Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Nigeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 18 May 2017

Re: Any information on difficulties faced moving to a different part of Nigeria and in particular because of the different ethnic minorities in different parts of the country that make it difficult to move and live there.

Related to this is there information in general on difficulties/ tensions and disputes between the different minority groups within Nigeria.

The 2016 US Department of State country report for Nigeria states:

> "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 ethnoreligious violence." (US Department of State (3 March 2017) *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Nigeria*, pp.21-22)

In a section headed "In-country Movement" this report states:

> "The federal, state, or local governments imposed curfews or otherwise restricted movement in the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe in connection with operations against Boko Haram. Other states imposed curfews in reaction to events such as ethnoreligious violence." (ibid, p.22)

A section of this report titled "National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities" states:

> "A long history of tension existed between some ethnic groups. The government's efforts to address tensions between ethnic groups typically involved heavily concentrated security actions, incorporating police, military, and other security services, often in the form of a joint task force." (ibid, pp.37-38)

This section of the report also states:

> "All citizens have the right to live in any part of the country, but state and local governments frequently discriminated against ethnic groups not indigenous to their areas, occasionally compelling individuals to return to a region where their ethnic group originated but where they no longer had ties. State and local governments sometimes compelled nonindigenous persons to move by threats, discrimination in hiring and employment, or destruction of their homes. Those who chose to stay sometimes experienced further discrimination, including denial of scholarships and exclusion from employment in the civil service, police, and military. For example, in Plateau State the predominantly Muslim and nonindigenous Hausa and Fulani faced significant discrimination from the local government in land ownership, jobs, access to education, scholarships, and government representation.

> Land disputes, ethnic differences, settler-indigene tensions, and religious affiliation contributed to clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers throughout the Middle Belt (the central part of the country). Determining the motives behind any single attack remained difficult. 'Silent killings,' in which individuals disappeared and later were found dead, occurred throughout the year. Reprisal attacks at night in which assailants targeted and attacked individual homes or communities occurred frequently.
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> Conflicts over land rights continued between members of the Tiv, Kwalla, Jukun, Fulani, and Azara ethnic groups living near the convergence of Nasarawa, Benue, and Taraba States." (ibid, p.38)

A report published by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in paragraph 3, states:

> "Significant numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are reported to have returned to their place of origin; substantial numbers of refugees are also reported to have returned to Nigeria, but concerns have been expressed that not all such returns have been voluntary and a significant proportion have not returned home but have joined IDPs in Nigeria (see also para. 10 below). Many other forcibly displaced persons have expressed a desire to return once conditions are conducive for doing so; however, security and protection challenges are reported to be significant. Concerns have been noted in particular about the increased insecurity within IDP sites and surrounding areas. In February 2016, suicide bombers reportedly attacked an IDP camp in Dikwa, Borno State, killing more than 58 people and injuring more than 80 people.12 Assessments of IDP sites in previously inaccessible areas have revealed considerable human rights concerns related to sexual exploitation, rape and sexual violence, other forms of violence, and tensions between IDPs and host communities." (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (October 2016) *International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing northeastern Nigeria (the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa) and surrounding region – Update II*, pp.2-3)

The 2017 country report on Nigeria from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom states:

> "Based on article 147 of the 1999 Constitution, Nigerian law and state and local government practice make a distinction between 'indigenes' and 'settlers.' Indigenes are persons whose ethnic group is considered native to a particular area, while settlers are those who have ethnic roots in another part of the country. State and local governments issue certifications granting indigene status, which bestows many benefits and privileges. The settler designation can be made even if a particular group may have lived in an area for generations. Accessing land, schools, civil service jobs, or public office without such an indigene certificate can be almost impossible. In the Middle Belt, indigene and settler identities fall along and reinforce ethnic and religious divides, leading to sectarian violence to control state and local governments." (US Commission on International Religious Freedom (26 April 2017) *2017 Country Reports: USCIRF Recommended Countries of Particular Concern (CPC): Nigeria*)

A report published by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, in a section titled "Ethno-religious conflicts", states:

"Due to their tendency to spread into other areas after an early stage in one area, ethno-religious conflicts have gained notoriety as the most violent crises in Nigeria. Most of these conflicts occur in the middle-belt and along the culturally borderline states of the predominantly Muslim North, and also take place between Hausa-Fulani groups and non-Muslim ethnic groups in the South (Osaghae and Suberu 2005:19). In conflicts of this nature occurring along the convergence of ethnic and religious lines, it is often very difficult to tell the differences between religious and ethnic crises because the dividing line between them is slimmer than thin." (African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) (29 August 2016) *Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria: A specific analysis upon identities (1999-2013)*)

A report from BBC news states:

"After a spate of deadly attacks in Nigeria this year blamed on ethnic Fulani cattle herders, the president has ordered a military crackdown on the group. But the issue is not new - clashes between different groups of Fulani herders and farmers have killed thousands of people in Nigeria over the past two decades. In 2014, more than 1,200 people lost their lives, according to the most recent Global Terrorism Index. This made the Fulanis the world's fourth deadliest militant group, the report said." (BBC News (5 May 2016) *Making sense of Nigeria's Fulani-farmer conflict*)

A document published by Conciliation Resources states:

"In many areas of the country, the blockage of transhumance routes and loss of grazing land to agricultural expansion, combined with increased southwards movement of pastoralists, has led to increased conflict with local communities. This is particularly the case along the central axis of Nigeria (also known as the Middle Belt) – notably parts of Plateau, Kaduna, Niger, Nassarawa, Benue, Taraba, and Adamawa States. In some of these states and in the north-west, including Zamfara State, rampant banditry has further inflamed farmer-pastoralist conflicts. The conflicts often have localised dynamics, but primarily involve Fulani pastoralists and local farming communities. Both sides are affected, leading to many fatalities, the destruction of livelihoods and property, and internal displacement." (Conciliation Resources (March 2017) *From cooperation to contention: Political unsettlement and farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Nigeria*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) (29 August 2016) *Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria: A specific analysis upon identities (1999-2013)*
http://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ethnic-religious-crises-nigeria/
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