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World Report 2025 - Nigeria

Following the 2023 election of former Lagos State Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president, 2024 was marked by increased economic hardship, threats to freedom of expression, and ongoing insecurity. Economic reforms introduced in 2023 contributed to inflation which surged to [34.19 percent by June, with food inflation exceeding 40 percent](#), pushing many deeper into poverty. In response to criticism, authorities resorted to repression, arresting and prosecuting journalists, social media commentators, and protesters.

Violence in the Northwest and Northcentral Regions

Killings, kidnappings, and violent raids by so-called bandit gangs, which emerged following years of farmer-herder conflict, continue to plague Nigeria's Northwest region. In March alone, [nearly 400 people were reportedly kidnapped in Kaduna State](#), including [287 schoolchildren](#), many of them girls, at the government secondary school in Kuriga town. Authorities later announced the rescue of 137 children, claiming this accounted for all the schoolchildren kidnapped, rejecting the initial report of 287 kidnapped students as erroneous. Also in March, bandits [kidnapped at least 15 students](#) from a boarding school in Gidan Bakuso village, Sokoto State, while they were sleeping.

Violence between predominately Muslim herders and predominantly Christian farming communities persisted in the Northcentral region. A [deadly Christmas Day assault](#) in December 2023, attributed to a group of herders, resulted in the deaths of about 140 people across various communities in Plateau State, leading to a series of clashes and attacks in the state. In January, at least [30 people were killed](#) and more than 100 were injured in attacks allegedly carried out by herders on villages in Mangu Local Government Area, Plateau State. By February, [865 people were reportedly killed and over 15,000 were displaced](#) to areas in Plateau and Bauchi states, as tensions continued to rise.

According to the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#), [over 1.3 million people](#) were internally displaced in the Northcentral and Northwest regions by April 2024, up from nearly 1.1 million in December 2023.

Separatist Agitations in the Southeast Region

In May, gunmen [killed](#) eleven people, including six civilians and five soldiers, in an attack in Obingwa Local Government Area, Abia State. Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, the government [said](#) the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a secessionist group in the Southeast region, was responsible.

The trial of Nnamdi Kanu, IPOB's leader, on terrorism and treason charges, [resumed in February](#) after [the Supreme court overturned a decision by the Court of Appeal](#) to dismiss the charges against him. Kanu was first arrested in 2015, fled Nigeria in 2017 while on bail, and was arrested again in 2021 in Kenya. On September 24, the case suffered another setback after the presiding judge [recused](#) herself following a request by Kanu, who [accused](#) her of bias.

Boko Haram Conflict in the Northeast Region

In February, suspected Boko Haram fighters [abducted](#) over 200 internally displaced people, mostly children, in the Ngala Local Government Area of Borno State. In September, in one of the deadliest attacks in the region in recent years, fighters [killed](#) at least 170 people, mostly men and boys, in

Mafa village, Yobe State. ISWAP, a prominent breakout faction of Boko Haram, is suspected of having carried out the [reprisal](#) attack following the community's refusal to continue paying levies to them.

In April, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which comprises of military units from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria [started the second phase](#) of the "Lake Sanity" operation, which they reported led to the killing of at least 140 Boko Haram fighters, and to the arrest of 57 individuals implicated in extremist activities. The operation was launched in 2022 to fight back against Boko Haram's insurgency in the Lake Chad basin.

April marked the 10th anniversary of the [abduction](#) of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, 90 of whom [remain](#) in captivity.

Poverty and Inequality

The government did little to cushion people from the impacts of economic reforms introduced in 2023. These reforms, including the removal of a fuel consumption subsidy and the liberalization of foreign currency exchange rates, [contributed to high inflation](#), resulting in Nigeria's [worst cost of living crisis in 30 years](#).

In February, the [government resumed a cash transfer program](#) to support families after it was suspended due to irregularities. The program was initiated in October 2023 and aimed to ultimately benefit 15 million families by distributing 25,000 naira (US\$15) to each beneficiary over a period of three months, from October to December 2023, but had only [benefited 1.7 million people by December 2023](#).

Meanwhile, [the government's spending priorities](#) in 2024, including the [purchase of a presidential jet](#) unveiled in August sparked public outrage.

Abuses by Security Forces

Authorities responded to nationwide protests in August against the economic crisis, tagged #EndBadGovernance, with violence in some locations, including [Abuja, Gombe, and Kano](#). Several protesters [were reportedly killed](#) over the 10 days of the protests, and scores more were arrested.

Government officials and security agencies warned people ahead of the protests against participating, claiming [the protests were politically motivated](#), intended to undermine the government and create conditions for "regime change." In early September, Nigerian authorities [charged](#) 10 protesters with treason, which carries the possibility of the death penalty. In November, 76 protesters, including 30 minors, detained since August, were also [charged](#) with treason and inciting a coup. Outrage over images of the children in court led [President Tinubu to order their release and the dropping of charges](#).

Accountability for Abuses by Security Forces

In March, the Special Independent Investigative Panel on Human Rights Violations in Counter-Insurgency Operations in the Northeast [concluded hearings](#) on allegations of forced abortions and infanticide against the military but has not yet issued its report.

In May, the Nigerian military announced that [two officers would face a court martial](#) for a December 2023 airstrike in Tundun Biri Community, Kaduna State, which killed 85 and injured many more. However, military authorities provided no details on the investigation or indictment related to the strike, which was intended for bandits.

In September, [a military airstrike in Kaduna State, Nigeria, killed 24 people](#). The Air Force announced an investigation into the strike, which was intended to target bandits but reportedly struck civilians.

Freedom of Expression and Media

The authorities have intensified a crackdown on critics and journalists, [marked by numerous instances of abductions, unlawful arrests, and detention](#).

In August, Isaac Bristol, a social commentator alleged to run an anonymous social commentary account on X, was [reported missing](#), and was confirmed three weeks later to be in custody of the police. Bristol is also charged under provisions of the Cybercrimes Act including for disseminating false information intended to disrupt law and order, obtaining and sharing classified information, and money laundering.

In May, Daniel Ojukwu, a reporter at the Foundation for Investigative Journalism, a nongovernmental organization, went missing in Lagos and was discovered later to be in the custody of police, who accused him of [violating the Cybercrimes Act](#) after he published a report online alleging that a former [senior assistant to the president stole from a government fund](#). He was released 10 days later without charge.

In the same month, Chioma Okoli, a private citizen, [was charged](#) with offences under the Cybercrimes Act after she posted a negative review of a tomato puree produced by Erisco Foods Limited, who petitioned the police. The case has continued to generate public outrage since September 2023 when she was first arrested.

In March, Segun Olatunji, the editor of First News site, was [taken](#) from his home in Lagos by a dozen armed men who identified themselves as military officers and [released](#) two weeks later without charge in Abuja. While in custody, he was [questioned](#) about criticisms and allegations of corruption against government officials in his publications.

Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act makes a broad range of online interactions a criminal offense. In February, the government amended the law, but [the Committee to Protect Journalists and others contend](#) that the amendments are not extensive enough to prevent the law from being used for censorship and intimidation.

Other actions by the authorities have raised significant concerns. In July, a federal legislator, Tajudeen Abass, introduced the Counter Subversion Bill, which he claimed was aimed at enhancing Nigeria's counterterrorism framework by addressing subversive activities. The bill, which was eventually withdrawn following public outcry, [was reported to include several troubling and overly broad provisions](#), including fines and jail time for failing to recite the national anthem and for insulting leadership.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In June, [the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender \(LGBT\) community in Nigeria faced backlash](#) after a newspaper article falsely suggested that the country had legalized same-sex relationships through an agreement with the European Union (EU). Nigeria, along with other members of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, signed [the Samoa Agreement with the EU](#), which focuses on sustainable development, climate change, investment opportunities, and international collaboration.

Nigerian law criminalizes same-sex conduct, same-sex marriages, and the registration of LGBT organizations. Sentences include a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. At the state level,

same-sex sexual activities are criminalized through various laws, including Sharia law, with the maximum sentence being death by stoning.

Women's and Girl's Rights

In August, [a bill to repeal the 2015 Violence Against Persons Prohibition \(VAPP\) Act](#) advanced for consideration by the Senate and sparked public outrage. The VAPP Act offers women and girls protection from abuse, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, domestic violence, rape, and female genital mutilation. Senator Jibrin Isah, who introduced the bill for the repeal and reenactment in 2022, claimed the bill will address several [challenges in the current law](#), including gender bias.

The brutal killing of university student Christianah Idowu, 21, in August led to renewed calls for authorities to address the rising cases of femicide in Nigeria.