



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Nigeria: Boko Haram**

**Version 2.0**

**January 2019**

# 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 basis of claim](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and 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 – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment on whether, **in general**:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- 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
- Claims are 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 \(COI\)](#), dated 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, and is from generally reliable sources. 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, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

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

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

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

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, 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: 30 January 2019

## 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 political/religious opposition to the group, and/or because the person is a woman.

### 1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 Boko Haram has split into 2 factions:

- Islamic State-West Africa; and
- Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad

Both groups are referred to as Boko Haram in this section of the note.

- 1.2.2 Where a claim by a male applicant is refused it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Nigeria is listed as a designated state in respect of men only (see [Certification](#)).

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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](#)).

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### 2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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### 2.3 Refugee convention reason

- 2.3.1 A person's actual or imputed religion, political opinion and membership of a particular social group (as a woman).

- 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 Boko Haram is a militant Islamist group based in north-east Nigeria, primarily in Borno state, formed in 2002. Drawing on a sense of injustice felt by the local population at the underdevelopment of the region, the group has recruited its members largely from ethnic Kanuris. In 2016 the group split into 2 factions: Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA), led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi; and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), led by Abubakar Shekaum. Both groups, however, maintain the same ultimate goal of creating a fundamentalist Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria with strict compliance to Sharia law. Most Nigerians and commentators refer to both groups as one entity: 'Boko Haram' (see [Boko Haram](#)).
- 2.4.2 From 2009 Boko Haram has used violence to achieve its aims, primarily in the areas it is based and operates in the north-east of Nigeria. The 2 factions appear, however, to employ slightly different military tactics: ISIS-WA often target and directly engage with military personnel, while JAS are reported to conduct ambushes along transport routes, using a variety of methods including improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers. An estimated 20,000 to over 35,000 people have been killed in violence involving the group and the Nigerian armed forces (see [Boko Haram](#) and [Conflict-related violence](#)).
- 2.4.3 Boko Haram has used a variety of forms of violence, including targeted killings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, and destruction of property - particularly schools and mosques - as well as attacks against 'soft' targets such as refugees and IDPs. The group has attacked government and political targets, as well as Muslim and Christian populations generally, focussing on security personnel but has also attacked civilians. It targets anyone who is (or is perceived to be) challenging or in opposition to its political or religious beliefs including
- Members of the police and military
  - Politicians
  - Individuals perceived as supporting 'western' concepts such as secular education, such as teachers
  - Muslims that do not support its aims
  - Traditional leaders
  - Prominent clerics (see [Targets of violations](#))
- 2.4.4 The group has also forcibly recruited and abducted thousands of men, women and children, subjecting many to abuse including sexual violence,

forced marriage and using young girls, in particular, as suicide bombers (see [Targets of violations](#)).

- 2.4.5 Boko Haram continues to operate and be active in the north-east region - primarily Borno state, with its capital Maiduguri being the epicentre of the violence but it has also undertaken attacks in Adamawa and Yobe states. However it has limited influence beyond these areas and rarely ventures into other parts of the Muslim North or the Christian South of Nigeria (see [Boko Haram \(Areas of operation\)](#) and [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. While Boko Haram's advance into the main towns in the north-east has been checked, the security forces have limited capacity to control rural areas. The armed force's ability to defeat the group has been undermined by a lack of personnel, high desertion rates, corruption, poor and insufficient equipment, poor communication, and heavy-handedness in counter-insurgency operations during which it is reported to have committed human rights abuses and caused civilian casualties, and arbitrarily arrested thousands of people. Despite the government's efforts Boko Haram continues to be a potent threat in rural areas and in the towns of Borno state, and in some parts of Yobe and Adamawa states and failures to adequately protect people from Boko Haram attacks and slow response to distress calls have been reported (see [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 an estimated 2.5 million people being displaced within and from the region. An estimated 7.7 million people required humanitarian assistance in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states (see [Conflict-related violence](#) and [Targets of violations](#)).
- 2.4.8 Persons who do not agree with or support the beliefs of Boko Haram in Borno state and some parts of Adamawa and Yobe states is likely be at risk of serious harm or persecution.
- 2.4.9 However, Boko Haram's attacks are largely confined to the north-east and the group has limited influence or capacity to target persons outside of the region. Therefore, persons in areas outside of the north-east who oppose or challenge the aims of Boko Haram are unlikely to be at risk of serious harm or persecution from the group.
- 2.4.10 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.
- 2.4.11 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 fears persecution and/or serious harm by non-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 government has made efforts to deal with the threat of Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria, deploying thousands of troops to the region and has managed to reverse some of the group's advances. The government has also arrested and brought to trial over 1,500 people accused of being linked to Boko Haram (see [State protection](#)).
- 2.5.3 However, the security forces are poorly equipped, trained and funded, reportedly due to corruption at various levels. The military, and other security forces, have been accused of extra-judicial killing of suspects, particularly suspected members of Boko Haram, or persons suspected of harbouring them. They are also accused of being responsible for many deaths in military custody and having carried out systematic violence and abuse against populations 'freed' from Boko Haram control, including arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment, and holding people in poor conditions (see [State protection](#)).
- 2.5.4 The armed forces heavy-handedness in its efforts to stop Boko Haram have alienated the local population, undermining its ability to end the insurgency. Boko Haram continues to be able to operate in rural areas of Borno state which remain outside of the control of the security forces, and to be able to attack targets in rural and urban areas in the north-east of the country (see [State protection](#)).
- 2.5.5 In other parts of the country, the security forces generally maintain order. The Nigerian Police Force is the main law enforcement agency in Nigeria but is hampered by poor and inadequate training, and lack of funding and capacity, partly because centralised control impedes operational changes and improvements from reaching the whole country (see [State protection](#) and [country policy and information note on protection](#)).
- 2.5.6 In general, in the north-east - primarily in Borno - the state may be willing but is unlikely to be able to provide protection.
- 2.5.7 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. But the state's ability and willingness to provide protection can be subject to localised differences, depending on the availability of resources in the particular area. 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 More information about and assessment of protection is in [country policy and information on protection](#) and on [gender-based violence](#). For general 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 Where the person's fear is of persecution and/or serious harm by non-state actors, decision makers must determine whether the person could relocate

internally to a place where they would not face a real risk of persecution or serious harm and where they can reasonably be expected to stay.

- 2.6.2 Nigeria is a large country with a population of over 190 million, covering an area of over 900,000 sq km (around four 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, however movement may be impeded by safety concerns, particularly in areas where there are ongoing security issues such as the north-east. Many Nigerians, however, continue to migrate across the country, between states and from north to south for economic and other reasons (see [Freedom of movement](#), and [country information relevant to and assessment of internal relocation](#)).
- 2.6.3 Boko Haram's influence and activities are largely confined to the northern states, particularly Borno state. Decision makers will need to consider the nature of this threat and how far it would extend, and whether or not it would be safe and reasonable to expect the person to relocate (see [Boko Haram](#) and [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 2.6.4 In general a person is likely to be able to relocate from the north-east to another part of Nigeria, although this will depend on their individual circumstances. However, single women without a support network or means to support themselves may face greater difficulties in relocating than single men or families. Internal moves may also be more difficult for non-indigenes due to language, religious and cultural differences, particularly between northern and southern states (see [Freedom of movement](#) and [country policy and information on internal relocation and gender-based violence](#)).
- 2.6.5 Each case must therefore be considered on its facts, with the onus on the decision maker to demonstrate that internal relocation would be reasonable / not unduly harsh.
- 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 unlikely 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 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

# Country information

Section 3 updated: December 2018

## 3. Background

### 3.1 Geographical regions

3.1.1 The country of Nigeria comprises 36 states, plus the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (FCT); these form six geographical zones:

- North East – Bauchi, Borno, Taraba, Adamawa, Gombe and Yobe;
- North West – Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa;
- North Central – Niger, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Kwara and FCT;
- South East – Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia and Anambra;
- South West – Oyo, Ekiti, Osun, Ondo, Lagos and Ogun;
- South South – Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Rivers, Cross River, and Delta<sup>1</sup>.

3.1.2 The DFAT provided a map of the country, describing the administrative boundaries, main cities and ethnic groups<sup>2</sup>:



<sup>1</sup> Australian Government: (DFAT) Thematic Report: Nigeria (para 2.6), 9 March 2018 [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> DFAT Thematic Report: Nigeria (p2), 9 March 2018 [url](#)

- 3.1.3 The capital city is Abuja, with almost 3 million people; the largest city is Lagos, with approximately 14 million people, although the Lagos state government claims there are 21 million residents<sup>3</sup>.

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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 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.’<sup>4</sup>

- 3.2.2 The Thematic Report on Nigeria of the Australian Government (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - DFAT) published on 9 March 2018 described the demography of Nigeria. It noted approximately 200 ethnic groups, and 500 indigenous languages in Nigeria. The largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the north-west, the Kanuri in the north-east, the Igbo in the south-east, and the Yoruba in the south-west. The official language is English. It is estimated that fifty per cent of Nigerians are Muslim, forty per cent are Christian, and ten per cent follow indigenous religious beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Government: (DFAT) Thematic Report: Nigeria (para 2.10), 9 March 2018 [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> EASO COI Country Focus Report (para 1.2.1), June 2017 [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> DFAT, Nigeria (para 2.8), 9 March 2018 [url](#)

## 4. Boko Haram

### 4.1 Ideology and aims

- 4.1.1 An American Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report on Boko Haram, dated 8 August 2018, stated:

‘Boko Haram is an Islamist militant group based in Nigeria’s northeast. Mohammed Yusuf, an influential Islamist cleric from Borno State, created the group in Maiduguri in 2002. The overarching aim of the group, which began as an offshoot of the Salafi movement, a branch of Sunni Islam, is to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state with sharia criminal courts.

‘The movement’s followers, called Yusuffiya, consist of northern Islamic students and clerics, as well as professionals, many of whom struggle to find work. While it is difficult to track the size of Boko Haram, U.S. intelligence officials have estimated that there are between four and six thousand hard-core militants. Other analysts have said the group’s membership could be three times that. CFR Senior Fellow John Campbell writes that many of the group’s fighters, as well as its victims, are likely Kanuri Muslims, the predominant ethnic group in Borno.’<sup>6</sup>

- 4.1.2 The DFAT report of 2018 observed:

‘Boko Haram was initially a fringe movement, which provided social and financial help to Muslims and called for strict observation of sharia. The group transitioned into an insurgency in 2009 following the extrajudicial killing of its founding leader, Muhammad Yusuf, when tensions with government security forces escalated over the application of sharia law in the northeast states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. Since 2009, Boko Haram has attacked individuals seen as supporting the government, including police, military and politicians; individuals seen as supporting “western” concepts including secular education; and Muslims that do not support its cause.’<sup>7</sup>

- 4.1.3 A background paper about Boko Haram published on the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI for Global Change) website stated:

‘Evidence suggests that Boko Haram has been very effective in using Islamic ideology to recruit, organise and sustain its battle against the Nigerian state. Boko Haram ideology is a spill over from the Sunni-Salafi doctrine that the “temporal proximity to Prophet Mohammad is associated with the truest form of Islam”. On the other hand, contrasting approaches to returning to this original way of practicing Islam has given rise to Salafi jihadis that believe in the use of violence, even against other Muslims. Victims of this approach include Salafi purists and activists who denounce violence and advocate participating in political processes. Boko Haram appears to associate with the Sunni-Salafi jihadis who call for the use of violence to ensure a return to the original form of Islam, and the rejection of everything deemed un-Islamic. Thus, Boko Haram’s ideological propaganda for recruitment and structural and strategic organisation has hinged on the

<sup>6</sup> Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), ‘Nigeria’s Battle With Boko Haram’, 8 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>7</sup> DFAT, Nigeria report 2018 (para 2.38), March 2018, [url](#).



principle of rejecting western civilization – characterized by the modern Nigerian government – building a society based on Islamic values and structured around the immediate establishment of an Islamic state...<sup>8</sup>

4.1.4 The background paper continued:

‘...The manipulation of the memory and historical narrative of the Kanem-Borno Empire and the use of Kanuri identity resonated with the communities Boko Haram preached to, enabling them to recruit thousands of young people. However, this very narrative also contributed to the factions that later emerged within the sect. In recent times, factions within Boko Haram have emerged fundamentally due to differences in religious ideology, conflict strategy and ethnic identity.’<sup>9</sup>

4.1.5 Tim Marshall in his book, Prisoners of geography, observed that Boko Haram ‘... wants to establish a caliphate in Muslim areas, has used the sense of injustice engendered by underdevelopment to gain ground in the north... Much of the local population will not co-operate with the military, either for fear of reprisal or due to the shared resentment of the south [of Nigeria]... Since it first appeared in 2009 more than 20,000 people have been killed and thousands more abducted.’<sup>10</sup>

4.1.6 The American Council for Foreign Relations, 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 controls<sup>11</sup>.

4.1.7 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).[...]<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> TBI for Global Change, ‘Boko Haram: Ideology, Ethnicity, and Identity’, 29 September 2014, [url](#).

<sup>9</sup> TBI for Global Change, ‘Boko Haram: Ideology, Ethnicity, and Identity’, 29 September 2014, [url](#).

<sup>10</sup> Tim Marshall, Prisoners... (ps 132-133), 2016 (updated in 2017), hard copy only

<sup>11</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> EASO, Targeted individuals 2018 (ps 21-22), November 2018, [url](#).

## 4.2 Structure and recent organisational changes

### 4.2.1 The August 2018 CFR report on Boko Haram stated:

‘In Boko Haram’s formative years, Yusuf criticized northern Muslims for participating in what he saw as an illegitimate, non-Islamic state. “Yusuf’s vision was extreme in the northern Nigeria context, but not so extreme that it was unrecognizable,” writes Alexander Thurston in his 2017 book on the group. “In diverse ways, most northern Muslims believe that Islam provides a framework that should shape public life.”

‘The group began to radicalize amid episodic clashes between Christians and Muslims and as security forces adopted harsher tactics against suspected militants. A flash point for the group came in 2009, when a police crackdown set off an armed uprising in Bauchi State that soon spread in the northeast. Government forces killed more than eight hundred people, including many suspected Boko Haram members, in ensuing protests. Following the uprising, Yusuf was murdered while in police custody... Boko Haram splintered into at least two factions following Yusuf’s death. Today, Abubakar Shekau heads one faction, which appears to remain focused on fighting the Nigerian government in the northeast. Several times, Nigeria’s military claimed to have killed Shekau, but videos of the leader have emerged as recently as 2018.

‘For at least the last two years, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Yusuf’s son, has led a second faction, which CFR’s Campbell says has the same ultimate goals as Shekau’s but a less strict view as to what constitutes apostasy. Some analysts say the increasingly grisly nature of Boko Haram’s atrocities sparked rifts within the group.

‘Boko Haram analysts and Nigerian security officials have offered varying assessments of the group’s links to other militant Islamist groups, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The group declared allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015, rebranding itself as the Islamic State’s West Africa Province. Some say that focusing on an affiliation to these groups downplays the context in which Boko Haram emerged. Others argue that ignoring evidence of Boko Haram’s ties to other Islamist militant groups may hinder an understanding of the insurgency.’<sup>13</sup>

### 4.2.2 The Institute for Security Studies noted in a July 2018 report:

‘In August 2016, Boko Haram officially split into two groups – Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA), led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi, and Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad (JAS), led by long-time militant Abubakar Shekau. The rupture occurred after some militants opposed to the continuation of Shekau’s rule secured the support of Islamic State, replacing him with al-Barnawi. Shekau rejected the demotion, and instead began commanding a faction comprised of fighters loyal to him.’<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Council on Foreign Relations (CFR): ‘Nigeria’s Battle With Boko Haram’, 8 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>14</sup> ISS, Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram (p3), July 2018, [url](#)

### 4.3 Size, funding and capability

- 4.3.1 A United States (US) Library of Congress Congressional Research Service paper, 'Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa (ISWA) Province', dated 28 June 2018, stated:

'Estimates of Boko Haram's size vary. U.S. military officials suggest that it has roughly 1,500 fighters, while ISWA may have up to 3,500. Boko Haram's membership appears to draw predominately from the minority ethnic Kanuri community in northeast Nigeria, where it has been most active, but both factions are reported to have fighters from the other Lake Chad Basin countries as well. Experts suggest Boko Haram funds its operations largely through criminal activity, including bank robberies, kidnappings, assassinations for hire, trafficking, cattle rustling, and extortion. The group reportedly collected several million dollars in ransoms in exchange for the release of Chibok schoolgirls. Both factions have seized vehicles, weapons, and ammunition from the Nigerian and Nigerien [sic] armies.'<sup>15</sup>

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### 4.4 Areas of operation

- 4.4.1 Tim Marshall observed that 'Boko Haram fighters are usually ethnic Kanuris from the north-east [of Nigeria]. They rarely operate outside of their home territory, not even venturing west to the Hausa region, and certainly not way down south to the coastal areas.'<sup>16</sup>

- 4.4.2 The US Library of Congress Congressional Research Service paper, 'Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province' stated in June 2018:

'Boko Haram attacks have been primarily concentrated in northeast Nigeria, but the group has claimed responsibility for attacks across north and central Nigeria. In 2014, Boko Haram attempted several attacks in Lagos, but to date its reach in southern Nigeria appears limited. In 2014, the group launched attacks into northern Cameroon, southern Niger, and eastern Chad, prompting clashes with the security forces of those countries. Attacks in neighbouring countries increased after those militaries became involved in the regional offensive against the group in 2015. Boko Haram has also been linked to various kidnapping operations in northern Cameroon.'<sup>17</sup>

- 4.4.3 A BBC News report, 'Nigeria's Boko Haram attacks in numbers - as lethal as ever', dated 25 January 2018, stated:

'Nigeria-focused journalist Andrew Walker told BBC Monitoring that the uneven nature of local media reporting and the roaming nature of the group mean that the full extent of attacks cannot be accounted for with great accuracy.

'The group's attack locations have broadly remained the same over the last two years... with Borno State - the birthplace of the insurgency - being the most common target... Suicide attacks were the most common method of

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<sup>15</sup> US Library of Congress, CRC: 'Boko Haram and the IS's West Africa Province', 28 June 2018, [url](#).

<sup>16</sup> Tim Marshall, Prisoners... (p132), 2016 (updated in 2017), hard copy only

<sup>17</sup> US Library of Congress CRC: 'Boko Haram and the IS's West Africa Province', 28 June 2018, [url](#).



attack in the Nigerian city of Maiduguri, which continues to be the epicentre of the insurgency, whereas armed assaults were more common elsewhere...

'The highest concentration of fatalities in 2017 was in Maiduguri, which has seen its population double to two million in recent years as people flee Boko Haram violence in rural areas.

'Elsewhere in Nigeria, there were also high concentrations of fatalities in the localities of Magumeri, Konduga, Damaturu and Mubi.

'There have been no big changes in the group's targeting in the last two years, with Boko Haram attacking hard and soft targets.

'Its most common targets in 2016 and 2017 were villages and militaries.

'Boko Haram also continues to target mosques and internally displaced people (IDPs) fleeing the violence...' <sup>18</sup>

#### 4.4.4 The Institute for Security Studies report of July 2018 noted:

'The patterns of violence are largely synonymous with the geographic areas of operation for each group, which can be determined by attack trends, safety conditions along major routes, the testimonies of respondents and key informant interviews. Generally, JAS is present in south and central Borno State, particularly around the Sambisa Forest and the border with Cameroon. ISIS-WA initially had its stronghold in northern Borno near Lake Chad but has since expanded further south to areas north and west of Damboa and in Yobe State around Buni Yadi. Both are present in northern Cameroon, while areas of Chad and Niger are dominated more by ISIS-WA.

'Cells from both factions have probably been active in other areas as well, complicating the picture on the ground. But their locus is in the main areas mentioned, as shown by recorded attack patterns. The forest around Sambisa and the vegetation along the shores of Lake Chad provide a degree of natural coverage for both factions, resulting in strongholds in those locations.

'The major areas of operation are consistent with the conditions along main roads in Borno State. Many interviewees noted that ISIS-WA tends not to conduct ambushes along transport routes unless to target military personnel. Roads in JAS areas, in contrast, remain insecure to the point where military escorts are required. Thus, from Maiduguri, the roads north and west to Baga, Damasak and Damaturu – all passing through areas of presumed ISIS-WA influence – are considered by humanitarian personnel to be relatively safe, while those going east past Mafa and Konduga, and south to Damboa, all of which pass through JAS areas of influence, are not. A higher rate of violence and greater use of IEDs, tactics which more closely relate to JAS operating methods, have been recorded on these routes.' <sup>19</sup>

#### 4.4.5 The Council for Foreign Relations (CFR) in an article of August 2018 accompanying analysis of data compiled by its [Nigeria Security Tracker](#) and ACLED between 2011 and June 2018 noted that 'Boko Haram's territorial control is now limited to some small villages and pockets of countryside, [but]

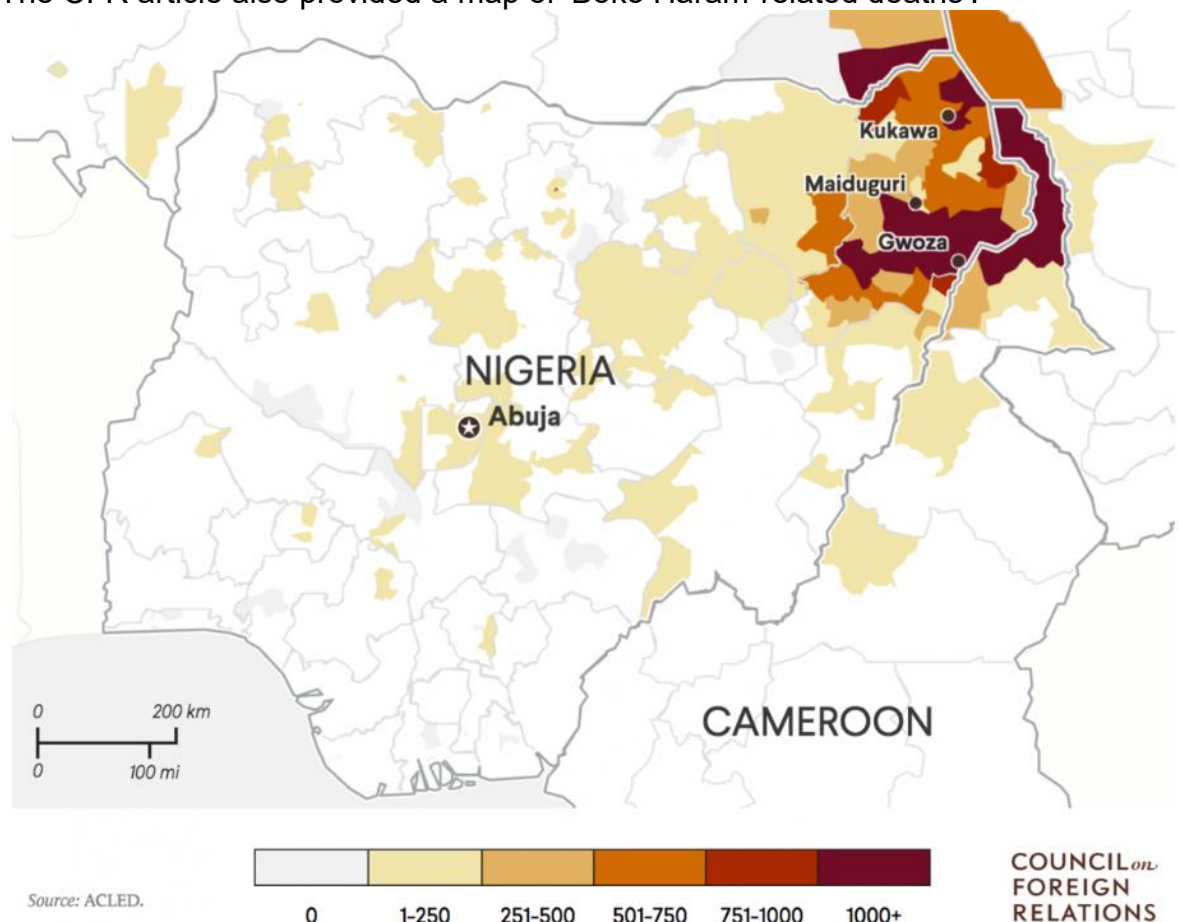
<sup>18</sup> BBC News, 'Nigeria's Boko Haram attacks in numbers...', 25 January 2018, [url](#).

<sup>19</sup> ISS, *Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram* (p22), [url](#)

a shift in tactics has helped the group stay a threat to millions.’ The same article commented:

‘Boko Haram–related violence has largely been confined to Nigeria’s northeast, in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. It has been most heavily concentrated in Borno, with the brunt of the violence borne by [the towns of] Maiduguri, Gwoza, and Kukawa. Violence has also become common south and east of Maiduguri, along the border with Cameroon’s Far North Region, and around Lake Chad. There have been sporadic incidents in places such as Nigeria’s Middle Belt and the capital of Abuja that have been attributed to Boko Haram.’<sup>20</sup>

4.4.6 The CFR article also provided a map of ‘Boko Haram-related deaths’:<sup>21</sup>



4.4.7 The CFR article further commented:

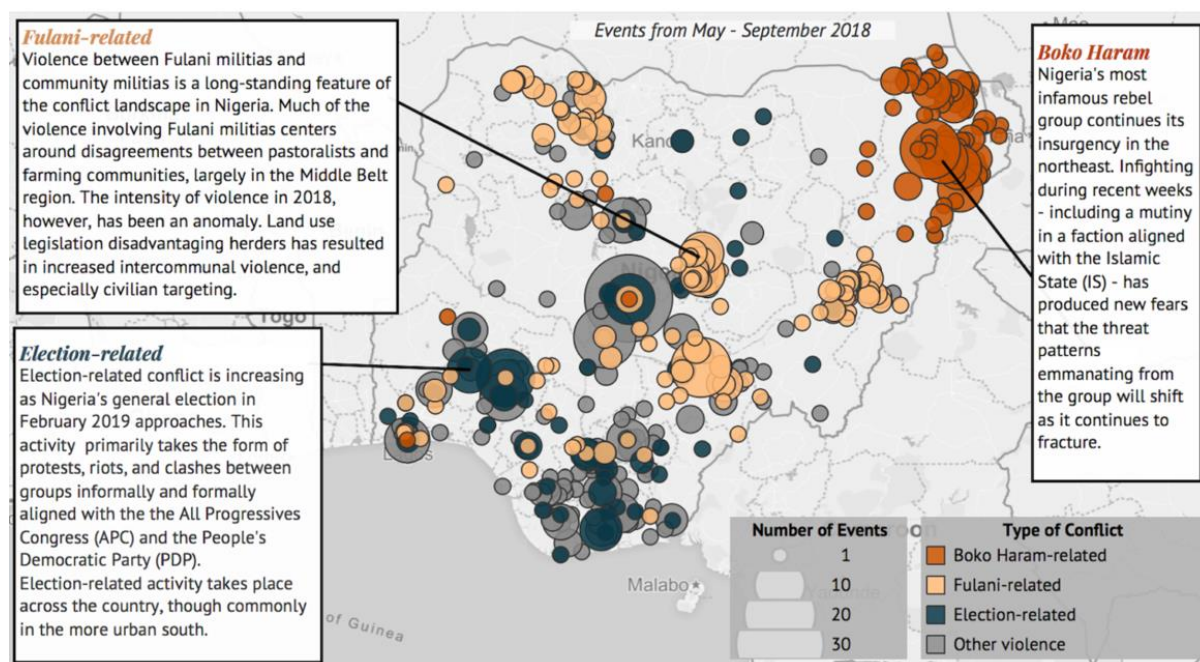
‘In the country’s south and east, including major cities such as Lagos and Port Harcourt, Boko Haram–related violence is all but absent. That part of Nigeria is majority Christian and comprises many different ethnic groups but has few Kanuri. Boko Haram is reportedly largely composed of Kanuri, and many of its victims, if not most, are Kanuri as well. Notably, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that Boko Haram does not appear to be motivated by ethnic identity and has been able to recruit from other Muslim ethnic groups in northern Nigeria. The group has derived its support from a

<sup>20</sup> CFR, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>21</sup> CFR, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#).

deeply impoverished population that has long felt neglected by the central government. Its followers generally adhere to a more fundamentalist strain of Islam that rejects the secular state.’<sup>22</sup>

- 4.4.8 ACLED produced a map and analysis of 3 primary crises posing a threat to stability in Nigeria, including events involving Boko Haram (marked in orange below) for the period May to September 2018. Almost all Boko Haram incidents occurred in the north-east of the country<sup>23</sup>:



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Section 5 updated: January 2019

## 5. Conflict-related violence

### 5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The EASO security situation report of November 2018 summarised the general situation in the north-east:

‘The population of the north-east of Nigeria has suffered from the violence, leading to mass displacement, tens of thousands deaths, destruction of many villages, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure.[...] Boko Haram is responsible for the death of approximately 17 000 people since May 2011. Another 14 645 persons have died as a result of clashes between Boko Haram and Nigerian military and other state actors.[...] However, in the first half of 2018, the number of fatalities related to Boko Haram was estimated at ‘over 200’.[...] After losing much of their territory Boko Haram changed their tactics from organised, large-scale attacks to more sporadic attacks such as suicide bombings.[...]’<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> CFR, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>23</sup> ACLED, Concurrent crises in Nigeria, 15 October 2018, [url](#).

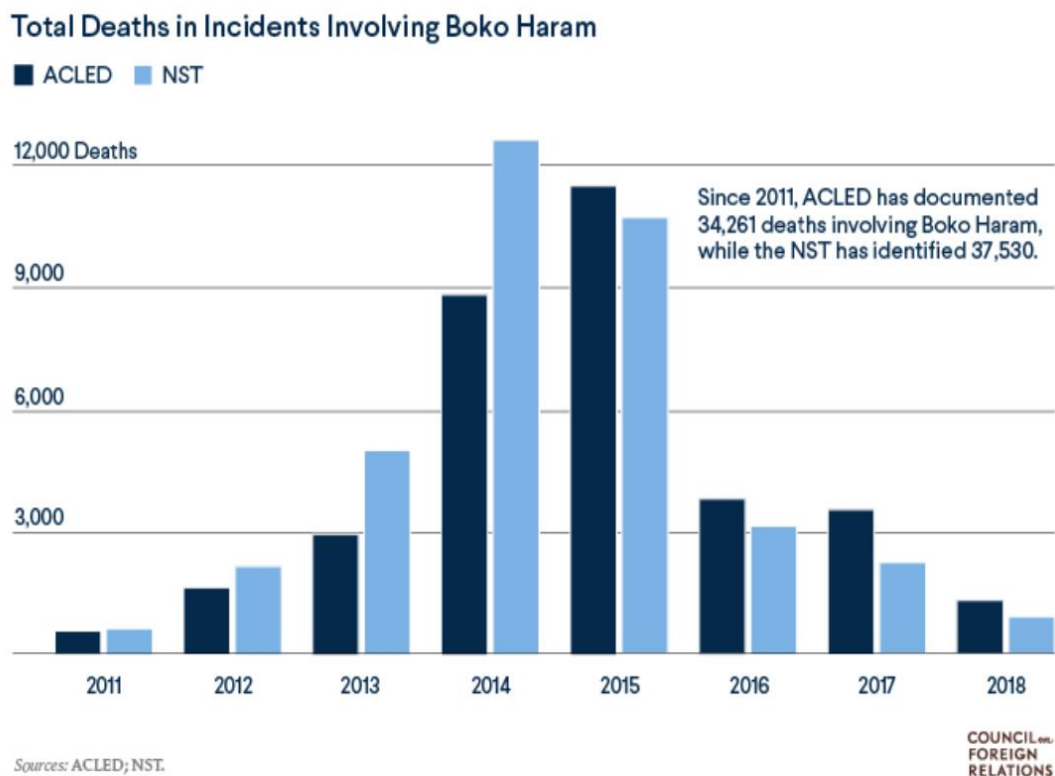
<sup>24</sup> EASO, Security situation 2018 (p22), November 2018, [url](#).

## 5.2 Levels of violence

- 5.2.1 A CFR article of August 2018, based on analysis of data compiled by its Nigeria Security Tracker and ACLED, observed:

‘From June 2011 through June 2018, the NST documented 2,021 incidents involving Boko Haram, in which 37,530 people were killed, nearly double the conventionally cited estimate of twenty thousand. Over the same period, ACLED identified 3,346 incidents, in which 34,261 people were killed. Both totals reflect deaths of alleged Boko Haram fighters, government forces, and civilians combined. Though ACLED tends toward lower casualty estimates and the NST higher estimates, both identify the same progression: the conflict, beginning in 2012, escalated quickly and peaked in 2014–2015. Levels of violence declined in 2016, following a major Nigerian military campaign to recover Boko Haram–occupied territory launched in late 2014 that continued through the following year. Troops from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, as well as some mercenaries, played a major role in this campaign.’<sup>25</sup>

- 5.2.2 The CFR article provided a table of estimated deaths ‘involving’ Boko Haram for the period 2011 and 2018<sup>26</sup>:



- 5.2.3 The CFR article of August 2018 went on to observe that:

‘There is credible, if anecdotal, evidence that despite claims by the military that government forces are only killing Boko Haram members, the security services have indiscriminately killed young men on the mere suspicion of being affiliated with the group. Many others have died after being detained in

<sup>25</sup> CFR, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>26</sup> CFR, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#).



mass incarcerations. Spokesmen for the security forces claim that those who died in prisons were all Boko Haram fighters, but in almost all cases there was no judicial process to make such a determination.

‘According to the two data sets, civilians have borne roughly 45 percent of conflict-related deaths. ACLED attributed 15,107 deaths to violence against civilians. The NST documented 15,953 civilian deaths, attributed to both military and Boko Haram attacks. The vast majority of these were the result of attacks by Boko Haram.’<sup>27</sup>

- 5.2.4 See also the [EASO security situation report 2018](#) and for regular updates, the Council on Foreign Relations [Nigeria Security Tracker](#).

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### 5.3 Nature of violence

- 5.3.1 An American Council on Foreign Relations August 2018 report summarised ‘Many of the group’s activities are those typically associated with terrorism, including suicide bombings, kidnappings, and destruction of property, particularly schools. In recent years, it has increased attacks on soft targets, or relatively unprotected places, and used more women and children as suicide bombers. Beyond Nigeria, the group is most active in northern Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.’<sup>28</sup>

- 5.3.2 The United States State Department ‘International Religious Freedom Report 2017’, (USSD IRFR) published on 29 May 2018 (covering 1 January - 31 December 2017), stated:

‘The terrorist organization Boko Haram and its splinter organization the Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA) continued carrying out numerous attacks, committing mass killings, and targeting civilians. Nigeria Watch estimated activities by Boko Haram and ISIS-WA resulted in the deaths of 1,794 persons during the year, including members of the two groups, a decrease from the 2,900 deaths recorded in 2016. According to media reports, in September members of Boko Haram killed Chief Imam Ustaz Goni Bukar Tabare and four people in Magumeri, Borno State.’<sup>29</sup>

- 5.3.3 An ‘Independent’ report, ‘Dozens dead after twin bomb blasts target worshippers outside mosque in Nigeria’, dated 1 May 2018, stated:

‘Two explosions killed at least 28 worshippers at a mosque in north-eastern Nigeria and wounded at least 56 others, with many of the victims caught in the second blast while trying to flee, police said.

‘The attack in Mubi town came a day after President Muhammadu Buhari met with US President Donald Trump at the White House and discussed the threat from the Nigeria-based Boko Haram extremist group. Its fighters were quickly blamed for Tuesday’s blasts.

‘This is the second time in six months that dozens have been killed in an attack on a Mubi mosque. In November, a teenage suicide bomber attacked worshippers as they gathered for morning prayers, killing at least 50 people

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<sup>27</sup> CFR, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>28</sup> Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), ‘Nigeria’s Battle With Boko Haram’, 8 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>29</sup> USSD, ‘International Religious Freedom Report 2017’, 29 May 2018, Nigeria, [url](#).

in one of the region's deadliest assaults in years... The National Emergency Management Agency coordinator in Adamawa state, Imam Abbani Garki, said 18 people were critically wounded and had been evacuated for treatment in Yola city.

'Haruna Hamman Furo, the head of the state emergency management agency, called the attack "devastating..."The military and civilian militia ousted the extremists from the town, which is a commercial hub near the border with Cameroon.

'In recent months, Boko Haram activity has been concentrated in the far north of Adamawa state, around Madagali, near the border with Borno state. That area is not far from the Sambisa Forest area where the extremists had a stronghold.

'Boko Haram fighters are also said to be hiding in the Mandara mountains to the east near Cameroon.'<sup>30</sup>

- 5.3.4 An Institute for Strategic Studies (ISS) report, 'The terror group is turning communities against refugees, and victims into suspects', dated 18 April 2018, stated:

'Boko Haram has since 2009 proven a highly adaptable foe, routinely changing tactics to suit shifting circumstances. The terror group increasingly focuses on soft targets, including refugees and internally displaced people...

'Boko Haram remains a substantial threat and has conducted a string of violent attacks so far in 2018, including the high-profile kidnapping and subsequent release of 110 school girls. Attacks by the extremist group were initially mostly aimed at security forces and it minimised civilian casualties. But its violence has escalated over time and the group's definition of legitimate targets has expanded.

'Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari declared the group "technically defeated" in December 2015 after it suffered a series of territorial losses. In August 2016 it split into two factions, one of them aligned with Islamic State and targeting security forces. The other Abubakar Shekau faction has a more indiscriminate attack profile and is responsible for most attacks on displaced people.'<sup>31</sup>

- 5.3.5 The ISS report continued:

'Boko Haram militants have also reportedly been infiltrating refugee flows and camps. In July 2017, nine insurgents and 100 accomplices were identified among a group of 920 refugees returning from Cameroon. Attackers have reportedly disguised themselves as refugees to travel into towns to purchase supplies.

'Among incidents reported are militants masquerading as travellers, herdsmen, workers, hunters, preachers and sick people. In 2017, stories emerged of militants pretending to have epileptic attacks or be injured, only to detonate themselves when people gather to help. Boko Haram is known

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<sup>30</sup> 'Independent', 'Dozens dead after twin bomb blasts target worshippers...', 1 May 2018, [url](#).

<sup>31</sup> ISS: 'The terror group is turning communities against refugees...', 18 April 2018, [url](#).

for its extreme ruthlessness and relies on fear and violence to maintain control...'<sup>32</sup>

5.3.6 The report continued:

'In February 2016, at the height of the Europe migration "crisis", Catherine Shakdam, political analyst and director of the Shafaqna Institute for Middle Eastern Studies, proposed that Islamic State was intentionally creating mass migration towards Europe. She wrote that "mass migration has long been exploited by devious entities as part of a new military genre: asymmetrical warfare". Such coercive migration occurs when a weaker challenger strategically engineers population movements to manipulate a more powerful target into making political, military or economic concessions.

'Extremist groups like Boko Haram could try to use this tactic. Where resources are limited, and ethnic tensions are elevated, the risk of mass in-migration can present a persuasive threat to already fragile states. Boko Haram's ability to control migration may be used to create conflict to the point that it becomes less costly for enemy governments to concede to their demands than it does to withstand the migration burden.'<sup>33</sup>

5.3.7 The US State Department 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2017', published on 19 September 2018, noted that, during 2017, 'Boko Haram and ISIS-WA carried out hundreds of attacks in Nigeria using suicide bombers, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), vehicle-borne IEDs, raids, ambushes, and kidnappings.'<sup>34</sup>

5.3.8 The USSD IRFR 2017 also stated:

'Boko Haram and ISIS-WA continued to attack population centres and security personnel in the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Vulnerable populations, notably those perceived as disagreeing with the groups' political or religious beliefs or those perceived as interfering with their access to resources, were targeted by the groups. There were multiple reports of Boko Haram killing scores of unarmed civilians. On November 21 [2017], Boko Haram blew up a mosque in Mubi, Adamawa State, resulting in the deaths of 50 worshippers.

'While Boko Haram no longer controlled as much territory as it once did, the two insurgencies maintained the ability to stage forces in rural areas and launched attacks against civilian and military targets across the Northeast. On November 25, ISIS-WA militants launched an attack on Magumeri town in Magumeri local government area of Borno State, but security forces were able to repel them. From these areas of influence, the groups were still capable of carrying out complex attacks on military positions, and they deployed large numbers of roadside improvised explosive devices. According to estimates from NGO Nigeria Watch, which did not appear to differentiate between Boko Haram and ISIS-WA, 1,794 persons, including Boko Haram members, died as a result of the group's activities during the year, compared with 2,900 killed in 2016. The Adamawa State chapter of the country's Muslim Council reported that Boko Haram killed more than

<sup>32</sup> ISS: 'The terror group is turning communities against refugees...', 18 April 2018, [url](#).

<sup>33</sup> ISS: 'The terror group is turning communities against refugees...', 18 April 2018, [url](#).

<sup>34</sup> USSD, 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2017', Nigeria, 19 September 2018, [url](#).

5,247 Muslims since 2013 in Adamawa State. According to reports, Boko Haram killed more than 500 Catholics in Borno State since the insurgency began.

‘Approximately half of the students abducted by Boko Haram from the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School in 2014 remained in captivity. The government successfully negotiated the release of 82 of the kidnapped students in May, in addition to the 21 students released in October 2016. According to media reports, in September members of Boko Haram killed Chief Imam Ustaz Goni Bukar Tabare and four other individuals in Magumeri, Borno State. CAN [Christian Association of Nigeria] reported more than 900 churches were destroyed by Boko Haram in the northeast since the insurgency began.’<sup>35</sup>

- 5.3.9 A France24 report, ‘Nigeria: Boko Haram targets and kills members of citizen patrol’, dated 30 March 2018, stated:

‘A couple who were part of a citizen patrol in Gambaru, a town in Borno state, in northeast Nigeria, were recently killed by Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. Known locally as “vigilance committees”, these groups are made up of civilians, who alongside the authorities, are engaged in the fight against terrorism. It’s not the first time members of one of these committees have been targeted in this border zone, where Boko Haram remains very active.’<sup>36</sup>

- 5.3.10 The Council on Foreign Relations, in a compilation of data ‘Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact’, published on 20 August 2018, summarised that Boko Haram had turned to suicide bombings, which accounted for almost a third of all casualties in the first half of 2018, and has increasingly attacked Muslim places of worship<sup>37</sup>. The same source further noted that ‘In the first half of 2018, there were thirty suicide bombings in northeast Nigeria, killing 297 people, signaling that such attacks have continued with some regularity. Boko Haram’s use of suicide bombers perhaps copies a tactic used by Islamist jihadis in the Middle East and elsewhere. Its reliance on this tactic reflects the overall decline in its direct confrontation with the army and security services, after Nigerian forces drove Boko Haram out of much of its territory, and its current strategy of attacking soft targets. One faction appears to still be focused on military targets.’<sup>38</sup>

- 5.3.11 A Reuters report, ‘Nigerian military struggles against Islamic State in West Africa’, dated 19 September 2018, stated:

‘Islamist militants have killed hundreds of soldiers in attacks in north-eastern Nigeria in recent weeks, security and military sources say, forcing a turnaround in the course of an insurgency which the government has frequently claimed to have vanquished.

‘The fatigued, ill-equipped government troops have reached breaking point, they said... In the past three weeks, according to military and security sources, ISWA killed 48 soldiers at a military base and, in a separate attack,

<sup>35</sup> USSD, ‘International Religious Freedom Report 2017’, 29 May 2018, Nigeria, [url](#).

<sup>36</sup> France24, ‘Nigeria: Boko Haram targets and kills members of citizen patrol’, 30 March 2018, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact, 20 August 2018, [url](#)



left 32 dead in Gudumbali - a town to which thousands of refugees were ordered to return in June.

“The situation in the northeast is deteriorating,” said one security source, speaking on condition of anonymity. “They are running out of weapons, ammo and basic equipment. They are exhausted.”

‘Now, ISWA is winning almost all its battles with the military, security sources said... Before the insurgency, Nigeria’s northeast, sitting in the arid Sahel that skirts the Sahara’s southern border, had for centuries been a hub of cross-continental trade through the desert and one of the country’s agricultural breadbaskets.

‘ISWA’s influence extends from the Lake Chad region, including in Niger and Chad itself, and stretches about 100 miles into the Nigerian states of Borno and Yobe, where government has in many areas all but vanished after a decade of conflict. It was not immediately clear how control of that territory has changed in recent months... ‘A military spokesman denied the army was losing most of its clashes with ISWA.

“It’s not true,” said Brigadier General John Agim, adding that no soldiers had died at Gudumbali.

‘Agim declined to show battle reports or comment on the rest of the situation, other than saying the military did not have enough equipment.

‘In one of the army’s biggest defeats since Buhari came to power, an ISWA attack on a base in July killed at least 100 soldiers, according to people familiar with the matter. Many of the dead were interred in a mass burial, two sources said.

‘Other gruelling battles have been fought - at least 45 soldiers killed in Gajiram in June, scores dead and missing after a convoy ambush in Boboshe in July, and 17 killed in Garunda in August. These are just some of the recent attacks, according to military and security personnel, that are taking a heavy toll on the military.

‘With each victory, ISWA gets stronger, collecting weapons, ammunition and vehicles abandoned by fleeing troops. Its tactics have also improved, using trucks mounted with heavy guns to pin down ill-equipped troops, as well as suicide-bombing vehicles.’<sup>39</sup>

#### 5.3.12 The Institute for Security Studies report of July 2018 observed:

‘The prevailing view among those interviewed has been that JAS is responsible for the wide-scale use of suicide bombers, including female and child bombers, often directed at the civilian populace – an aspect Shekau has more or less confirmed in his messaging.[..] ISIS-WA, on the other hand, has concentrated on targeting security forces through large-scale but less frequent assaults.

‘While the vast majority of violence in the Lake Chad region is unclaimed and some even unreported, the notion of distinct attack profiles adheres to overall patterns in the messaging and actions of both groups. Nonetheless, ISIS-WA has deployed (male) suicide bombers, primarily through the use of

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<sup>39</sup> Reuters, ‘Nigerian military struggles against Islamic State in West Africa’, 19 September 2018, [url](#).

vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) during operations, and has been accused of harming civilians, while JAS has also confronted security forces and conducted non-suicide violence – a pertinent reminder that the characteristics of each faction are not absolute.[...]<sup>40</sup>

- 5.3.13 For a more detailed account of Boko Haram's violent attacks in Nigeria over the last few years, see the [Global Terrorism Database](#), and also the American Council on Foreign Relations '[Nigeria Security Tracker](#)'.

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Section 6 updated: January 2019

## 6. Targets of violations

### 6.1 General

- 6.1.1 The EASO in its report on targeting of individuals of November 2018, citing an undated article by the UN, stated:

'According to the United Nations (UN), the human rights violations committed by Boko Haram amount to breaches of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including:

- massacres
- the burning down of entire villages
- attacks on protected sites such as places of worship and schools, and the slaughter of people taking refuge in such sites
- torture
- cruel and degrading treatment following sentences in so-called 'courts'
- abduction on a massive scale, including of children
- forced displacement
- child recruitment
- extremely severe and widespread violations of the rights of women and girls, including sexual slavery, sexual violence, forced so-called "marriages", and forced pregnancy.<sup>41</sup>

- 6.1.2 The EASO COI report on Nigeria of July 2017 stated:

'The government of Nigeria has been waging military operations against the extremist group Boko Haram since 2009, and the group has engaged in widespread human rights abuses across north-eastern Nigeria. The UN states that Boko Haram's gross human rights violations resulting in civilian casualties constitute breaches of international humanitarian law...

'As reported by the United Nations (UN), Boko Haram has intentionally killed civilians using military weaponry, IEDs, and suicide attacks; while also specifically targeting and killing those who refused to adopt Boko Haram's ideology, including law enforcement officers, teachers, health workers, members of civilian defence groups, and those trying to escape during

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<sup>40</sup> ISS, Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram (p19), July 2028, [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> EASO, Targeting of individuals... (ps22-23), November 2018, [url](#).

attacks. Boko Haram engaged in forced recruitment, and recruitment of child soldiers. The group also engaged in abductions, and subjected female abductees to rape, abuses, and forced marriage. Women and girls have been subjected to widespread sexual violence and sexual slavery by Boko Haram members.<sup>42</sup>

### 6.1.3 The USSD human rights report for 2017 noted:

‘Boko Haram and ISIS-WA attacked population centres and security actors in the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. These groups also targeted anyone perceived as disagreeing with the groups’ political or religious beliefs or interfering with their access to resources. While Boko Haram no longer controls as much territory as it once did, the two insurgencies nevertheless maintain the ability to stage forces in rural areas and launch attacks against civilian and military targets across the Northeast. From these areas of influence, the groups were still capable of carrying out complex attacks on military positions, and they deployed large numbers of roadside improvised explosive devices.

‘Boko Haram employed hundreds of suicide bombings against the local population. Women and children carried out many of the attacks. According to a study by UNICEF, nearly one in five suicide attacks by Boko Haram used a child, and more than two-thirds of these children were girls. As of August, UNICEF reported that Boko Haram used 83 children to carry out suicide attacks; of those, 55 were girls. On August 15, three female suicide bombers dispatched by Boko Haram detonated their suicide vests in the market area of Konduga town, killing 16 civilians and injuring 82 others. There were multiple reports of Boko Haram killing entire villages suspected of cooperating with the government.

‘ISIS-WA targeted civilians with attacks or kidnappings less frequently than Boko Haram. ISIS-WA employed targeted 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 and deliberate campaign, ISIS-WA also targeted government figures, traditional leaders, and contractors... As of September, NGO and activist allegations of thousands of enforced civilian disappearances by security forces in the Northeast remained uninvestigated by the government.

‘Boko Haram abducted men, women, and children, often in conjunction with attacks on communities. The group forced men, women, and children to fight on its behalf. Women and girls abducted by Boko Haram were subjected to physical and psychological abuse, forced labor, forced marriage, forced religious conversions, and sexual abuse, including rape and sexual slavery. Boko Haram also forced women and girls to participate in military operations. Most female suicide 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.

‘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

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<sup>42</sup> EASO: COI Report – Nigeria section 1.6.1, June 2017 [url](#).

were still on the run or dispersed in IDP camps. 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. The government successfully negotiated the release of 82 of the kidnapped women in May, in addition to the 21 women released in October 2016.’<sup>43</sup>

- 6.1.4 The USSD also observed that: ‘Boko Haram engaged in widespread sexual violence against women and girls. Those who escaped or that security services or vigilante groups rescued faced ostracism by their communities and had difficulty obtaining appropriate medical and psychosocial treatment and care.’<sup>44</sup>

- 6.1.5 The DFAT report of March 2018 noted:

‘Boko Haram has carried-out targeted assassinations against Muslim preachers who refuse to join the group, including prominent clerics such as Bashir Kashara (killed in October 2010), Ibrahim Ahmad Abdullahi (killed in March 2011), and Ibrahim Birkuti (killed in June 2011). In July 2014, Boko Haram targeted a prominent moderate cleric, Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, with a bomb attack in Kaduna.

‘In 2013, the Office of the Prosecutor in the International Criminal Court (ICC) declared the fighting in north-eastern Nigeria to be a non-international armed conflict. The government has deployed thousands of troops to Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States but has thus far been unable to defeat Boko Haram. International observers have expressed concerns over a lack of discipline in military operations and have accused the military of killing Boko Haram members without due process...

‘In April 2014, Boko Haram abducted more than 200 female students from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State. Schools in the area had been closed for weeks due to violence, but the girls had returned to sit their final exams when they were abducted. In May 2017, 82 of the girls were freed in a prisoner swap with Boko Haram. Over 100 girls are still in captivity.

‘In 2016, Boko Haram split into two factions. One faction, headed by Abu Musab al Barnawi, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), calling itself the Islamic State of West Africa (ISISWA). The other, headed by Abubakr Shekau, retains the original Boko Haram name, Jama’atu Ahl as-Sunnah li-Da’awati wal-Jihad (JASDJ). Most Nigerians still refer to both groups collectively as Boko Haram.

‘The conflict in the north-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa acts as a push factor for internal and external migration. Thousands of Nigerians have fled into neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and Niger in response to the conflict. Boko Haram violence has led to the internal displacement of as many as 2.5 million Nigerians. Internally displaced people in Nigeria lack adequate humanitarian support, and displaced women and girls are vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse from security forces and vigilantes. In its 2017 world report, Human Rights Watch states that military operations

<sup>43</sup> USSD, Human rights report 2017 (section 1g), April 2018, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> USSD, Human rights report 2017 (section 1g), April 2018, [url](#)

against Boko Haram intensified in 2016, with most areas controlled by the group recovered by security forces, noting there was also a decline in civilian deaths from 3,500 in 2015 to 550 in 2016.

'Targeted attacks increased in June to September 2017, with bomb blasts at the Dalori IDP camp, Maiduguri university, Molai general hospital in Maiduguri, and a major coordinated gun attack on the Maiduguri city itself. On 21 November 2017, suicide bombers killed 50 men and boys at a mosque during morning prayers. Fighters believed to be Boko Haram abducted up to 115 schoolgirls from a science and technical college in Dapchi, Yobe State in February 2018.'<sup>45</sup>

#### 6.1.6 DFAT also noted

'Both Christians and Muslims have suffered violence at the hands of Boko Haram due to their religious beliefs. Boko Haram opposes Christianity as well as less restrictive forms of Islam. DFAT considers credible local and international advice that Boko Haram attacks Muslim communities more frequently than Christian communities and that the groups has kidnapped and assassinated individual Muslims. Christians are less commonly targeted individually.'<sup>46</sup>

#### 6.1.7 The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) on its Nigeria country page observed:

'The conflict in Nigeria's north-east has resulted in widespread displacement, violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, protection risks and a deepening humanitarian crisis. Now in its ninth year, the crisis continues to uproot the lives of thousands of children, women and men and is adding to the long history of marginalisation and chronic under-development. Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed, thousands of women and girls abducted and children drafted as so-called "suicide" bombers into the insurgency. Up to 2.1 million people fled their homes at the height of the conflict, 1.7 million of whom are still currently internally displaced and close to 200, 000 people are still in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, after having been forced to flee.

'In the three most affected states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, 7.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, more than 50 per cent of whom are children. Government forces are recapturing territory from the insurgents, but the security situation in the north-east is expected to remain fragile. Over 80 per cent of Borno State is considered high or very high risk for international humanitarian actors, often constraining access to desperately vulnerable communities. As the security situation improves, new areas are becoming accessible and new dimensions of need - and hope - emerge.

'In areas recently retaken by the Government vulnerable host populations are in critical need of humanitarian interventions including food, water, sanitation, protection, education, shelter and health services. Escaping from attacks across the three most-affected states, IDPs are taking shelter in the relative safety of urban centres. Families are living in overcrowded and

<sup>45</sup> DFAT: Nigeria report (paras 2.35; 2.39-2.44), 9 March 2018 [url](#).

<sup>46</sup> DFAT, Nigeria report (para 3.14), 9 March 2018 [url](#).



highly inadequate living conditions, with resources and basic services under huge strain. Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, and its outskirts, have seen their population double from one to two million with the influx of people fleeing the violence in other areas of the state. In an area already economically deprived, more than three in four IDPs are living among host communities. Their lack of access to livelihoods and resources is leading to risky livelihood coping strategies.’<sup>47</sup>

6.1.8 EASO noted in its report on targeted persons of November 2018, citing various sources, that:

‘The tactics used by Boko Haram “are those typically associated with terrorism”, namely suicide bombings, kidnappings, and destruction of property[...], targeting of civilians, political assassinations, assaults, “invasion of border communities, and seizures and control of territory in Nigeria”.[...]

‘Since its existence, the extremist group has moved from attacking governmental and political targets to targeting civilians, and has targeted both Muslim and Christian populations[...], although since the 2016 split, ISIS-WA has led “less frequent but larger attacks” against military targets.[...]

‘According to a study by academics Jason Warner and Hilary Matfess, from 11 April 2011 to 30 June 2017, Boko Haram “deployed 434 bombers to 247 different targets during 238 suicide bombing attacks”. The source states that “at least 56 % of these bombers were women, and at least 81 bombers were specifically identified as children or teenagers”.[...]

‘In recent years, Boko Haram increased attacks on “soft targets”[...], combined with the use of more women and children as suicide bombers[...]; one media outlet showed the case of a 14 year old girl who had allegedly been paid 40 pence by Boko Haram to carry out a suicide bomb attack, before being caught by the Nigerian authorities.[...]

‘UNICEF reported on the “alarming surge in number of children used in Boko Haram bomb attacks” in the first quarter of 2017; whereas in the Q1-2016 6 children had been reportedly used in such attacks, in Q1-2017 27 children – including infants -, were used by the terrorist group.[...]<sup>48</sup>

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## 6.2 Women and children

6.2.1 In a report produced by the Combating Terrorism Centre (CTC), (Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines) in May 2018, Elizabeth Pearson states that:

‘The Islamic State’s strict prohibition on female violence was geared toward its “state” project, with a strict division of male and female roles (violent/non-violent) in order to recruit both men and women, unify its members, and regulate their behaviour. And with no similar governance role or recruitment objectives, Boko Haram has been freer to embrace female violence.

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<sup>47</sup> UNOCHA, Overview, not dated, [url](#)

<sup>48</sup> EASO, Targeting individuals (p29), November 2018, [url](#).

'Boko Haram's use of female "suicide" bombing is not only unprecedented in scale, but also in the absence of symbolic meaning accorded to "attackers" or consistent public theological justification.

'Boko Haram and the Islamic State engage in gender-based violence in the pursuit of tactical goals, but this changes to suit their aims and context.'<sup>49</sup>

6.2.2 The Institute for Security Studies referred to a United Nations Refugee Agency report which:

'...warned of a sharp increase in women and children being used as human bombs. In 2017 the use of children in attacks was up four times over the previous year. By August 2017, this included 83 children, mostly under 15 years and 55 of them girls, and a baby strapped to a child.

'Using women and children to carry out attacks, or posing as refugees, makes Boko Haram more elusive, and has the effect of turning countries and communities against refugees, and turning victims into suspects. It increases the general feeling of insecurity and diminishes the prospect of people helping one another.

'There is also a danger that Boko Haram might be exploiting and controlling mass flows of migrants as a valuable bargaining position. And it may be strategically stimulating migration to overwhelm governments. Although no evidence has been found in the case of Boko Haram, the phenomenon is well known.'<sup>50</sup>

6.2.3 The Institute for Security Studies also noted, in their report 'Refugees are Boko Haram's latest soft target':

'An ISS database shows a significant rise in Boko Haram attacks on internally displaced people or refugees. In 2015 there were four attacks, expanding to 10 in 2016 and 18 in 2017.

'Female suicide bombers perpetrated a significant majority of these attacks, probably because they attract less suspicion and can more easily access camps than male militants. Attacks have included explosive devices left in refugee camps, and suicide bombings of markets, schools and transport.

'In one of the worst attacks in February 2016, two female suicide bombers stormed a camp in Dikwa, Nigeria, and blew themselves up, killing 58. Three women blew themselves up at a camp entrance in Konduga, Nigeria, in July 2017, killing 30. Attacks on sites housing displaced people is on the increase in Cameroon, also threatening aid workers and the vital flow of food and medical supplies. On 1 March 2018, Boko Haram killed four aid workers in Rann, north-east Nigeria, outside a camp housing 55 000 displaced people.'<sup>51</sup>

6.2.4 A Globe and Mail (Canada) article, 'Nigeria's modern slave raiders', dated 2 March 2018, stated:

'More than 100 teenage girls were seized by Boko Haram last week in Dapchi in Nigeria, a crime that echoes the notorious kidnapping of 276

<sup>49</sup> CTC, West Point: 'Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines' (VI) May 2018 [url](#).

<sup>50</sup> ISS: 'The terror group is turning communities against refugees...', 18 April 2018, [url](#).

<sup>51</sup> ISS: 'The terror group is turning communities against refugees...', 18 April 2018, [url](#).

young women in Chibok in April 2014. There are some differences, especially in the fact that the girls taken at Dapchi are Muslim, while the Chibok girls were mostly Christian. But the parallels are more striking: an assault on a girls' school, confusion about whether the attackers were soldiers, changing stories by Nigerian government officials. How can we understand Boko Haram's targeting of girls' schools in these attacks?

'Boko Haram, a brutal Islamist insurgency, kills people all over the region, in Nigeria but also in Cameroon, Niger and Chad. They kill men and women, young and old, Muslims and Christians, soldiers and civilians. However, they frequently target young women for abduction rather than murder. The young women who are kidnapped are "married" to Boko Haram insurgents, if we can use that term to describe this kind of sexual enslavement. "Marriage" involves forced conversion to Islam for Christians – and also, to some degree, for Muslim women, since Boko Haram describes Muslims who are not members of the group as "idol-worshippers."

'In effect, Boko Haram leaders parcel out captured women to their foot-soldiers through "marriage" as rewards for their support...Abubakar Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram, even threatened in a video to "sell [the Chibok girls] in the marketplace." It is no wonder that local people often identify Boko Haram as slave raiders.'<sup>52</sup>

- 6.2.5 However, the report also noted the contrast between women who are forcibly 'married' or enslaved by Boko Haram, and those who join willingly:

'...Hilary Matfess details their accounts in her remarkable book "Women and the War on Boko Haram": Women who voluntarily marry into Boko Haram describe their husbands as well-off and describe generous allowances and presents. New brides receive their dowry payments from their husbands, instead of having them passed on to their parents.

'Perhaps most importantly, Boko Haram wives are expected to remain in purdah, seclusion from public contact, where they occupy themselves with household duties and child care...

'Today, women who have been kidnapped by Boko Haram are frequently forced to do menial labour, and those who are forcibly "married" to Boko Haram followers often do not have the same high status as those who join Boko Haram willingly...

'For one thing, Boko Haram attacks girls' schools. They attack such places because young women can be found there, but they also attack Western systems of education, which Boko Haram describes as deceitful and useless...We do not as yet understand the manipulation that leads women, as well as girls as young as seven or eight years old, to blow themselves up at security checkpoints or in mosques or markets. They must be seen as victims, not perpetrators, of these atrocities...' <sup>53</sup>

- 6.2.6 The DFAT Report on Nigeria, published on 9 March 2018, stated with regards to participation in education: 'Targeting of schools by the terrorist group Boko Haram in northern states exacerbates the situation. Boko

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<sup>52</sup> Globe and Mail, 'Nigeria's modern slave raiders', 2 March 2018, [url](#).

<sup>53</sup> Globe and Mail, 'Nigeria's modern slave raiders', 2 March 2018, [url](#).



Haram attacks caused the closure of all public schools in the northeast state of Borno in March 2014. While many schools re-opened from late 2015, some parents remain reluctant to send their children, especially girls, back to school for fear of violence.<sup>54</sup>

- 6.2.7 In a November 2018 report EASO reported with regards to forced recruitment and use of child soldiers by Boko Haram that: 'Boko Haram is believed to forcibly recruit youth and children.

'On the consequences in case of refusal to join or leaving Boko Haram, several incidents have been reported in the media, namely:

'In 2017, a woman who escaped Boko Haram describes how the insurgents had killed others who tried to flee after being kidnapped. Those who refused to become suicide bombers would be separated from the group, beaten and starved.

'Several sources report on the use of child soldiers in different roles in Boko Haram's military offensives (in Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad): collecting military intelligence and information before and during attacks, as fighters in the frontline, to plant explosives, and as suicide bombers.

'In April 2017, UNICEF reported on the 'alarming surge in number of children used in Boko Haram bomb attacks'; whereas in Q1-2016 6 children had been reportedly used in such attacks, in Q1-2017 27 children – including infants -, had been used by the terrorist group. The FIDH reports that child soldiers are regularly drugged to perform their missions, and threatened to be executed by Boko Haram's commanders if they refuse to obey.'<sup>55</sup>

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Section 7 updated: December 2018

## **7. State protection**

### **7.1 Military deployment to north-east**

#### **7.1.1 The DFAT report on Nigeria noted:**

'In 2013, the Office of the Prosecutor in the International Criminal Court (ICC) declared the fighting in north-eastern Nigeria to be a non-international armed conflict. The government has deployed thousands of troops to Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States but has thus far been unable to defeat Boko Haram. International observers have expressed concerns over a lack of discipline in military operations and have accused the military of killing Boko Haram members without due process.'<sup>56</sup>

#### **7.1.2 The EASO security situation report noted that '[i]n 2017 and 2018, several security operations were launched [in north-east Nigeria], while others already underway were continued by Nigerian security forces.'<sup>57</sup>**

#### **7.1.3 In December 2018 the United States Institute of Peace summarised that:**

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<sup>54</sup> DFAT: Thematic Report: Nigeria para. 2.23, 9 March 2018 [url](#).

<sup>55</sup> Nigeria Targeting of individuals (para 2.1.5 and 2.1.6), November 2018, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> DFAT: Country Information Report: Nigeria para. 2.40, 9 March 2018 [url](#).

<sup>57</sup> EASO, Security situation report (p19), November 2018, [url](#).

'The Boko Haram insurgency, furthermore, is both a symptom of state fragility and exacerbates that vulnerability. Long or repeated struggles against a range of economic, social, and political forces have sapped the Nigerian government's capacity to carry out basic constitutional functions, such as providing for the security and welfare of its citizens. As a result, the social contract between the state and its citizens is frayed, and the government's legitimacy is eroding.

'The military still provides substantial urban and rural security in liberated areas and conducts operations to continue degrading the capabilities of the insurgents who, since June 2017, have been staging sporadic attacks from camps scattered across difficult terrain. The burden of securing liberated areas is overstressing the military and impeding its primary responsibility of guaranteeing territorial integrity. The Armed Forces of Nigeria (Army, Navy, and Air Force), which have an estimated force strength of 181,000 personnel, are deployed in thirty-two of the nation's thirty-six states.

'Compounding the problem of numerical capacity of the armed forces is their traditional focus on protecting a regime rather than civilians. The same mindset weakens interagency coordination and cooperation among these forces because working across borders can seem contrary to the primary aim of protecting the government. The lack of focus on serving civilians means that most residents of the northeast have, over the decades, seen little genuine state security or any real government services, including development projects.'<sup>58</sup>

7.1.4 The June 2018 US Library of Congress Congressional Research Service paper, 'Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province', stated:

'The regional military offensive in 2015 and subsequent operations have reversed Boko Haram's territorial advance, but Nigeria and its neighbours have limited capacity to protect civilians in the remote border areas where Boko Haram continues to operate. Nigeria has sought to improve regional coordination, but the African Union-authorized, donor-backed Multinational Joint Task Force has struggled to provide security in territory regained from Boko Haram, threatening the return of displaced populations. The Nigerian military has repeatedly claimed to have militarily defeated Boko Haram, but many analysts disagree with the assertion. Multiple factors have undermined the military's response to the insurgency. Corruption is systemic and drains resources from the security apparatus. By many accounts, Nigerian troops have not been adequately resourced or equipped to counter the insurgency, despite a substantial defence budget by regional standards. Abuses by Nigerian forces during operations—including mass detentions of civilians—and civilian casualties during operations have taken a toll and reportedly fuelled extremist recruitment. The Nigerian army launched Operation Safe Corridor mid-2016 to encourage defections and facilitate the rehabilitation of former militants. Reviews of its implementation and impact are mixed.'<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> United States Institute of Peace, *Civilian-Led Governance and Security in Nigeria After Boko Haram* (p.2-5), 19 December 2018, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> US Library of Congress CRC: 'Boko Haram and the IS's West Africa Province', 28 June 2018, [url](#).

- 7.1.5 The United States State Department 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2017', published on 19 September 2018, stated:

'The Nigerian Office of the National Security Advisor is responsible on paper for coordinating all security and enforcement agencies. The Nigerian military has primary responsibility for combating terrorism in the Northeast. Several government agencies also perform counterterrorism functions, including the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Ministry of Justice. The NPF has a Counterterrorism Unit and a Terrorist Investigation Branch. Both units are responsible for investigating acts of terrorism and conducting proactive measures to prevent terrorist attacks. Interagency cooperation and information sharing was limited. Due to their knowledge of the local context, community-based security groups, often collectively referred to as the Civilian Joint Task Force, provided critical and necessary responses to the terrorism threat in the Northeast.'

- 7.1.6 The EASO report noted:

'In March 2017, the Nigerian army announced that it would set up a seven-member Special Board of Inquiry to investigate alleged cases of human rights violence committed by the army during their on-going counter-terrorism operations across the country. On the other hand, at the same time there was also criticism, for example by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), on a recent report published by AI which alleged human rights abuses by Nigerian security agencies against arrested Boko Haram suspects. According to the NHRC, the report was not supported with facts that reflected the situation in the area and was issued without referring to findings from those on the ground.'

- 7.1.7 As part of the UN compilation for the Human Rights Council as part of the Universal Periodic Review process published in August 2018, the OHCHR observed:

'OHCHR had received preliminary reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law allegedly committed by some government forces during counter-insurgency operations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention, and ill-treatment. Failures to adequately protect people from Boko Haram had also been documented.

'... that Boko Haram had intentionally killed and maimed civilians in attacks throughout Borno State and in parts of Adamawa and Yobe States. Credible reports indicated that the security forces had not deployed in several cases where civilians had come under attack by Boko Haram. The inability of the security forces to protect civilians from Boko Haram attacks and the deterioration of the security situation had led to the emergence of local self-defence groups, known as vigilantes, who seemed to operate with the tacit approval of the security forces. OHCHR recommended that Nigeria take immediate steps to strengthen and expand measures to protect civilians, including in the context of counter-insurgency operations, and stop the use

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<sup>60</sup> USSD, 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2017', Nigeria, 19 September 2018, [url](#).

<sup>61</sup> EASO COI Country Focus Report (para 3.2.1), June 2017 [url](#)

of vigilante groups in such operations, and that it adopt a comprehensive strategy for combating violent extremism.[...]

‘OHCHR had received confirmation that in areas affected by Boko Haram, young men were not only exposed to the risk of being targeted by Boko Haram, but also of being arbitrarily arrested and detained by the army, police or civilian vigilante groups, if suspected of being Boko Haram members.[...]’<sup>62</sup>

- 7.1.8 In an April 2018 report the International Crisis Group described the February 2018 abduction of 113 children by Boko Haram from Dapchi in north east Nigeria. The report described that “a number of errors by Nigerian authorities appear to have enabled the Dapchi girls’ abduction’, further explaining that:

‘First, Dapchi town was unguarded: the army had withdrawn its troops on 10 January. It has since claimed that the troops were redeployed to Kanama (close to the border with Niger) to counter persistent insurgent attacks in that area, suggesting troop numbers in Yobe state are insufficient to secure every town that needs protection at the same time. Indeed, many residents of the north east have long worried that the army is stretched too thin in that area. The army also asserted, after the abduction, that troops had been withdrawn from Dapchi because the town was considered safe, suggesting intelligence failures. [...]

‘Second, security forces appear to have been slow to respond to Dapchi’s distress calls before and during the raid. An Amnesty International report noted that the “army and police received multiple calls up to four hours before the raid” but failed to take preventive action. [...]

‘Third, the Dapchi school itself was inadequately protected. Again, to guard all of the numerous schools across the conflict zone simultaneously is undoubtedly difficult. But the challenge is not new – and the government was supposed to have found a solution years ago. [...]

‘The government exacerbated errors in failing to prevent the Dapchi attack with additional missteps immediately afterward. Its information management was particularly poor. Initially it remained silent for 48 hours. Then the Yobe state government and local security officials denied that any student had been abducted and, according to journalists in Dapchi, attempted to deter distraught parents from speaking out.’<sup>63</sup>

- 7.1.9 Amnesty International described in a May 2018 report that:

‘Since early 2015, the Nigerian military has carried out intensive operations and recaptured vast swathes of territory that had come under the control of Boko Haram in the north-east of the country. However, instead of “freeing” hundreds of thousands of people who had been trapped in these areas, the military has carried out systematic patterns of violence and abuse against this population, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.

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<sup>62</sup> UNHRC, UN compilation (p3-4), 27 August 2018, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> ICG, Preventing Boko Haram Abductions of Schoolchildren in Nigeria, 12 April 2018, [url](#)

Women have been affected in disproportionate and gender-specific ways, and continue to face ongoing discrimination and violence.’<sup>64</sup>

7.1.10 The same source further described that:

‘Scores of IDPs from different rural locations across Borno told Amnesty International that they had come to the satellite camps because they had been forced to do so by the military. They said that when the military conducted operations in their villages, they burnt down homes and opened fire at remaining residents indiscriminately. Many of these women and men said that they had suffered brutally under Boko Haram, and were hoping to be rescued – only to find themselves attacked by the military.

‘People arriving in the recaptured towns seeking safety had often spent months or years living in or near areas under Boko Haram control, and were treated with suspicion by the military. The military or Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF, a civilian militia who work closely with the Nigerian armed forces) subjected everyone arriving to a “screening” before they were allowed to proceed to the satellite camp. According to reports from a number of recaptured towns, these “screenings” often involved separation of family members, arbitrary detention, and torture and other ill-treatment. Several women also reported being forced to remove their clothes and stand naked for “screenings” conducted in public. In at least one location (Bama town), the military detained people in prison cells in overcrowded conditions with inadequate food and water for several days or more while they were screened, leading to deaths.

‘The conditions across the satellite camps have been deplorable, particularly in the first nine months or year after the satellite camps began to be set up (around October 2015). As a result, thousands of IDPs died between late 2015 and mid/late 2016 for lack of food, water and health care.

‘Amnesty International has documented patterns of rape and sexual exploitation occurring in the satellite camps from late 2015 until the present. Scores of women (and some men) described how soldiers and Civilian JTF members commonly used force and threats to rape women and girls, and took advantage of the conditions to coerce women into becoming their “girlfriends”, which involved being available for sex on an ongoing basis.’<sup>65</sup>

7.1.11 The November 2018 European Asylum Support Office report on ‘Actors of Protection’ noted that:

‘Despite the large investments, observers note that the military continues to suffer from extremely low capacity and high rates of desertion, with frontline soldiers publicly complaining about not receiving wages and having inadequate or no equipment. Local and international experts attribute the difference between the high rates of government spending and the low capacity of the forces to fight corruption.

‘In the north-east part of the country affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, where security is maintained with the Nigerian military, issues have arisen

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<sup>64</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: “They Betrayed Us ... ” (p.8), 24 May 2018, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: “They Betrayed Us ... ” (p.9-11), 24 May 2018, [url](#)



regarding police and overall security presence as a result of allegedly poor communication between the two security forces.

'While the Nigerian government has repeatedly claimed in recent years to have technically defeated Boko Haram, the military has been criticised for failing to eliminate violence associated with the insurgency.'<sup>66</sup>

7.1.12 A Reuters report, 'Nigerian military struggles against Islamic State in West Africa', dated 19 September 2018, stated:

'Soldiers have become terrified of the insurgents, afraid to leave their bases, said a security source and a diplomat. While hundreds have died recently, hundreds more have deserted.

'One retired general, speaking on condition of anonymity, described "a crisis of morale," linking the frequent allegations of human rights abuses - rape, torture, shake-downs and extra-judicial killing - to broken spirits.

'The Nigerian military denies such accusations, though it set up a panel last year to probe allegations. Its findings have not been made public.

'Last month, Nigerian special forces mutinied at an airport, refusing to be deployed after learning that after years in the northeast they were being rotated to another, more dangerous part of the region.

"Many of our troops have been in the theater for over two years," said one captain. "They don't know how their families, their wives and children, are."

'Some soldiers said though they do get a few days of leave, it is often barely enough time to go from the field to their families before they must return.

'Others said their wages and rations are often embezzled by their commanders, there is too little equipment, and many vehicles are broken and gathering rust. One said his men had to buy blankets from refugees for 300 naira (\$1) each to keep warm.'<sup>67</sup>

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## 7.2 The Nigerian Police Force

### 7.2.1 The DFAT report further stated:

'The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the principal law enforcement agency in Nigeria. The Nigerian Constitution prohibits state and local governments from forming their own forces. The NPF is one of the largest police forces in the world, with 371,800 officers.

'The NPF suffers from low capacity and insufficient training. In addition, the centrally controlled nature of the NPF ensures resources and changes in operating procedures are slow to reach all corners of the country... In January 2013, the NPF introduced a voluntary Code of Conduct in response to allegations of extrajudicial killings and other abuses. The Code provides a set of guiding principles and standards of behaviour for police officers. The NFP has increased the number of women in the police force and introduced

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<sup>66</sup> EASO, Nigeria Actors of Protection (3.3, 4.2), November 2018, [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> Reuters, 'Nigerian military struggles against Islamic State in West Africa', 19 September 2018, [url](#).

human rights officers at all police stations. However, DFAT understands that the human rights officers are unable to prevent human rights abuses for various reasons, including a lack of authority at the local level.’<sup>68</sup>

- 7.2.2 EASO in security situation report 2018, which references a number of sources including the DFAT report mentioned above, stated:

‘The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the principal law enforcement agency in the country. The Nigerian constitution prohibits state and local governments from forming their own forces.[...] State governors may request federal police for local emergency actions<sup>105</sup>, but state police commissioners take directives for major operations from the Inspector General of Police in Abuja. According to Interpol, the strength of the NPF is more than 350 000 men and women.<sup>106</sup> Another source reported 371 800 officers [...], while the Inspector General of Police (IGP) himself, Mr Ibrahim Idris, mentioned the number of 300 000 while addressing commanders of Police Mobile Force (PMF), Special Protection Unit (SPU) and Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU) at a meeting in Abuja in March 2018.[...] The same IGP had earlier revealed that the NPF was overstretched and far below the United Nations’ 1:400 police-population ratio.’<sup>69</sup>

- 7.2.3 A Nigerian academic (Sage Publications, 2013) wrote a paper on the Nigerian Police Force in which he stated ‘The Nigerian Police Force is widely perceived by the public as the most corrupt and violent institution in Nigeria in a way that is not evidently insincere. In light of the generalisation and banalization of police corruption and deviance, it is surprising that few works have addressed this problem that most directly affects the aggrieved Nigerian public’.<sup>70</sup>

- 7.2.4 In December 2018 the United States Institute of Peace summarised that ‘the police are the principal criminal investigation agency responsible for investigating all crimes covered by penal and criminal codes, hence the need to rehabilitate the force and make it functional. According to Mike Okiro, the chairman of the Police Service Commission, Nigeria has about four hundred thousand police officers. However a significant percentage of them are not available for routine police work because more than 150,000 are assigned to guard VIPs and others who ordinarily would not qualify for police protection. Other officials say that the real picture is even more bleak. The assistant inspector-general of police for Zone 5 in Benin City in southern Nigeria, Rasheed Akintunde, said that only 20 percent of police officers are engaged in the core duties of protecting lives and ensuring the peace. “The remaining 80 percent are just busy providing personal security to some ‘prominent people’.’<sup>71</sup>

- 7.2.5 The November 2018 European Asylum Support Office report on ‘Actors of Protection’ noted that:

‘In November 2017, the World Internal Security and Police Index International (WISPI), rated the Nigeria police force as the ‘worst’, in terms of

<sup>68</sup> DFAT, Thematic Report, Nigeria (paras 5.5, 5.6 and 5.9), 9 March 2018 [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> EASO, Security situation report 2018 (p27), November 2018, [url](#).

<sup>70</sup> Sage Publications: Daniel Egigba Agbiboa, ‘Protectors or Predators’ 10 December 2013, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> United States Institute of Peace, Civilian-Led Governance and Security in Nigeria After Boko Haram (p.5-6), 19 December 2018, [url](#)

its ability to handle internal security challenges, out of 127 countries assessed.

'The NPF is generally considered to be unable to perform its duties in a proper and efficient manner. Numerous sources mention its lack of sufficient funding, suitable manpower, proper equipment, appropriate and adequate training, welfare packages, and government support on its side. As such, most Nigerians 'do not perceive it as an effective law enforcement body and have little faith in the criminal justice system.' Underfunding in particular is a phenomenon which dates back to the era of military rule in Nigeria (1960-1999). The NPF's centrally controlled nature leads to resources and changes in operating procedures reaching all corners of the country slowly. According to one source there are no crime laboratories and facilities to process evidence in Nigeria. In line with the above-mentioned information, a recent study mentions that there is presently little or no training for the NPF and where it does exist, it is 'very poor' as police officers 'are not thoroughly exposed to modern policing.'<sup>72</sup>

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### 7.3 Arrests and prosecutions

#### 7.3.1 A 'Premium Times' report, 'Nigerian Army arrest 963 Boko Haram suspects in Borno', dated 11 January 2017, stated:

'The Nigerian Army on Wednesday said it had arrested about 963 persons suspected to be Boko Haram terrorists during an operation between January 4 and January 9<sup>th</sup>.

'Lucky Irabor, the Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, disclosed this at the weekly review of the Operation Rescue Final at Maimalari Cantonment in Maiduguri.

'Mr. Irabor said, "On January 3 at about 1240hrs, 4 women and 13 children were apprehended by vigilantes at Buni Yadi and were later handed over to our troops.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the women were wives of Boko Haram terrorists who fled from Sambisa forest as a result of our operations. All suspects are in our custody undergoing investigation.

"On January 9, a surrendered Boko Haram member was identified as a male sympathiser and spy in Monguno area: We also identified two wives of Amir (Boko Haram Commander) from the arrested members," he said.

'He said that also on January 5, at about 10:30 a.m., following a tip-off, troops and the Civilian Joint Task Force arrested four Boko Haram suspects at Shuwari village.

"The suspects are: Modu Auwami, Mamye Modu, Usman Kachanawa and Mallum Maji.

"During preliminary investigation, some local witnesses identified Auwami as one who provided medical treatment to injured terrorists.

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<sup>72</sup> EASO, Nigeria Actors of Protection (3.2 Police capacity), November 2018, [url](#)



“The other three suspects claimed they were abducted by the terrorists and that they only spent few days in their camps.

‘He said that the suspects were now in the Army’s custody undergoing further interrogation.

‘Iraabor said that the suspects who all confessed to be members of the Boko Haram terror group, claimed to have come to town to buy Tramadol tablets.’<sup>73</sup>

7.3.2 The United States State Department ‘Country Reports on Terrorism 2017’ stated:

‘In October [2017], the Government of Nigeria began closed-door hearings in front of civilian judges for more than 1,600 suspected supporters of Boko Haram and ISIS-WA. According to a government statement, 600 suspects were arraigned in the initial proceedings. Of these, 45 pled guilty to various charges and were sentenced to between three and 31 years in prison, 468 persons were ordered to undergo a de-radicalization and rehabilitation program before being released, 34 cases were dismissed, and 28 cases were remanded for trial in civilian courts elsewhere in the country. Some human rights groups alleged terrorist suspects detained by the military were denied their rights to legal representation, due process, and to be heard by a judicial authority.

‘On December 8 [2017], the government said it adopted a new strategy for the screening of suspected Boko Haram members and other terrorists. This involved developing a national terrorism database and providing training in investigative interviewing techniques and evidence collection.’<sup>74</sup>

7.3.3 A ‘Sahara Reporters’ report, ‘Police “Arrest” 22 Boko Haram Members Involved In 2014 Chibok Girls’ Kidnap’, dated 18 July 2018, stated:

‘The Nigeria Police Force says it has arrested 22 of the Boko Haram members who masterminded the 2014 abduction of schoolgirls from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State.

‘According to Damian Chukwu, the Borno State Commissioner of Police, the suspects were arrested in different locations across Borno and Yobe States.

‘He said all the suspects had confessed to participating in the Chibok abduction and in many bomb attacks on civilians, security agents and religious places of worship in the northeast.’<sup>75</sup>

7.3.4 A Nigerian ‘Guardian’ report, ‘Army arrests wanted Boko Haram commander, kills two insurgents’, dated 6 August 2018, stated:

‘Troops of 222 Battalion deployed in operation Lafiya Dole on 2 August 2018 while on ambush operation around Malari village Borno State neutralized two Boko Haram terrorists while others flee into the bush.

‘Troops of Operation Lafiya Dole have announced the arrest of a Boko Haram commander on its wanted list of suspects.

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<sup>73</sup> ‘Premium Times’, ‘Nigerian Army arrest 963 Boko Haram suspects in Borno’, 11 January 2017, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> USSD, ‘Country Reports on Terrorism 2017’, Nigeria, 19 September 2018, [url](#).

<sup>75</sup> ‘Sahara Reporters’, ‘Police “Arrest” 22 Boko Haram Members Involved In 2014’, 18 July 2018, [url](#).

'The Director of Army Public Relations, Brig-Gen. Texas Chukwu, disclosed this in a statement yesterday in Maiduguri.

'He said the arrested suspect, Maje Lawan, was number 96 on the wanted list of the Nigerian Army.

'Chukwu said the suspect was arrested at a displaced persons camp in Banki, a border town with Cameroun, 126 kilometres, east of Maiduguri, Borno State.

'He explained that the wanted Boko Haram commander was arrested when he infiltrated the camp at Banki.

'He said: "The suspect is currently undergoing preliminary investigation and would be handed over to the appropriate authority for further action."

'The director urged the public to be vigilant and report any suspicious persons, movements and activities to the law enforcement agencies for prompt action.

'In a related development, he disclosed that troops of 222 Battalion deployed in Operation Lafiya Dole killed two insurgents in an ambush operation in Malari village of the state.

'He said the operation, which lasted for over three hours, forced the terrorists to flee into Sambisa Forest and other nearby bushes.

'Chukwu added that the troops also recovered 10 bicycles from the fleeing insurgents.'<sup>76</sup>

7.3.5 For further detail, see [country policy and information on actors of protection](#).

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## 7.4 Emergence of vigilantism

7.4.1 The UNHRC report on 'violations and abuses committed by Boko Haram and the impact on human rights in the affected countries (A/HRC/30/67)' published 29 September 2015, noted the emergence of vigilante groups in the north-east of Nigeria 'The inability of security forces to protect civilians from Boko Haram attacks and the deterioration of the security situation have led to the emergence of local self-defence groups, known as vigilantes, in north-east Nigeria and Cameroon. In both cases, the vigilantes seem to operate with the tacit approval of the security forces, and it appears that, in both countries, the authorities benefited from the activities of the groups against Boko Haram.'<sup>77</sup>

7.4.2 The report continued:

'OHCHR learned that the Civilian Joint Task Force [CTJF] has assisted Nigerian security forces in identifying and arresting Boko Haram suspects, controlling security checkpoints, providing information and monitoring the movement of people, and has also used firearms against Boko Haram in self-defence and to safeguard communities. It also received information on allegations of beatings, detention of suspects, bribery, food deprivation, killings and the recruitment of children by the Task Force, despite the

<sup>76</sup> 'Guardian', 'Army arrests wanted Boko Haram commander, kills two insurgents', 6 August 2018, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> UNHRC: A/HRC/30/67, para 64, 29 September 2015 [url](#).

advisory issued by the Government on 21 January 2015 on the prohibition of the use or abuse of children and young persons in counter-insurgency efforts in the north-eastern States. Some falsely identified Boko Haram suspects were allegedly killed by the Task Force, including, in at least one case, a person with a disability.

‘Some interviewees informed OHCHR that the Civilian Joint Task Force had brought security and order to communities, while others, including children, stated that they felt under pressure from peers to join them or to risk being considered Boko Haram suspects.

‘In areas such as Bama, a witness noted that “entire communities, especially young and unmarried men and boys, joined the Civilian Joint Task Force. People were afraid to talk about Boko Haram, because they would kill them. The army would also kill you if you didn’t cooperate with them.” Many Task Force members in Baga and others thought to be members of Boko Haram were reportedly killed in retaliatory attacks when Boko Haram captured the town.’<sup>78</sup>

#### 7.4.3 In December 2018 the United States Institute of Peace summarised that:

‘As the counterinsurgency ebbs and postconflict peacebuilding gets under way, the civilian composition of the CJTF raises many questions. From its inception, these units varied in capability, composition, and allegiance—some were informal, others state-supported, still others semi-independent—and often lacked accountability.

‘These civilian vigilantes use their knowledge of local inhabitants, geography, languages, and cultures to great effect. However, while mostly helpful so far, the CJTF could become an internal security problem during the transition away from military control, particularly in border areas where smuggling is lucrative and small arms are easy to obtain. Their actions at times have spurred concern over human rights abuses, in the process also discrediting the military and drawing the attention of international organizations.’<sup>79</sup>

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Section updated: December 2018

## 8. Freedom of movement

### 8.1 Legal and official restrictions

#### 8.1.1 The United States State Department ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017’, 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 ethnoreligious violence... 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

<sup>78</sup> UNHRC: A/HRC/30/67, paras 66 – 68, 29 September 2015 [url](#).

<sup>79</sup> United States Institute of Peace, Civilian-Led Governance and Security in Nigeria After Boko Haram (p.5-6), 19 December 2018, [url](#)

Boko Haram. Other states imposed curfews in reaction to events such as ethnoreligious violence.

‘Police conducted “stop and search” operations in cities and on major highways and, on occasion, set up checkpoints. Upon assuming office, the new inspector general of police renewed his predecessor’s order to dismantle all checkpoints. Nonetheless, many checkpoints operated by military and police remained in place.’<sup>80</sup>

8.1.2 The DFAT country report on Nigeria noted:

‘There are no legal impediments to internal relocation in Nigeria. Freedom of movement is one of the fundamental rights provided in Nigeria’s Constitution.

‘Nigeria has as many as three million internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the insurgency in northeast and internal conflicts in the middle belt states. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 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 pose impediments to large-scale migration from the north to the south.

‘Many Nigerians move to different parts of the country for economic reasons. High rates of poverty, particularly in the north, lead many individuals to seek opportunities in new industries such as telecommunications, construction, wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing in different locations across Nigeria... DFAT assesses that Nigerians can and do freely relocate internally. Internal moves can be more difficult for non-indigenes due to language, religious and cultural differences, particularly between northern and southern states.’<sup>81</sup>

8.1.3 Also see [country policy and information](#) on freedom of movement.

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<sup>80</sup> USSD, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017’, section 2d, Nigeria, [url](#).

<sup>81</sup> DFAT: Country Information Report: Nigeria paras. 5.21-5.25, 9 March 2018 [url](#).

# 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:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **30 January 2019**

## Changes from last version of this note

COI updated; note no longer considers whether there is a generalised risk of indiscriminate violence or a breach of Article 3 of the ECHR.

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