



Nigeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 12 February 2018

- 1. Information regarding attacks by Boko Haram militants on 25/12/12 in Maiduguri, Borno State in particular at House of Mercy Church of God.**
- 2. Information regarding Boko Haram activity in that region between 2012 and 2014.**
- 3. Information regarding attacks in Lagos in June/ July 2015.**
- 4. Is state protection available/ effective?**

No reference to the House of Mercy Church of God in Maiduguri or Borno State was found among sources available to the Refugee Documentation Centre.

A CNN Wire report refers to attacks on two churches on Christmas Eve 2012 as follows:

“At least 12 people died in northern Nigeria when attackers raided two churches during Christmas Eve services, police said. One assault occurred at the Church of Christ in Nations in Postikum, in Yobe province. Gunmen attacked worshipers during prayer, killing six people, including the pastor, and setting the building on fire. Worshipers also were attacked at the First Baptist Church in Maiduguri, in Borno state. A deacon and five church members were killed.” (CNN Wire (25 December 2012) *12 killed in attacks on two churches in Nigeria*)

A report from Arutz Sheva (Israel National News) states:

“Two terrorist attacks shook the besieged Nigerian Christian community on Christmas Eve, resulting in 12 Christian deaths. Police reports reveal that a church in Peri, a village in the northern Nigerian state of Yobe, was set ablaze late on Christmas Eve following a shooting attack shortly after midnight mass. Another six were killed at the First Baptist Church in Maiduguri, in Borno state.” (Arutz Sheva (Israel National News) (28 December 2012) *AJC Condemns 'Bestiality' of Attack Against Nigerian Christians*)

An article from British magazine The Spectator states:

“To attend midnight mass on Christmas Eve in parts of Nigeria is to take your life in your hands. For the last three years, Islamist militants have been attacking churches but last week, when gunmen moved on a church in Potiskum, they found the military waiting. On their retreat, they came across a smaller unprotected church in the nearby village of Peri and opened fire, killing the pastor and five parishioners. A separate attack on the First Baptist Church in the village of Maiduguri took Nigeria's Christmas death toll to a dozen, and the overall casualties of its new sectarian war to 1,400.” (The Spectator (29 December 2012) *Unholy war*)

Please note that the above reports are contradicted by a report from the U.S. Commission On International Religious Freedom which states:

“December 24, Maiduguri, Borno State: Gunmen attacked the First Baptist Church. No one was killed.” (The U.S. Commission On International Religious Freedom (August 2013) *Nigeria: Boko Haram’s Religiously-Motivated Attacks*)

A 2012 report published by Human Rights Watch, in a section titled “Boko Haram Attacks”, states:

“Boko Haram has attacked a wide array of targets since 2009, including government authorities (especially the police and other members of security agencies); Christians and other ‘infidels’; and Muslims, including clerics, traditional leaders, and politicians who have criticized its ideology or tactics or were perceived to have collaborated with the government.

The group’s attacks appear to have steadily increased since its reemergence in 2010. Media reports monitored by Human Rights Watch of suspected Boko Haram attacks, show that between July and December 2010, at least 85 people were killed in some 35 separate attacks in four states in northern and central Nigeria, as well as in Abuja, the nation’s capital. Attacks attributed to Boko Haram in 2011 left at least 550 people dead in some separate incidents. In the first nine months of 2012 alone, more than 815 people died in some 275 separate attacks in 12 northern and central states, and Abuja.

After the group reemerged in 2010, police officers and then Muslim leaders including clerics and traditional rulers who criticized the group or were seen as collaborating with the government to identify group members were the initial target of attacks. Most of these attacks were carried out by gunmen, often riding on motorcycles, who shot and killed their victims. In December 2010, suspected Boko Haram members carried out their first major bombings, with attacks on Christmas Eve in the city of Jos and on New Year’s Eve in Abuja. Within six months of these bombings, the group deployed its first suicide bomber in an attack in June 2011 on the police headquarters in Abuja. Since then, suspected Boko Haram members have carried out numerous suicide bombings of police stations and churches, as well as the United Nations building and the offices of a private newspaper in Abuja.” (Human Rights Watch (11 October 2012) *Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria*, p.40)

The Executive Summary of a report from the International Crisis Group states:

“Boko Haram’s four-year-old insurgency has pitted neighbour against neighbour, cost more than 4,000 lives, displaced close to half a million, destroyed hundreds of schools and government buildings and devastated an already ravaged economy in the North East, one of Nigeria’s poorest regions.” (International Crisis Group (3 April 2014) *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*)

In a section titled “A Rapidly Evolving Threat” this report states:

“On 20 January 2012, Boko Haram killed at least 185 people, mostly Muslim civilians, in coordinated bombings and shootings targeting state security agencies in Kano. The intention was to force the state government to stop the arrests of members fleeing Maiduguri to Kano. For several months the state was a major theatre for the sect, prompting an extensive military response. Following a sweeping crackdown in September 2012 that resulted in arrests and killings of prominent members, including Abubakar Adam Kamar, Abul Qaqa, Mohammed Suleiman and Malam Ghali, scores of top Boko Haram commanders fled, supposedly to Mali and Somalia. Some reportedly were arrested by Niger security operatives in the border town of Kwanni, handed over to Nigerian authorities and taken to Abuja. They have not been heard of since.” (ibid, p.17)

This section of the report also states:

“Although Boko Haram has been pushed into the bush, it can still carry out spectacular attacks. On 2 December 2013 around 200 insurgents dressed in military uniform and armed with rocket launchers, explosives and assault rifles infiltrated Maiduguri and conducted coordinated attacks on the air force base and a military barracks. Most of the buildings were reportedly destroyed, as well as five aircraft. On 20 December 2013, several hundred fighters stormed military barracks outside Bama, close to the Cameroon border, in a predawn raid, torching the compound and killing many soldiers, their wives and children. The army said the Islamists tried to escape across the border, but fighter jets killed many of them, as well as civilians.” (ibid, p.18)

A report from the US Congressional Research Service, in a section titled “What is the impact of Boko Haram violence and who are its victims?”, states:

“More than 4,000 people have been killed in Boko Haram-related violence. U.N. and Nigerian officials report that more than six million Nigerians have been affected and more than 300,000 have been displaced. The group has focused on a wide range of targets, but civilians in the impoverished Muslim northeast have borne the brunt of the violence. Boko Haram’s leaders have called in their public rhetoric for an uprising against secular authority and a war against Christianity. Attacks attributed to the group have not exclusively, or even primarily, targeted Christians, who are a minority in the north, and the group has yet to conduct attacks against the majority-Christian southern part of the country. Religious figures and institutions comprised an estimated 10% of the group’s targets from 2009 to 2013,⁹ but its assaults on churches have nevertheless fueled existing religious tensions in Nigeria. These attacks, which often occur on Sundays or religious holidays, presumably to achieve maximum effect, have in some cases sparked deadly reprisal attacks by Christians against Muslim civilians. The church bombings, along with the recent spate of kidnappings and other high-profile civilian attacks, appear to be part of a deliberate effort to foment instability, possibly seeking to discredit and delegitimize the national government by exposing the weakness of its security apparatus and justice mechanisms and, potentially, to ignite a religious war.

Boko Haram’s attacks have increased substantially in frequency, reach, and lethality since 2010, occurring almost daily in parts of northeast Nigeria, and periodically beyond.¹¹ In May 2013, the Nigerian government declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa in response to the

escalating violence, expanding a state of emergency that had been declared in Borno and Yobe in late 2011. Boko Haram initially focused primarily on state and federal targets, such as police stations, but it has also targeted civilians in schools, churches, mosques, markets, bars, and villages. Cell phone towers and media outlets have also been attacked, likely for both tactical and ideological reasons. The group has assassinated local political leaders and moderate Muslim clerics. Its deadliest attacks include a coordinated series of bombings in Kano, northern Nigeria's largest city, that killed more than 180 people in January 2012; an attack on the village of Benisheikh in September 2013 that killed more than 160 civilians; and an assault on another northeastern village, Gamboro, that may have killed as many as 300 people in early May 2014." (US Congressional Research Service (20 May 2014) *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*, pp.3-4)

The Executive Summary of an Amnesty International report states:

"Boko Haram has wreaked havoc and suffering on the lives of millions of people in north-east Nigeria since 2009. The armed group has killed thousands of people, abducted at least 2,000 and forced more than a million to flee their homes. Through a campaign of almost daily killings, bombings, abductions, looting and burning, Boko Haram has crippled normal life in north-east Nigeria. Towns and villages have been pillaged. Schools, churches, mosques and other public buildings have been attacked and destroyed. Boko Haram is brutally mistreating civilians trapped in areas under its control and has disrupted the provision of health, education and other public services by the Nigerian authorities. Amnesty International's research shows that Boko Haram has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity with impunity." (Amnesty International (14 April 2015) *'Our Job Is To Shoot, Slaughter And Kill': Boko Haram's Reign Of Terror In North-East Nigeria*, p.3)

This Summary also states:

"Boko Haram's raids on towns and villages in north-east Nigeria terrorized civilians and disrupted ordinary people's livelihoods. Some attacks were carried out by just two or three gunmen on a motorcycle, some by hundreds of fighters supported by tanks and anti-aircraft weapons mounted on flat-bed trucks. The fighters shot civilians in the streets and in their homes. They stole from people's houses, shops and markets, burned these buildings and left. They frequently abducted civilians. In some attacks, Boko Haram gunmen quietly entered villages or towns and assassinated specific individuals identified in advance. In others, Boko Haram assembled civilians and preached to them, instructing them not to be loyal to the government and to follow Boko Haram's version of Islam. Boko Haram sometimes gave civilians a choice: to be killed or join the group. More frequently, fighters simply shot civilians or cut their throats." (ibid, p.4)

In a section titled "Insurgency and Escalation" this report states:

"Starting in 2012 Boko Haram began to use more widespread violence to force its ideology on society. In an attempt to stop children receiving western education, seen by the group as responsible for moral decay, Boko Haram set dozens of schools on fire in Maiduguri. Initially the group only burned

down school buildings when they were empty. However, from the beginning of 2013 the attacks became increasingly deadly. Amnesty International's research found that Boko Haram intentionally targeted teachers and pupils in an effort to prevent children from going to school. At least 70 teachers and more than 100 schoolchildren and students were killed or wounded between January 2012 and October 2013. At least 50 schools were either burned down or badly damaged and 60 more were forced to close. Thousands of children were forced out of schools across communities in Adamawa, Borno, Yobe and Kaduna states. In March 2014, the Borno state government decided to close all secondary schools in the state in order to protect students and teachers from further attacks. The state government announced that all schools would be reopened in November 2014." (Ibid, p.11)

See also section titled "Life Under Boko Haram Control" which states:

"Boko Haram fighters ruthlessly enforced a common set of rules across towns under their control, which they would announce to the assembled population soon after taking over. Residents were ordered not to sell or consume cigarettes, Indian hemp, or other drugs; men had to let their beards and hair grow and wear trousers that did not touch the floor; women should cover themselves including their faces in public; all transactions had to be conducted directly between producer and consumer – intermediaries were forbidden; women were not allowed to move around outside without a permissible reason, travel between towns required special permission from the Amir and residents were frequently prohibited from leaving Boko Haram territory.

With such restrictions on people's movement, basic activities like obtaining food and gaining a livelihood were a challenge. Although there were fewer restrictions on men, Boko Haram had killed or imprisoned many men of fighting age. Most households were therefore dependent on children to collect food, or on assistance from Boko Haram members.

Although looted food was often distributed for free, in many locations Boko Haram allowed or even encouraged trade. A resident of Dikwa told Amnesty International that before he fled, Boko Haram was operating a credit system.

A woman from Bama said life under Boko Haram was particularly hard for those who refused to convert to Boko Haram's interpretation of Islam. 'Those who followed Boko Haram were given food. If you didn't agree to follow Boko Haram, they will just leave you... If they see you have bought something, they will ask if you bought it and tell you to go and show them the place where you bought it and they will beat the seller and beat you.'

Boko Haram required residents to attend their daily prayers. Failure to attend was punishable by flogging. The group's members would preach to people, instructing them on their methods of praying, worship and performing ablutions. Boko Haram members told residents that their previous practices and the texts they used to learn about Islam were wrong. They told residents that government officials and politicians were corrupt, that they were unbelievers and that people must obey Islam instead. Christians abducted by Boko Haram had to learn Islamic prayers and practices.

Civilians were discouraged or prevented from leaving Boko Haram's towns and camps. In some places people were told to leave or join Boko Haram.³⁹ By contrast, in several locations Boko Haram actively imprisoned people, placing them in large houses or in prisons under armed guard. In other areas, civilians were allowed to remain in their homes or moved into available homes, without constant guard. However, Boko Haram fighters patrolled the streets and the areas between towns looking for those trying to escape. If discovered, escapees were turned around and, in some cases, flogged or executed." (ibid, pp.15-16)

An article from American magazine The Atlantic states:

"The 2015 Global Terrorism Index, published by the Institute for Economics & Peace, found that Boko Haram, the Nigerian jihadist group, was responsible for 6,644 deaths in 2014, compared with 6,073 at the hands of ISIS. Boko Haram, which was founded in 2002 as an Islamist movement against Western education and morphed into an armed insurgency in 2009, has rapidly expanded its scope and ambitions over the past two years, achieving international notoriety in the spring of 2014 by kidnapping more than 200 schoolgirls. Much like ISIS, the organization controls territory in Nigeria (although it has lost some of it over the past year) and has declared a caliphate in that territory. The group is also international; although based in northeastern Nigeria, it has launched attacks in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger." (The Atlantic (18 November 2015) *The World's Deadliest Terrorist Organization*)

No reference was found to an attack in Lagos in June or July 2015.

An August 2015 article from Africa Review states:

"Nigeria steps up security as terrorist commanders are nabbed in commercial capital Up to five states in Nigeria, including the densely populated commercial city of Lagos, are on high alert following recent arrests of Boko Haram commanders in the states. The states which are outside embattled northeast region are Lagos, Kano, Plateau, Enugu and Gombe. So far, the Department of State Services (DSS) has arrested 20 more suspected Boko Haram commanders and members in these states between July 8 and Aug. 25. Reports indicate that twelve members of the Islamist militant group have been arrested in Lagos." (Africa Review (31 August 2015) *Boko Haram scare in Lagos*)

An article from the Lagos-based newspaper states:

"There has been a sudden influx of Boko Haram agents into Lagos and other parts of Nigeria outside the militants' main area in northeastern Nigeria, said Tony Opuiyo, spokesman of the Department of State Services. He said Boko Haram is trying to extend their reach after being pushed out of the urban centers of northeastern Nigeria in recent months. Security agencies had arrested 14 Boko Haram suspects in Lagos, the capital Abuja and other parts of the country outside the northeast in the past two months, said Opuiyo. Those arrested include cell leaders, some of whom admitted to involvement in recent suicide attacks, he said." (PM News (30 August 2015) *Boko Haram trying to hit Lagos DSS*)

See also PM News article which states:

“Forty-five people suspected to be members of Boko Haram who reportedly planned to bomb Dolphin Estate in Ikoyi, Lagos State, western Nigeria, have been arrested and charged to court. Among them are Abuyi Sheriff, Babagana Ali, Abass Ibrahim, Abubaka Grema, Kabiri Ibrahim, Mustaph Mohammed, Usman Mohammed and Modu Amsami. Others are Isa Agafi, Adamu Jebili, Saja Kamba, Abba Sagoma, Mallam Buchu, Abdul-Kareem Abba, Babagana Koloye, Usman Buka, Adamu Mohammed, Lawal Mohammed, and Tela Abana. Also arrested are Mustapha Mohammed, Isa Agafi, Belo Modu, Kachala Babagana, Modu Abu, Alhaji Modu Mustapha and many others. The suspects were arrested by the officers of Directorate of Security Service (DSS) in the state following a tip-off. An affidavit sworn to and presented before the court, stated that following an intelligence report that there will be a terror attack in September 2015 by the terrorist group at Dolphin Estate in Ikoyi, Etiosa Local Government in Lagos, a team of DSS cordoned off the area, intercepted and arrested the suspects.” (PM News (23 October 2015) *45 Boko Haram suspects arrested in Lagos*)

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on state protection for Christians in Nigeria, in a section titled “State Protection”, states:

“Regarding protection for violence between Christians and Muslims in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, the USCIRF states that ‘years of inaction by Nigeria’s federal and state governments have created a climate of impunity’ and that ‘rarely are perpetrators of sectarian violence held accountable’ The International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 similarly states that there is a ‘lack of government protection for victims of religious violence’ and that the authorities at all levels of government did not effectively address the problems leading to violence between Christian farmers and Muslim cattle herders in central Nigeria

Sources indicate that the Nigerian army is fighting Boko Haram in the northeast Media sources state that the army is receiving support from a multi-national task force from neighbouring countries. Sources report that the government declared a ‘state of emergency’ in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa that lasted from May 2013 until November 2014. According to the International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, the Nigerian government’s actions against Boko Haram have been ‘largely ineffective,’ and the military fighting has increased the death toll of civilians in these areas. Voice of America similarly states that the Nigerian army ‘has struggled to stop attacks by Boko Haram’. Freedom House indicates that the government response to Boko Haram has been criticized for being ‘ineffective’ and for committing ‘gross human rights violations with impunity’” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (17 November 2015) *NGA105320.E – Nigeria: Situation of Christians, including those living in northern cities, Lagos and Abuja; state protection (2011-October 2015)*)

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.

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