through coercion but some voluntarily, is part of the reason why female victims that escape or are liberated are too often shunned by their communities. There is a popular fear that they remain Boko Haram at heart...’¹²²

6.4.2 The DFAT report 2020 noted:

‘In 2014, Boko Haram abducted 276 mostly Christian schoolgirls from Chibok, Borno state, reportedly forcing them to convert to Islam and become “wives” for Boko Haram fighters. Around 100 of the Chibok girls remain unaccounted for. In February 2018, insurgents abducted a further 110 schoolgirls from Dapchi, Yobe state, releasing 104 of the girls two weeks later after negotiations with the government. Five of the remaining girls reportedly died in captivity and one girl continues to be held hostage, allegedly for refusing to deny her Christian faith.

‘Boko Haram has also paid, forcibly conscripted, or otherwise coerced young boys and girls to serve in its ranks and perpetrate attacks and raids, plant

¹²¹ USCIRF, [Factsheet: Violent Islamist Groups in Northern Nigeria](#), 12 February 2021

¹²² CFR, [‘Women, Boko Haram and Suicide Bombings’](#), 25 March 2020

improvised explosive devices (IEDs), serve as spies, and carry out person-borne IED bombings, often under the influence of drugs...'¹²³

6.4.3 The same report stated:

'International observers report Boko Haram have subjected many women and girls to GBV, including through abduction, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and rape. Those women and girls who have escaped, or who security services or vigilante groups have rescued, have reportedly faced ostracism by their communities and have had difficulty obtaining appropriate medical and psychosocial treatment and care, including for their children born of rape...

'...Boko Haram has forced abducted school-aged girls to become "wives" for its fighters.'¹²⁴

6.4.4 DFAT also stated:

'Most disappearances in Nigeria relate to abductions carried out by insurgent groups, particularly Boko Haram. According to the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross], almost 22,000 Nigerians have been reported missing over the last decade due to the Boko Haram conflict, which is the highest number of missing persons registered with the ICRC in the world. Almost 60 per cent of these were minors when they disappeared. Boko Haram has also reportedly conducted large-scale abductions in the northeastern states of Borno and Yobe.'¹²⁵

6.4.5 Freedom in the world 2021 stated: 'Boko Haram's attacks on women's rights have been particularly egregious, with victims often subjected to forced marriage and rape, among other acts.'¹²⁶

6.4.6 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated:

'Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa continued attacks on civilians, military, and police; recruited and forcefully conscripted child soldiers; and carried out scores of person-borne improvised explosive device attacks—many by coerced young women and girls—and other attacks on population centers in the Northeast and in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Abductions by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa continued. Both groups subjected many women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced marriages, sexual slavery, and rape.'¹²⁷

6.4.7 The same report also stated:

'Boko Haram continued to employ indiscriminate person-borne improvised explosive device (PIED) attacks targeting the local civilian populations. Women and children were forced to carry out many of the attacks. According to a 2017 study by UNICEF, children, forced by Boko Haram, carried out nearly one in five PIED attacks. More than two-thirds of these children were

¹²³ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 2.61 & 2.62), updated 3 December 2020

¹²⁴ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 3.108), updated 3 December 2020

¹²⁵ DFAT, '[Country information report: Nigeria](#)' (paragraphs 4.11), updated 3 December 2020

¹²⁶ Freedom House, [Freedom in the world 2021: Nigeria](#), 3 March 2021

¹²⁷ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#) (section Executive summary), March 2021

girls. Boko Haram continued to kill scores of civilians suspected of cooperating with the government...

'Women and girls were subjected to forced marriage and sexual abuse, including rape and sexual slavery. Most female PIED bombers were coerced in some form and were often drugged. Boko Haram also used women and girls to lure security forces into ambushes, force payment of ransoms, and leverage prisoner exchanges.'¹²⁸

- 6.4.8 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated: 'Women and girls abducted by Boko Haram and ISIS-WA, as well as the babies born as a result of rape during their captivity, faced stigmatization and community isolation.'¹²⁹

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Section 7 updated: 30 June 2021

7. State protection

7.1 Military deployment to north-east

- 7.1.1 A CRS report from September 2020 stated:

'In contrast to his predecessor, Buhari strengthened counterterrorism coordination with neighboring countries and recorded a series of military victories against Boko Haram soon after taking office [in 2015]. Boko Haram has nevertheless proven resilient, as the military has struggled to curb the group's attacks and reestablish state control in contested areas, notably in rural zones. The emergence and growth of an Islamic State-affiliated splinter faction since 2016, alongside rising insecurity in other parts of the country, have placed further strain on Nigeria's overstretched security forces...'¹³⁰

- 7.1.2 Janes website stated in an April 2019 update:

'Boko Haram has emerged as the primary thrust of the NA's [Nigerian Army] internal security role, with thousands of troops deployed to northern towns and carrying out patrols and raids against the group.

'The Nigerian Armed Forces are dealing with an array of threats from domestic terrorism perpetuated by the Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) insurgencies in the northeast...

'The military response to Boko Haram has become more effective, with most militants on the run or hiding in the Sambisa Forest. The group is no longer capable of keeping territory for a significant amount of time, or conducting a sustained asymmetric campaign. However, evidence of Boko Haram's resurgence is piling up.'¹³¹

- 7.1.3 'The United Nations Security Council in a report covering the period January 2017 – December 2019 noted:

'[The] CJTF [Civilian Joint Task Force] continued to fight alongside the Nigerian Security Forces to protect communities against Boko Haram. CJTF

¹²⁸ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section G), March 2021

¹²⁹ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section G), March 2021

¹³⁰ CRS, '[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)', 18 September 2020

¹³¹ Janes Sentinel Country risk assessments, Armed Forces, subscription only, last updated 12 April 2019

is based in Maiduguri, Borno State. Of the 27 local government areas in Borno, CJTF is present in all but 3 in southern Borno, where the presence of Boko Haram is limited. Following the signing of an action plan with the United Nations in September 2017 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, CJTF stopped recruiting and using children and has since separated from its ranks 2,203 boys and girls recruited and used between 2013 and 2017. This significant progress was the result of a progressive effort and a detailed road map for the implementation of the action plan, with support from the United Nations and humanitarian partners through the Ministry of Justice of Borno State.’¹³²

7.1.4 The DFAT report 2020 noted:

‘Attempts by security authorities to curtail the Boko Haram insurgency in an enduring fashion have not proved fully successful to date. The government initially declared a state of emergency in May 2013 in the three northeastern states in which Boko Haram was strongest – Borno, Yobe and Adamawa – while in the same year, the Office of the Prosecutor in the International Criminal Court declared the fighting in northeastern Nigeria to be a non-international armed conflict. By March 2015, a regional coalition made up of troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger had succeeded in winning back all of the towns under Boko Haram’s control, leading President Buhari to declare in 2015 that Boko Haram had been “technically defeated”. The insurgency has successfully regrouped in recent years, however, and continues to represent a significant security threat in the northeastern states.’¹³³

7.1.5 The same report added:

‘Boko Haram’s resurgence comes despite the deployment of thousands of troops to the northeastern states, and the reported government allocation of almost USD80 million [£57.4 million¹³⁴] per quarter to combat the insurgency. International observers have expressed concern over a lack of discipline in military operations, noting that reports of low morale among soldiers caused by insufficient military equipment and medical care (and fuelled by high rates of corruption within the military) may be degrading the effectiveness of efforts to defeat the insurgency. Human rights groups have also raised repeated concerns government security forces have committed significant human rights abuses in the context of counter-insurgency efforts against Boko Haram, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests and other abuses...’¹³⁵

7.1.6 Regarding alleged abuses by the military against Boko Haram, DFAT noted:

‘The government has acknowledged that the military has been accused of extrajudicial killings (as well as torture, arbitrary arrest and detention) in the course of security operations against Boko Haram, and in the context of countering other militant and separatist groups elsewhere in the country. A March 2017 military board of inquiry (BOI) set up to investigate allegations of

¹³² UNSC, [Children and armed conflict in Nigeria; Report of the Secretary...](#) (page 5), 6 July 2020

¹³³ DFAT, [‘Country information report: Nigeria’](#) (paragraphs 2.63), updated 3 December 2020

¹³⁴ Oanda, [Currency converter](#), 4 March 2021

¹³⁵ DFAT, [‘Country information report: Nigeria’](#) (paragraphs 2.66), updated 3 December 2020

human rights violations committed by the army during campaigns against the insurgency in the northeast (including in detention centres) found no evidence of extrajudicial executions of detainees, and did not recommend prosecutions or other accountability measures for any member of the military or other government entity. Critics of the BOI argued it lacked full independence, did not have forensic or other evidentiary expertise, and did not consult testimonies from victims of human rights violations in compiling its evidence, thus calling into question some of its conclusions.’¹³⁶

7.1.7 BBC News reported in February 2021:

‘Nigerian soldiers have reportedly killed dozens of Islamist Boko Haram militants in a major operation the north-east of the country.

‘Troops stormed the jihadists’ strongholds in Kidari, Argude, Takwala, Chowalta and Galdekore, local media reports.

‘The soldiers are said to have gained access into the notorious Timbuktu Triangle in the vast Sambisa Forest, located between Borno and Yobe States.

‘Sources close to the Nigerian military say that the operation involved Nigerian troops and the multi-national joint task force.

‘Some people who had been kidnapped by the militants were rescued. Two soldiers were killed while three others were seriously injured.

‘The insurgents no longer control huge swathes of territory in Nigeria's north-east, but continue to carry out attacks on both military and civilian targets - mostly ambushes.

‘Last week, President Muhammadu Buhari appointed new military chiefs following repeated calls to replace them because of growing insecurity, including the long-running Boko Haram insurgency and rampant kidnappings.’¹³⁷

7.1.8 BBC Monitoring in a February 2021 article stated:

‘The jihadist chief [Abubakar Shekau] denied a recent military statement that his farmland had been seized in the Sambisa forest, a stronghold of the group in Borno, claiming that he did not own a farm.

‘He reiterated his aim of establishing an Islamic state free of Western influence and rejected claims that his group has been decimated by military operations.

‘The video, which lasted just over five minutes, included footage of militants firing improvised rockets and engaging in armed combat...

‘Local media highlighted that the latest attack [February 2021 rocket attack on Madiuguri – see [Nature of violence and incidents](#)] comes after the Nigerian military recaptured the town of Marte from Boko Haram and ahead of the trial of 5,000 militants linked to the group.’¹³⁸

¹³⁶ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraphs 4.5), updated 3 December 2020

¹³⁷ BBC News, ‘[Boko Haram militants “killed in major operation”](#)’, 4 February 2021

¹³⁸ BBC Monitoring, ‘[Boko Haram claims deadly rocket attack...](#)’, 25 February 2021, subscription only

7.1.9 A USCIRF February 2021 factsheet stated:

‘Combating violent Islamist groups in northern Nigeria is a top priority for many governments in the region. The Nigerian government has conducted several military operations in northeast and northwest Nigeria aiming to neutralize militant Islamist groups and stop their expansion. These have included ground assaults like Operations Deep Punch I & II into the Sambisa Forest, as well as air assaults like Operation Rain of Fire.’¹³⁹

7.1.10 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated:

‘Units of the NA’s Seventh Division, the NPF [Nigerian Police Force], and the DSS [Department of State Services] carried out operations against the terrorist groups Boko Haram and ISIS-WA in the Northeast. There were reports of military forces committing extrajudicial killings of suspected members of the groups...

‘There were reports that security services used excessive force in the pursuit of Boko Haram and ISIS-WA suspects, at times resulting in arbitrary arrest, detention, or torture...

‘There were reports some of the arrested and detained included children believed to be associated with Boko Haram, some of whom may have been forcibly recruited.’¹⁴⁰

7.1.11 The Jamestown Foundation in a report from April 2021 stated:

‘The start of 2021 was marked by Nigerian military offensives against Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Jamaat Ahl al-Sunna li-Dawa wal-Jihad (JASDJ), which are collectively known as “Boko Haram.” The military offensives codenamed Operation Tura Takai Bango were launched on January 3 and were intended to be “theater-wide,” but with an emphasis on preventing ISWAP from erecting checkpoints on the road from Yobe State’s capital, Damatru, to Borno State’s capital, Maiduguri, where ISWAP consistently abducted and stole from passengers. ISWAP was already threatening to cut Maiduguri off from the rest of Borno through roadway ambushes. However, obstructing the Damatru-Maiduguri roadway was additionally strategic for ISWAP because it would essentially cut Borno itself off from the rest of Nigeria.

‘One flashpoint to emerge from Operation Tura Takai Bango was Alagarno Forest, which straddles areas from Damboa in southwest Borno toward Goniri in eastern Yobe. Goniri is also located just south of the Damatru-Maiduguri roadway. Early in Operation Tura Takai Bango, on January 6, the Nigerian military reported it “took out” a compound hosting “high-profile” ISWAP leaders in Damboa. At the same time, it also “inflicted heavy casualties” in other air strikes on JASDJ hideouts in Sambisa Forest, which is near Borno’s eastern border with Cameroon... However, as is typical in any state-insurgent information war, ISWAP released its own claims backed by photographic and video evidence of counter-attacks against the Nigerian

¹³⁹ USCIRF, [Factsheet: Violent Islamist Groups in Northern Nigeria](#), 12 February 2021

¹⁴⁰ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section G), March 2021

military in and around Alagarno Forest, especially Gorgi, Goniri, and Kafa, including.¹⁴¹

7.1.12 BBC Monitoring on their Boko Haram timeline list the following military events in April 2021.

- **‘3 April** - The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) describes as "false propaganda", the claim by the Boko Haram militants that they shot down a NAF Alpha Jet in Borno State. In a statement, the NAF spokesperson Edward Gabkwet says: "Although the video is still being thoroughly analysed, it is evident that most parts of the video were deliberately doctored to give a false impression that the aircraft was shot down... It is obvious that the Boko Haram sect, in its characteristic manner of employing false propaganda, is seeking to claim credit for what was obviously an air accident that could have been caused by several other reasons"
- **‘18 April** - The Nigerian army says it has inflicted heavy casualty on Boko Haram militants who attempted to take control of the strategic town of Dikwa, the headquarters of Dikwa Local Government Area of Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria. In a statement, the army says: "The troops launched a counter attack in the early hours of Monday 19 April 2021 and successfully reoccupied their main headquarters in Dikwa. The retreating terrorists suffered heavy losses in both equipment and personnel including some of their key leaders from the superior firepower of own troops both from the air and ground forces"
- **‘23 April** - The Nigerian army says it has killed at least 21 Boko Haram militants after the insurgents attacked Geidam town in Yobe State, northeastern Nigeria. In a statement, the Director of Army Public Relations, Brig Gen Mohammed Yerima says "troops stationed at the town, supported by the Air Component of Operation Lafia Dole, mounted a hot pursuit and closed up with the terrorists, killing 21 of them in the process. The gallant troops successfully recovered a gun truck with an anti aircraft gun mounted on it, eight AK 47 rifles with 10 magazines as well as two Rocket Propelled Grenade Bombs and five chargers".
- **‘25 April** - The chairman of the Nigerian Senate Committee on Army, Senator Mohammed Ali Ndume, urges the federal government to try the alleged Boko Haram financiers in an open court. Addressing the media in Abuja, he says: "The presidency said recently that Nigerians would be shocked if it revealed the identities of those who are sponsoring the Boko Haram insurgents. Can you imagine that 400 Bureau De Change (BDC) operators are the people funding the Boko Haram? When the BDC operators are arrested now, what will the government do with them? The presidency is already saying their case is confidential. What is confidential about it? The presidency should expose the identities of all the BDC operators so far arrested and carry out their trial in public"¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Jamestown Foundation, [Target Maiduguri: How Islamic State in West Africa](#), 9 April 2021

¹⁴² BBC Monitoring, [‘Boko Haram – Armed Organisation’](#), 27 April 2021, subscription only

7.1.13 EASO in their June 2021 security situation report, and using a range of sources, stated with regard the general security challenges of the Nigerian state:

‘Nigeria is confronted by multiple security challenges: Islamist groups resurgent in the North-East Region; conflict in the North-West Region involving herder-allied groups, vigilantes, criminal gangs and jihadists; ethno-communal violence between nomadic cattle herders and farming communities in the North-West Region and from the Middle Belt southward; long-running discontent and militancy in the Niger Delta; and separatist Biafra agitation in the South-East Region. The “weakened, stretched, and demoralised security services” are deployed in 35 of Nigeria’s 36 states, and are entering the second decade of their war against Boko Haram. The police and military have struggled to meet the multiple security missions across the country, including “participating in the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), countering terrorism, enforcing maritime security, countering narcotics trafficking and other criminal networks, and peacekeeping”, and the police force in particular has been considered “oppressive and ineffective”, underfunded, untrained, susceptible to endemic corruption, increasing the burden on the military to take on internal security operations. A regional action plan to “eradicate terrorism in West Africa” led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made little progress after a year, despite a budget of USD 2.3 billion for its 2020-2024 action plan.’¹⁴³

7.1.14 EASO also commented: ‘In the North-East Region, the military is conducting counterinsurgency/counter-terrorist operations against the Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa, where it has deployed as many as 70 000 troops at times...’¹⁴⁴ [however] ‘The Nigerian state response to Boko Haram has been largely ineffective, providing fertile ground for anti-Boko Haram militias to develop.’¹⁴⁵

7.1.15 The same EASO report continued:

‘In 2019 the Nigerian army changed military strategy and consolidated its forces into bigger and better equipped so-called “super camps”, to improve their defence against insurgents. The aim was to increase the capacity of the army to mobilise quickly, to take the fight to their adversary, and “deny terrorists, bandits and kidnappers the freedom of action”... However, sources report that the move to “super camps” instead created space for militants to move more freely, deepen their roots in communities and strengthen their supply chains. It also eroded the protection of civilians in areas from which troops withdrew. Throughout 2020 attacks continued, including against civilians, military patrols and escorts, the Governor of Borno state, and (although unsuccessful) Gajiram and Bitta “super camps”... The army sustained some 800 casualties in 2020 and it is reported that federal security provision is breaking down in large parts of the North-East Region... In February 2020 the State Governor of Borno reportedly stated that “Nigeria would require about 100 000 more soldiers to win the war against Boko Haram.”...

¹⁴³ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 59), June 2021

¹⁴⁴ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 26), June 2021

¹⁴⁵ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 34), June 2021

‘On 3 January 2021, a military offensive called Operation Tura Takaibango was launched by Nigerian military forces with the aim “to wipe out remnants of the Boko Haram and Islamic States of West Africa (ISWAP) terrorists and other criminal groups in the North East.” The operation covered Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states and was aimed to tackle the insurgents’ strongholds and also to prevent kidnapping on the Maiduguru-Damaturu highway. The operation was intended to prevent “the migration of terrorists into southern Borno and Yobe states.”

‘The operation used airstrikes and ground troops and focused on ISWAP hideouts in the Alagarno forest (from Damboa in southwest Borno to Goniri in eastern Yobe) and Boko Haram/JASDJ hideouts in Sambisa forest, near Borno’s border with Cameroon. Zenn reported that ISWAP in March 2021 had launched counter-attacks on the army around Alagarno forest and killed soldiers, captured military vehicles and weapons...’¹⁴⁶

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7.2 International and regional assistance

7.2.1 A CRS report from September 2020 stated:

‘Regional counterinsurgency efforts are coordinated under the African Union-authorized Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which comprises troops from Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The MNJTF has received U.S. and other donor support. MNJTF forces have mounted some successful operations, notably in border zones and areas around Lake Chad, yet they continue to face capacity gaps and coordination challenges, and security gains often have been short-lived.’¹⁴⁷

7.2.2 In respect of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) the same CRS report stated:

‘As Nigeria’s Islamist insurgencies have persisted, non-state vigilante groups have emerged to provide security in some zones. Known collectively as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), they have, in some cases, received state support or participated in military operations; some also have received U.N. training. The CJTF reportedly has helped stabilize some areas, including by channeling information between community members and the military. At the same time, some CJTF members reportedly have committed violence against civilians and other abuses.’¹⁴⁸

7.2.3 R2P stated in a January 2021 report on security-related developments and threats to the civilian population: ‘The MNJTF has led efforts to combat Boko Haram since 2015...

‘Although the regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has made significant progress in confronting Boko Haram and ISWA, civilians remain at risk of terrorist attacks and identity based violence.’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 59-60), June 2021

¹⁴⁷ CRS, ‘[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)’ (p6), 18 September 2020

¹⁴⁸ CRS, ‘[Nigeria: Current issues and US policy](#)’ (p6), 18 September 2020

¹⁴⁹ R2P Monitor, [Issue 55](#) (page 19), 15 January 2021

- 7.2.4 See also the [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) an internationally supported regional stabilisation facility.

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7.3 The Nigerian police force

- 7.3.1 Bertelsmann Stiftung in an April 2020 country report, covering events between 2017 and 2019, stated: ‘...the police, frequently abused their powers in their fight against terrorism, crime, nationalists and militias, causing widespread criticism inside and outside Nigeria.’¹⁵⁰

- 7.3.2 The DFAT report 2020 noted:

‘The NPF maintains law and order in each state and engages in border security, maritime and counter-terrorism operations. An inspector general of police, appointed by and reporting directly to the president, commands the NPF.

‘With around 370,000 officers, the NPF is one of the largest police forces in the world, although to meet the UN recommended ratio of one police officer per 400 residents it would need to train another 155,000 officers. While the exact number of female NPF officers is unclear, it has historically been low. In-country sources report the NPF suffers from low capacity and insufficient training, while its operational efficiency is hampered by its centralised nature, which makes resource allocation and changes in operating procedure slow to implement in all states.

‘Police salaries are low, with recruits earning less than USD400 [£286¹⁵¹] a year. As a result, police officers are susceptible to corrupt practices to supplement their income and many Nigerians view the NPF as an endemically corrupt organisation ... In November 2018, President Buhari approved legislation to increase police salaries in an effort to address corruption and lift performance.’¹⁵²

- 7.3.3 For more information about and an assessment of the effectiveness of the NPF, see [Country policy information note: Actors of protection](#)

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7.4 Arrests, detention and prosecutions

- 7.4.1 The DFAT report 2020 noted: ‘According to numerous reports, the military has arbitrarily arrested and detained thousands of persons in the context of the ongoing conflict against Boko Haram in the northeast, sometimes with the assistance of members of vigilante groups such as the CJTF.’¹⁵³

- 7.4.2 DFAT also stated: ‘Human rights observers report security forces continue to arrest and detain for prolonged periods women and children removed from, or allegedly associated with, Boko Haram, including women and girls who had been forcibly married to or sexually enslaved by these groups.

¹⁵⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung: [BTI 2020 Country Report Nigeria](#) (p6), 29 April 2020

¹⁵¹ Oanda, [Currency converter](#), 4 March 2021

¹⁵² DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraph 5.8-5.10), updated 3 December 2020

¹⁵³ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraph 4.28), updated 3 December 2020

Authorities reportedly detain these women and children for screening and their perceived intelligence value.’¹⁵⁴

7.4.3 R2P stated in a January 2021 report on security-related developments and threats to the civilian population: ‘... Although the government claims to have made progress against these groups [Boko Haram and ISWAP], reportedly killing hundreds of fighters, the military has also allegedly forcibly displaced entire villages in the north-east and arbitrarily detained individuals suspected of supporting extremist groups.’¹⁵⁵

7.4.4 A USCIRF February 2021 factsheet stated

‘In some instances, neighboring countries have supported the Nigerian military in this endeavor through the [Multi-National Joint Task Force](#) (MNJTF). The MNJTF is an ad-hoc mechanism through which the military forces of countries affected by these groups (Chad, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin) collaborate in joint military planning and operations and allow for cross border pursuits by counterterrorism forces into each other's territory...

‘In other instances, Nigerian security forces have partnered with community militias and informal vigilante armed groups in counter-Boko Haram activities. The most prominent of these—the Civilian Joint Task Force—trains and arms local recruits in Borno state to serve as the first line of defense against attacks by violent Islamist groups. This approach has yielded both successes and challenges. Community militias have both protected and harmed civilians in northeast Nigeria, and Nigerians face significant barriers in seeking redress for rights abuses perpetrated by informal militia fighters.

‘The result of the efforts of the Nigerian military and its partners thus far has been the effective partitioning of parts of northern Nigeria, with state actors controlling major urban centers and relocating civilians to "supercamps" so they can more easily provide protection, while various violent Salafi factions vie for control over rural areas and major supply routes. Moreover, large-scale military operations in the region often trigger the eventual return of voluntary and involuntary associates of violent jihadist groups.

‘Counterterrorism forces have also been responsible for human rights violations and violence against civilians. In its preliminary investigation in northeast Nigeria, the ICC found reasonable basis to believe the Nigerian counterterrorism forces committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Research conducted by the Center for Civilians in Conflict found that community militias supported by the Nigerian government to protect local populations from militant Islamist violence have committed abuses against civilians, including arbitrary detention, harassment and sexual assault, and extortion.’¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ DFAT, ‘[Country information report: Nigeria](#)’ (paragraph 4.29), updated 3 December 2020

¹⁵⁵ R2P Monitor, [Issue 55](#) (page 19), 15 January 2021

¹⁵⁶ USCIRF, [Factsheet: Violent Islamist Groups in Northern Nigeria](#), 12 February 2021

7.4.5 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated: ‘The government investigated attacks by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa and took steps to prosecute their members.’¹⁵⁷

7.4.6 The same report also stated: ‘Security services continued to arrest and detain suspected Boko Haram and ISIS-WA members at IDP camps and in host communities, sometimes arbitrarily and with insufficient evidence, and restricted family access to detainees...’¹⁵⁸

7.4.7 USSD continued:

‘The government continued to arrest and detain women and children removed from or allegedly associated with Boko Haram and ISIS-WA. They included women and girls who had been forcibly married to or sexually enslaved by the insurgents. The government reportedly detained them for screening and their perceived intelligence value. Some children held were reportedly as young as age five...’¹⁵⁹

‘Although the constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, police and security services at times employed these practices. The law also provides for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court, but detainees found such protections ineffective, largely due to lengthy court delays. According to numerous reports, the military arbitrarily arrested and detained—often in unmonitored military detention facilities—thousands of persons in the context of the fight against Boko Haram in the Northeast.’¹⁶⁰

7.4.8 EASO in their June 2021 security situation report, and using a range of sources stated: ‘In December 2020 the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court ”concluded that war crimes and crimes against humanity had been committed by Boko Haram, and the Nigerian military and that Nigerian authorities had failed to investigate and prosecute these crimes, therefore warranting a full investigation.”’¹⁶¹

7.4.9 The same EASO report added:

‘Between 2009 and 2018, the Nigerian government has conducted over 20 different inquiries to examine the crimes and violations committed by Boko Haram. Thousands of individuals suspected of Boko Haram membership have been arbitrarily arrested and detained since the conflict started in 2009...

‘Nigerian security forces treated many civilians as alleged Boko Haram members, subjecting them to arrest, detention, extra judicial killings.. and the collective punishment of villages suspected of falling under Boko Haram control... including the burning of villages... In 2019, the Nigerian Army, Police Force and the Department of State Services carried out counter terrorism operations against Boko Haram with reports of extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrest... Children suspected of association with Boko Haram were detained... with reports of harrowing violations, including sexual

¹⁵⁷ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section Executive summary), March 2021

¹⁵⁸ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section E), March 2021

¹⁵⁹ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section Prison and detention centre conditions), March 2021

¹⁶⁰ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section Arbitrary arrest or detention), March 2021

¹⁶¹ EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 29), June 2021

violence... and torture... The UN has documented over 3 600 detentions of children, most of which were unlawful.’¹⁶²

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Section 8 updated: 30 June 2021

8. Freedom of movement

8.1.1 The DFAT report 2020 described the demography of Nigeria stated:

‘Freedom of movement is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed in Nigeria’s Constitution, and Article 41(1) guarantees the right of citizens to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part of the country. While there are no legal impediments to internal relocation in Nigeria, state and local governments reportedly frequently discriminate against ethnic groups not indigenous to their areas (see Race/Nationality).

‘Internal migration is very common in Nigeria. Nigerians often live and work in different parts of the country from their family origins or birthplaces. This distribution reflects a multitude of factors such as: employment opportunities in sectors such as the telecommunications, construction, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing across Nigeria; educational opportunities; placement of young Nigerian graduates as part of national service or internship arrangements; herdsman or farmers seeking new grazing or agricultural opportunities; the existence of relatives or family support structures in other parts of the country; as well as internal displacement due to poverty or conflict in the northeast of the country. Internal migration includes both northerners moving to the south and southerners moving to more northerly locations such as Kaduna or Kano or to the FCT.

‘On occasion, non-indigenes can experience challenges moving to a new state if they do not possess familial connections or financial means in their new locations. Non-indigenes may face official discrimination when attempting to access government services, including university places or employment in the civil sector (see Race/Nationality). These restrictions do not, however, apply in the larger urban centres of Lagos and Abuja.

‘Nigeria has almost three million IDPs from the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and the Middle Belt conflict (see Security Situation). The UNHCR reports IDPs in Nigeria represent all religions and ethnicities. The majority have settled freely in host communities where they have familial connections or in state-run camps established in response to the conflicts. While some IDPs have moved to southern Nigeria in response to the insurgency, differences in language and culture, and lack of family ties, may discourage large-scale migration from the north to the south...’¹⁶³

8.1.2 The USSD Human Rights report 2020 stated

‘The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, but security officials restricted freedom of movement at times by imposing curfews in areas experiencing terrorist attacks and ethnic violence.

¹⁶² EASO – European Asylum Support Office: [Nigeria - Security situation](#) (page 34), June 2021

¹⁶³ DFAT, [‘Country information report: Nigeria’](#) (paragraphs 5.30-5.34), updated 3 December 2020

In-country Movement: The federal, state, or local governments imposed curfews or otherwise restricted movement in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States in connection with operations against Boko Haram and ISIS-WA. Other states imposed curfews in reaction to specific threats and attacks, and rural violence.

Police conducted “stop and search” operations in cities and on major highways and, on occasion, set up checkpoints. In response to COVID-19, the federal and state governments each instituted restrictions on movement between and within states, as well as curfews that varied throughout the year.’¹⁶⁴

8.1.3 See also [CPIN: Nigeria – Internal Relocation](#).

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¹⁶⁴ USSD, [2020 Human Rights...](#)(section Freedom of movement), March 2021

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Background
 - Ideology and aims
 - Formative years and recent organisational changes
 - Size, funding and capability
 - Areas of influence and operation
- Individuals and groups targeted by Boko Haram
 - Nature of violence and target groups
 - Women and children
- Protection – State capacity
- State response
 - Security situation in the northeast
 - Counter-terrorism security forces
 - Military operations against Boko Haram
 - Arrests and prosecutions
- Freedom of movement
 - Legal and official restrictions
 - Internal flight options

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

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The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

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