

Nigeria - Country Focus



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Country of Origin Information Report

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- Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Country of Origin Information Department
- Denmark, Danish Immigration Service, Ministry of Immigration and Integration
- France, Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), Information, Documentation and Research Division (DIDR)
- The Netherlands, Country of Origin Information Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The following external expert reviewed this report:

- Stella Odiase, Lawyer and Doctoral Candidate at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University.

The review carried out by the mentioned departments contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.





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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Any event taking place after the finalisation of this report is not included. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the [Introduction](#).

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EUAA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 3 May 2024. The report covers the period 1 January 2023-31 March 2024. Any event taking place after the end of the reference period is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the [Introduction](#).





Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of Origin Information
CPN	Child Protection Network
ESN	Eastern Security Network
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	Member States of the European Union and associated countries
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
IOM	International Organization for Migration





Term	Definition
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province
LGA	Local government area
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (persons)
Member States	Member States of the European Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NAP	National Action Plan against trafficking in Persons 2022-2026
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NSAG	Non-state armed groups
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PIND	Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta
Refugee Convention	The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol (referred to in EU asylum legislation and by the CJEU as ‘the Geneva Convention’)
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SSMPA	Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act





Term	Definition
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
TIER	The Initiative for Equal Rights
UAM(s)	Unaccompanied minors
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USDOS	United States Department of State
VAPP Act	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act
WHER	The Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant contextual information in view of the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.

The report provides an overview of the situation in Nigeria in the period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024, focusing on security issues and selected profiles relevant for international protection. The report builds upon the preceding EASO COI report [Nigeria Security Situation – June 2021](#).¹ Events taking place after the end of the reference period have not been included.

Methodology

The present report was written according to the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)² and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Guide (2023)³. It is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference of this report were based on internal consultation and on input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI Specialist Network on West Africa. The terms of reference for this report can be found in [Annex II](#).

Collecting information

The information gathered results from extensive desk research, conducted using predominantly public, specialised paper-based, and electronic sources until the end of March 2024, as well as from the peer-review process conducted by EU+ national COI experts as well as an international expert on Nigeria, until May 2024. Additional information was added to the report as a result of the quality review process during the review implementation up until 5 July 2024. All sources used are referenced in the [Bibliography](#). Wherever information could not be found within the timeframes for drafting this report after carefully consulting a range of sources, this is stated in the report.

Research challenges

The report encountered different research challenges: for the security situation, one of the main challenges was linked to the data. For security incidents, data from ACLED was primarily used. To a smaller extent, data from Nigeria Watch on security incidents were also used; however, the causes of violence available and types of conflict are coded very differently from the ACLED data, and comparison of both sets of databases is not possible. With regards to

¹ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria: Security Situation, June 2021, [url](#), pp. 23-39

² EUAA, COI Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

³ EUAA, COI Writing and Referencing Guide, February 2023, [url](#)





fatalities, information from both ACLED and Nigeria Watch were used, the latter for 2023. It has to be noted according to ACLED the fatality numbers it provides are estimates.⁴ For more details, see Section [Sources on security incidents and fatalities](#). Another challenge was the use by media of terms such as ‘bandits’, ‘armed gunmen’ and ‘terrorists’ on occasion interchangeably, making it in such cases difficult to identify which actor(s) were involved. In the profiles section, challenges included scarcity of information on recent statistics for the three topics under Girls and Women: FGM, forced marriage and GBV and the same applied for the topic other means of redress in the LGBTIQ people profile.

Quality control

To ensure adherence to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#),⁵ as well as compliance with the ToRs and factual accuracy of the report, a quality review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. Moreover, the report benefitted from the peer-review of a prominent Nigeria expert also mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#). All comments made by reviewers were taken into consideration and the vast majority of them were implemented. The quality review phase was carried out up to 14 May 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations, contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.

Sources

This report has relied upon English-language sources. In accordance with [EUAA COI Report Methodology](#),⁶ a range of different published documentary sources have been consulted. The information results mainly from desk research of public specialised paper-based, and electronic sources. These include:

- reports produced by various United Nations (UN) bodies;
- reports produced by other international and non-governmental organisations active in the field of human rights, conflict and security situation;
- reports produced by EU and governmental organisations;
- reports produced by foundations, and advocacy organisations;
- academic publications, investigative articles and think tank reports;
- reports from international, regional and local media sources in English;
- reports and datasets by organisations specialised in specific topics or profiles, such as security and conflict monitoring;
- reports produced by local and grassroot organisations.

⁴ ACLED, Fatalities, last update 7 May 2024, [url](#)

⁵ EUAA, COI Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

⁶ EUAA, COI Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)





Finally, as far as maps are concerned, the administrative map was developed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). For additional details see [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

Sources on security incidents and fatalities

Data of the [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#)⁷ and, to a smaller extent, of the research project Nigeria Watch⁸ have been used for information on security events and fatalities.

ACLED is a project that collects, analyses and maps information on ‘dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world’.⁹ The EUAA downloaded the ACLED curated data files on Nigeria on 15 April 2024, which are used in this report.

ACLED explains the methodology applied for coding and monitoring the data in a codebook¹⁰ where it states that ‘The fundamental unit of observation in ACLED is the event’.¹¹ ACLED records six event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, protests, riots and strategic developments.¹² For the analysis of the security situation in Nigeria in this report, battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians and riots were included as incidents.

ACLED uses the following definitions of these event types:

- **battle:** ‘a violent interaction between two organized armed groups at a particular time and location. ‘Battles’ can occur between armed and organized state, non-state, and external groups, and in any combination therein. There is no fatality minimum necessary for inclusion. Civilians can be harmed in the course of larger ‘Battles’ events if they are caught in the crossfire...’;
- **explosions/remote violence:** ‘events as incidents in which one side uses weapon types that, by their nature, are at range and widely destructive. The weapons used in ‘Explosions/Remote violence’ events are explosive devices, including but not limited to: bombs, grenades, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), artillery fire or shelling, missile attacks, air or drone strikes, and other widely destructive heavy weapons or chemical weapons. Suicide attacks using explosives also fall under this category’;
- **violence against civilians:** ‘events where an organized armed group inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants. By definition, civilians are unarmed and cannot engage in political violence. ... The perpetrators of such acts include state forces and their affiliates, rebels, militias, and external/other forces.’;
- **riots:** ‘violent events where demonstrators or mobs of three or more engage in violent or destructive acts, including but not limited to physical fights, rock throwing, property

⁷ ACLED, Data & Tools, n.d., [url](#)

⁸ Nigeria Watch, Nigeria Watch, n.d., [url](#)

⁹ ACLED, About ACLED, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#)

¹¹ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 9

¹² ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 13





destruction, etc. They may engage individuals, property, businesses, other rioting groups, or armed actors.’¹³

Regarding fatalities, ACLED stated on 7 May 2024:

- ‘ACLED does not have a fatality threshold for an event’s inclusion in the dataset. This means that political violence and demonstration events in ACLED do not need to produce any fatalities in order to be included as valid events. No arbitrary number of deaths is used to define a conflict.’;
- ‘ACLED codes fatalities from the most reliable possible sources and/or partners in a given conflict environment. Further, researchers seek out information to triangulate – where and when possible – the fatality numbers from reports.’;
- ‘If source reports differ or a vague estimate is provided, ACLED uses the most conservative estimate available and seeks to note in the ‘Notes’ column when there has been a dispute. When better information becomes available, these totals will be revised and corrected – upward or downward. When sources report estimates such as “tens” or “dozens” or “hundreds,” ACLED codes 10 for “tens,” 12 for “dozens,” 100 for “hundreds,” and so on’;
- ‘When a report does not indicate whether or not any fatalities occurred or notes that it is unknown whether fatalities occurred at all, ACLED defaults to coding 0 as the fatality estimate.’;
- ‘Fatality numbers are not consistently reliable from any source. All reported fatalities, from all forms of media and partners, are estimates.’¹⁴

Data from [Nigeria Watch](#) are also used in the report. The project began in July 2006 and is hosted by the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria) on the campus of the University of Ibadan since July 2013.¹⁵ Nigeria Watch database is based on a wider range of types of conflict (ethnic, social, political, religious, military¹⁶) than ACLED. It includes a large variety of types of violent incidents, i.e. incidents caused by land issues, oil production, political and religious issues, market issues, cattle grazing, crime, road and plane/train/boat /pollution accidents, fire/explosions, natural disasters, sorcery.¹⁷ While the Nigeria Watch database can be filtered by cause of violence (causes of violence available: cattle grazing, convicts execution, crime, fire/explosion, land issue, market issue, natural disaster, other accident, political issue, religious issue, road accident, sorcery),¹⁸ the causes available and types of conflict are coded very differently from the ACLED data and comparison of both sets of databases is not possible.

Information from Nigeria Watch’s Annual Report for 2023 is used on fatalities alongside ACLED data.

¹³ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 11-18

¹⁴ ACLED, Fatalities, last update 7 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵ Nigeria Watch, About us, Who we are?, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁶ Nigeria Watch, How to use, Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷ Nigeria Watch, How to use, Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸ Nigeria Watch, The Database, advanced search, n.d., [url](#)





Structure and use of the report

The report is divided into two parts. The first part provides a security overview and looks into security trends in the period 1 January 2023 - 31 March 2024 and into the nature of the incidents, particularly those having impacted civilians. This is followed by an overview of the Actors involved in the conflict, to be read in conjunction with the EASO COI report [Nigeria Security Situation – June 2021](#), pages 23-39, where the different actors involved in the conflict are presented in detail. Next is a breakdown of the security situation by geopolitical zone.

The second part of the report addresses a – non exhaustive – selection of the main profiles relevant for Nigeria. More specifically, the report addresses the situation of victims of trafficking in human beings, women and girls, and LGBTIQ people.





Map



NIGERIA Reference Map

As of 29 Oct. 2020



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
 Update date: 29 Oct. 2020 Sources: UNCS, NGA, DCW, Natural Earth, Gov, ESRI, WFP, OCHA. Feedback: ocharowca@un.org www.unocha.org www.reliefweb.int

Map 1. Nigeria UNOCHA¹⁹

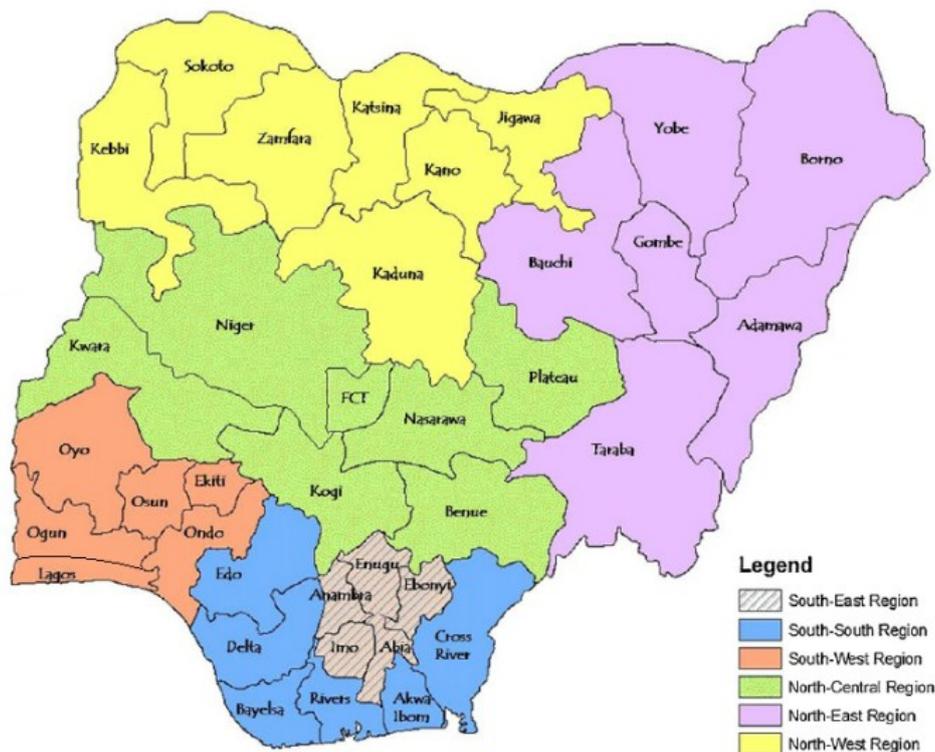
¹⁹UN OCHA, Nigeria: Reference Map, 29 October 2020, [url](https://www.unocha.org/nigeria/reference-map)



1. Country overview and general situation

Nigeria is a federal presidential republic. It is divided into 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.²⁰ The 36 states and the FCT are grouped into six geopolitical zones (see Map 2 below)²¹:

- North-Central (seven states): Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Na(s)sarawa, Niger, and Plateau;
- North-East (six states): Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe;
- North-West (seven states): Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara;
- South-East (five states): Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo;
- South-South (six states): Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers;
- South-West (six states): Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and Lagos.



Map 2. Nigeria geopolitical zones NIMC²³

²⁰ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, Administrative divisions, last updated 13 March 2024, [url](#)

²¹ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d, [url](#)

²² Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d, [url](#)

²³ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d, [url](#)



Nigeria is located in western Africa, bordering Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, as well as the Gulf of Guinea.²⁴ Based on 2023 estimates, the major urban areas, by population, were Lagos (15.946 million), Kano (4.348 million), Ibadan (3.875 million), Auja (3.84 million), Port Harcourt (3.48 million) and Benin City (1.905 million). There are ‘significant population clusters’ throughout Nigeria, with the highest density areas in the south and south-west of the country.²⁵ Based on UN data, on 1 July 2024, Nigeria’s population was estimated at 228 399 066.²⁶ The CIA’s Factbook indicated that, based on estimations on 1 May 2024, the population was 236 747 130.²⁷ According to the World Bank, Nigeria’s population had an annual growing rate of 2.4 % in 2022.²⁸ Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country,²⁹ as well as the continent’s largest economy, and has extensive oil and gas reserves.³⁰

Nigeria is an ethnically diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups, including the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Tiv, Kanuri, Ibibio, and Ijaw.³¹ Islam is practiced by about 54 % of the population, followed by various Christian denominations that represent around 46 %.³² Distribution of population by religion varies across the country, but the North-West and North-East are predominantly Muslim, while the South-West is predominantly Christian.³³ 12 states in the north apply *Sharia* law.³⁴

For information on ethnicities and religion in Nigeria, as well as on the political system, see [EASO COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation 2021, Ethnicity and religion](#).

Sources indicated that, in 2023, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and government forces were involved in human rights violations.³⁵ NSAGs were accused of committing widespread killings, kidnappings, female genital mutilation/cutting, and other forms of gender-based violence,³⁶ sexual slavery, and forced marriages.³⁷ Government forces were accused of arbitrary, unlawful and extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.³⁸

Throughout 2023, different elections took place in the country, including presidential and legislative elections in February, gubernatorial elections in March, supplementary contests in

²⁴ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, Geography, last update 1 May 2024, [url](#); UN Geospatial, Nigeria, 01 August 2014, [url](#)

²⁵ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, Geography, last update 1 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁶ As of 21 May 2024. Source: World Population Review, Nigeria Population 2024 (Live), n.d., [url](#)

²⁷ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, Geography, last update 1 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁸ World Bank (the), Data, Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

²⁹ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, Geography, last update 1 May 2024, [url](#)

³⁰ USA, Congressional Research Service, Nigeria: Overview and U.S. Policy, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³¹ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, last updated 22 May 2024, [url](#)

³² US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, last updated 22 May 2024, [url](#); USCIRF, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2023 Annual Report [url](#); USCIRF–Recommended for Countries of Particular Concern (CPC): Nigeria, May 2023, [url](#), p. 31

³³ USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report 2022 - Nigeria, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 6

³⁴ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#); USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report 2022 - Nigeria, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³⁵ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#); USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1

³⁶ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1

³⁷ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#); USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1

³⁸ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1





April, and three off-cycle governorship elections in November.³⁹ The new President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, of the ruling party All Progressives Congress, won with 36 % of the votes and was sworn in on 29 May 2023.⁴⁰ The presidential election was marked by controversies,⁴¹ including the new president's eligibility and the electoral commission failing to collate ballots transparently.⁴² Sources indicated that high numbers of voters registered for the elections; however, voter turnout was a low 27 %.⁴³ In addition, elections experienced logistical and technological shortcomings,⁴⁴ as well as allegations of electoral staff malpractices.⁴⁵ The 2023 European Union Election Observation Mission in Nigeria noted that the elections were held on time 'despite a very challenging environment'. According to the source, political parties reported unequal campaign conditions due to interference and increase in violent incidents.⁴⁶ 234 deaths were registered in connection with the general elections in 2023, both during the campaign and election days.⁴⁷

On 13 July 2023, President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency due to food insecurity, in order to address increasing food prices and food shortages.⁴⁸ Between October–December 2023, an estimated 2.8 million people faced acute food insecurity in the North-East states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe.⁴⁹ In 2023 Nigeria experienced what was described as 'an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis' with inflation in December at 28.9 %.⁵⁰

In 2023, crime in Nigeria constituted the primary cause of violence and resulted in 5 356 fatalities. Under crime, Nigeria Watch included cultism, rural banditry, kidnappings, and farmers-herders' clashes.⁵¹

³⁹CDD and ACLED, Nigeria's 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, Calming Tensions amid Nigeria's Post-election Controversy, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹ International Crisis Group, Calming Tensions amid Nigeria's Post-election Controversy, 26 May 2023, [url](#); CDD and ACLED, Nigeria's 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁴² International Crisis Group, Calming Tensions amid Nigeria's Post-election Controversy, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴³ International Crisis Group, Calming Tensions amid Nigeria's Post-election Controversy, 26 May 2023, [url](#); Tech Monitor, Did biometric systems fail Nigeria's democracy?, 9 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, Calming Tensions amid Nigeria's Post-election Controversy, 26 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Premium Times, 2023: INEC blacklists 100 ad hoc staff in Akwa Ibom, 17 March 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶ EEAS, European Union Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Elections held on schedule, but lack of transparency and operational failures reduced trust in the process and challenged the right to vote, 27 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁸ Punch, Food shortage: Tinubu declares state of emergency, plans 500,000 hectares farmland, 14 July 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu declares state of emergency over food, 14 July 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹ ACAPS, Nigeria. Conflict in northeastern and northwestern Nigeria, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁰ EU, 2023 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the world, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 132

⁵¹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 8-11





2. Security Situation

2.1 Recent security overview and security trends

Sources indicated that Nigeria has been facing overlapping security crises for over a decade.⁵² The European Union reported that the ‘unprecedented wave of different and overlapping security crises’ included banditry, crime and kidnapping, insurgencies, separatist agitations, terrorism and farmer/herder conflicts, highlighting that most of Nigeria was impacted by violence and crime.⁵³ In 2023, in the North-West, gangs of bandits were accused of kidnapping, sexual violence, and looting, while in the North-East, there was a resurgence of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). In addition, in the Middle Belt⁵⁴ and in the North-Central region, the intercommunal conflict between farmers and herders continued, with fatalities being reported; Nigeria’s security forces were accused of human rights abuses, including indiscriminate airstrikes.⁵⁵ The North-Central, along with the North-West, were the two geopolitical zones predominantly affected by banditry.⁵⁶

In 2023, Nigeria Watch reported that the main causes of violence and fatalities in the country were criminal activity, followed by political and religious issues, and road accidents. This trend was consistent with previous years.⁵⁷ Criminal activities included cultism, rural banditry, kidnapping, farmers/herders’ clashes, with the North-Central and North-West regions being overall the most impacted.⁵⁸ The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) specified that rural communities ‘have become unsafe and contested spaces marked by limited State presence, inadequate infrastructure, and scarce resources.’ Rural areas had become hubs for criminal activities and violent conflicts in Nigeria, namely the northern part of Nigeria, where terrorism, banditry, insurgency, and kidnapping were on the rise.⁵⁹

According to Nigeria Watch, the number of fatalities decreased in 2023. Approximately 75 % of fatalities in Nigeria were reported in the North, primarily due to insurgency, rural banditry, land conflict and counter-insurgency operations by state forces. In the South, fatalities were mainly due to pro-Biafra groups, crime, and ethno-communal conflicts.⁶⁰ Civilian casualties due to operations by security forces continued in 2023,⁶¹ specifically against non-state armed

⁵² BBC News, Nigeria's security crises - five different threats, 19 July 2021, [url](#); AA, Nigeria grappling with security challenges for over a decade, 22 June 2022, [url](#); EU, 2023 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the world, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 132

⁵³ EU, 2023 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the world, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 132

⁵⁴ The term ‘Middle Belt’ usually refers to the following States: Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau. Source: Oasdom, List of Middle Belt States in Nigeria, 1 June 2020, [url](#); But some would also add Adamawa and Taraba, as well as ‘the southern parts of Kaduna State, Kebbi State, Bauchi State, Gombe State, Yobe State and Borno State. Source: Legit, List of Middle Belt states in Nigeria: which ones are they?, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁵ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9

⁵⁷ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁸ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 8-11

⁵⁹ ACCORD, The ruralisation of violence and the criminalisation of conflict in Nigeria, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 7

⁶¹ EU, 2023 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the world, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 132



groups such as Boko Haram, ISIS-WA and bandits.⁶² According to Amnesty International, NSAG and government forces have reportedly committed violations of international law.⁶³

In 2023, state forces reportedly committed significant human rights issues, including torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings.⁶⁴ There were also reports that the government arrested and forcibly detained, for long periods, women and children who were removed from or that were allegedly associated with Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa (WA), including women and girls who had been forcibly married or sexually enslaved by the insurgents.⁶⁵ During 2023, Nigeria's security forces reportedly used excessive force, including for the dispersal of peaceful protests and assemblies.⁶⁶

2.2 Types of violence

Attacks by Islamist groups and counter-insurgency operations

For the period December 2022-June 2023, the UN reported a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities. This was attributed to counter-insurgency joint operations by Nigeria and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram, as well as to the demobilisation of Boko Haram's ex-combatants and supporters and recurrent fighting between Boko Haram and ISWAP. However, the source highlighted that during the reference period, large-scale attacks continued to take place, and armed militias continued to operate in the northwestern states of Zamfara and Sokoto and, to a smaller extent, in the central and southern states of Plateau, Benue, and Delta.⁶⁷ According to Nigeria Watch, in 2023, attacks by Islamist groups Boko Haram, ISWAP, Ansaru, and counter operations by state security forces resulted in 2 212 fatalities in communities across Adamawa, Borno, Kaduna and Yobe states. Victims included civilians such as fishermen, farmers, herdsman and commuters, as well as security operatives and insurgents. This marked a decrease of 898 fatalities compared to 2022, due to attacks by Islamist groups and counter-insurgency operations.⁶⁸

The jihadist insurrection in the area of the Lake Chad Basin was mainly centred on Nigeria, with the conflict remaining 'very violent' and affecting particularly the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe.⁶⁹ A UN Security Council report indicated that between 30 June and 31 December 2023, 'insecurity caused by criminal armed groups operating primarily in Nigeria's North-Western states of Zamfara and Sokoto and, to a lesser extent, in the central and southern states of Benue, Plateau and Delta, remained high.' The same source indicated that

⁶² USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 13

⁶³ AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 283

⁶⁴ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 1, 3

⁶⁵ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-15

⁶⁶ AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 284, 283

⁶⁷ UN, Security Council, Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, 30 June 2023, S/2023/490, [url](#), p. 6

⁶⁸ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 13

⁶⁹ IISS, Armed Conflict Survey 2023, From Global Jihad to Local Insurgencies: the Changing Nature of Sub-Saharan Jihadism, 6 December 2023, [url](#); The survey covers the period 1 May 2022–30 June 2023. Source: IISS, Armed Conflict Survey 2023, Editor's Introduction, 6 December 2023, [url](#)



counter-insurgency operations resulted in an improvement of the security situation in the Lake Chad basin on the border with Nigeria, and that a decrease in the number of fatalities linked to terrorist attacks was reported.⁷⁰ Boko Haram and ISWAP in Nigeria reportedly engaged in kidnapping as a method of recruitment.⁷¹

According to a The New Humanitarian and Vice News investigation, soldiers in the Nigerian military were perceived as a ‘threat’ due to their failure of distinguishing jihadist gunmen from civilians and were accused of committing international humanitarian law (IHL) violations. In late 2022, in the town of Bama, North-East, people reported ‘the depopulation of the countryside by military “clearance” operations’, which involved setting fire to their villages, destroying food supplies, and killing people.⁷²

Criminal, cult, and separatist violence in the Niger Delta⁷³

In the first quarter of 2023, the conflict in the Niger Delta was described as ‘relatively stable’, with a decrease of violence and fatalities. This reduction was mainly due to a decline in organised crime, communal conflict, clashes between cults, political tensions, and separatist clashes. In the second quarter of 2023, the situation remained stable, with fewer violent incidents resulting in fatalities, but with an increase in conflict-related fatalities. This rise was linked to an increase in separatist tensions, organised criminal violence, and clashes between rival cults.⁷⁴ In the third quarter of 2023, violence resulting in fatalities decreased, particularly in criminal violence, separatist tensions, and cult clashes. However, communal conflicts and ‘mob violence’ increased.⁷⁵ In the last quarter of 2023, insecurity across the Niger Delta persisted, particularly with kidnappings and robberies, driven by financial gain from ransoms demanded by criminal gangs.⁷⁶

Intercommunal conflicts between farmers and herders

According to Nigeria Watch, fatalities linked to clashes between farmers and herders increased from 579 in 2022 to 860 in 2023. According to the same source, the trend of killings taking place in grazing fields and during raids on farms in Fulani communities continued in 2023. The states most affected by these clashes were Benue and Plateau in the North-Central zone, and Taraba in the North-East.⁷⁷ While clashes between Muslim herders and the mainly Christian farmers are linked to ethno-religious conflicts, climate change and

⁷⁰ UN, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, 2 January 2024, [url](#), p. 7

⁷¹ CDD, Analysis of Security Dynamics in West Africa from October 2022 to June 2023, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 9

⁷² The New Humanitarian and VICE News, Living trapped between Boko Haram and Nigeria’s military, 3 July 2023, [url](#)

⁷³ The Niger Delta is an area in southern Nigeria. The states that are included in the Niger Delta vary. The core states are Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta. Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Edo, as well as Abia, Imo, and Ondo are sometimes also included in the definition of the Niger Delta region. Source: SDN, Overview of the Niger Delta, 21 January 2020, [url](#); PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: January – March 2023, 30 May 2023, [url](#), p. 1

⁷⁴ PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: April – June 2023, 22 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁷⁵ PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: July – September 2023, 27 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 1-2

⁷⁶ PIND, 2023 Q4 Progress Report, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 20

⁷⁷ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 6



expanding agriculture also constitute significant factors in this conflict.⁷⁸ For more information on the farmers-herders conflict, see [EASO COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation 2021](#).

Banditry

According to a May 2024 article by the Global Observatory of the International Peace Institute, bandits and banditry had grown and escalated in the North-West of Nigeria for the past decade. Criminal gangs are described by state forces and the media more commonly as ‘bandits’. The source added that banditry resort to the ‘deployment of large-scale violence’ and is strengthened by the criminal economy.⁷⁹ For more information on bandits as a non-state armed group, see section [2.4.2 Non-state armed groups overview - Bandits](#).

In its 2023 International Review, the Red Cross described banditry as the worst security threat that Nigeria was facing in terms of its impact and intensity of violence, stating that it was the cause of Nigeria’s ‘worse humanitarian crisis in decades.’⁸⁰

Kidnappings

Nigeria is one of the world's hotspots for kidnappings,⁸¹ with kidnappings for ransom in the North-West increasing⁸² and reaching ‘alarming proportions.’⁸³ Kidnappings were also concentrated in central regions.⁸⁴ According to Deutsche Welle, ‘[k]idnapping in Nigeria has evolved into a security threat that feeds a vast network of criminal and Islamist groups,’ with armed gangs kidnapping large numbers of schoolchildren and demanding ransom for their return.⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch highlighted that kidnappings constituted ‘the latest indication of Nigeria’s spiralling security crisis,’ with communities continuing to face ‘severe threats’ from Islamist groups like Boko Haram in the North-East and other criminal groups in the North-West.⁸⁶

In a March 2024 joint report, the Global Initiative and ACLED noted a significant increase in kidnapping-related events between 2019-2022, making it the main source of income of bandits. Although a decrease was noted in 2023-early 2024, a resurgence of mass kidnappings was observed since February 2024, reportedly attributed to the declining profitability of individual kidnappings for ransom.⁸⁷

⁷⁸ Reuters, Deaths from latest Nigerian inter-communal clashes pass 100, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹ GO, Northwest Nigeria Has a Banditry Problem. What’s Driving It?, International Peace Institute, 22 May 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁰ International Review of the Red Cross, The question of definition: Armed banditry in Nigeria’s North-West in the context of international humanitarian law, ICRC, June 2023, [url](#), p. 735

⁸¹ DW, Nigeria kidnappings: Who’s behind them and what do they want, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸² Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸³ Reuters, Gunmen kill four, abduct at least 40 in northwest Nigeria, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁴ AP, Gunmen abduct 287 students in the latest school attack in Nigeria’s northwest, headteacher says, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁵ DW, Nigeria: Kidnappings on the rise, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁶ HRW, Armed Groups Kidnap Hundreds Across Northern Nigeria, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Global Initiative against transnational organized crime and ACLED, What does the recent escalation of mass abductions in Nigeria tell us?, 15 March 2024, [url](#)



News agency TheCable reported 4 243 people kidnapped in Nigeria in 2023, with the highest number of kidnappings recorded in Zamfara, followed by Kaduna, Niger and Sokoto.⁸⁸ Sources recorded between 500-564 kidnappings since the beginning of 2024,⁸⁹ with mass abductions taking place in Nigeria's North-East and North-West regions, and Kaduna, Borno, and Sokoto states.⁹⁰ For more information on these incidents, see [Section 2.5.3](#).

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) reported two main types of kidnappings in the country. One is perpetrated by Islamist organisations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP and mainly targets women and children with the aim of forceful recruitment; usually no ransom is demanded and those kidnapped are released during military operations. A second type is kidnappings for ransom by bandit groups that target those 'easily accessible'; the armed perpetrators often attack villages and kidnap large groups.⁹¹ Other sources indicated that kidnapping is a primary revenue source 'for both violent extremist organizations in the North East and bandit groups in the North West.'⁹² Similarly, according to Le Monde, kidnapped victims were usually released after their relatives paid the requested ransom, and those who fail to make a payment, the victim is usually killed by their captors.⁹³

Different groups were behind the kidnappings in Nigeria, namely bandits in the north, Islamic militants, such as ISWAP and Boko Haram, in the north/North-East of Nigeria, and several armed groups in the Niger Delta.⁹⁴ An increasing alliance between criminal gangs involved in kidnappings and the jihadist groups has been observed⁹⁵, with the jihadist insurrection in the area of the Lake Chad Basin increasingly mixing with non-jihadist militias active in most of northern Nigeria (usually involved in banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling and local community conflicts). These militias are reportedly 'more lethal' than jihadist groups.⁹⁶

According to BBC, kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria is considered 'a low-risk, high-reward business,' with the arrest of perpetrators rarely being made, 'despite the fact that paying a ransom to free someone has been made illegal'.⁹⁷ On the modus operandi, the AP added that, frequently, armed groups were targeting villagers and travellers 'for huge ransoms'.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ TheCable, IN DETAIL: Nigeria's security falters as non-state actors killed 3,841 persons, abducted 4,243 in 2023, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Global Initiative against transnational organized crime and ACLED, What does the recent escalation of mass abductions in Nigeria tell us?, 15 March 2024, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Nigeria: UN Human Rights Chief appalled by recent mass abductions, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Global Initiative against transnational organized crime and ACLED, What does the recent escalation of mass abductions in Nigeria tell us?, 15 March 2024, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Nigeria: UN Human Rights Chief appalled by recent mass abductions, 15 March 2024, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Nigeria: UN Human Rights Chief appalled by recent mass abductions, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹¹ CDD, Analysis of Security Dynamics in West Africa from October 2022 to June 2023, 11 August 2023, [url](#), pp. 8-9

⁹² Global Initiative against transnational organized crime and ACLED, What does the recent escalation of mass abductions in Nigeria tell us?, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹³ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁴ DW, Nigeria kidnappings: Who's behind them and what do they want, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#); IISS, Armed Conflict Survey 2023, From Global Jihad to Local Insurgencies: the Changing Nature of Sub-Saharan Jihadism, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁶ IISS, Armed Conflict Survey 2023, From Global Jihad to Local Insurgencies: the Changing Nature of Sub-Saharan Jihadism, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷ BBC News, Nigeria's mass abductions: What lies behind the resurgence?, 9 March 2024, [url](#)

⁹⁸ AP, Gunmen abduct 287 students in the latest school attack in Nigeria's northwest, headteacher says, 8 March 2024, [url](#)





In March, 2024 Amnesty International (AI) highlighted a ‘spate of abductions targeting children in schools and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps in the northern part of the country.’ Within 10 days, approximately 700 people were kidnapped by gunmen in the states of Borno, Kaduna, and Sokoto. AI reported receiving reports of kidnappings almost daily, including in the states of Zamfara, Katsina, and Niger. Due to these abductions and attacks, combined with the absence of a strong response from the state, many parents kept their children out of school.⁹⁹

Electoral violence

In 2023, different elections took place in the country, namely presidential and legislative, as well as elections for governorships and other subnational elections.¹⁰⁰ For general information on the 2023 elections, see also [Section 1](#).

The Centre for Democracy and Development reported that suppression and intimidation of voters, as well as the destruction or theft of election material perpetrated mainly by political party agents and politically aligned ‘thugs,’ took place across all six geopolitical zones.¹⁰¹

Sources reported a significant increase in violence prior to the elections.¹⁰² The EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Nigeria reported that the 2023 elections in Nigeria were impacted by ‘orchestrated’ violence aiming to impact the electoral process.¹⁰³ Similarly, according to a joint report by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and ACLED, while state security forces were deployed to polling units, the 2023 elections were affected considerably by numerous violent incidents.¹⁰⁴ The increase of intimidation and vote-buying strategies,¹⁰⁵ combined with assassination attempts and killings as the election dates were approaching, created insecurity in the southern states and attacks during rallies were reported in different northern states. The use of violence hindered the electoral campaigns, disturbed the elections and prevented voter participation.¹⁰⁶

According to CDD and ACLED, the highest number of violent incidents was recorded at the presidential and gubernatorial elections on 25 February and 18 March 2023, respectively,¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ AI, Nigeria: Fresh abduction is a sign that impunity reigns, 13 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Chatham House, Nigeria’s 2023 elections: Security, economic and foreign policy imperatives, 5 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ CDD, Votes, Violence and Validity: Our Understanding of Nigeria’s 2023 Sub-National Elections, 21 March 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹⁰² EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 26; CDD and ACLED, Nigeria’s 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰³ EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁰⁴ CDD and ACLED, Nigeria’s 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰⁵ EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 25

¹⁰⁶ EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰⁷ CDD and ACLED, Nigeria’s 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7





while the EU EOM to Nigeria noted that the majority of recorded incidents of electoral violence were linked to the state-level elections¹⁰⁸.

According to ACLED, most of the electoral violent events linked to the elections involved violence against civilians, accounting for 114 incidents. During each of the four election dates, there were increased incidents of looting, confrontations between the different parties and armed clashes between state security forces and unidentified armed groups attempting to seize electoral materials.¹⁰⁹ Most electoral-related violent incidents, or 60%, took place in the Southern region,¹¹⁰ namely in the states of Imo, Rivers, Enugu, Ebonyi, Osun, and Cross River.¹¹¹ At least 19 fatalities linked to the elections were reported across Abia, Rivers, Kano, Kaduna, Ondo, Kogi, Ebonyi, and Delta states.¹¹² The week prior to the presidential and legislative elections, targeted attacks against candidates were reported, with abductions and killings being reported in Lagos, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Zamfara, Oyo, Rivers, and Delta.¹¹³ The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta reported that violence resulting in fatalities during elections in the Niger Delta went from 82 reported fatalities in 2019 to 56 in 2023.¹¹⁴

At least 14 journalists and media workers were detained, harassed, or attacked by authorities while covering the presidential and federal elections in 2023,¹¹⁵ and 28 journalists and media workers were reportedly harassed and attacked while covering the state elections.¹¹⁶ Amnesty International stated that a total of 42 journalists covering the 2023 elections faced harassment and attacks.¹¹⁷

Improvised explosive devices (IED) and airstrikes

In 2022, IEDs affected an average of 6.8 civilians per attack. From 2022 to 2023, civilian casualties caused by explosive weapons increased by 15 % and civilian fatalities by 42 %, representing the highest number of civilian casualties and fatalities since 2018.¹¹⁸ In 2023, however, airstrikes wounded and killed more civilians than IEDs. On average, 7.6 civilians were wounded per airstrike, and 4.2 were killed. IED attacks wounded an average of 3.8 persons and killed 3.1 civilians per attack. In 2023, 65 incidents of explosive violence resulting in casualties were recorded in Nigeria, with the country being ranked in the second highest

¹⁰⁸ EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 26

¹⁰⁹ CDD and ACLED, Nigeria's 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹¹⁰ CDD and ACLED, Nigeria's 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹¹¹ EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p. 26

¹¹² CDD and ACLED, Nigeria's 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹¹³ EU, Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2023, Final Report, General Elections, 25 February and 18 March 2023, 27 June 2023, [url](#), p.27

¹¹⁴ PIND, Niger Delta Quarterly Conflict Trends: January – March 2023, 30 May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹¹⁵ CPJ, At least 14 journalists detained, attacked, or harassed covering Nigeria's election, 27 February 2023, [url](#); TheCable, Report: 14 journalists attacked, detained while covering Saturday's polls, 28 February 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ CPJ, At least 28 journalists harassed, beaten, denied access while covering Nigerian state elections, 21 March 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ AI, Nigeria: Accountability for human rights violations remains elusive: Amnesty International submission to the 45th session of the UPR working group, January-February 2024, 12 July 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹¹⁸ AOAV, Explosive violence monitor 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 30



category of casualty-causing incidents (in Action on Armed Violence's scale).¹¹⁹ According to AOAV, in 2023, 346 out of the 1 548 total casualties due to explosive violence, were civilians.¹²⁰

46 % of civilian casualties (160 casualties resulting in 89 fatalities) were attributed to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), and 38 % (130 casualties resulting in 72 fatalities) to non-state actors, including Boko Haram and ISWAP.¹²¹

For 2023, the Explosive Weapons Monitor reported¹²² between 1 and 9 incidents where air-launched weapons were used by state armed forces, and between 10 and 99 incidents by non-state armed actors where ground-launched and directly emplaced weapons were used.¹²³

While fighting Islamist insurgents in the North-East and armed criminal gangs in the Northwest and Central region, Nigeria's military has reportedly conducted aerial attacks that resulted in the death of civilians and persons not involved in armed confrontations.¹²⁴ On 3 December 2023, airstrikes in Tudun Biri, Kaduna state, resulted in at least 85 fatalities.¹²⁵ Between January 2017 and January 2024, 227 persons were reportedly killed in four military airstrikes.¹²⁶

2.3 Types of events and impact on civilians

Types of events and fatalities

According to ACLED data, extrapolated in Figure 1 below, in the period January 2023-March 2024, there were 4 520 security incidents¹²⁷ recorded in Nigeria: 1 508 battles, 302 incidents of remote violence¹²⁸, 2 329 incidents of violence against civilians and 381 riots. Events in which civilians were the main or only target¹²⁹ included 39 incidents of remote violence, 166

¹¹⁹ AOAV, Explosive violence monitor 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 15

¹²⁰ AOAV, Explosive violence monitor 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 28

¹²¹ AOAV, Explosive violence monitor 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 30

¹²² Based on information by AOAV, ACLED and Insight Insecurity. Source: EWM, Explosive Weapons Monitor 2023, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 31, 34

¹²³ EWM, Explosive Weapons Monitor 2023, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 31, 34

¹²⁴ Reuters, Bombing of herders highlights pattern of deadly aerial assaults by the Nigerian military, 6 June 2023, [url](#); AI, Nigeria: Victims of reckless air strike still awaiting justice a year on, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

¹²⁵ HRW, Nigeria: Erroneous Military Airstrike, 7 December 2023, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango after at least 80 civilians reported killed in Nigeria airstrike, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁵ UN OHCHR, Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango after at least 80 civilians reported killed in Nigeria airstrike, 6 December 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Nigeria airstrike 'mistakenly' kills worshippers at religious festival, 5 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶ UN OHCHR, Comment by UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango after at least 80 civilians reported killed in Nigeria airstrike, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Filtered to include the following types of events: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians and riots

¹²⁸ For a definition on 'remote violence', see [Sources on security incidents and fatalities](#).

¹²⁹ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 22-23



riots and 2 329 incidents of violence against civilians.¹³⁰ Kidnappings are coded by ACLED under ‘violence against civilians’.

Between January 2023 and March 2024, 10 769 fatalities were reported, including 3 735 as ‘violence against civilians’.¹³¹

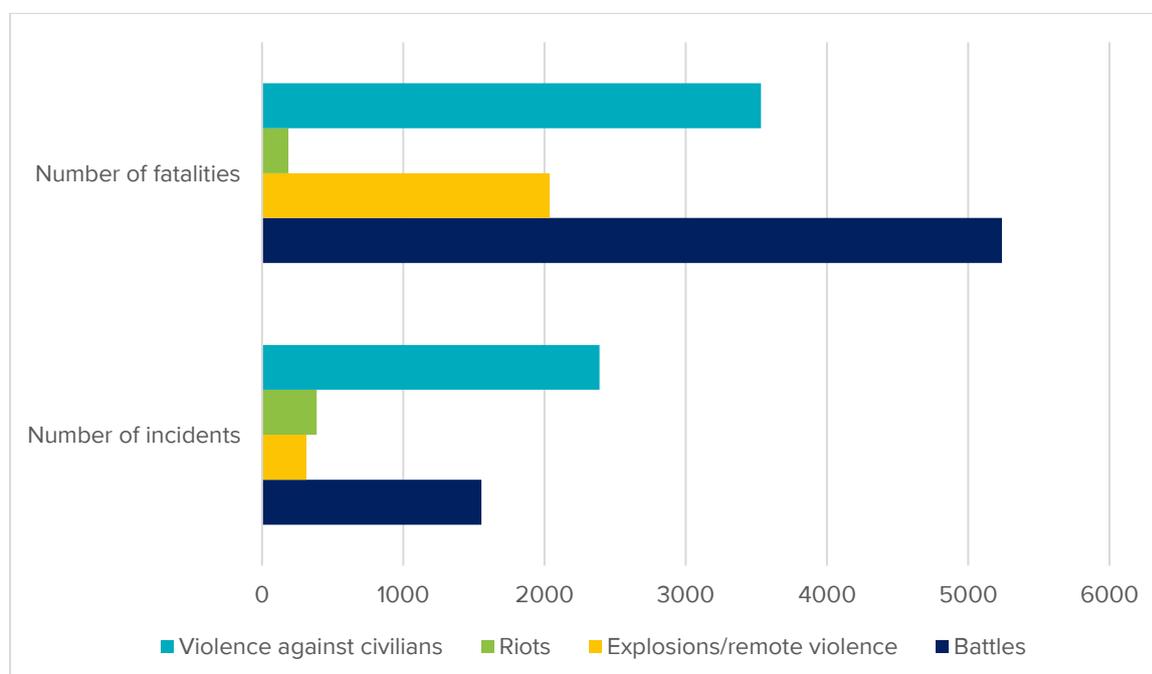


Figure 1. Number of incidents and fatalities (coded as ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’, ‘riots’, and ‘violence against civilians’) in the period 1 January 2023-31 March 2024, based on ACLED data.¹³²

According to Nigeria Watch, for the reference period 1 January 2023-31 December 2023, the North-Central and North-West regions had the highest numbers of fatalities.¹³³

Nigeria Watch’s annual report for 2023 reported 11 794 fatalities due to violence, marking a decrease of 3 699 fatalities from 2022, with rural banditry and kidnappings remaining prevalent in many states. According to the same source, 5 356 fatalities were due to criminal incidents, while 836 to clashes between farmers and herders. Other main causes of fatalities in Nigeria in 2023, aside from criminal incidents, were political issues and road accidents. The source also reported 892 fatalities due to rural banditry and government counter-operations, a decrease from 5 725 fatalities from the same cause in 2022. Kidnapping resulted in 532 fatalities, also a decrease from the previous year.¹³⁴ ACLED and Nigeria Watch do not use the same parameters to group types of events and causes of fatalities. Please see [Sources on security incidents and fatalities](#).

¹³⁰ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

¹³¹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March -2024

¹³² EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023-31 March 2024

¹³³ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 6

¹³⁴ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 6, 9



Geographic distribution of events and fatalities

Figure 2 below shows the security incidents per federal state coded by ACLED as ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’, ‘riots’, or ‘violence against civilians’ in the period 1 January 2023-31 March 2024, focusing on the states where more than 200 events were recorded in total. These states were Borno, with the most events recorded in the country, followed by Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, and Benue.

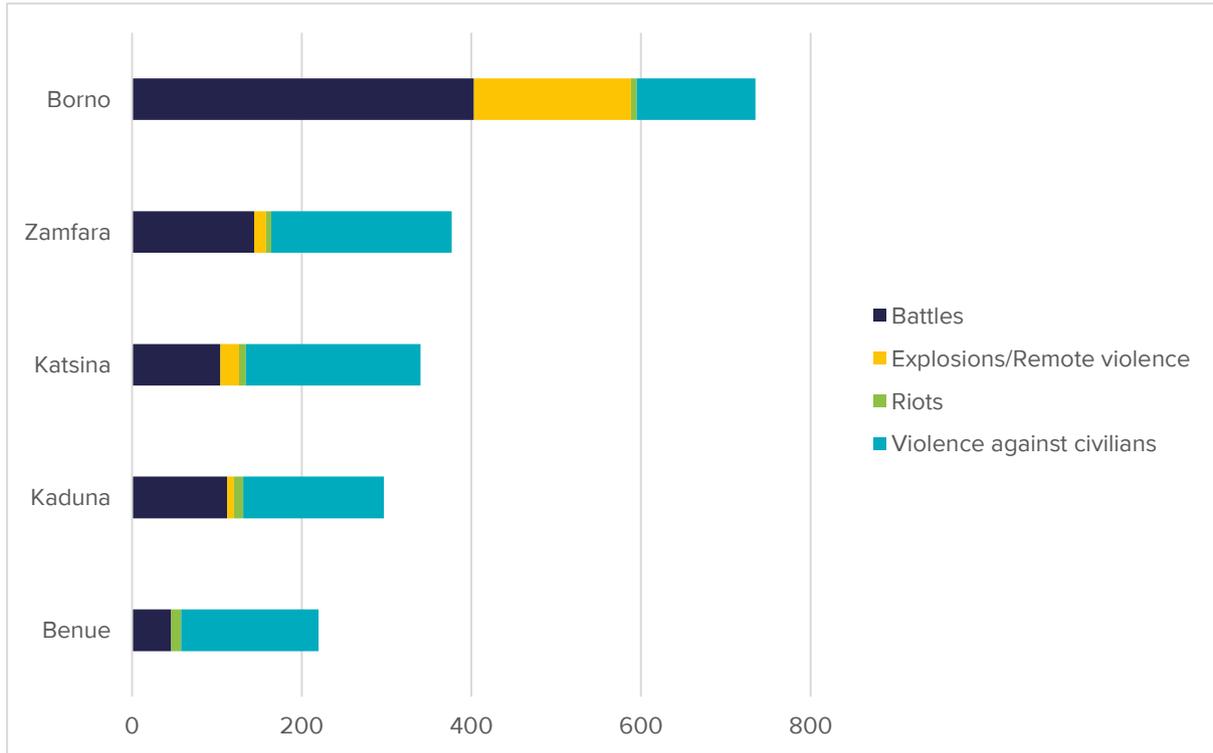


Figure 2. Number of security events (coded as ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’, ‘riots’, and ‘violence against civilians’) in the period 1 January 2023-31 March 2024 in the states where more than 200 events were recorded in total, based on ACLED data.¹³⁵

Most of the security incidents reported by ACLED (see also Figure 2 below) were recorded in Borno: 715 incidents in total, including 395 coded as ‘battles’, 181 as ‘remote violence’, 136 as ‘violence against civilians’, and 6 as ‘riots’. In Zamfara, 377 incidents were recorded in total (137 codes as ‘battles’, 12 as ‘remote violence’, 202 as ‘violence against civilians’, and 6 as ‘riots’). The lowest numbers of security incidents were recorded in Gombe, 9 incidents in total (1 as ‘battle’, 7 as ‘violence against civilians’, and 1 as ‘riot’) and Jigawa with 10 incidents (1 as ‘battle’, 1 as ‘remote violence’, 3 as ‘violence against civilians’, and 5 as ‘riots’).¹³⁶

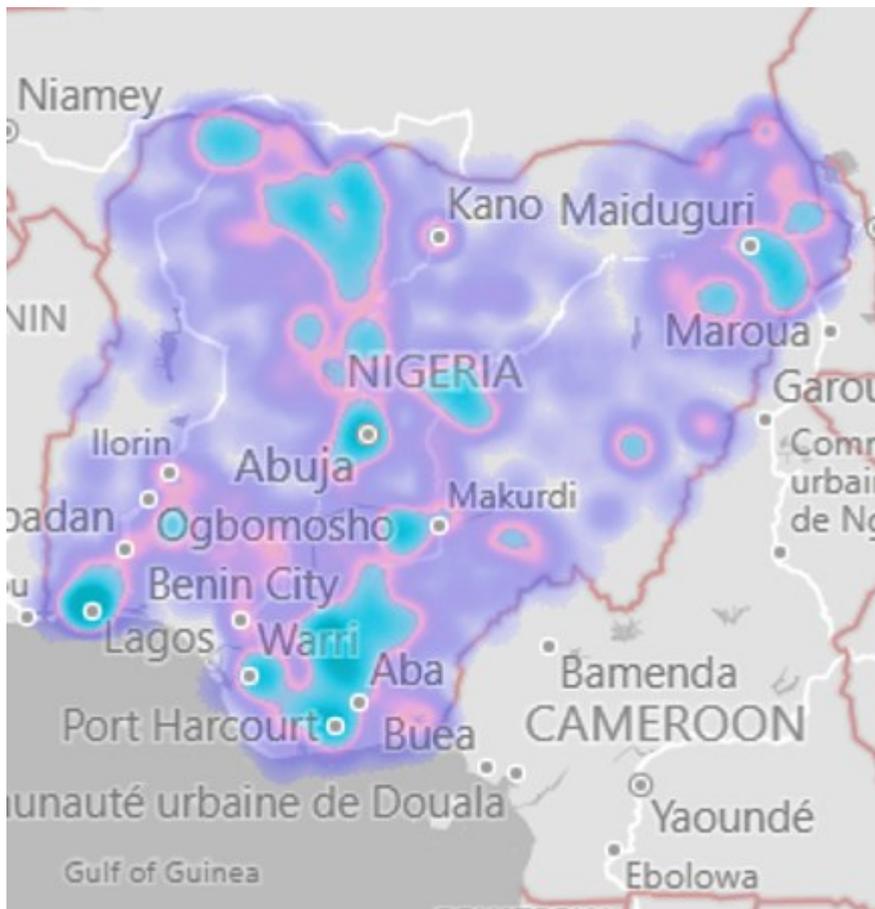
¹³⁵ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

¹³⁶ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

According to Nigeria Watch, for 2023, the state of Borno had the most fatalities (2 123), followed by Benue, Niger, Plateau, Kaduna, and Zamfara. Ekiti, Jigawa, Bayelsa, Gombe, and Adamawa had the smaller number of fatalities.¹³⁷

According to a joint report by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and ACLED on the elections that took place in Nigeria in 2023, at least 38 election-related fatalities were reported across Abia, Rivers, Kano, Kaduna, Ondo, Kogi, Ebonyi, and Delta states, with the Southern region of the country experiencing over 60 % of all electoral violence incidents.¹³⁸

The heatmap below (Map 3) shows the geographic distribution and intensity of incidents ('battles', 'explosions/remote violence', and 'violence against civilians') in the reference period.



Map 3. Heatmap of security events (coded as 'battles', 'explosions/remote violence', 'riots', and 'violence against civilians') for the period 1 January 2023-31 March 2024. EUAA PowerBi, based on ACLED data.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 6

¹³⁸ CDD and ACLED, Nigeria's 2023 Election Security Landscape - Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges, 22 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

¹³⁹ EUAA analysis PowerBi based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

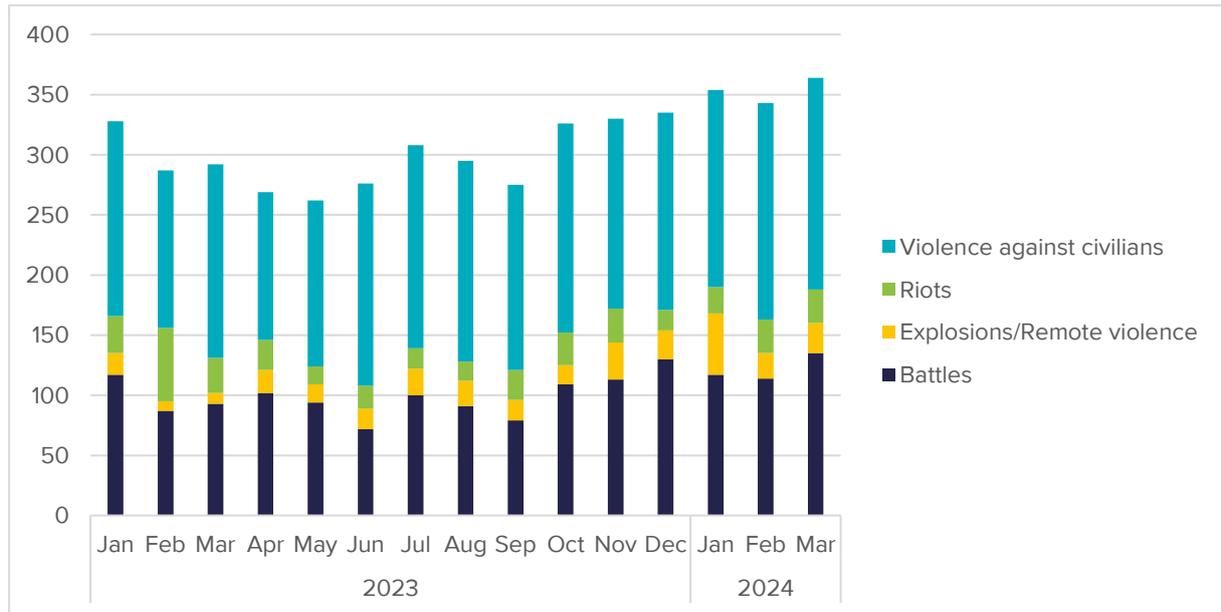


Figure 3. Evolution of security events coded as ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’, ‘riots’, and ‘violence against civilians’, between 1 January 2023-31 March 2024, based on ACLED data.¹⁴⁰

2.4 Main actors

In 2023, criminal gangs and state security forces continued being key actors in violent incidents in Nigeria. Criminal groups were involved in incidents that resulted in the most fatalities (5 151 fatalities), followed by security forces (3 789), and political and ethnic groups (3 064).¹⁴¹

2.4.1 State forces

The Armed Forces of Nigeria consist of the Army, Navy (which includes the Coast Guard), and the Air Force.¹⁴² The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) consists of six command units.¹⁴³ The Army is deployed in all 36 states: In the North-East, it is involved in counter-insurgency operations against the Islamic groups; in the North-West, in combating bandits, Islamist groups, and BH and ISIS-WA combatants, and in the farmers-herders conflict; and in the Niger Delta region, in providing protection to the oil industry against militants and criminal activity.¹⁴⁴ The Nigeria Police Force consists of seven departments and is structured in 17 zones, each covering different states.¹⁴⁵ The EU reported that, in 2023, security forces were deployed in 32 out of the 35 states in Nigeria.¹⁴⁶ The Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), established in 2014 by Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Benin, and authorised by the African Union in 2015, has

¹⁴⁰ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

¹⁴¹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12

¹⁴² US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, last updated 30 May 2024, Military and Security, [url](#)

¹⁴³ Nigeria, NAF, About, History, n.d., [url](#); Nigeria, NAF, Organization, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ US, CIA, The World Factbook: Nigeria, last updated 30 May 2024, Military and Security, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Nigeria, Nigeria Police Force, About us, Force Structure, n.d., [url](#); Nigeria, Nigeria Police Force, Zones, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ EU, 2023 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the world, 29 May 2024, [url](#), p. 132



as mandate the elimination of Boko Haram and enabling the stabilization in areas affected by Boko Haram and other insurgent groups.¹⁴⁷ It is currently made up of the armed forces of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.¹⁴⁸ Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK), formerly named operation Lafiya Dole, is an operation led by the Nigerian Army against Boko Haram in the North-East.¹⁴⁹ The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is a local group founded in 2013 to support the Nigerian security forces against Boko Haram in the North-East and protect local communities from Boko Haram.¹⁵⁰ The NAF, MJTF, OPHK, and CJTF conducted counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram and ISWAP.¹⁵¹ In 2023, Nigeria's security forces carried out land and air operations aiming to counter the activities of bandits in several states across the Middle Belt and North-West.¹⁵²

State forces, including security forces, constituted one of the main actors of violence in Nigeria¹⁵³ and were linked 'indiscriminate' airstrikes.¹⁵⁴ A military airstrike by the Nigerian Air Force took place on 24 January 2023, resulting in the death of 39 civilians.¹⁵⁵ This attack was part of the aerial activity of Operation Whirl Stroke, a joint military, police, and department of state security operation, which was deployed in response to security problems in and around Nasarawa state.¹⁵⁶ Following the attack, the governor of Nasarawa state claimed that the attack was perpetrated by an 'unidentified drone.'¹⁵⁷ About six months after the attack, the Nigerian Air Force took responsibility for the airstrike, claiming to have carried it out in response to "'suspected terrorist" activities.'¹⁵⁸ This attack was described as Nigeria's 'most devastating military mishap in six years,' although airstrike 'mistakes' had occurred in the past.¹⁵⁹

For a breakdown of the state armed forces and background information, see [EASO COI Report – Nigeria - Security Situation, 2021](#).

2.4.2 Non-state armed groups

Human Rights Watch reported that '[m]ultiple armed groups continue to kill and jeopardise the livelihood of millions across the country.' In the North-West, gangs of bandits were involved in extensive killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and lootings.¹⁶⁰ In addition, a resurgence of

¹⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?, 7 July 2020, [url](#). See also: Nigeria, MNJTF, Armed Forces of Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Nigeria, MNJTF, About the Force, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ TheCable, Lafiya Dole to Hadin Kai — army renames operation to defeat Boko Haram, 30 April 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ UNICEF, Civilian joint task force in northeast Nigeria signs action plan to end recruitment of children, 15 September 2017, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 13

¹⁵² HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵³ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12

¹⁵⁴ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#); USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁵⁶ HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ TheCable, Nasarawa explosion: Drone dropped the bomb — not NAF aircraft, says Abdullahi Sule, 26 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ ISS, Nigeria's military mistakes cost the country its civilians, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



attacks by ISWAP resulted in fatalities.¹⁶¹ In the Lake Chad Basin area, the jihadist insurrection was mainly centred on Nigeria. This conflict, which remained ‘very violent’, impacted the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. This jihadist insurrection appears increasingly mixed up with the activities of non-jihadist militias that are involved in banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling, and in communal conflicts taking place in most of northern Nigeria.¹⁶²

Ongoing intercommunal conflicts between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt and North-Central region were also reported, which continued to cause fatalities (860 in 2023).¹⁶³

Other major actors include separatists, namely the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its militia wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), who were main actors involved in tensions in the South-East (whose activities resulted in 245 fatalities in the region), and cults (whose activities resulted in 301 fatalities).¹⁶⁴ According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), cults are ‘umbrella networking organizations,’ with a wide array of activities that vary between regions.¹⁶⁵ Cults reportedly have a chain of command similar to that of militia groups, with roles and hierarchies generally clear.¹⁶⁶ According to UNODC, cults engage in extortion of businesses and communities, outsourcing of criminal activities to non-cult criminal groups, drug dealing, piracy, and firearms trafficking.¹⁶⁷

Groups known as ‘political thugs’ were used by established political parties to influence the outcome and the electoral processes of 2023. Candidates reportedly ‘mobilised’ these actors to attack polling stations.¹⁶⁸

Boko Haram, including ISWAP and Jama’tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad (JAS)

JAS and ISWAP constitute two of Boko Haram’s splinters or factions.¹⁶⁹ On 19 May 2021, the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, was killed during a clash with ISWAP.¹⁷⁰ This led to mass defections from the JAS.¹⁷¹ In 2023, the JAS gained ground in the intra-jihadist fighting in North-East Nigeria, putting a stop to ISWAP advance. Throughout 2023, JAS took most of the islands in Lake Chad, previously controlled by ISWAP, and in October 2023, launched major offensives against ISWAP, forcing its fighters to evacuate many of their island territories in the Lake Chad area.¹⁷²

According to the ISS, JAS’ victories were linked to the defection from ISWAP to JAS of commander Mikhail Usman, also known as Kaila, in early 2023, taking with him other

¹⁶¹ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶² ISS, Armed Conflict Survey 2023, From Global Jihad to Local Insurgencies: the Changing Nature of Sub-Saharan Jihadism, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶³ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 11, 14, 8,

¹⁶⁵ UNODC, Organized Crime in Nigeria: A Threat Assessment, [url](#), pp. 5-11

¹⁶⁶ UNODC, Organized Crime in Nigeria: A Threat Assessment, [url](#), pp. 5-11

¹⁶⁷ UNODC, Organized Crime in Nigeria: A Threat Assessment, [url](#), pp. 5-11

¹⁶⁸ Al Jazeera, How violence robs Nigerians of their votes, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ International Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#); ISS, Boko Haram factional violence worries Islamic State, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ CSIS, Boko Haram’s Leader Is Dead: What Are the Humanitarian and Security Implications?, 15 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ ISS, Defections alone won’t break ISWAP terror group, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷² International Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#); ISS, Boko Haram factional violence worries Islamic State, 25 April 2024, [url](#)



commanders and fighters.¹⁷³ In March 2024, International Crisis Group described ISWAP ‘under serious strain, though [...] hardly defeated.’ In 2023, ISWAP claimed significantly less attacks.¹⁷⁴ According to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), as of April 2024, JAS was occupying as much as 40 % of the islands previously controlled by ISWAP. ISWAP maintains control over the mainland in the areas it used to occupy.¹⁷⁵

According to a letter by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team to the UN Security Council, the Boko Haram faction Adamu Saddiqu, which was operating in North-West Nigeria, was also active in North-Central Nigeria where it was involved in criminal activities including banditry.¹⁷⁶ Adamu Yunusu, aka Saddiqu, appeared to be the leader of a Boko Haram faction.¹⁷⁷

Bandits

The International Committee of the Red Cross defined bandits as a ‘a loose collection of various criminal groups’ involved in kidnappings for ransom, armed robbery, cattle rustling, sexual violence, looting, and attacks against traders, farmers and travellers, especially in the North-West.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, DW described bandits as violent criminals and armed gangs active across Northern Nigeria. In the past two decades, these groups moved from being nomadic ‘brigands’ frequently involved in cattle rustling and local raids, to organised criminal gangs involved in drug and arms smuggling and mass kidnappings for ransom of local villagers and schoolchildren.¹⁷⁹ According to a lecturer at the University of Jos in Nigeria, while the government was using the terms ‘bandits’ and ‘unknown gunmen’ interchangeably, bandits were not the same as ‘unknown gunmen’.¹⁸⁰

Most of the groups of bandits originated in Zamfara and were operating out of different forested areas connecting many states, thus allowing them freedom of movement, including to the neighbouring States of Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kaduna, and Katsina.¹⁸¹

According to a May 2024 article by the Global Observatory of the International Peace Institute, it was estimated that there were around 30 000 bandits spread across numerous groups in North-West Nigeria, with each group’s numbers ranging from 10 to more than 1 000 fighters.¹⁸²

¹⁷³ ISS, Boko Haram factional violence worries Islamic State, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters, 28 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ ISS, Boko Haram factional violence worries Islamic State, 25 April 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ UN Security Council, Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council, 29 January 2024, S/2024/92*, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁷⁷ Sahara Reporters, Boko Haram Fighters Training Bandits In Northern Nigeria To Use Anti-aircraft Guns, Explosives—Report, 26 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ International Review of the Red Cross, The question of definition: Armed banditry in Nigeria’s North-West in the context of international humanitarian law, ICRC, June 2023, [url](#), p. 736

¹⁷⁹ DW, Nigeria kidnappings: Who’s behind them and what do they want, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Musa, S., Y., Nigeria’s ‘bandits’ are not ‘unknown gunmen’: why the label matters, 18 October 2021, The Conversation, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Criminal Gangs Destabilizing Nigeria’s North West, 14 December 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸² GO, Northwest Nigeria Has a Banditry Problem. What’s Driving It?, International Peace Institute, 22 May 2024, [url](#)



The Associated Press (AP) similarly noted that hundreds of gangs of bandits seemed to exist, each with numerous armed fighters.¹⁸³

According to a lecturer at the University of Jos in Nigeria, quoting survivors, eyewitnesses and security sector sources, bandits seemed to be mainly Fulani herdsmen speaking the Fulfulde dialect in the North-West and North-Central regions.¹⁸⁴ According to AP News, bandits were generally part of the nomadic Fulani¹⁸⁵ community.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, a study by the ISS on bandits at Niger's Maradi Region and Nigeria's North-West and North-Central states of Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kebbi, and Niger, noted that most bandits were from the ethnic communities of Fulani, Hausa, and Tuareg, which are found in both countries. Based on the testimonials of victims, most bandits in Nigeria were Fulani.¹⁸⁷

According to AP, in its origins, bandits armed themselves to fight the ethnic Hausa communities in Zamfara State over access to land and water resources.¹⁸⁸ However, bandits evolved into organised armed groups, with different sources reporting that these groups were involved in kidnappings for ransom,¹⁸⁹ and forcibly taking over farmlands and gold mines.¹⁹⁰ The International Committee of the Red Cross added that the main driving factor behind banditry was profit, and not any particular ideology, political or sectional interests, as bandits were targeting indiscriminately communities of different faiths and ethnicities in the region.¹⁹¹

Nigeria Watch, in its annual report for 2023, reported 892 fatalities linked to bandits and to government counter-operations.¹⁹²

See Section [2.5 Breakdown by geopolitical zones](#) for details on Actors involved in specific regions.

¹⁸³ AP, Why schoolchildren are being abducted in northern Nigeria amid the region's security crisis, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Musa, S., Y., Nigeria's 'bandits' are not 'unknown gunmen': why the label matters, 18 October 2021, The Conversation, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ The Fulani ethnic group are also known as Foulah, Fulbe, Fule, Peul. Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Fulani, last update 17 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ AP, Why schoolchildren are being abducted in northern Nigeria amid the region's security crisis, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ ISS, Banditry on the border needs joint Nigeria-Niger efforts, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ AP, Why schoolchildren are being abducted in northern Nigeria amid the region's security crisis, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ AP, Why schoolchildren are being abducted in northern Nigeria amid the region's security crisis, 8 March 2024, [url](#); Musa, S., Y., Nigeria's 'bandits' are not 'unknown gunmen': why the label matters, 18 October 2021, The Conversation, [url](#); Musa, S., Y., Nigeria's 'bandits' are not 'unknown gunmen': why the label matters, 18 October 2021, The Conversation, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ AP, Why schoolchildren are being abducted in northern Nigeria amid the region's security crisis, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ International Review of the Red Cross, The question of definition: Armed banditry in Nigeria's North-West in the context of international humanitarian law, ICRC, June 2023, [url](#), p. 739

¹⁹² Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9



2.5 Breakdown by geopolitical zones

2.5.1 North-Central (Benue, Federal Capital Territory, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau)

North-Central consists of the following seven states: Benue, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau.¹⁹³ The estimated population for the region in 2020 was 29 955 288.¹⁹⁴

Main actors

Bandits, counter-insurgency operations, farmers-herders

Central Nigeria has been particularly affected by criminal gangs.¹⁹⁵ These criminal gangs, also known as bandits,¹⁹⁶ were present in the North-Central, particularly in Niger state and in some localities in the FCT (Kuje and Bwari Local Government Areas – LGA).¹⁹⁷

The military and air force were also involved in state security operations, including Operation Whirl Stroke, a joint military, police, and state security department operation, deployed in response to security problems in and around Nasarawa state.¹⁹⁸

A joint security team, comprising the army, the police, vigilantes, and secret services was active in the Kuje and Bwari areas of the FCT in 2023, regions where kidnappings had become widespread.¹⁹⁹

Farmers and herders were involved in ongoing and regular clashes in the North-Central (and North-West) Nigeria,²⁰⁰ with Benue and Plateau being the most affected states in terms of fatalities.²⁰¹

Recent security trends

The North-Central geopolitical zone had the highest number of fatalities in Nigeria in 2023, along with the North-West, with crime being the primary cause of violence resulting in fatalities in the country. Niger in the North-Central, was the state where the highest number of fatalities due to crime was recorded.²⁰²

¹⁹³ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Nigeria, NBS, Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2021, [8 August 2022], [url](#), p. 14

¹⁹⁵ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 285

¹⁹⁶ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 9, 11

¹⁹⁸ HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 10

²⁰⁰ AP, In Nigeria's hard-hit north, families seek justice as armed groups seek control, 28 May 2023, [url](#); TRT World, Explained: Nigeria's decades-long violent farmer-herder crisis, [January 2024], [url](#)

²⁰¹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12

²⁰² Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 6, 8





In the North-Central and in the Middle Belt clashes between farmers and herders were ongoing, with the authorities ‘struggling’ to control clashes for land and other resources, which were further aggravated by ethnic and religious tensions.²⁰³ In 2023, Benue state recorded the highest number of fatalities due to farmers/herders clashes, followed by Plateau.²⁰⁴

While in 2023 there was a significant decrease of fatalities due to rural banditry and government counter-operations, the North-Central and North-West regions accounted for 98 % of the overall fatalities, including of civilians and bandits killed during military operations.²⁰⁵ Criminal gangs, also known as bandits, were accused of attacking villages, and carrying out kidnappings and killing of residents,²⁰⁶ as well as looting and destroying property. Bandits were regularly involved in mass kidnappings at schools to demand ransom from parents and the authorities.²⁰⁷

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 899 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the North-Central zone, of which 198 were coded as ‘battles’, 15 as ‘explosions/remote violence’, 597 as ‘violence against civilians’, and 89 as ‘riots’.²⁰⁸ Security incidents were recorded in all seven states in the region, with the highest number being documented in Benue state: 161 incidents of ‘violence against civilians’, 44 ‘battles’, and 12 ‘riots’.²⁰⁹ According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as ‘battles’, as well as in ‘violence against civilians’ together with the Fulani ethnic militia.

²⁰³ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12

²⁰⁵ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9

²⁰⁶ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#); Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9

²⁰⁷ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁰⁹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024



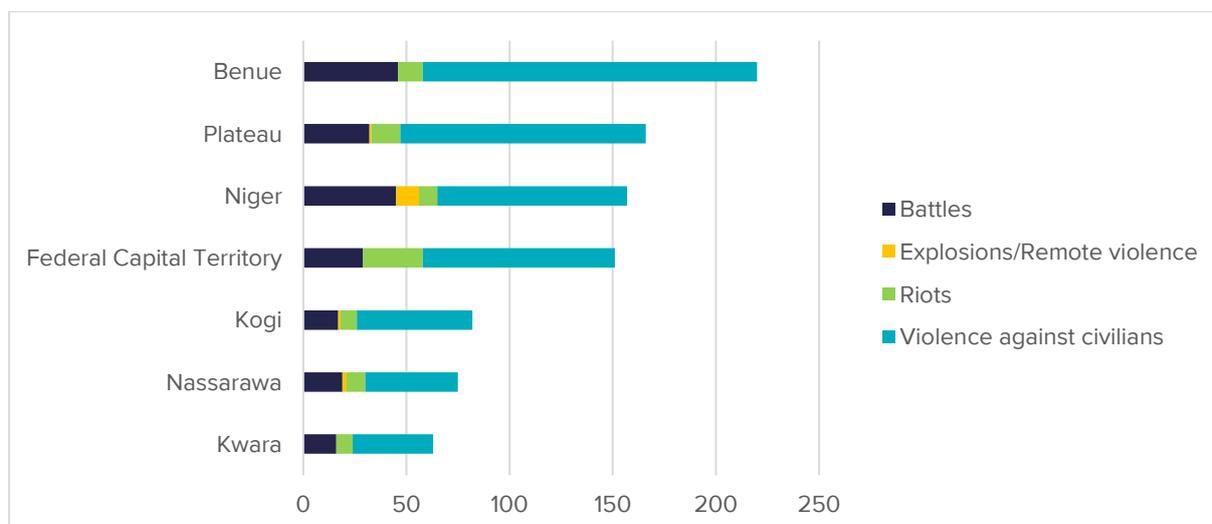


Figure 4. Security events in North-Central geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.²¹⁰

Fatalities

In the same period, ACLED reported 2 389 fatalities²¹¹ in the North-Central zone due to all four event types, out of which 1 325 fatalities were due to ‘violence against civilians’.²¹²

As shown in the infographic below, in the North-Central zone, the two states with the highest numbers of fatalities were Niger and Benue. In Niger, there were 434 fatalities in incidents coded as ‘battles’, 150 as ‘explosions/remote violence’, 6 as ‘riots’, and 117 as ‘violence against civilians’. In Benue 160 fatalities were recorded in incidents coded as ‘battles’, 5 fatalities in events codes as ‘riots’, and 545 as ‘violence against civilians’.²¹³

²¹⁰Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 - 31 March 2024.

²¹¹ The fatalities were filtered by the following event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, riots and violence against civilians

²¹² EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²¹³ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024



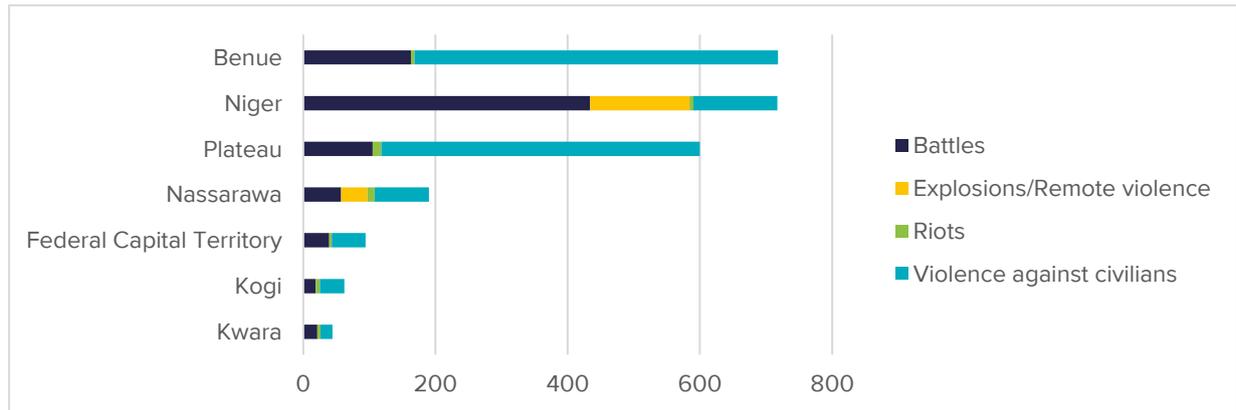


Figure 5. Fatalities per event type in North-Central geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.²¹⁴

Internal displacement

As of December 2023, 394 567 IDPs were reported in Benue, followed by 20 613 IDPs in Nasarawa, and 54 457 in Plateau. Approximately 50 % of the IDPs indicated that their displacement was due to communal clashes, involving confrontations between ethnic and religious groups, frequently linked to land and border disputes.²¹⁵

2.5.2 North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe)

The North-East consists of the following six states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe.²¹⁶ The estimated population for the region in 2020 was 28 957 466.²¹⁷

Main actors

Boko Haram, ISWAP, state forces, farmers-herders

In the North-East, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) were present and active.²¹⁸

Farmers and herders were also present in the North-East, with Taraba recording the third highest numbers of fatalities in Nigeria due to farmers/herders clashes, preceded by Benue and Plateau in the North-Central.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 - 31 March 2024.

²¹⁵ IOM, Nigeria — North-Central and North-West — Round 13 IDP Atlas (March 2024), 11 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 7

²¹⁶ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d., [url](#)

²¹⁷ Nigeria, NBS, Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2021, [8 August 2022], [url](#), p. 14

²¹⁸ AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 285; HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#); ACLED, A Decade After Chibok: Assessing Nigeria's Regional Response to Boko Haram, 16 April 2024, [url](#); ACAPS, Nigeria. Conflict in northeastern and northwestern Nigeria, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

²¹⁹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12



Troops of the 21st armoured brigade, operation Hadin Kai (OPHK), and the 199 Special Forces Battalion, in cooperation with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), were also active, involved in counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram in Sambisa forest in Borno state.²²⁰

Recent security trends

The North-East zone was described by IOM as the most affected zone by the conflict.²²¹ Throughout 2023, in the North-East continuous human rights abuses were perpetrated by Boko Haram and ISWAP.²²² In 2023 a ‘resurgence’ of ISWAP attacks was reported.²²³ For the same period, Borno state recorded the highest number of total fatalities in Nigeria (2 123), and was described as ‘the most dangerous state’ in 2023, because it registered 29.03 fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants, mainly due to the Boko Haram conflict. Out of those fatalities, 1 932 were attributed to attacks by Boko Haram, ISWAP, Ansaru, and counter operations by state forces.²²⁴ In 2023, Bauchi was the state with the highest fatalities caused by kidnappings in Nigeria in 2023.²²⁵ Violent incidents, such as attacks, abductions and extortion in the North-East (and North-West) were perpetrated by non-state armed groups (NSAGs), including Boko Haram and ISWAP.²²⁶

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 1 028 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the North-Central zone, of which 501 were coded as battles, 204 as explosions/remote violence, 294 as incidents of violence against civilians and 121 as riots.²²⁷ Security incidents were recorded primarily in Borno state, which had by far the highest number of security incidents in the geopolitical zone. More specifically in Borno state 136 incidents of violence against civilians were recorded, as well as 395 battles, 181 incidents of explosions/remote violence and 6 riots.²²⁸ According to ACLED data, ISWAP was involved in the majority of events coded as battles, while unidentified armed groups and ISWAP were involved in most incidents of violence against civilians.²²⁹

²²⁰ Guardian (The) Nigeria, Troops kill 35 terrorists, destroy camps in Sambisa forest, 24 April 2023, [url](#)

²²¹ IOM, Nigeria – North-east – Mobility Tracking Round 46 IDP and Returnee Atlas (December 2023), 14 February 2024, [url](#), p. 3

²²² AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 285

²²³ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²²⁴ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 6, 13

²²⁵ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 10

²²⁶ ACAPS, Nigeria. Conflict in northeastern and northwestern Nigeria, 3 January 2024, [url](#), p. 1

²²⁷ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²²⁸ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²²⁹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024



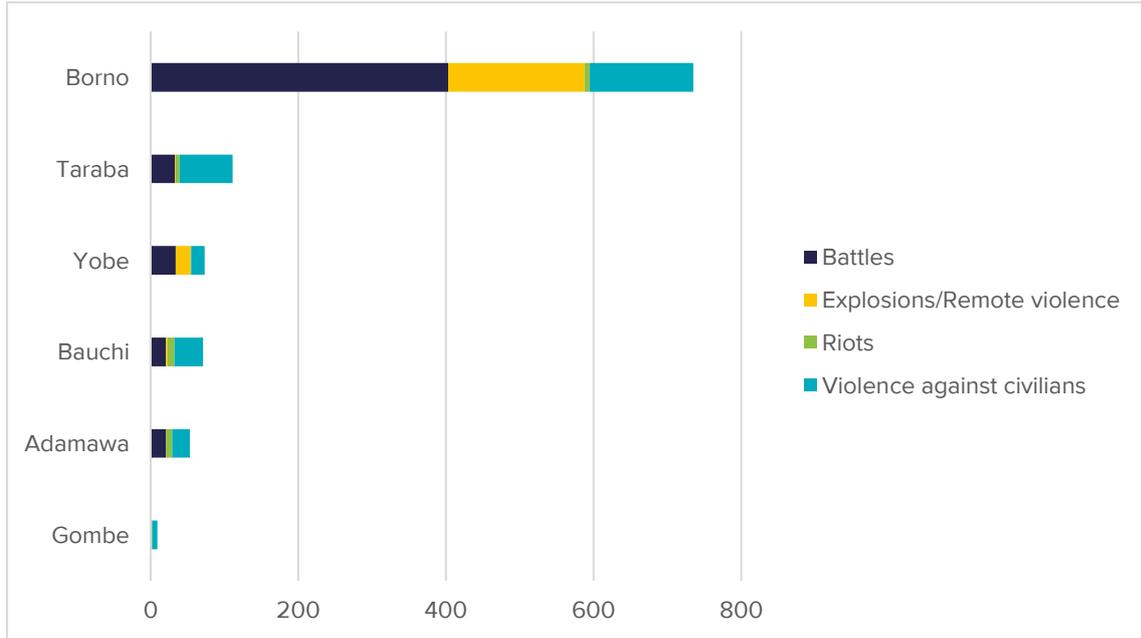


Figure 6. Security events in North-East geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.²³⁰

Fatalities

In the same period, in the North-east zone, ACLED reported 3 875 fatalities,²³¹ out of which 522 were due to ‘violence against civilians’. In the North-East zone, the state with the highest numbers of fatalities was Borno. There were 1 821 fatalities due to ‘battles’, 1 072 due to ‘explosions/remote violence’, and 271 due to ‘violence against civilians’.²³²

²³⁰ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.

²³¹ The fatalities were filtered by the following event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, riots and violence against civilians

²³² EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

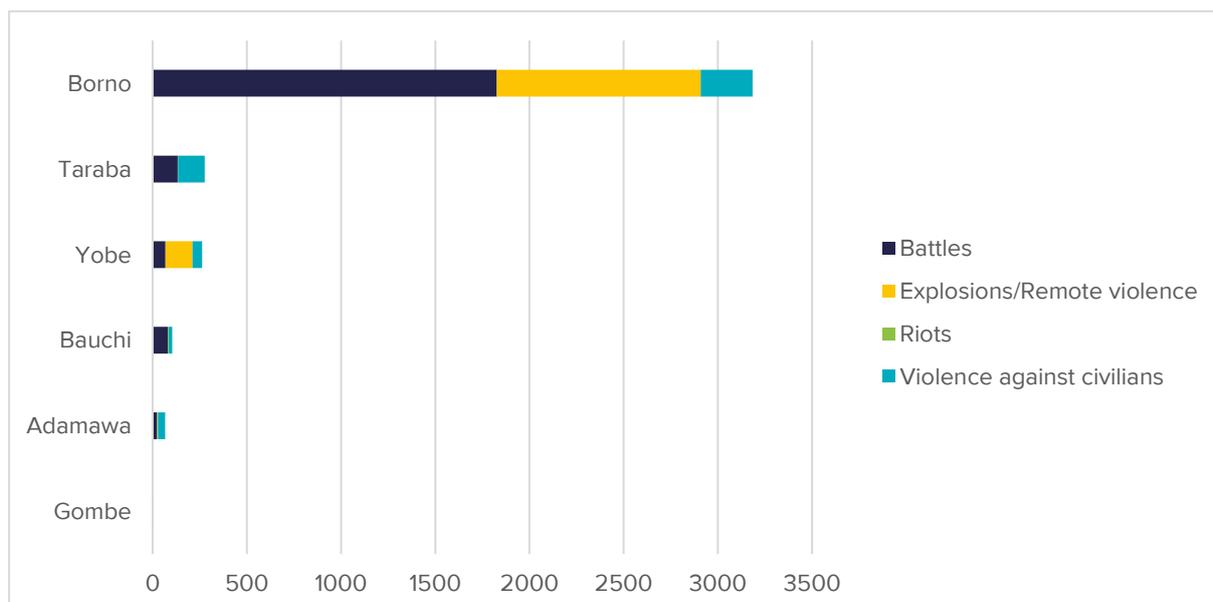


Figure 7. Fatalities per event type in the North-East geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024²³³

In cases of civilian targeting, meaning events in which civilians were the main or only target of an event,²³⁴ 598 fatalities were recorded in the North-East zone.²³⁵

Internal displacement

As of December 2023, there were 2 305 335 IDPs in North-East Nigeria, with Borno hosting 74 % of IDPs, corresponding to 1 711 481 people.²³⁶ Approximately half of the 3.3 million IDPs in Nigeria at the end of 2023 due to conflict and violence were in Borno state.²³⁷ Adamawa hosted 218 118 IDPs, Bauchi 66 489, Gombe 52 383, Taraba 101 834, and Yobe 155 030 IDPs.²³⁸

Insurgency, involving attacks by non-state armed groups was the main reason of displacement reported (in 92 % of the locations), followed by communal clashes (6%), farmers-herders' conflicts, armed banditry/kidnapping and natural disasters.²³⁹

As of December 2023, Borno state hosted 871 017 returnees, Adamawa 858 420 returnees and Yobe 354 398 returnees.²⁴⁰

²³³ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.

²³⁴ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 22-23

²³⁵ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²³⁶ IOM, Nigeria – North-east – Mobility Tracking Round 46 IDP and Returnee Atlas (December 2023), 14 February 2024, [url](#), p. 7

²³⁷ IDMC, Nigeria, last updated 14 May 2024, [url](#)

²³⁸ IOM, Nigeria – North-east – Mobility Tracking Round 46 IDP and Returnee Atlas (December 2023), 14 February 2024, [url](#), p. 7

²³⁹ IOM, Nigeria – North-east – Mobility Tracking Round 46 IDP and Returnee Atlas (December 2023), 14 February 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²⁴⁰ IOM, Nigeria – North-east – Mobility Tracking Round 46 IDP and Returnee Atlas (December 2023), 14 February 2024, [url](#), p. 14

2.5.3 North-West (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara)

The North-West consists of the following seven states: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara.²⁴¹ The estimated population for the region in 2020 was 56 550 588.²⁴²

Main actors

Bandits, state forces, Islamist groups, farmers and herders

Bandits have been present in Nigeria's North-West for a long period²⁴³ and were active in 2023.²⁴⁴ Kaduna state,²⁴⁵ along with Niger in the North-Central, were the states where bandits were prevalent.²⁴⁶

For a general overview on Actors described as bandits, see section [Bandits](#).

According to Le Monde, North-West and Central Nigeria 'for years have been terrorized by criminal gangs'. These criminal gangs, also known as bandits, raid villages, kidnap and kill residents as well burn homes after looting them. The gangs, who maintain camps in a vast forest, are also notorious for mass abductions from schools to extract ransom from parents and governments.²⁴⁷ Farmers and herders were involved in ongoing and regular clashes in North-West (and North-Central) Nigeria.²⁴⁸

Nigeria's security forces, including the Nigerian Army, were also present in the North-West region, were involved in airstrikes and aerial operations.²⁴⁹ In 2023, Nigeria's security forces were carrying out land and air operations aiming to counter the activities of bandits in several states across the Middle Belt and North-West.²⁵⁰

Recent security trends

The North-West, along with the North-Central, was one of the two geopolitical zones in Nigeria with the highest number of fatalities due to crime, the primary cause of fatal violence in Nigeria.²⁵¹ Both regions also accounted for 98 % of fatalities due to banditry. Human Rights

²⁴¹ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d., [url](#)

²⁴² Nigeria, NBS, Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2021, [8 August 2022], [url](#), p. 14

²⁴³ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 285

²⁴⁵ HRW, Nigeria: Erroneous Military Airstrike, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9

²⁴⁶ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9

²⁴⁷ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ AP, In Nigeria's hard-hit north, families seek justice as armed groups seek control, 28 May 2023, [url](#); TRT World, Explained: Nigeria's decades-long violent farmer-herder crisis, [January 2024], [url](#)

²⁴⁹ HRW, Nigeria: Erroneous Military Airstrike, 7 December 2023, [url](#); Channels Television, Army Takes Responsibility For Air Strike In Kaduna — Commissioner, 4 December 2023, [url](#); HRW, Nigeria: Erroneous Military Airstrike, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁵¹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), pp. 6, 8



Watch reported that in the North-West armed bandits ‘continue to carry out widespread killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and lootings.’²⁵²

EU ECHO reported growing insecurity caused by ‘community violence, herders-farmers clashes and attacks from criminal groups and armed bandits.’²⁵³ Bandits are accused of attacking villages, kidnaping and killing residents, looting and burning houses, and carrying out mass abductions from schools to extract ransom from parents and governments.²⁵⁴

In 2023, Nigeria’s security forces carried out land and air operations aiming to counter the activities of bandits in several states across the Middle Belt and North-West.²⁵⁵ Nigeria’s security forces’ responses to bandits were described as ‘often abusive’.²⁵⁶ The Nigerian Army took responsibility for the air strike in Kaduna state on 3 December 2023 which resulted in the death of 85 civilians.²⁵⁷

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 1 237 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the North-West zone, of which 411 were coded as ‘battles’, 47 ‘explosions/remote violence’, 724 incidents of ‘violence against civilians’, and 55 ‘riots’.²⁵⁸ Most of the security incidents were recorded in Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna with the highest number being documented in Zamfara: 202 incidents of ‘violence against civilians’, 137 ‘battles’, 12 ‘remote violence’, and 6 ‘riots’.²⁵⁹ According to ACLED data, the military forces of Nigeria were involved in the majority of events coded as ‘battles’, while the Zamfara and Katsina communal militias in those coded as ‘violence against civilians’.²⁶⁰

²⁵² Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9; HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁵³ EU, ECHO, Nigeria, 28 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁵⁴ Le Monde, Nigeria: Fifteen students kidnapped by armed men, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ HRW, Nigeria: No Justice for Civilians Killed in Airstrike, 6 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ HRW, Nigeria: Erroneous Military Airstrike, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ Channels Television, Army Takes Responsibility For Air Strike In Kaduna – Commissioner, 4 December 2023, [url](#); HRW, Nigeria: Erroneous Military Airstrike, 7 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁵⁹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁶⁰ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024



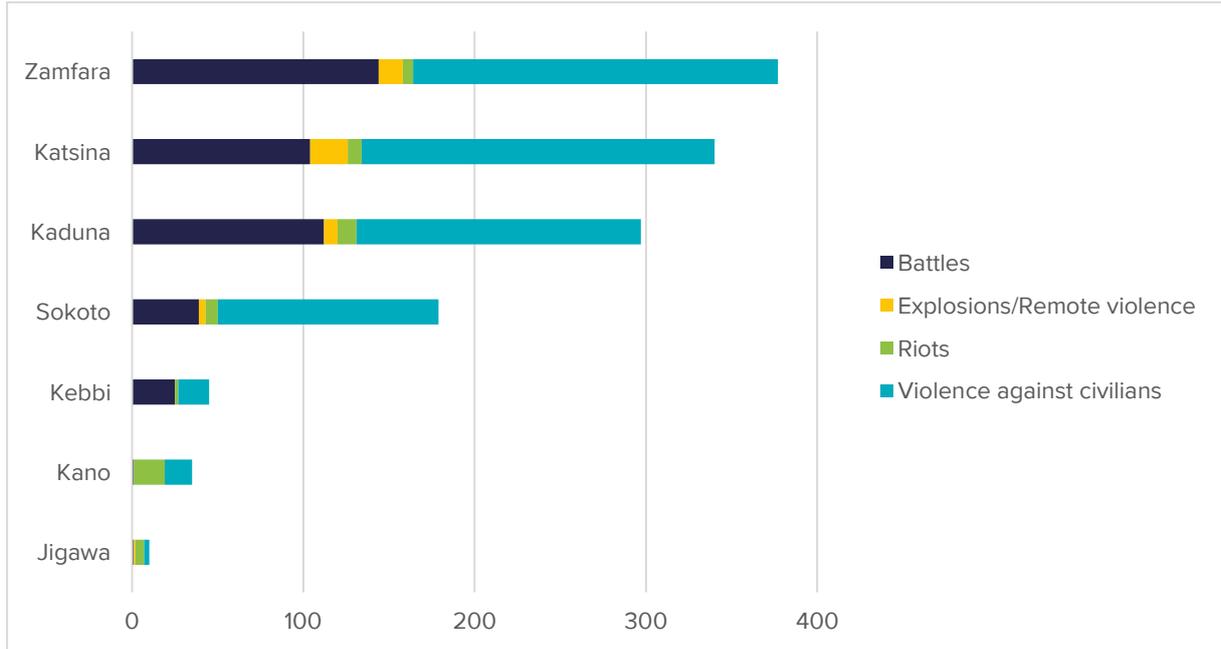


Figure 8. Security events in North-West geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.²⁶¹

Fatalities

In the same period, in the North-West zone, ACLED reported 3 138 fatalities,²⁶² out of which 1 047 were due to ‘violence against civilians’. In the North-West zone, the state with the highest number of fatalities was Zamfara: 566 due to ‘battles’, 238 to ‘explosions/remote violence’, and 290 to ‘violence against civilians’.²⁶³

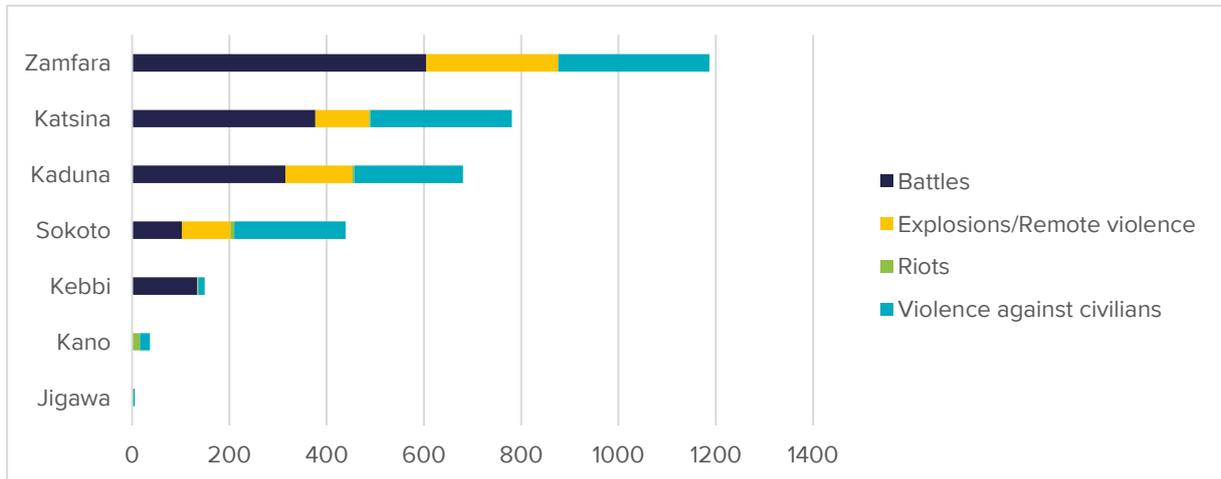


Figure 9. Fatalities per event type in the North-West geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.

²⁶² The fatalities were filtered by the following event types: battles, explosions/remote violence, riots and violence against civilians

²⁶³ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁶⁴ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.



In cases of civilian targeting (events in which civilians were the main or only target of an event),²⁶⁵ 1 145 fatalities were recorded in the North-West zone.²⁶⁶

Internal displacement

According to information on displacement by IOM, covering the period between 13 September and 24 October 2023, Katsina state had the largest share of IDPs in North-West Nigeria, an estimated 244 380 IDPs corresponding to 23 % of the total internally displaced population, followed by Zamfara.²⁶⁷ One of the main reasons for displacement in the North-West, similarly to the North-Central, was armed banditry and kidnapping, reported by 44 % of the IDPs. Another factor was communal clashes, reported by 27 % of IDPs, and attacks by herdsmen, reported by 19 %.²⁶⁸

As of December 2023, there were 231 937 IDPs in Katsina, 160 498 in Zamfara, 119 787 in Kaduna, 94 729 in Sokoto, and 15 608 in Kano. In Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto, the main reason for displacement was armed banditry and kidnapping. IOM highlighted that the percentages of IDPs that stated being displaced due to armed banditry in Zamfara was 100 %, Katsina (84 %), and Sokoto (77 %).²⁶⁹

2.5.4 South-East (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo)

The South-East consists of the following five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo.²⁷⁰ The estimated population for the region in 2020 was 22 516 538.²⁷¹

Main actors

Separatist factions, unknown gunmen, security forces

In 2023 the main actors involved in tensions in the South-East were ‘separatist factions’²⁷², or the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Eastern Security Network (ESN).²⁷³ Biafra separatists, present in the South-East were described as ‘the law now’ having taken over the powers of government officials and traditional rulers in the area.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁵ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 22-23

²⁶⁶ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁶⁷ IOM, Nigeria — North-Central and North-West Displacement Report 12 (December 2023), 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 10

²⁶⁸ IOM, Nigeria — North-Central and North-West Displacement Report 12 (December 2023), 4 January 2024, [url](#), p. 11

²⁶⁹ IOM, Nigeria — North-Central and North-West — Round 13 IDP Atlas (March 2024), 11 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 7

²⁷⁰ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d., [url](#)

²⁷¹ Nigeria, NBS, Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2021, [8 August 2022], [url](#), p. 14

²⁷² ISS, Nigeria’s military mistakes cost the country its civilians, 13 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁷³ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 14

²⁷⁴ BBC News, Biafra quest fuels Nigeria conflict: Too scared to marry and bury bodies, 9 January 2023, [url](#)



Unknown gunmen were also present in the South-East throughout 2023,²⁷⁵ with the phrasing ‘attacks by unknown gunmen’ frequently used to describe sectional violence in the South-East of Nigeria.²⁷⁶

State forces were also present in the South-East in 2023.²⁷⁷ Premium Times, quoting official sources, reported that, in the period between 11 February 2024 and 7 March 2024, combined security forces killed a high number of suspected members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed militant wing, Eastern Security Network (ESN), across the South-East. According to an official, the operations were conducted by the Joint Task Force of Operation Udoka, consisting of personnel from the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, and the Nigeria Police Force; personnel from the State Security Service and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps also participated. The ‘suspected’ IPOB/ESN locations were at the communities of Orsu, Eke-Ututu, and Ihiteukwa, Ihittenansa, located in Orsu LGA in Imo state. During the same period, additional locations were destroyed in Ihiala LGA, in Anambra state.²⁷⁸ Sahara Reporters added that the Nigerian Army has announced the destruction of the alleged ‘Supreme Headquarters’ of IPOB and of ESN at Mother Valley in Anambra State.²⁷⁹

Recent security trends

Nigeria Watch reported for 2023 that the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Eastern Security Network (ESN), and the counter-operations by state forces resulted in 245 fatalities in the South-East region.²⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch reported that, in 2023, the leader of the IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, was discharged and acquitted of treason-related charges by Nigeria’s Court of Appeal, but he continued in detention pending an appeal to the Supreme Court by the federal government.²⁸¹ The same source also indicated that South-East states attempted to end a “‘sit at home order’”²⁸² issued by IPOB; however, while IPOB claimed that the ‘order’ was suspended, gunmen continued to enforce it by killing, targeting, and destroying the property of citizens who did not follow the ‘order’.²⁸³ Biafra separatists were reportedly involved in killings, kidnappings and extortion in the South-East.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁵ AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 285; Leadership, Threat To Election In South East, 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ Akinyetun, T. et al., Unknown gunmen and insecurity in Nigeria: Dancing on the brink of state fragility, Security & Defence Quarterly, 30 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 14

²⁷⁸ Premium Times, Security agencies kill many suspected IPOB members, destroy group’s ‘supreme headquarters’ – Official, 9 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁷⁹ Sahara Reporters, Nigerian Troops Raid, Destroy Alleged IPOB, ESN Supreme Headquarters In Anambra, Kill Scores, Recover Bombs, Biafra Flags, Uniforms, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 14

²⁸¹ HRW, World Report 2024 – Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁸² This order was introduced by IPOB in 2021 and required citizens in the region to stay at home and for public places to remain closed on Mondays and on any other decided as well as on the days Nnamdi Kany would appear at court. Source: HRW, World Report 2024 - Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁸³ HRW, World Report 2024 – Nigeria, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ BBC News, Biafra quest fuels Nigeria conflict: Too scared to marry and bury bodies, 9 January 2023, [url](#)



Throughout 2023, human rights abuses were reportedly perpetrated by “unknown gunmen” in the South-East.²⁸⁵ According to a paper by Tope Shola Akinyetun,²⁸⁶ Victor Chukwuekwu Ebonine, and Iyase Osariyekemwen Ambrose with on security in Nigeria, the phrasing ‘attacks by unknown gunmen’ being frequently used to describe ‘sectional violence’ in the South-East of Nigeria.²⁸⁷ According to News provider Leadership reported in 2023 that ‘the fear of violence is so pervasive in the South-East’ that people were unwilling to move within the region due to the possibility of being attacked by unknown gunmen.²⁸⁸

Nigeria Watch reported that Abia and Anambra, both in the South-East, were among the states with the highest fatalities due to kidnappings.²⁸⁹

Security incidents

During the reporting period (1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024), there were 458 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the South-East zone, of which 172 were coded as ‘battles’, 8 ‘explosions/remote violence’, 249 incidents of ‘violence against civilians’, and 29 ‘riots’.²⁹⁰ Security incidents were recorded primarily in Anambra and Imo with the highest number being documented in Anambra state: 61 incidents of ‘violence against civilians’ were recorded, as well as 60 ‘battles’, 2 ‘explosions’, and 13 ‘riots’.²⁹¹ According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as ‘battles’ and ‘violence against civilians’.

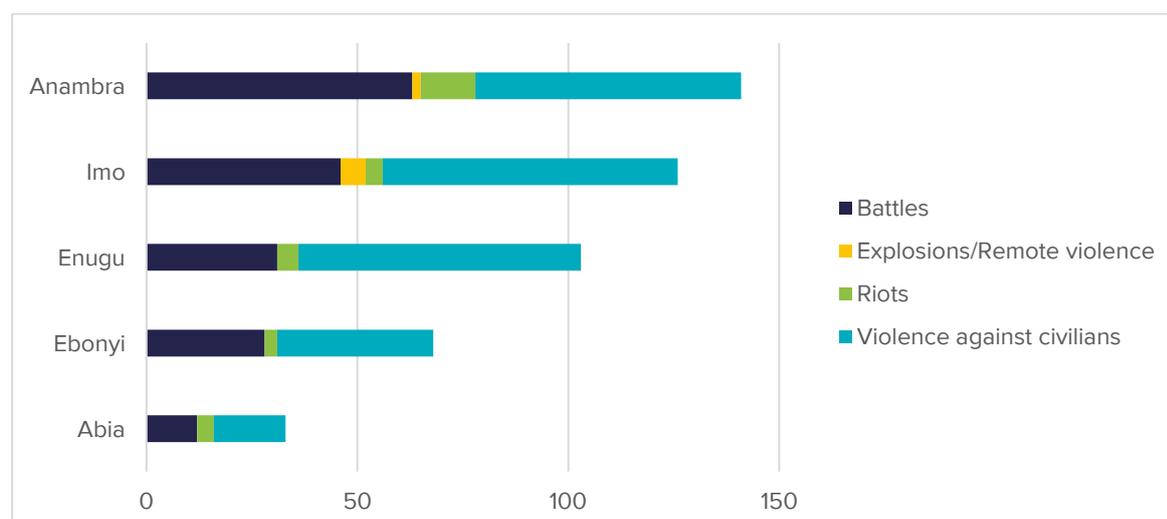


Figure 10. Security events in South-East geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024²⁹²

²⁸⁵ AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 285

²⁸⁶ Akinyetu is with the Department of Political Science at Lagos State University of Education, and Ebonine and Ambrose with the Department of Political Science at University of Benin. Akinyetun, T. et al., Unknown gunmen and insecurity in Nigeria: Dancing on the brink of state fragility, Security & Defence Quarterly, 30 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁷ Akinyetun, T. et al., Unknown gunmen and insecurity in Nigeria: Dancing on the brink of state fragility, Security & Defence Quarterly, 30 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁸ Leadership, Threat To Election In South East, 2023, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 10

²⁹⁰ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁹¹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁹² Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.



Fatalities

In the same period, in the South-East zone, ACLED reported 570 fatalities, out of which 256 were due to ‘violence against civilians’. In the South-East zone, the states with the highest numbers of fatalities were Imo and Anambra. In Imo there were 85 fatalities due to ‘battles’, 4 to ‘explosions/remote violence’, and 104 to ‘violence against civilians’. In Anambra, there were 92 fatalities due to ‘battles’, 14 to ‘riots’, and 64 to ‘violence against civilians’.²⁹³

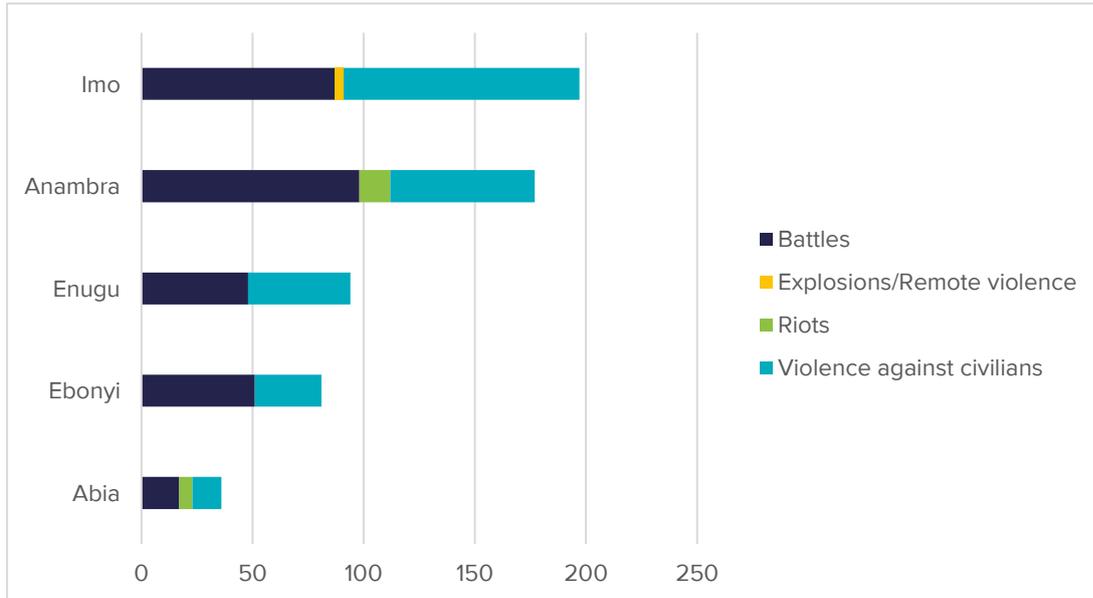


Figure 11. Fatalities per event type in the South-East between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.²⁹⁴

Events in which civilians were the main or only target²⁹⁵ caused 269 fatalities in the South-East zone.²⁹⁶

In the sources consulted and within the time constraints of this report, there was no information on internal displacement in the South-East.

2.5.5 South-South (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers)

The South-South consists of the following six states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers.²⁹⁷ The estimated population for the region in 2020 was 28 712 991.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁹⁴ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.

²⁹⁵ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 22-23

²⁹⁶ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

²⁹⁷ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ Nigeria, NBS, Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2021, [8 August 2022], [url](#), p. 14



Main actors

Cameroonian separatists, cults

Cameroonian separatists were reported to have been active and present in the Belengete community of Cross River state.²⁹⁹

Cults, including the Icelanders, Greenlanders and Degbam, were present and active in the South-South, with bases in Emuoha, Port Harcourt, and Ahoada, in Rivers state. In 2023, these cults were involved in clashes with rival cults, security forces, and local vigilantes.³⁰⁰

Recent security trends

Rivers was among the three states that reported consistently the highest number of deaths in clashes between rival cult groups, with the other two states being in the South-West.³⁰¹

Cameroonian separatists' attacks at the Belengete community of Cross River state in December 2023³⁰² reportedly resulted in displacement, injuries, disappearances,³⁰³ rapes, killings, and abductions.³⁰⁴

In 2023, Rivers and Delta were among the states with the highest fatalities due to kidnappings.³⁰⁵

Security incidents

Between 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024, there were 491 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the South-South zone, of which 134 were coded as 'battles', 28 'explosions/remote violence', 254 incidents of 'violence against civilians', and 75 'riots'.³⁰⁶ Security incidents were recorded primarily in Rivers and Delta, with the highest number being documented in Rivers: 77 incidents of 'violence against civilians', 45 'battles', 26 'explosions/remote violence', and 10 'riots'.³⁰⁷ According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups were involved in the majority of events coded as 'battles' and 'violence against civilians'.³⁰⁸

²⁹⁹ Conversation (the), Nigeria's security problems deepen as Anglophone insurgency in Cameroon spills across border, 28 February 2024, [url](#); Vanguard, Bandits from Cameroon sack C'River community, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

³⁰¹ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

³⁰² Conversation (the), Nigeria's security problems deepen as Anglophone insurgency in Cameroon spills across border, 28 February 2024, [url](#); Vanguard, Bandits from Cameroon sack C'River community, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁰³ HumAngle, Ambazonian Insurgents Ravage Nigerian Community For Housing Refugees From Cameroon, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ Daily Post, Ambazonia rebels control Belegete community, block Nigerian troops, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 10

³⁰⁶ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³⁰⁷ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³⁰⁸ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024



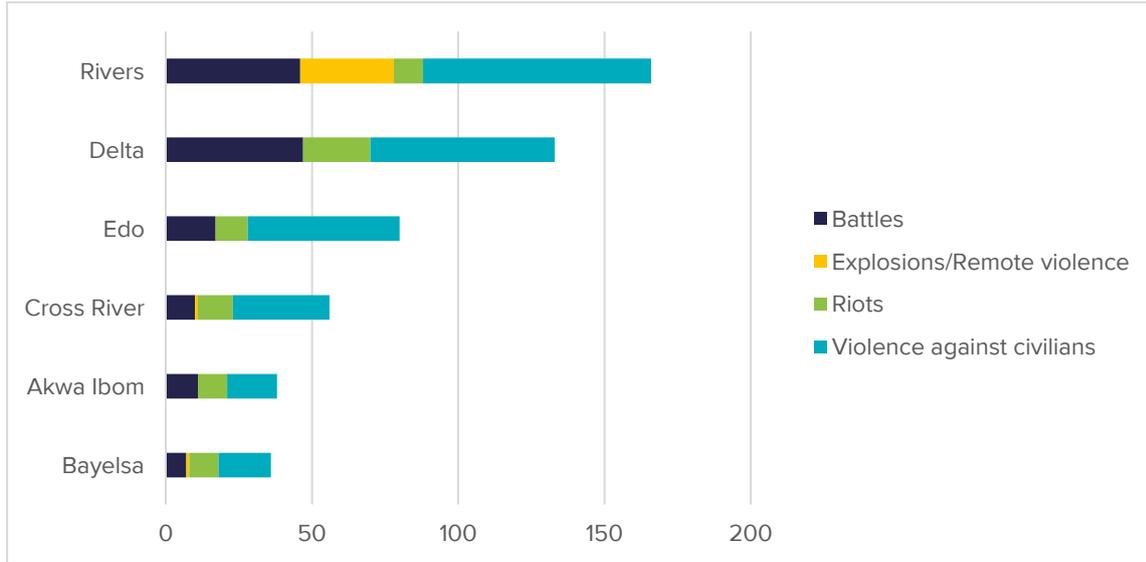


Figure 12. Security events in South-South between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.³⁰⁹

Fatalities

In the same period, in the South-South, ACLED reported 510 fatalities, out of which 176 were due to ‘violence against civilians’. In the South-South zone, the state with the highest number of fatalities were Rivers and Delta. In Rivers, 100 fatalities were due to ‘battles’, 1 to ‘riots’, and 59 to ‘violence against civilians’. In Delta, 87 fatalities were due to ‘battles’, 17 to ‘riots’, and 37 to ‘violence against civilians’.³¹⁰

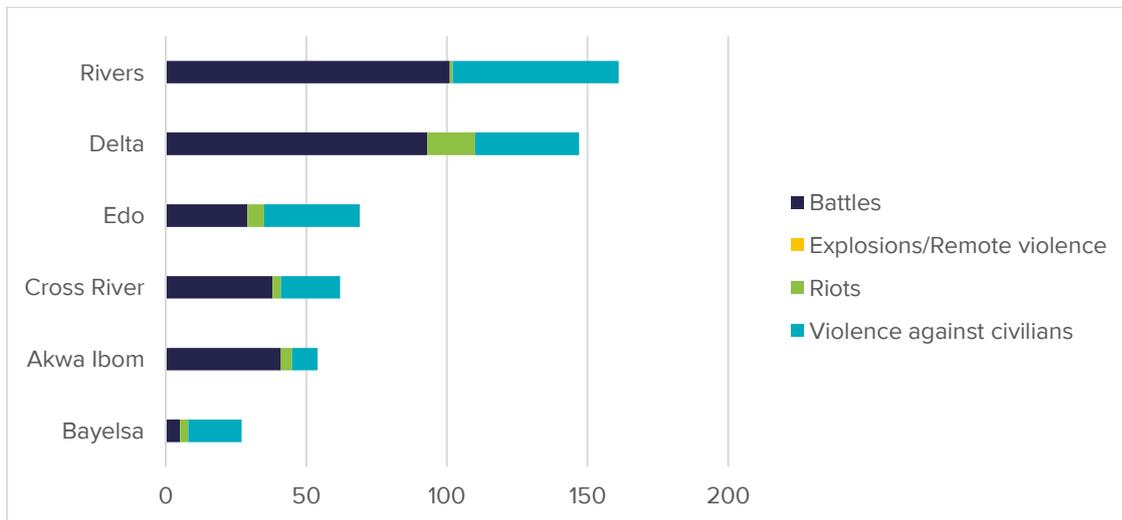


Figure 13. Fatalities per event type in the South-South between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024

³¹⁰ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³¹¹ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.



Events in which civilians were the main or only target³¹² caused 193 fatalities in the South-South zone.³¹³

In the sources consulted and within the time constraints of this report, there was no information on internal displacement in the South-South.

2.5.6 South-West (Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and Lagos)

The South-West consists of the following six states: Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, and Lagos.³¹⁴ The estimated population for the region in 2020 was 39 590 467.³¹⁵

Main actors

Cults, bandits, farmers-herders, state security forces

Cults were present and active in the South-West, particularly in Lagos and Ogun, with two of the main groups being the Aiye and Eiye confraternities.³¹⁶ Bandits were also reported being active in the South-West,³¹⁷ including in Ondo state,³¹⁸ and Fulani herdsmen were also involved attacks, kidnappings, and killings in the region.³¹⁹

Amotekun, a “state-owned” security network, described as the South-West’s security network or as the Ondo state Security Network Agency or Western Nigeria Security Network, was active in the South-West, including in Ondo state.³²⁰

Recent security trends

The South-West was facing different security challenges, including rising cases of killings, abductions, and other crimes,³²¹ with one source describing the security situation as ‘...degenerating into terrorism.’³²²

The states of Lagos and Ogun were two out of the three – the third being Rivers in the South-South – that in 2023 were primarily affected by clashes between cults and that reported

³¹² ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 22-23

³¹³ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³¹⁴ Nigeria, NIMC, NIMC Enrolment Centres, n.d., [url](#)

³¹⁵ Nigeria, NBS, Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2021, [8 August 2022], [url](#), p. 14

³¹⁶ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

³¹⁷ Punch, Villagers flee as bandits overwhelm Amotekun in parts of Ondo, 6 January 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The) Nigeria, Interrogating Southwest’s continuous battle with insecurity four years after Amotekun’s birth, 10 March 2024, [url](#); Peoples Gazette, Bandits have taken over our farmlands; we can no longer harvest, farmers tell FG, 17 March 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁸ Punch, Villagers flee as bandits overwhelm Amotekun in parts of Ondo, 6 January 2024, [url](#)

³¹⁹ Guardian (The) Nigeria, Interrogating Southwest’s continuous battle with insecurity four years after Amotekun’s birth, 10 March 2024, [url](#); Vanguard, Ondo Community protest foreign herdsmen’s invasion, 24 March 2023, [url](#)

³²⁰ Guardian (The) Nigeria, Interrogating Southwest’s continuous battle with insecurity four years after Amotekun’s birth, 10 March 2024, [url](#); TheCable, Amotekun arrests 45 suspects for kidnapping, cultism in Ondo, 13 May 2024, [url](#); Punch, S’West needs new strategies to fight insecurity – DAWN DG, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

³²¹ Guardian (The) Nigeria, Interrogating Southwest’s continuous battle with insecurity four years after Amotekun’s birth, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

³²² Tribune Online, Killings, kidnapping slipping into terrorism in South-West —Ebiseni, Afenifere Secretary-General, 4 February 2024, [url](#)



consistently the highest number of deaths in clashes between rival cult groups.³²³ In Lagos state, incidents involving cults were reported in Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Mushin, Ojo, Oshodi-Isolo, and Shomolu LGAs, and in Ogun state in Obafemi-Owode, Shagamu, Ijebu-Ode, and Abeokuta North and South LGAs.³²⁴

Security incidents

Between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 407 security incidents recorded by ACLED in the South-West, of which 92 were coded as ‘battles’, 211 as ‘violence against civilians’, and 104 ‘riots’.³²⁵ Security incidents were recorded in all states with the highest number being documented in Lagos state: 57 incidents of ‘violence against civilians’, 30 as ‘battles’, and 46 ‘riots’.³²⁶ According to ACLED data, unidentified armed groups and unidentified cult militia were involved in the majority of events coded as ‘battles’, while unidentified armed group in ‘violence against civilians’.³²⁷

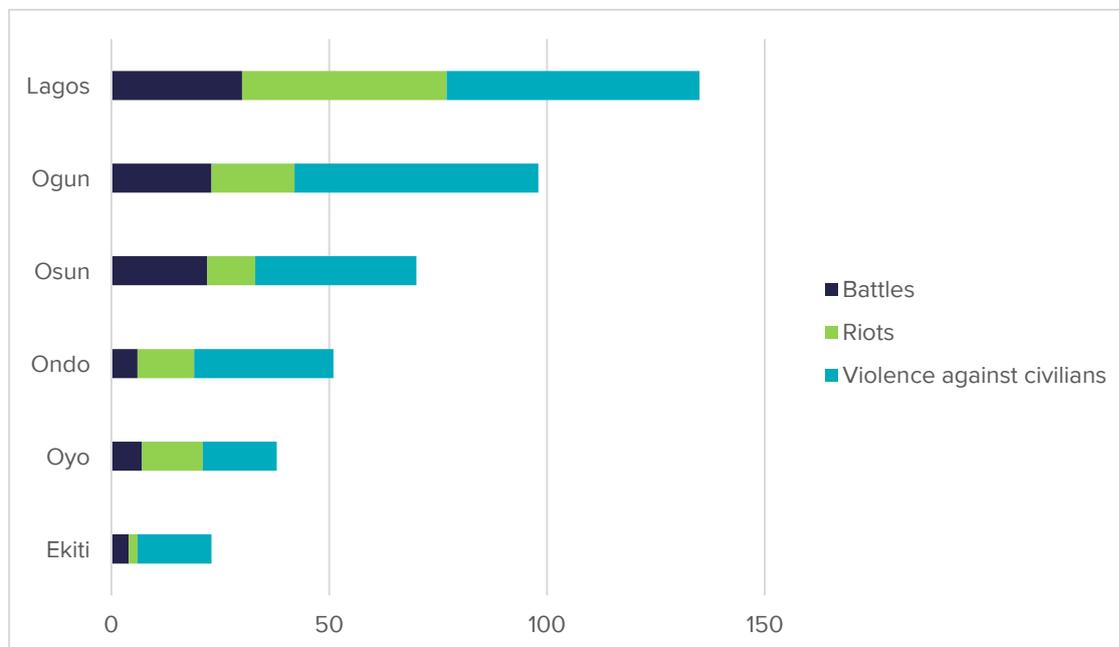


Figure 14. Security events in South-West between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.³²⁸

Fatalities

³²³ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

³²⁴ Nigeria Watch, Annual Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

³²⁵ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³²⁶ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³²⁷ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³²⁸ Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024



In the same period, in the South-West zone, ACLED reported 287 fatalities, out of which 127 were due to violence against civilians. In the South-West, Ogun was the state with the highest number of fatalities: 47 due to ‘battles’, 5 to ‘riots’, and 40 to ‘violence against civilians’.³²⁹

Events in which civilians were the main or only target³³⁰ caused 146 fatalities in the South-West.³³¹

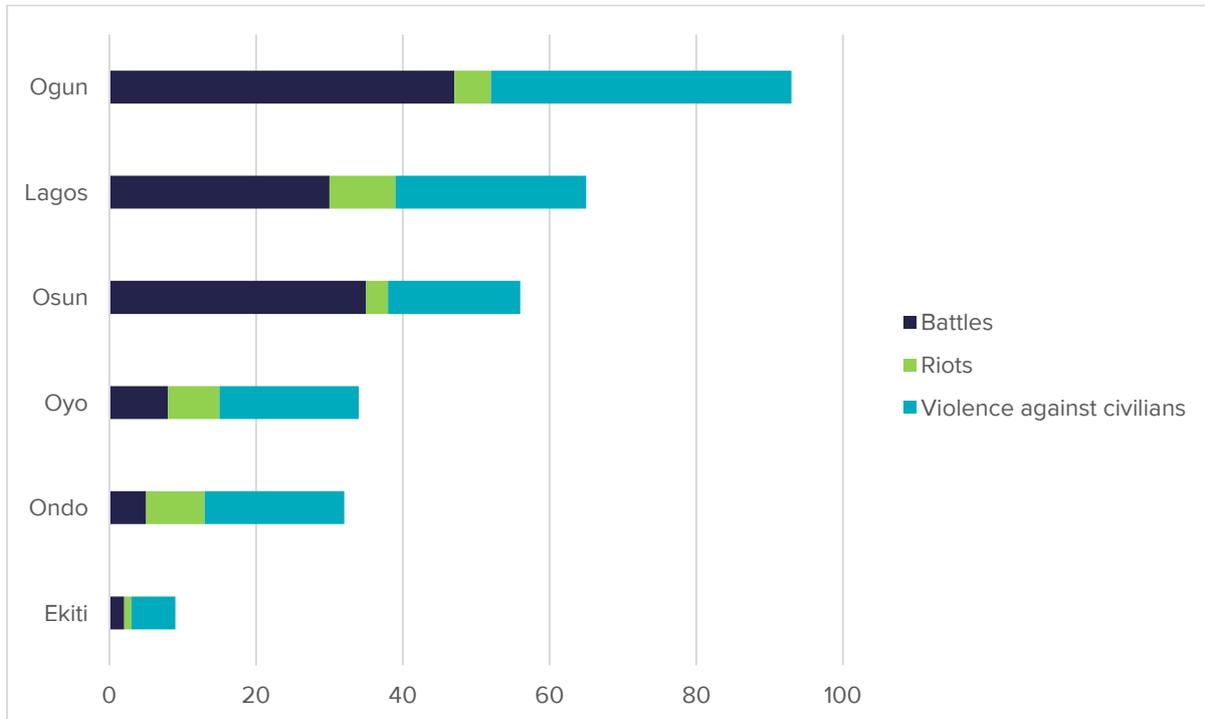


Figure 15. Fatalities per event type in the South-West geopolitical zone between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.³³²

In the sources consulted and within the time constraints of this report, there was no information on internal displacement in the South-West.

³²⁹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³³⁰ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project Codebook, updated 9 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 22-23

³³¹ EUAA analysis PowerBI based on ACLED dataset, filtered on Nigeria, 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024

³³² Source: ACLED data, filtered period 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024.



3. Trafficking in human beings

According to the EU Commission, Nigerians are the top nationality of victims of human trafficking registered in 2002 in the EU, with over 1 200 victims out of the 10 093 registered.³³³ Women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation throughout countries in Europe such as France, Italy, Spain, and Austria.³³⁴ Frontex reported that Nigerian women are among the main nationalities that are trafficked into southern European countries for sexual exploitation in private apartments, bars, and nightclubs.³³⁵

During the reference period, trafficking in human beings³³⁶ (THB) affected men, women, and children in Nigeria.³³⁷ The country is an origin, transit and destination location for sex trafficking and forced labour of both children and adults.³³⁸ Walk Free Foundation estimated that 1.6 million people were subjected to ‘slavery’³³⁹ in Nigeria in 2021.³⁴⁰ According to UNODC, between 750 000 and one million persons are trafficked every year in Nigeria.³⁴¹

Organised crime groups in Nigeria are ‘heavily’ engaged in trafficking in human beings.³⁴² Sources indicated that traffickers operating in the south of the country are involved mainly in sex trafficking³⁴³ and forced labour in domestic work.³⁴⁴ Also in Southern Nigeria, criminals set up ‘baby factories’.³⁴⁵ The scheme consists of illicit facilities in which young girls and women, often driven by poverty, are lured to get pregnant and then sell their babies.³⁴⁶ Some girls are raped and held against their will in these illegal facilities.³⁴⁷ According to the EU Commission, to ensure victims of human trafficking remain under their control, Nigeria trafficking rings ‘apply measures such as severe threats, the use of extreme violence or intimidation with obscure religious practices’.³⁴⁸

³³³ European Commission, Newly released data show an increase of trafficking in human beings, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

³³⁴ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³³⁵ Frontex, Risk Analysis for 2023/2024, 18 September 2023, [url](#), p. 38

³³⁶ UNODC defines THB as ‘the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.’ UNODC, Human trafficking, n.d., [url](#)

³³⁷ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³³⁸ USDOL, 2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Nigeria, 26 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³³⁹ Walk Free Foundation uses the term ‘modern slavery’ to refer to different phenomena such as: ‘forced labour, forced or servile marriage, debt bondage, forced commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, slavery-like practices, and the sale and exploitation of children’. Walk Free Foundation, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³⁴⁰ Walk Free Foundation, The Global Slavery Index 2023, 16 June 2023, [url](#), p. 26

³⁴¹ UNODC, Prevention of human trafficking, n.d., [url](#)

³⁴² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁴³ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³⁴⁴ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); DW, Why Nigeria's ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³⁴⁷ DW, Why Nigeria's ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 128

³⁴⁸ European Commission, 15 arrested in intercontinental crackdown against Nigerian crime syndicates, n.d., [url](#)



Foreign and Nigerian illegal actors also engage in sex trafficking and forced labour during the journey across northern Africa to Europe.³⁴⁹ Nigerian traffickers are involved in trafficking within Nigeria and capture victims mainly in rural areas, but victims can come from any region.³⁵⁰

In 2021/2022, Benue state recorded the highest number of rescued victims of human trafficking.³⁵¹ Edo, Delta, Kano, Abia, Ebonyi, Imo, and Kogi states were also main states of origin of victims.³⁵² NAPTIP informed in 2023 that human traffickers started to use more frequently the northern borders of the country for their activities.³⁵³ Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in Nigeria are vulnerable to trafficking due to the additional challenges they face in terms of integration, economic opportunities, and institutional support.³⁵⁴ Trafficking networks engaging in forced labour exploitation, including of children, operate within the country and the West Africa region.³⁵⁵

Sources reported that armed groups were involved in the forced recruitment of children to use them as child soldiers.³⁵⁶ Children are also exploited in other activities involving begging and forced labour in domestic work, agriculture, mining, and other sectors.³⁵⁷

Additional information on the Modus operandi of THB in Nigeria for sexual exploitation in Europe can be found in Section 2 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report, Nigeria: Trafficking in Human Beings](#), 26 April 2021.

3.1 Legislation

Nigeria adopted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act in 2003, which was amended in 2015,³⁵⁸ and forms the legal basis to tackle trafficking in human beings in Nigeria.³⁵⁹ The 2003 law established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to enforce the Act and coordinate legislation on trafficking in human beings and related offences.³⁶⁰

On 28 April 2022, the NAPTIP launched the National Action Plan against trafficking in Persons 2022-2026 (NAP).³⁶¹ The NAP is the strategic plan to guide anti-trafficking in persons

³⁴⁹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁵¹ The Street Journal, Human Trafficking: Benue ranked highest as 1.6m Nigerians get trapped in modern slavery, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

³⁵² USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁵³ Punch, Northern borders now human trafficking hotbed – NAPTIP, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); Enobong Roberts, R. and Lawanson, T., Understanding IDPs in Nigerian Cities, May 2023, [url](#), p. 53

³⁵⁵ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³⁵⁶ ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁵⁷ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003, [url](#), Art. 4

³⁶⁰ Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003, [url](#), Art. 4

³⁶¹ UNODC, Nigeria launches National Action Plan against human trafficking, 29 April 2022, [url](#)



interventions using the resources efficiently.³⁶² The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was updated to add guidance on gender issues, on how to assist victims of THB with disabilities, and victims in conflict contexts.³⁶³ The United States Department of State (USDOS) reported in 2023 that the government increased its ‘anti-trafficking capacity’ in comparison to the previous reporting period.³⁶⁴ Efforts by the government to tackle THB included launching more investigations, prosecution, and convictions on traffickers; identifying more victims and referring them to the necessary assistance and implementing the ‘handover protocol to refer child soldiers, including some trafficking victims.’³⁶⁵

3.2 Reintegration and protection of returnees, prosecution of perpetrators

According to the USDOS report, 1 634 victims of THB were identified by the government in 2022 and were provided with assistance by the government and government-supported NGOs.³⁶⁶

The General Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria published in January 2023 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, covering the period from April 2021 to December 2022, provided relevant information on stigma faced by victims of THB. The confidential sources consulted indicated that even though it is ‘difficult to paint a clear picture of society’s views on women who have been exploited in the sex industry in Europe’ upon their return, mainly due to the ‘country’s high degree of cultural diversity and the differing profiles of trafficking victims,’ the stigma suffered by victims of sexual exploitation is present across the country.³⁶⁷ Women who returned pregnant or with a child face increased difficulties because the child would be considered as ‘proof of sex work’ abroad.³⁶⁸ Moreover, victims returning with a child could face family rejection.³⁶⁹ In cases in which the debt with traffickers was not settled upon return, or traffickers considered that the debt was not paid, traffickers ‘would do everything they could’ to collect payments, including physical abuse and murder.³⁷⁰ Sources reported that victims were held against their will until the debt is fully paid.³⁷¹

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands noted in 2024 that victims of trafficking in human beings could face reprisals from ‘human traffickers and/or their accomplices, [...] their

³⁶² Nigeria, NAPTIP, National Action Plan on Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2022-2026, 28 April 2022, [url](#), p. ii

³⁶³ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁵ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 87

³⁶⁸ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 87

³⁶⁹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 87; IOM, Nigerian women defying stigma upon return, n.d., [url](#)

³⁷⁰ Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

³⁷¹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3



own family members, friends or partners'.³⁷² The source added that many victims did not speak about the reprisals 'out of fear' and that studies and data were not available on this phenomenon.³⁷³ In addition to threats, traffickers used violence, intimidation, and religious practices to exert control over the victims.³⁷⁴ Sources specifically reported the use of the *juju* tradition by traffickers as a reprisal for breaking the oath administered before the journey.³⁷⁵

NAPTIP runs ten shelters in the country with a total capacity of 329 bedspaces which can be occupied for maximum 6 weeks.³⁷⁶ Victims in need of longer assistance in terms of accommodation in shelters are referred to centres run by NGOs.³⁷⁷ According to a confidential source consulted by the COI Unit of the Netherlands, shelters run by NAPTIP were not available for male victims of THB.³⁷⁸ In May 2022, NAPTIP informed that two NGO-run shelters fully complied with the standards and six partially complied.³⁷⁹ Victims of THB who returned to the country could access shelters and foreign victims could also access support services.³⁸⁰ One confidential source informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands in 2024 that available resources to assist and protect victims of THB were insufficient and that the number of shelters was about 40 across the country.³⁸¹

In 2024, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched a reintegration project to assist victims of THB to provide training on business skills.³⁸² The project aims to reach approximately 20 000 returnees in Nigeria.³⁸³ Religious organisations were engaged with providing assistance, counselling, and shelters to victims for reintegration purposes.³⁸⁴ Victims who decide to settle elsewhere in Nigeria, outside their places of origin, relied on the assistance of other returnees or NGOs to begin anew.³⁸⁵ Additional information on the reintegration of returnees can be found in Section 3 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report, Nigeria: Trafficking in Human Beings](#), 26 April 2021.

³⁷² Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷³ Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷⁴ Europol, 15 arrested in intercontinental crackdown against Nigerian crime syndicates, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

³⁷⁵ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 84; Adeyinka, S., Lietaert, I., & Derluyn, I., The Role of Juju Rituals in Human Trafficking of Nigerians: A Tool of Enslavement, But Also Escape, 22 November 2023, [url](#), p. 8

³⁷⁶ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Counselling & Rehabilitation Department, n.d., [url](#)

³⁷⁷ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Counselling & Rehabilitation Department, n.d., [url](#)

³⁷⁸ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 89

³⁷⁹ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Non-Compliance to Regulation 2019: NAPTIP to Clamp Down on Shelters and Homes, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁰ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁸¹ Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

³⁸² IOM, Reintegration and Empowerment: IOM Launches Reintegration Business Training for Human Trafficking Survivors in Nigeria, 18 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸³ IOM, Reintegration and Empowerment: IOM Launches Reintegration Business Training for Human Trafficking Survivors in Nigeria, 18 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ Vatican News, Nigerian Catholic women religious prevent trafficking, protect victims, 31 October 2023, [url](#); Global Sisters Report, Catholic Sisters Initiative webinar highlights support for human-trafficking survivors, 19 April 2024, [url](#)

³⁸⁵ Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 8





Victims did not always resort to the judiciary system and authorities to denounce traffickers due to lack of confidence in the system and corruption.³⁸⁶ In 2022, authorities investigated 1 242 cases related to trafficking, including sex trafficking (511 cases), labour trafficking (282), and ‘unspecified forms of trafficking’ (449).³⁸⁷ The figure of the previous reporting period stood at 852 cases under investigation for trafficking.³⁸⁸ USDOS noted that official data could include crimes beyond the international concept of trafficking.³⁸⁹

3.3 Re-trafficking

Information on re-trafficking of victims of THB in Nigeria was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this report. Based on the information obtained from confidential sources by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, victims of trafficking whose debt was not considered to be fully paid off by traffickers, perceived being re-smuggled as their only solution.³⁹⁰ Additionally, if conditions that led to exploitation for the first time remained unchanged, victims were exposed to further exploitation after their return.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁷ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁸ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁸⁹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report 2023 – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ Netherlands, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 5

³⁹¹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 85





4. Women and girls

4.1 Sexual and gender-based violence (including domestic violence)

4.1.1 Prevalence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remained ‘widespread’ in Nigeria during the reference period.³⁹² According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the prevalence of women who have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 is higher in North-East, North-Central, and South-East regions.³⁹³ The government of Nigeria has a ‘national gender-based violence dashboard,’ which tracks GBV cases in real-time across the country.³⁹⁴ The database [consulted on 28 April 2024] indicated that 42 504 cases of SGBV were reported in Nigeria, of which 83.4 % remained ‘open’ and 16.6 % were ‘closed’, with 596 convicted perpetrators.³⁹⁵ According to Amnesty International (AI), the Minister of Women’s Affairs indicated that there were 24 720 reports of sexual and gender-based violence in 2023, including 975 deaths.³⁹⁶

Displacement caused by the ongoing conflict in the North-East and North-West intensified protection risks for women and girls.³⁹⁷ Boko Haram and other armed groups engaged in ‘widespread’ SGBV against women and girls, including rape and forced marriage.³⁹⁸ UNHCR reported that, between January and February 2024, SGBV was the most reported protection incident in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States, including increasing incidents of domestic and psychological violence perpetrated by family members and non-State armed groups (NSAG).³⁹⁹ The same source reported that ‘women and girls made up 100% of SGBV survivors, with 21% of incidents involving children.’⁴⁰⁰ In North-Central Nigeria, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported ‘alarming levels of sexual violence against women and girls’ in Benue’s IDPs camps, aggravated by poverty and power imbalances between men and women.⁴⁰¹

³⁹² British Council, Impact Report – Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption in Nigeria: Tackling sexual and gender-based violence, 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁹³ UNFPA Nigeria, Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices Against Women and Girls 4.3% in Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p.2

³⁹⁴ Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, National Gender Based Violence Dashboard, n.d., [url](#)

³⁹⁵ Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, National Gender Based Violence Dashboard, n.d., [url](#)

³⁹⁶ AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/2024 - Nigeria, 24 April 2024, [url](#), p. 286

³⁹⁷ WFP, Nigeria Annual Country Report 2022 - Country Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023, 31 March 2023, [url](#), p. 32

³⁹⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ UNHCR, Protection Monitoring Report; UNHCR Maiduguri Sub-Office; January-February 2024, 18 March 2024, [url](#), p. 4

⁴⁰⁰ UNHCR, Protection Monitoring Report; UNHCR Maiduguri Sub-Office; January-February 2024, 18 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁴⁰¹ MSF, Surviving sexual violence in the camps of Benue, 5 April 2024, [url](#)



Sourced indicated that SGBV cases were underreported due to several factors, including social stigma,⁴⁰² ‘internalised acceptance of violence,’⁴⁰³ the cost and length of court proceedings, and lack of protection and assistance.⁴⁰⁴ According to USDOS, sentencing in cases of sexual assault and rape were ‘inconsistent and often minor.’⁴⁰⁵ Southern states enacted laws that prohibit SGBV; however, ‘survivors generally had little or no recourse to justice.’⁴⁰⁶

Domestic violence is viewed as a private matter.⁴⁰⁷ In rural areas, both police and courts were hesitant to act where the ‘level of alleged abuse did not exceed local customary norms.’⁴⁰⁸

4.1.2 Legislation and state protection

According to Freedom House, Nigeria has strict laws on rape and domestic violence.⁴⁰⁹ In its 2023 report on Nigeria, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands indicated that the 2015 Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act) ‘prohibits violence against women and girls’ and provides various types of support, such as medical, psychosocial, and legal assistance.⁴¹⁰

NAPTIP oversees the implementation of the VAPP, organised in two platforms, the High Level Multi-Agency Task Team (HiMAT) and the Service Providers Accountability Resource Committee (SPARC).⁴¹¹ The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in Nigeria and part of the HiMAT, includes a Women, Children and Vulnerable Groups Department, which receives complaints related to sexual violence and liaises with local authorities.⁴¹² The Nigeria Police Force is also part of the HiMAT and has gender units that handle SGBV cases, train officers across Nigeria and cooperate with NGOs.⁴¹³

⁴⁰² British Council, Impact Report – Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption in Nigeria: Tackling sexual and gender-based violence, 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 62; FES, Lagos Micro-Struggles Report 2023, Lagos Just City Project, November 2023, [url](#), p.40; UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, Public statement by Chair of Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 29 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰³ Fwangyil G. A., The Dynamics of Gender-Based Violence in the Contemporary Nigerian Society: an Exploration of Aiwanose Odafen’s Tomorrow I Become A Woman, December 2023, [url](#), p. 152

⁴⁰⁴ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 62

⁴⁰⁵ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

⁴⁰⁶ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

⁴⁰⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 62

⁴⁰⁸ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 26

⁴⁰⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴¹⁰ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p.60, 61; See Part I on offences and Section 38 on Rights of Victims of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015, [url](#)

⁴¹¹ Nigeria, NAPTIP, 2022 Implementation Report: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act - 2015, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p. 1

⁴¹² Nigeria, NAPTIP, 2022 Implementation Report: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act - 2015, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p.17

⁴¹³ Nigeria, NAPTIP, 2022 Implementation Report: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act - 2015, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p. 31, 32



In 2021, NAP TIP established Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) which offer services for survivors of sexual violence, including counselling, medical, forensic, legal as well as psycho-social support.⁴¹⁴

However, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands report, gender-based violence survivors have access to shelters, but there is a shortage and they generally only accept women for a short period of time.⁴¹⁵ In general, ‘support from the authorities to victims was insufficient due to a lack of capacity and resources.’⁴¹⁶

4.2 Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

4.2.1 Prevalence

According to WHO’s definition, ‘female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.’⁴¹⁷

In 2023, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that Nigeria had 19.9 million females who had undergone FGM/C, the third highest number in the world.⁴¹⁸ However, some traditional practices are not recognised as forms of FGM/C by the community and, as a result, are not reported.⁴¹⁹ Sources indicated that women were reluctant to report having undergone FGM/C due to social bias or because FGM/C is a crime under the VAPP Act.⁴²⁰

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands report, the factors influencing the prevalence of FGM/C are ‘the state, population group, religion and cultural environment’.⁴²¹ Landinfo reported that religion had a minor influence on FGM,⁴²² while ethnic traditions ‘largely legitimised’ the practice.⁴²³ Depending on the cultural context, uncircumcised women may face social sanctions such as recriminations, social exclusion, and decreased marriage prospects.⁴²⁴ Sources consulted by Landinfo suggested that the use of

⁴¹⁴ Nigeria, NAP TIP, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 Annual Report 2021, 9 February 2023, [url](#), p. 27

⁴¹⁵ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 64

⁴¹⁶ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 64

⁴¹⁷ WHO, Types of female genital mutilation, n.d., [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ UNICEF Nigeria, World will miss target of ending FGM by 2030 without urgent action – including from men and boys, 6 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹⁹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 65

⁴²⁰ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 65, 66; Orchid Project and 28 Too Many, FGM/C in Nigeria: Country Profile Update March 2023, March 2023, [url](#), p. 23

⁴²¹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 67

⁴²² Landinfo, Nigeria; Female genital mutilation, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 18

⁴²³ Landinfo, Nigeria; Female genital mutilation, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 12

⁴²⁴ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 69



force in female circumcision practices has decreased significantly in recent times, although isolated cases of coercion by parents or older family members still exist.⁴²⁵ Similarly, parents who refused to circumcise their daughters may face social pressure, especially in societies where social obligations are strong and women are marginalised by poverty and low educational attainment.⁴²⁶

4.2.2 Legislation and state protection

FGM/C is a criminal offence under Section 6 of the VAPP Act, which specifically prohibits ‘female circumcision or genital mutilation’.⁴²⁷ In Nigeria, a federal act comes into force when states enact the legislation.⁴²⁸ As of April 2024, Kano was the only Nigerian state that had not enacted the VAPP Act, while Ekiti and Lagos had separate laws on SGBV.⁴²⁹ Sources described the enforcement of the laws against FGM/C as ‘rare’,⁴³⁰ ‘relaxed’,⁴³¹ and ‘not consistently implemented’.⁴³²

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands report indicated that the Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development operates shelters for victims of FGM/C in nearly every state, and relies on civil society organisations in states where there are no shelters.⁴³³ However, these shelters face financial constraints and rely heavily on donations.⁴³⁴ The same source mentioned that there are two main organisations supporting women who want to escape FGM/C: the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Child Protection Networks (CPNs).⁴³⁵

4.2.3 Perpetrators

According to the NGO 28 Too Many, the role of midwives often overlaps with that of traditional cutters in Nigeria.⁴³⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands reported a ‘rise’ in cases of FGM/C being carried out in healthcare facilities in states like Ekiti, Osun, and

⁴²⁵ Landinfo, Nigeria; Female genital mutilation, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p. 28

⁴²⁶ Orchid Project and 28 Too Many, FGM/C in Nigeria: Country Profile Update March 2023, March 2023, [url](#), p. 40, 54;

⁴²⁷ Nigeria, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015, [url](#), Section 6

⁴²⁸ Landinfo, Nigeria; Female genital mutilation, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p.29; Orchid Project and 28 Too Many, FGM/C in Nigeria: Country Profile Update March 2023, March 2023, [url](#), p. 18

⁴²⁹ Partners West Africa Nigeria, VAPP Tracker, accessed 29 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 27

⁴³¹ Landinfo, Nigeria; Female genital mutilation, 11 August 2023, [url](#), p.29

⁴³² Orchid Project and 28 Too Many, FGM/C in Nigeria: Country Profile Update March 2023, March 2023, [url](#), p.55

⁴³³ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 70

⁴³⁴ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 70

⁴³⁵ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 70

⁴³⁶ Orchid Project and 28 Too Many, FGM/C in Nigeria: Country Profile Update March 2023, March 2023, [url](#), p. 38



Oyo.⁴³⁷ The same source noted that women performed FGM in the majority of the cases, except in the South-West Region, where performers are called ‘Ooolas’ and are men.⁴³⁸

4.3 Child and forced marriage

4.3.1 Prevalence

According to UNICEF, four out of every ten girls marry before the age of 18, making the country rank third in the world with over 24 million underage brides.⁴³⁹ Despite recent data indicating a decrease in national prevalence from 44 % to 30 %, progress has been ‘sluggish and inconsistent.’⁴⁴⁰ Sources reported that poverty, cultural norms, and religious beliefs influenced the prevalence of child and forced marriage.⁴⁴¹ According to Nigerian judge Veronica Agboje,⁴⁴² in a marriage arrangement, consent from the girl is not required, as the decision rests with the father.⁴⁴³ The mother's role is often minimal, limited to informing the child of the marriage decision.⁴⁴⁴

According to Agboje, in addition to poverty, cultural and religious aspects, ‘insecurity, abduction and/or kidnapping play major roles in early or forced marriage’ in Nigeria.⁴⁴⁵ The report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) similarly indicates that security and ‘family honour’ are drivers of child marriage.⁴⁴⁶ Sources indicated that in the North-East Region, Boko Haram and other armed groups forced many women and girls into marriage.⁴⁴⁷ For instance, Amnesty International reported in April 2024 that 82 of the 276 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram fighters in 2014 during the attack in the village of Chibok are still in captivity, and called on the Nigerian authorities to investigate the allegations of forced marriage of 20 of the women.⁴⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch noted that

⁴³⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 67

⁴³⁸ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 67

⁴³⁹ UNICEF, Nigeria Takes Bold Steps to End Child Marriage and Protect the Rights of Children, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ UNICEF, Nigeria Takes Bold Steps to End Child Marriage and Protect the Rights of Children, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴¹ Contrapuntal (the), Nigeria’s Epidemic of Child Marriages, 19 February 2024, [url](#); Orchid Project and 28 Too Many, FGM/C in Nigeria: Country Profile Update March 2023, March 2023, [url](#), p. 49; Aboje, V., Vulnerability of the Girl Child in Nigeria, International Association of Women Judges, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴² Hon. Justice Veronica Oka Agboje (Mrs.) is a Judge of the High Court of Delta State Warri Division, Delta State Nigeria. International Association of Women Judges, Hon. Justice Veronica Agboje, IAWJ Rising Leaders, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁴³ Aboje, V., Vulnerability of the Girl Child in Nigeria, International Association of Women Judges, 8 January 2024, [url](#);

⁴⁴⁴ Aboje, V., Vulnerability of the Girl Child in Nigeria, International Association of Women Judges, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ Aboje, V., Vulnerability of the Girl Child in Nigeria, International Association of Women Judges, 8 January 2024, [url](#);

⁴⁴⁶ UN Human Rights Council, Adverse impact of forced marriage on the full and effective enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls, 2 February 2023, [url](#), paras. 38, 39

⁴⁴⁷ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 2; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Nigeria; Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 10 November 2023, [url](#), p. 5;

⁴⁴⁸ AI, Nigeria: Decade after Boko Haram attack on Chibok, 82 girls still in captivity, 14 April 2024, [url](#)



many schools were forced to shut down due to the threat of attacks, increasing the risk of child marriage for girls in these areas.⁴⁴⁹

4.3.2 Legislation and state protection

Forced marriage and child marriage in Nigeria is a crime under Sections 21 and 23 of the Child's Rights Act.⁴⁵⁰

According to various sources, customary and Islamic laws, particularly in the northern regions, continue to allow practices like forced marriages.⁴⁵¹ Some states allow children as young as 11 to be legally married under customary or religious laws,⁴⁵² considering puberty the time when a girl is old enough to be married.⁴⁵³

According to Bertelsmann Stiftung, 'official law does not offer adequate protection' for victims of child marriage.⁴⁵⁴ The UN reported in 2023 that girls continued to be targeted through different forms of violence, including forced marriage, noting 'the difficulty of tracking, documenting and verifying such violations and abuses owing to a lack of safe reporting mechanisms, survivors' fear of stigma and retaliatory attacks, and a lack of access to some conflict affected areas.'⁴⁵⁵

According to The Borgen Project⁴⁵⁶ and Girls Not Brides, there are NGOs in Nigeria focusing on preventing child marriage and aiding victims.⁴⁵⁷ For instance, the Coalition of Civil Society to End Child Marriage, consisting of 60 members, works on activities to end child marriage in Nigeria and contributes to national and regional strategies.⁴⁵⁸ The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) also provides free legal representation, advocacy, education, and support services to protect the rights and well-being of girls in Nigeria.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁴⁹ HRW, Nigeria: 10 Years After Chibok, Schoolchildren Still at Risk, 11 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ Aboje, V., Vulnerability of the Girl Child in Nigeria, International Association of Women Judges, 8 January 2024, [url](#); See Section 21 on Prohibition of child marriage and Section 23 on Punishment for child marriage and betrothal of the Child's Rights Act, 2003, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 32; Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 71

⁴⁵² USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 32

⁴⁵³ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, January 2023, [url](#), p. 71

⁴⁵⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Nigeria, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 22

⁴⁵⁵ UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, Public statement by Chair of Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, 29 September 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁶ The Borgen Project is an organisation that advances policies and programs on poverty issues. See Borgen Project (the), About us, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ Borgen Project (the), Addressing Child Marriage in Nigeria, 8 December 2023, [url](#); Girls Not Brides, Fostering Change: Empowering Child Protection and Gender Equality for a Vibrant Future in Nigeria, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁸ National Coalition of Civil Society to end Child Marriage in Nigeria, About us, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁵⁹ FIDA Nigeria, About us, n.d., [url](#)



5. Situation of LGBTIQ people

5.1 Legal framework

Same-sex relations are forbidden in Nigeria by laws at the federal and state level.⁴⁶⁰ Nigeria is one of the countries that explicitly criminalise sex between women.⁴⁶¹ Anti-discrimination legislation does not include sexual orientation as a distinct ground for protection.⁴⁶²

The federal Criminal Code Act of 2004, used in most southern states as the state law, prescribes 14 years of imprisonment for consensual same-sex relations and three years for ‘gross indecency’.⁴⁶³ In northern states, the Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act of 1959 prescribes 14 years of imprisonment for consensual same-sex relations.⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, 12 northern states have *Sharia* law,⁴⁶⁵ which allows for the prosecution of ‘homosexual acts’⁴⁶⁶ and the use of the death penalty for ‘unnatural sexual acts’.⁴⁶⁷ According to Equaldex, a website that provides global information on law and public opinion data regarding LGBTIQ rights, both gays and lesbians in *Sharia* states can face the death penalty for consensual same-sex relations.⁴⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch indicated that the maximum sentence for same-sex acts between men is the death penalty, and for lesbians, ‘whipping and/or imprisonment’.⁴⁶⁹

A new federal law prohibiting same-sex marriage entered into force in 2014.⁴⁷⁰ The Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) bans gay marriage and public displays of same-sex relationships and organisations supporting gay rights.⁴⁷¹ According to Human Rights Watch, the wording of the law is so vague that it includes ‘virtually any form of same-sex cohabitation’.⁴⁷² The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIER), a Nigerian NGO that advocates for the

⁴⁶⁰ ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions, 30 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 97-98; TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, [2023], [url](#), p. 10; UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 83

⁴⁶¹ HRW, #outlawed, “The love that dare not speak its name”, 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶² TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 10

⁴⁶³ ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions, 30 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 97-98

⁴⁶⁴ ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions, 30 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 97-98

⁴⁶⁵ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#); UNHRC, Visit to Nigeria; Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler [A/HRC/54/26/Add.1], 24 July 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 31 December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁶⁷ ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 98

⁴⁶⁸ Equaldex, LGBT Rights in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ HRW, #outlawed, “The love that dare not speak its name”, [2023], [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ AI, Nigeria: Authorities must end witch hunt after more than 70 arrested for attending “gay party”, 25 October 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Transgender Nigerians fear proposals to criminalise cross-dressing, 26 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ AI, Nigeria: Authorities must end witch hunt after more than 70 arrested for attending “gay party”, 25 October 2023, [url](#); BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#); HRW, Nigerian Police Arrest Dozens for Alleged Gay Wedding, 30 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷² HRW, #outlawed, “The love that dare not speak its name”, [2023], [url](#)



rights of LGBTIQ people in the country, indicated that the law led to an increase of human rights violations against LGBTIQ people.⁴⁷³

In 2022, a parliamentary bill seeking to ban cross-dressing⁴⁷⁴ did not pass the second reading after being assessed as ‘unconstitutional’.⁴⁷⁵ In April 2024, sources quoted the public relations officer of the police as indicating that people cannot be arrested for cross-dressing because it is not a criminal offence.⁴⁷⁶ However, sources indicated that cross-dressing remains illegal in northern states practising *Sharia*.⁴⁷⁷

The USDOS report indicated that there are no laws regulating ‘conversion therapies’.⁴⁷⁸

5.1.1 Enforcement

According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), death sentences in the *Sharia* states have been reportedly carried out ‘only rarely’.⁴⁷⁹ According to the USDOS report covering 2023, while authorities did enforce *Sharia* law, ‘capital punishment was never carried out.’⁴⁸⁰

In the period 2002-2023, ILGA World documented over 80 cases in which various laws against LGBTIQ were enforced⁴⁸¹ and people were arrested on various charges including for consensual same-sex relationships, cross-dressing, participating at alleged gay weddings, and for ‘looking like a gay’ or ‘lesbianism’.⁴⁸² For example, sources reported on the case of three men who were sentenced to death for homosexuality in Northern Bauchi state by a *Sharia* court in June 2022.⁴⁸³ The SSMPA was used for the first time in 2019 to prosecute 47 suspected gay men in Lagos in a case later dismissed by a court after the police failed to present witnesses.⁴⁸⁴ Similar cases of group arrests were also reported in 2017 in Kaduna

⁴⁷³ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, [2022], [url](#), p. 7

⁴⁷⁴ Reuters, Transgender Nigerians fear proposals to criminalise cross-dressing, 26 September 2022, [url](#); Sahara Reporters, Nigerian House Of Representatives Considers Bill Seeking To Jail Bobrisky, Denrele, Other Cross-dressers For 6 Months, 5 April 2022, [url](#); TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, [2022], [url](#), p. 46

⁴⁷⁵ ICIR, What does Nigerian law say about cross-dressing?, 27 March 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁶ ICIR, Why we can’t arrest Bobrisky, other cross-dressers – Police, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Channels Television, No Law Suggests That Crossdressing Is A Crime In Nigeria – Police Spokesman, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁷ Equaldex, LGBT Rights in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); HRW, #outlawed, “The love that dare not speak its name”, [2023], [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 36

⁴⁷⁹ ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 98

⁴⁸⁰ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 34

⁴⁸¹ ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions 2023, 30 November 2023, [url](#), p. 99

⁴⁸² ILGA, Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions 2023, 30 November 2023, [url](#), pp. 104-106

⁴⁸³ Reuters, Nigerian Islamic court orders death by stoning for men convicted of homosexuality, 2 July 2022, [url](#); USDOS, International Religious Freedom Report 2022 - Nigeria, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸⁴ CNN, Nigeria is trying 47 men arrested in a hotel under its anti-gay laws, 12 December 2019, [url](#); HRW, Nigerian Police Arrest Dozens for Alleged Gay Wedding, 30 August 2023, [url](#)



state⁴⁸⁵ and in 2022 in Kano state.⁴⁸⁶ In August 2023, police raided an alleged gay wedding in the Delta state, arresting 67 people under the SSMPA.⁴⁸⁷ In October 2023, the police arrested 59 men and 17 women in Gombo state, accusing them of planning to have a gay wedding.⁴⁸⁸

In January 2024, No Strings, a Nigerian news source, quoted the police spokesperson as indicating that the police would ‘crack down’ on a group of LGBTIQ individuals featured in a social media video who were disclosing publicly their sexual identities.⁴⁸⁹ Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this report.

5.2 Societal attitudes and violence

The discrimination against sexual minorities in Nigeria is ‘pervasive’, as reported by Freedom House.⁴⁹⁰ Self-censorship is reportedly common among LGBTIQ individuals for safety reasons.⁴⁹¹ Conservative religious societal norms have been described as the main reason behind homophobia in Nigeria,⁴⁹² and religious institutions and figures have been reported to spread homophobic messages.⁴⁹³ According to Equaldex, homophobic attitudes in Nigerian society are ‘deeply ingrained.’⁴⁹⁴ Various surveys have shown predominantly negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ.⁴⁹⁵ According to a 2023 survey by Pew Research Center⁴⁹⁶, 97 % of Nigerians oppose same-sex marriage.⁴⁹⁷ Public support for the SSMPA, which was at the time of its adoption ‘widespread’,⁴⁹⁸ however dropped from 77 % in 2015 to 57 % in 2019, and to 48 % in 2022.⁴⁹⁹ Considering the acceptance of LGBTIQ in various states of Nigeria,

⁴⁸⁵ Premium Times, Amnesty International demands release of suspected gays arrested in Gombe, 25 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁶ Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes Summary, 30 June 2023, [url](#), p. 1; BBC News, Islamic police raid 'gay wedding' in Nigeria's Kano city, 20 December 2022, [url](#); Pink News (The), 19 people arrested ‘for attending same-sex wedding’ in Nigeria, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ Delta State Police Command [X], posted on: 29 August 2023, [url](#); VOA News, Nigeria Police Raid Same-Sex Wedding; Dozens Arrested, 30 August 2023, [url](#); AP, More than 60 people detained after a gay wedding in southern Nigeria, 29 August 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁸ AI, Nigeria: Authorities must end witch hunt after more than 70 arrested for attending “gay party”, 25 October 2023, [url](#); AP, Mass arrests target LGBTQ+ people in Nigeria while abuses against them are ignored, activists say, 27 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁹ No Strings, Popular Nigerian police officer threatens LGBT crackdown, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023 - Nigeria, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023 - Nigeria, 4 October 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹² CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, 2022, [url](#), p. 8

⁴⁹³ No Strings, Gay-obsessed Nigerian pastor calls homosexuality a propaganda, 20 February 2024, [url](#); UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 36

⁴⁹⁴ Equaldex, LGBT Rights in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ Equaldex, LGBT Rights in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#); Pew Research Center, How people around the world view same-sex marriage, 27 November 2023, [url](#); TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, 2022, [url](#), p. 8

⁴⁹⁶ Pew Research Center is a US-based think tank providing information on social issues and public opinion. Data for survey on Nigeria was collected between 20 February and 22 May 2023 based on face-to-face interviews within a broader survey on legality of same-sex marriages in 32 places across the world.

⁴⁹⁷ Pew Research Center, How people around the world view same-sex marriage, 27 November 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁹ TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, 2022, [url](#), p. 8



‘intolerance of LGBTIQ+ in Nigeria remains higher in the north-east, with Yobe state having the lowest level of acceptance.’⁵⁰⁰

Sources indicated that LGBTIQ people face violence by criminal individuals and groups.⁵⁰¹ The 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung report on Nigeria found that ‘vigilante groups frequently abuse LGBTIQ+ individuals.’⁵⁰²

According to TIER, between December 2022 and November 2023, 996 human rights violations based on perceived or actual sexual orientation and identity were reported to human rights organisations in Nigeria, including assault (83), assault and battery (170), blackmail (346), extortion (207), mob violence (13), threat to life (33), sexual assault (122), and kidnapping (7).⁵⁰³ Sources indicate that LGBTIQ people reportedly face discrimination in accessing private and public services,⁵⁰⁴ including healthcare and education as well as employment.⁵⁰⁵ TIER documented 141 cases of discrimination, 82 cases of forceful eviction, and 4 cases of unlawful dismissal from work between December 2022 and November 2023.⁵⁰⁶

5.2.1 *Kito* and other practices against LGBTIQ

LGBTIQ individuals have been targeted through a criminal practice called *kito*, which involves being lured through online dating apps to later being attacked and robbed, mostly by a group of men.⁵⁰⁷ Attacks are sometimes filmed and used to blackmail victims.⁵⁰⁸ BBC News reported that some of those videos have been published online and led to the loss of jobs, evictions from housing, rejection by family members, and deterioration of mental health.⁵⁰⁹ TIER described evictions following blackmail as a ‘consistent trend’.⁵¹⁰ The same source explained that victims are mostly gays and queer men, but that women from sexual minorities have also been targeted through *kito*, including cases where the perpetrator pretended to be from law enforcement.⁵¹¹

According to CNN, in cases involving female victims, *kito* tends to be ‘more severe and sexual in nature.’⁵¹² CNN also reported that women have been subjected to ‘corrective rape’, a

⁵⁰⁰ TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, [2022], [url](#), p. 47

⁵⁰¹ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#); CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); LGBTQ Nation, I was attacked by someone posing as queer on Tinder. In Nigeria, this is reality for too many, 13 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁰² Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Nigeria, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁰³ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), pp. 20-21

⁵⁰⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁰⁶ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 20

⁵⁰⁷ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#); CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 17

⁵⁰⁸ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#); CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#); Context, ‘I had been set up’: LGBTIQ+ Nigerians battle dating app traps, 29 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁹ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 19

⁵¹¹ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 17-18

⁵¹² CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)



practice when women are sexually assaulted with the intention to make them heterosexual.⁵¹³ According to LGBT Nation, a pro-LGBTIQ online news magazine, the *kito* practice has also led to some killings.⁵¹⁴ Corroborating information on alleged killings related to *kito* could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this report. CNN indicated that the *kito* practice has affected ‘thousands’ of LGBTIQ people in Nigeria.⁵¹⁵ The same source indicated that Nigerian feminist organisation WHER assisted 1 871 victims of *kito* between 2018 and 2022, while Pride TV, a local-based online media advocacy group, assisted 1 253 *kito* victims since 2020.⁵¹⁶ CNN further indicated that TIER assisted 65 *kito* victims in 2023.⁵¹⁷ According to TIER, *kito* represented 70 % of the 996 human rights violations against LGBTIQ registered by human rights organisations between December 2022 and November 2023.⁵¹⁸

CNN reported that practices to change a person’s sexual orientation are reportedly ‘common’ in Nigeria, including medical and religious therapies.⁵¹⁹ According to TIER, some religious leaders practice conversion therapies to ‘cure’ LGBTIQ people,⁵²⁰ while CNN reported on the story of a lesbian woman who was sent to a church by her family to ‘rid her of demons’.⁵²¹ Between December 2022 and November 2023, TIER documented 15 instance of conversion practices.⁵²² Sources also reported on inadequate surgeries done on intersex persons,⁵²³ sometimes without their consent.⁵²⁴

5.3 State attitude

According to TIER, state officials, including in law enforcement, ‘often exhibited a lack of willingness or capacity’ to work on cases involving LGBTIQ.⁵²⁵ The same source indicated that victims do not seek help because of stigma and discrimination⁵²⁶ or for fear of being attacked or arrested.⁵²⁷ A therapist working with TIER indicated that many victims of *kito* do not report the incidents to authorities and do not speak out because they prefer to hide their sexuality.⁵²⁸ CNN indicated that queer women are less likely to report or talk about being victims of *kito* because they face more stigma than queer men.⁵²⁹ According to a report by the UN Human

⁵¹³ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ LGBTQ Nation, I was attacked by someone posing as queer on Tinder. In Nigeria, this is reality for too many, 13 July 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹⁵ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

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⁵¹⁸ TIER, Kito: A Human Rights Crisis Predicated on Sexual Orientation, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, 2022] [url](#), p. 46

⁵²¹ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵²² TIER, Social perception survey on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons’ rights in Nigeria, 2022, [url](#), p. 20

⁵²³ UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [A/HRC/WG.6/45/NGA/3], 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 84; USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 36

⁵²⁴ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 36

⁵²⁵ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁵²⁶ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁵²⁷ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵²⁹ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)



Rights Council (UNHRC), discrimination and fear have prevented LGBTIQ persons from accessing justice.⁵³⁰ CNN reported that the Cybercrime Act, which was enacted to protect Nigerians regardless of their sexual orientation, is not equally applied due to bias against the LGBTIQ community, ‘ignorance’, and ‘religiosity’ by law enforcement.⁵³¹ Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this report.

According to Nigerian lawyers interviewed by the AP, there have been cases where ‘the police failed to act in handling cases of abuse against the LGBTQ+ community in Nigeria.’⁵³² BBC reported that some law enforcement officials have worked to stop the blackmailing of LGBTIQ persons, but also many victims fear to testify and ‘the blackmailers are rarely prosecuted.’⁵³³ On 17 March 2024, the police arrested a ten-member suspected ‘kito gang’ in Lagos state, as reported by the Nigerian daily, Punch.⁵³⁴ The same source added that ‘despite the quest to get the arrested members of the gang prosecuted, a lawyer for one of the victims was arrested instead’.⁵³⁵ According to Context, a media platform created by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, police ‘confirmed that eight men were arrested in Lagos, and the men were due to face charges of kidnapping, extortion and rape in a court in May’.⁵³⁶

The National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria’s annual report, covering 2022, indicated that it cooperated with non-governmental organisations to deliver training sessions to law enforcement officials on LGBTIQ matters to increase their protection.⁵³⁷

5.3.1 Abuses by state actors

Human Rights Watch indicated that following the case of a mass arrest of participants of an alleged gay wedding in 2022, the Federal High Court of Nigeria ruled that the ‘pretrial media parades’ of those arrested by the police were unconstitutional.⁵³⁸ Peoples Gazette reported that victims were awarded damages.⁵³⁹ Human Rights Watch indicated that, despite the ruling, ‘police have continued the abusive practice with total impunity.’⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁰ UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [A/HRC/WG.6/45/NGA/3], 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 23

⁵³¹ CNN, A life in fear: The dangers of finding love online as a queer woman in Nigeria, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵³² AP, Mass arrests target LGBTQ+ people in Nigeria while abuses against them are ignored, activists say, 27 October 2023, [url](#)

⁵³³ BBC News, The Nigerians lured into a trap and blackmailed for being gay, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ Punch, Group raises alarm over online kidnapping gang, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁵ Punch, Group raises alarm over online kidnapping gang, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ Context, ‘I had been set up’: LGBTQ+ Nigerians battle dating app traps, 29 April 2024, [url](#)

⁵³⁷ Nigeria, National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria (The), 2022 Annual Report, 25 May 2023, [url](#), p. 31

⁵³⁸ HRW, Nigerian Police Arrest Dozens for Alleged Gay Wedding, 30 August 2023, [url](#)

⁵³⁹ Peoples Gazette, Court declares police parade of suspects illegal in Nigeria; awards damages to victim, 11 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁴⁰ HRW, Nigerian Police Arrest Dozens for Alleged Gay Wedding, 30 August 2023, [url](#)



Sources indicated that LGBTIQ people face violence by police, including arbitrary arrests and detentions,⁵⁴¹ physical abuse,⁵⁴² and extortion.⁵⁴³ According to the 2023 TIER report, violations against LGBTIQ by ‘Hisbah [morality police in the states with the *Sharia* law], Police and other law enforcement agencies’ represent ‘a rapidly increasing trend in Nigeria as observed over the past four years.’⁵⁴⁴ The 2024 Bertelsmann Stiftung report on Nigeria found that security forces ‘frequently abuse LGBTQ+ individuals, and persecution is real, especially in Shariah states’.⁵⁴⁵ According to the UN Human Right Council, ‘[i]t was typical that following arrests and detention by the police, LGBTIQ persons faced torture and cruel, unhuman, or degrading treatment to coerce them to confess to being homosexual.’⁵⁴⁶ TIER recorded 67 cases of arbitrary arrests between December 2022 and November 2023.⁵⁴⁷

5.4 Means of redress

Organisations supporting LGBTIQ rights are effectively banned in Nigeria,⁵⁴⁸ with the exception of those providing legal advice or HIV and AIDS awareness.⁵⁴⁹ The Women’s Health and Equal Rights Initiative (WHER) offers psychosocial support to lesbian, bisexual and queer women,⁵⁵⁰ where Love Is a Crime also provides legal and psychological support to LGBTIQ persons who are victims of human rights violations.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴¹ AP, Mass arrests target LGBTQ+ people in Nigeria while abuses against them are ignored, activists say, 27 October 2023, [url](#); TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 20; UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [A/HRC/WG.6/45/NGA/3], 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 23

⁵⁴² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#); TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 21; UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [A/HRC/WG.6/45/NGA/3], 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 23

⁵⁴³ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 21

⁵⁴⁴ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), p. 18

⁵⁴⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Nigeria, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

⁵⁴⁶ UNHRC, Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Nigeria; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [A/HRC/WG.6/45/NGA/3], 10 November 2023, [url](#), para. 23

⁵⁴⁷ TIER, 2023 Human Rights Violation Report, 2023, [url](#), pp. 20-21

⁵⁴⁸ ICNL, Civic Freedom Monitor: Nigeria, 30 April 2023, [url](#); USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 19

⁵⁴⁹ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 – Nigeria, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 36

⁵⁵⁰ African Visionary Fund, Women’s Health and Equal Rights Initiative (WHER), n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁵¹ Where love is crime, Support Services, n.d., [url](#)





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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Reference period: January 2023 to March 2024

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