



Nigeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 March 2015

Is there any evidence that the Boko Haram try and pursue Christians who have relocated?

No reference was found to Boko Haram pursuing Christians who have relocated beyond the conflict states in the north east of Nigeria.

The 2015 Freedom House report on Nigeria states:

“Boko Haram has been accused of attempting to alter the religious and ethnic composition of the northeast, particularly in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, where it controls significant territory.” (Freedom House (28 January 2015) *Freedom in the World 2015 – Nigeria*)

A report from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in a section headed “Boko Haram attacks in north-east Nigeria”, states:

“The group has issued public demands that Christians leave northern Nigeria. It has burned down churches and killed worshippers. It has abducted Christian women and girls and threatened them with violence in order to force their conversion to Islam or marriage to its members. Men who refuse to convert have been killed.” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (9 December 2014) *Nigeria: Multiple displacement crises overshadowed by Boko Haram*)

A Human Rights Watch report, in a section titled “Attacks on Christians”, states:

“Boko Haram has carried out numerous attacks on churches and Christians in northern and central Nigeria during its campaign of violence. During the five days of violence in July 2009, for example, Boko Haram members killed 37 Christian men, including three pastors, and torched or partially destroyed 29 churches in Borno State, according to Christian leaders. Since the group reemerged in 2010, armed gunmen have bombed or opened fire on worshippers in at least 18 churches across eight northern and central states, killing more than 127 Christians and injuring numerous others, according to media reports monitored by Human Rights Watch. A Christian leader in Maiduguri told Human Rights Watch that in Borno State alone, between June 7, 2011 and January 17, 2012, 142 Christians were killed. The attacks on Christians in northern and central Nigeria appear to be part of a systematic plan of violence and intimidation.” (Human Rights Watch (11 October 2012) *Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria*, p.44)

The 2014 report from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, in a section titled “Background”, states:

“Exacerbating Muslim-Christians tensions is Boko Haram, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization that views Nigeria's federal and northern state governments, political leaders, and religious elites as morally corrupt. It rejects the secular state, calls for the universal implementation of what it considers ‘pure’ Shari’ah law to resolve the ills facing northern Nigerian Muslims, has called on all Christians to leave northern Nigeria, and perpetrates violent attacks against the police, military, Christians, churches, schools, and Muslim critics.” (US Commission on International Religious Freedom (30 April 2014) *USCIRF Annual Report 2014 - Countries of Particular Concern: Nigeria*)

The Executive Summary of the 2014 US Department of State report on religious freedom in Nigeria states:

“There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Some Muslim and Christian religious leaders stated the terrorist organization known as Boko Haram sought to incite hostilities between Muslims and Christians in the northern and central states, where local laws, discriminatory employment practices, and fierce competition for land exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions. In areas where it was active, Boko Haram attempted to force non-Muslims to convert and targeted Muslims who did not follow its version of Islam or support its activities.” (US Department of State (28 July 2014) *2013 Report on International Religious Freedom – Nigeria*, p.1)

In a section headed “Government Inaction” this report states:

“Christian groups continued to assert local and state authorities did not deliver adequate protection or post-attack relief to rural communities in the northeast, where Boko Haram killed villagers and burned churches throughout the year.” (ibid, p.6)

A report from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in a section headed “Mixed migration and an increasingly divided country”, refers to the situation for persons displaced by Boko Haram violence as follows:

“Many of those fleeing Boko Haram’s violence have made for the bustling cities of the south, mirroring the migration of others seeking economic opportunities there. IDPs have joined economic migrants in the slums and satellite towns around large cities, most notably Abuja. As experience elsewhere has shown, IDPs who migrate to large urban centres tend to become invisible and rarely receive support as they struggle to integrate in new and often hostile environments. The future for Nigeria’s IDPs is currently bleak. The country is ever more divided, and there are concerns that increasing violence in the north, much of it targeting Christian civilians, will spread to the Middle Belt and further south. Data is limited, but it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of people have already been displaced in the region over the past 15 years, and an influx of IDPs or the arrival of Boko Haram could set a powder keg alight.” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (5 June 2014) *Nigeria: Fleeing Boko Haram's relentless terror*)

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:

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