



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Nigeria</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Prevalence of violence due to interpersonal/family land disputes; State protection available</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	January 2022 - August 2023
<b>Topic(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#">Prevalence of violence due to interpersonal/family land disputes</a></li><li>2. <a href="#">State protection available</a></li></ol>
<b>Date of completion</b>	22 August 2023
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<b>Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)</b>	N/A



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## Disclaimer

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## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Nigeria

### Prevalence of violence due to interpersonal/family land disputes; State protection available

#### 1. Prevalence of violence due to interpersonal/family land disputes

According to the 2022 United States Department of State (USDOS) report on human rights practices in Nigeria, ‘land disputes, competition concerning dwindling resources, and ethnic and “settler-indigene” tensions’ led to confrontations between herdsman and farmers in the North Central region.<sup>1</sup> The same report added that the Tiv, Kwalla, Jukun, Fulani, and Azara ethnic groups living near borders of the states, Nasarawa, Benue, and Taraba, were particularly involved in clashes.<sup>2</sup>

The 2023 annual Freedom House report on Nigeria described that farmers and Fulani experienced violence as Fulani communities traveled south to find ‘new grazing lands’.<sup>3</sup> The 2023 Nigeria crisis response plan by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) further affirmed that violence continued against farmer communities due to competition over land, and that violence increased over disputes related to ‘crop damage, livestock theft, and water pollution’.<sup>4</sup> The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) added that ‘these disputes have been exacerbated by climate change, expanding agriculture and growing desertification in northern Nigeria’ which has ‘driven’ the predominately Muslim Fulani herdsman southwards to areas farmed by predominately Christian communities, resulting in ‘herder-farmer violence’ and ‘has also exacerbated religious and ethnic tension’.<sup>5</sup>

Instances of violence due to land disputes, as reported by sources, include:

- In August 2023, four people were killed over communal clashes due to a land ownership dispute between two communities in Enugu state.<sup>6</sup>
- In May 2022, three people were killed in conflicts between youths with ‘dangerous weapons’ over disputed land between two agrarian communities in Oyo state.<sup>7</sup>
- A community in Enugu state was attacked in early April 2023 by gunmen who torched houses and vehicles and left an ‘unspecified number of deaths’ over a 35-year long land dispute between two families. The attacked area had reportedly become ‘a ghost town’.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2022 – Nigeria, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>2</sup> USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2022 – Nigeria, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 32

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Nigeria, 9 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> IOM, Nigeria Crisis Response Plan 2023, 30 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>5</sup> GCR2P, Atrocity Alert No. 348: Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Protection of Civilians, 24 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> Guardian (The), Four die in land dispute, community clash in Enugu, 14 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Cable (The), ‘Three killed’ in boundary dispute between Oyo communities, 17 May 2022, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Daily Trust, How 35-Year-Old Land Dispute Resurfaces, Claims Lives In Enugu, 14 May 2023, [url](#)



- A February 2023 article by the NGO called the HumAngle, described the ‘violent disputes’ between the Lunguda and Waja communities in Adamawa state since 2018, and that the ‘recurring violence has claimed over 100 lives’ and ‘huge economic cost[s]’.<sup>9</sup>
- In March 2022, a member of a vigilante group was killed by a gunman in Delta state over a land dispute.<sup>10</sup>
- In October 2022, a pastor and two other individuals were killed over a land dispute between two communities in Delta state, which has existed for over 100 years.<sup>11</sup>
- In January 2022, two people were killed and numerous injuries were reported in an incident in Delta state, over a land dispute lasting four decades.<sup>12</sup>
- In February 2023, in Anambra state, an indiscriminate shooting over a land dispute between two communities left six people presumably dead and two injured.<sup>13</sup>
- In June 2023, the Ekiti state government publicly urged residents of border towns to engage in peaceful relations with neighbour states to ‘avert bloodshed’.<sup>14</sup>
- In August 2023, a land dispute between two communities in Enugu state left four people dead and considerable economic and property losses.<sup>15</sup>

According to Vanguard, reporting in 2021, land grabbers are known as ‘Omo-Onile’ and reportedly use ‘force, deception and intimidation’ to take control over increasingly scarce land in Lagos state. The activities of Omo-Oniles have become more prevalent due to Lagos’ increasing population, further ‘exacerbating tensions, including conflicts between landowners, buyers and private investors’.<sup>16</sup>

This Day Live, a local news source, reported in 2020 that disputes over land in Nigeria have led to inter-communal conflicts, causing, according to figures from the Global Centre for Responsibility to Protect,<sup>17</sup> over 3 600 casualties since January 2016. The same source also indicated that the National Boundary Commission (NBC), the agency responsible for providing facts and figures on land disputes in Nigeria, has been ineffective due to lack of funding.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. State protection available

According to the 2023 report by the IOM, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms for land disputes ‘have been weakened and trust in authorities is low due to widespread inaction and

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<sup>9</sup> HumAngle, Once Intimate, Two Adamawa Communities Torn Apart By Land Dispute, 19 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Guardian (The), Gunmen kill vigilante in Delta over land dispute, 15 March 2022, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> Vanguard, Land dispute: Pastor, 2 others, killed as Delta communities renew hostilities, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Vanguard, Land dispute: 2 killed, many wounded as Delta communities resume hostilities, 7 January 2022, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> People’s Gazette, Six killed over land dispute in fresh communal clash in Anambra, 7 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> Daily Post, Land Disputes: We cannot afford bloodshed with Ondo, Osun, EKSG warns, 13 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> Vanguard, 4 die in communal land dispute in Enugu, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> Vanguard, Sustaining war on land grabbing in Lagos, 25 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> The Global Centre engages in advocacy around specific crises, conducts research designed to further understanding of R2P, recommends strategies to help states build capacity, and works closely with NGOs, governments and regional bodies which are seeking to operationalize the Responsibility to Protect, GCR2P, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> Day Live (This), Violent Communal Land Disputes, 1 April 2020, [url](#)



perceived bias'.<sup>19</sup> According to several local news sources, the police or security forces were deployed to the areas affected by violence stemming from land disputes and have mediated to restore normalcy.<sup>20</sup> Other instances of local government intervention as a mediator, as reported by sources, include:

- In June 2022, following a conflict over disputed land between two traditional rulers in Cross River state that resulted in an unspecified number of deaths and in properties destroyed, the state government seized the land alleging that it was 'overriding public interest'.<sup>21</sup>
- In October 2022, the leader of a local government in Delta state was accompanied by the police and soldiers to hold a meeting with two communities in an attempt to subside violence due to a land dispute.<sup>22</sup>
- In June 2023, a land dispute in Anambra state was resolved through mediation by the community and the involvement of the president and traditional leader of the community.<sup>23</sup>
- After several violent episodes between two communities in Adamawa state, a five-person committee was set up in June 2022 by the Adamawa state House of Assembly 'to find lasting solutions to the annual bloody clashes'.<sup>24</sup>

According to a 2022 research paper published by the University of Nigeria, the re-occurrence of violent communal conflicts and land ownership claims by communal groups in Ebonyi state has led to the loss of lives and property, the displacement of 'thousands' of people, and that no systematic effort has been made 'to know the nexus between management of land in the state and persistence of violent communal conflict in the state'.<sup>25</sup>

An April 2022 research paper described that in the North Central states of Benue, Plateau and Kogi, it is the traditional, youth, and civil society leaders that tend to deal with farmer-herder and land disputes.<sup>26</sup>

The following information prior to the reference period, may be relevant:

According to a 2021 research journal, Afikpo, Ebonyi state, has 'maintained certain harmless traditional practices' to assist disputants in conflict resolutions concerning land disputes, and

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<sup>19</sup> IOM, Nigeria Crisis Response Plan 2023, 30 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>20</sup> People's Gazette, Six killed over land dispute in fresh communal clash in Anambra, 7 February 2023, [url](#); Guardian (The), Four die in land dispute, community clash in Enugu, 14 August 2023, [url](#); Vanguard, Land dispute: 2 killed, many wounded as Delta communities resume hostilities, 7 January 2022, [url](#); Vanguard, Land dispute: Pastor, 2 others, killed as Delta communities renew hostilities, 12 October 2022, [url](#); Vanguard, 4 die in communal land dispute in Enugu, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> Punch Nigeria, Communal clashes: Cross River govt sacks monarchs, takes over land, 28 June 2022, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> Vanguard, Land dispute: Pastor, 2 others, killed as Delta communities renew hostilities, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> Daily Post, Anambra community resolves land dispute, pacifies angry youths, 2 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> HumAngle, Once Intimate, Two Adamawa Communities Torn Apart By Land Dispute, 19 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> Abada, M.I., and Omeh, H.P., Land Management and Violent Conflict in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy, 26 December 2022, [url](#), p. 341

<sup>26</sup> Reardon, C., et al., Can Mediation Reduce Violence? The Effects of Negotiation Training for Local Leaders in North Central Nigeria. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps, April 2022, [url](#), p. 15



the decision-making body, known as ‘Essa Ehugbo Elders in Council’, makes final decisions regarding land disputes.<sup>27</sup>

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) reported in 2021 that since 2016, three Nigerian states (Plateau, Kaduna and Adamawa) have ‘established peace agencies and commissions to address communal conflicts and the roots of insurgency’, which have assisted local governments in community-level responses to address conflicts. These agencies and commissions include committees that ‘monitor threats and to provide early responses to prevent violence’.<sup>28</sup>

A 2021 article from a local news source quoting a representative of the Lagos state government, wrote that ‘there are laws in place, and violence will never be condoned because of disputes in land matters’. The same article noted that the Lagos State land-grabbing law was enacted ‘to prohibit forceful entry and illegal occupation of landed properties, as well as violent and fraudulent conducts in relation to landed properties’.<sup>29</sup>

Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted by the EUAA within time constraints of this query.

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<sup>27</sup> WWJMRD, The Traditional Methods of Land Dispute Settlement in Afikpo (Ehugbo), Nigeria Vis-À-Vis Court Proceedings, December 2021, [url](#), p. 37

<sup>28</sup> USIP, How to calm violent crises? Nigeria has an idea, 4 June 2021, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> Guardian (The), Lagos warns against use of land grabbers, violence in property dispute, 23 April 2021, [url](#)

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## **ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED**

Africa News; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD); Asylum Research Center (ARC); Deutsche Welle (DW); Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB); ECOI.net; European Union – EUAA COI Portal; Refworld; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United States Institute of Peace (USIP); World Organisation Against Torture (OMTC)