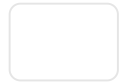


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Freedom in the World 2023 - Nigeria

PARTLY FREE

43

/ 100

Political Rights 20 / 40

Civil Liberties 23 / 60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

43 / 100 Partly Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Overview

While Nigeria has made significant improvements to the quality of its elections since the 1999 transition to democratic rule, the 2019 presidential and National Assembly elections, which saw President Muhammadu Buhari reelected and the All Progressives Congress (APC) regain its legislative majority, were marred by irregularities. Corruption remains endemic in the key petroleum industry. Security challenges, including insurgencies, kidnappings, and communal and sectarian violence in the Middle Belt region, threaten the human rights of millions of Nigerians. Military and law enforcement agencies often engage in extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses. Civil liberties are undermined by religious and ethnic bias, while women and LGBT+ people face pervasive discrimination. The vibrant media landscape is impeded by criminal defamation laws, as well as the frequent harassment and arrests of journalists who cover politically sensitive topics.

Key Developments in 2022

- In February, President Buhari enacted an amended electoral law. Among other things, the new legislation contained provisions that strengthen the financial independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and allow for early political party primaries.
- High levels of violent crime by nonstate actors, including Islamic militant groups, persisted throughout the year, affecting people across the country; more than 8,000 people were killed during the year, and thousands of others were kidnapped. In one incident in March, armed men

attacked a train headed from Abuja to Kaduna, killing at least 8 people and kidnapping more than 60 others.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The president can serve a maximum of two four-year terms and is elected by a qualified majority vote. The president must also win at least 25 percent of the votes cast in 24 states. President Buhari of the APC was reelected in February 2019, winning 53 percent of the vote. People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Atiku Abubakar won 39 percent. Other candidates shared 8 percent.

A one-week voting delay, announced on the morning of the election, undermined confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). International observers noted serious irregularities, including election-related violence, vote buying, and the intimidation of election officials and voters. Voter turnout was low at 35.7 percent. Abubakar legally challenged the results that March, but the Supreme Court dismissed his appeal that October.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

Members of the bicameral National Assembly, consisting of the 109-seat Senate and the 360-seat House of Representatives, are elected for four-year terms.

Legislative elections were held concurrently with the February 2019 presidential election. According to INEC, the APC won 212 seats, the PDP won 127, the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) won 10, and another 7 parties won the remainder. In the Senate, the APC won 63 seats, the PDP won 44, and the Young Progressives Party (YPP) won 1. One Senate seat was reported vacant.

Observers reported irregularities including violence, intimidation of voters and officials, and vote buying, as well as incidents where party officials directed voters on how to cast ballots at polling stations. The INEC declined to certify winning candidates in two races because local returning officers operated under duress.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies? 2 / 4

The 1999 constitution and the Electoral Act, 2022, provide Nigeria's legal electoral framework. In 2018 and 2019, the National Assembly passed Electoral Act amendments designed to strengthen equal airtime obligations for broadcasters, make the voter register and election results more accessible to voters, and extend federal electoral regulations to local races. President Buhari repeatedly vetoed the bill during this period, citing inconsistencies with existing law. The National Assembly passed an Electoral Act Amendment Bill in November 2021. Buhari declined to sign it in December, objecting to its provisions for party primary contests.

Buhari ultimately assented to the bill in February 2022, signing the new Electoral Act, 2022, into law. Among other things, the new legislation strengthens the financial independence of the INEC and allows for early political party primaries.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 3 / 4

Nigerians generally have the right to organize in different political parties. There were 91 registered parties and 73 presidential candidates in 2019, the largest number of parties and candidates since the 1999 transition to democracy. The INEC removed 74 parties from the register in 2020, citing their inability to win the support of a sufficient number of voters and lack of representation nationwide. While 22 parties won an appeals court judgment that year, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the INEC's original decision in May 2021. At the end of 2022, ahead of the 2023 general elections, 18 political parties were registered with the INEC.

A constitutional amendment signed by President Buhari in 2018 allowed independent candidates to compete in federal and state elections. Buhari also signed a "Not Too Young to Run" bill that same month, lowering the age of eligibility to run for political office from 40 to 35 years. However, a lack of internal party democracy and high fees make it difficult for prospective candidates to vie for major-party nominations.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 3 / 4

Nigeria's multiparty system provides an opportunity for opposition parties to gain power through elections, as demonstrated by Buhari's 2015 victory over predecessor Goodluck Jonathan. Buhari's election marked the first time in Nigerian history that a sitting president was peacefully replaced. Opposition parties can also gain influence when legislators cross the aisle; the APC lost its legislative majority when some of its legislators defected to the PDP during the 2015–19 term.

New political parties have successfully entered the National Assembly in recent years; the YPP won its first Senate seat in 2019. The APGA, which was formed in 2003, won 10 lower-house seats in 2019. However, the APC and PDP still hold most elected offices in Nigeria.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means? 1 / 4

Citizens' political choices remain impaired or undermined by vote buying and intimidation, the influence of powerful domestic and international economic interests, and the local domination of either the military or armed groups in some regions. Wealthy political sponsors, or "godfathers," dispense patronage and use their considerable influence to cultivate support for candidates who then use their offices to enrich their backers. Governorship elections held in Ekiti and Osun states in June and July 2022, respectively, saw voter inducements and pockets of violence. Local elections held in 2021 were seriously affected by the presence and activities of armed groups. Several INEC offices were

attacked by unidentified assailants that year, and campaigns in Anambra State were restricted during the electoral period, as candidates faced harassment from armed individuals.

Residents of Anambra State and other areas were intimidated by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which called on southeasterners to abide by stay-at-home orders after the June 2021 arrest of its leader. Residents reportedly complied with these instructions for fear of violence. In October 2021, it called on residents of Anambra and several other states to remain home before rescinding that call days ahead of the Anambra contest. Turnout in Anambra State stood at 10.2 percent, the lowest recorded there since the transition to democratic rule.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and 2 / other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4

Nigeria's legal framework generally provides for equal participation in political life by the country's various cultural, religious, and ethnic groups. However, politicians and parties often rely on voters' ethnic loyalties, and the interests of a given group may be poorly addressed in areas where it forms a minority or when affiliated parties are not in power.

Women enjoy formal political equality, but restrictive societal norms limit their participation in practice. Only 8 women hold Senate seats, while 13 hold seats in the House of Representatives. Women are poorly represented in the cabinet; Buhari named 7 women to his 43-seat cabinet in July 2019.

Same-sex relationships were criminalized and LGBT+ advocacy groups were banned in 2014, when former president Jonathan signed the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act. Openly LGBT+ people are deterred from running for office or working to advance their political interests.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine 2 / the policies of the government? 4

Elected officials generally make and implement policy in Nigeria, but are impaired by factors including corruption, partisan conflict, and poor control over areas where militant groups are active.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

The government has attempted to reduce corruption in public and private institutions, but the practice remains pervasive, particularly in the oil and security sectors. A whistleblower policy introduced in 2016, which rewards Nigerians who provide information on government corruption, has led to the recovery of significant monies in recent years.

Nigerian politicians have been locked in an effort to curb corruption in the petroleum sector since at least 2001, when legislators first considered an expansive Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB). The bill was finally passed in August 2021, and President Buhari enacted the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which provides a new legal, fiscal, and regulatory framework for the country's petroleum industry. Among other things, the PIA includes the "codification of transparency, good governance, and accountability in the administration" of Nigeria's petroleum sector.

High-profile politicians, as well as senior law enforcement and anticorruption officials have faced corruption allegations in recent years. In May 2022, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arrested Nigeria's accountant general, Ahmed Idris, on theft and money laundering charges. Idris, who is accused of stealing more than \$190 million, was granted bail in July, but court proceedings remained underway as of year's end.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The 2011 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) guarantees the right to access public records, but nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have criticized government agencies for routinely refusing to release information sought through the law. The law has also encountered resistance in some states. As of May 2021, two states had passed their own version of the FOIA. The other 34 have neither adopted the FOIA nor have they developed their own legislation.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 2 / 4

Freedoms of speech, expression, and the press are constitutionally guaranteed. However, these rights are limited by sedition, criminal defamation, and so-called false-news laws. Sharia (Islamic law) statutes in 12 northern states impose severe penalties for alleged press offenses. Internet service providers sometimes block websites at the request of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), particularly those advocating independence for the secessionist state of Biafra. The government has accused journalists of undermining national security when reporting on operations against Boko Haram. In August 2022, the government fined local broadcaster Trust TV approximately \$12,000 for airing a documentary covering the rising insecurity in the country, claiming that the documentary glorified violence and undermined national security. Media rights groups have expressed concern that such government action has had a chilling effect on media coverage in the country.

Officials restrict press freedom by publicly criticizing, harassing, and arresting journalists, especially when they cover corruption, human rights violations, separatist and communal violence, or other politically sensitive topics. In 2022, Nigeria's Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) documented 53 attacks against journalists. Numerous journalists were also subjected to arbitrary arrests on dubious grounds during the year. Additionally, in August, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) suspended the licenses of 53 radio stations that had failed to pay their licensing fees, drawing criticism from international media rights groups, who called the move a "signal of press freedom decline" in the country.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Religious freedom is constitutionally protected, but the government has also embarked on crackdowns against religious groups that have questioned its authority. Nigeria has been locked in a long struggle against Boko Haram, a militant group that has itself targeted moderate Muslims and

Christians along with their respective houses of worship. State and local governments have been known to endorse de facto official religions in their territory, placing limits on religious activity.

The government's conflict with the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), a Shiite Muslim group that advocates for Islamic rule in Nigeria, escalated in 2019, when an Abuja court banned it and labeled it a terrorist organization. The IMN considers its leader, Sheikh Ibrahim el-Zakzaky, to be the ultimate source of authority in Nigeria, and does not recognize the government in Abuja.

The government has responded violently to IMN activity in recent years. In 2015, security forces raided el-Zakzaky's compound, arrested him and his wife, and killed at least 300 IMN members. Dozens more were killed in a 2018 army operation. In September 2021, 8 people were killed and 57 were arrested when security forces and the IMN clashed in Abuja.

In June 2022, gunmen attacked a Catholic church in Ondo State, killing 40 people; the same month, gunmen attacked two churches in Kaduna State, killing 8 and kidnapping more than 30 others. Authorities believe an Islamic terrorist group was responsible for the attack in Ondo State.

Individuals who express nonbelief can face legal consequences. In 2020, Mubarak Bala, a humanist, was arrested in Kaduna State for social media comments criticizing Islam. Bala remained in pretrial detention until April 2022, when he was sentenced to 24 years in prison on charges including blasphemy and contempt of religion.

In May 2022, Deborah Samuel, a Christian university student in Sokoto, was stoned to death by a group of Muslim students who accused her of "blasphemy" for sending a WhatsApp message that some perceived as insulting to Islam. Police arrested at least two people in connection with her murder, which sparked protests after videos of the attack went viral.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 3 / 4

The federal government generally respects academic freedom. However, some state governments mandate religious instruction in elementary and secondary curriculums and student admission and faculty hiring policies are subject to political interference.

Schoolchildren have been affected by Boko Haram's assault on secular education, which has caused the closure or destruction of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Schoolchildren have also been abducted by Boko Haram.

Criminals seeking ransom also target schoolchildren. Between December 2020 and July 2021, armed gangs abducted over 1,000 students from northern schools for ransom. In April 2022, UNICEF reported that over 11,500 schools had been closed since December 2020 due to security concerns.

Students have faced ill-treatment in unregulated Islamic schools, which have operated for decades. Some parents have patronized these schools for corrective services, as a robust juvenile-rehabilitation system is lacking in much of Nigeria.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 3 / 4

Nigerians are generally free to engage in discussions on politics and other topics, though expression of critical views on political leaders or sensitive subjects like the military, religion, and ethnicity occasionally leads to arrests or violent reprisals.

The government continued to target online platforms used by ordinary citizens and activists during 2022. In November, a university student was detained and charged with defamation for a tweet that the government considered to be an insult to President Buhari's wife; the student was released in December after the charge was dropped.

In January, the government lifted restrictions on access to Twitter, which it had blocked in June 2021 after the website removed a post from President Buhari threatening violence in response to unrest in the southeast.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

The right to peaceful assembly is constitutionally guaranteed. However, federal and state governments frequently ban public events perceived as threats to national security, including those that could incite political, ethnic, or religious tension. Rights groups have criticized federal and state governments for prohibiting or dispersing protests that are critical of authorities or associated with controversial groups, including the IPOB. IMN activities were banned in 2019 after an Abuja court classified it as a terrorist organization.

A number of protests in recent years have been met with violence by security forces, who often use force to break up demonstrations. In October 2022, police used tear gas to disperse a peaceful demonstration commemorating the second anniversary of the 2020 #EndSARS protests against police brutality; at least 12 people were killed during the 2020 protests when security forces fired into a crowd. However, some protests during the year were allowed to proceed without notable police interference, including a September protest that saw students in Lagos demonstrate against an ongoing lecturers' strike. The September demonstration was large and mostly peaceful, but protest-related road blockades led to severe gridlock and disrupted some flights at the city's airport.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 2 / 4

Nigeria has a broad and vibrant civil society. However, members of some organizations face intimidation and physical harm for speaking out against Boko Haram, or encounter obstacles when investigating alleged human rights abuses committed by the military against Boko Haram suspects. Groups operating in the restive Niger Delta region face intimidation.

Aid workers operating in the northeast are impeded by restrictions imposed by civilian and military officials as well as by the activities of armed groups. An August 2022 statement by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that, since that January, one aid worker had been killed and six others had been kidnapped in the region. Another aid worker was killed and a UN helicopter pilot wounded in November, when a Nigerian soldier opened fire at a military base; Nigerian authorities reported that the incident was under investigation. In April 2021, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that its staff was forced to evacuate from the

town of Damasak, which had been attacked by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a Boko Haram splinter group.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 3 / 4

Workers are constitutionally allowed to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct strikes. Nevertheless, the government forbids strike action in some essential services, including public transportation and security.

In February 2022, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) began a strike; the strike continued until October, when it was called off without a resolution.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 2 / 4

Judicial independence is constitutionally and legally enshrined. The judiciary has achieved some degree of independence and professionalism, but political interference, corruption, equipment, and training remain key problems. Funding is also a problem for the judiciary. In 2020, President Buhari signed an executive order ostensibly giving state-level judiciaries and legislatures financial autonomy. Nigeria's 36 state governors sued the federal government that September, alleging that it sought to avoid its financial responsibilities through the order. The Supreme Court dismissed the suit in February 2022, affirming that the government is not responsible for funding state courts.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

There have been numerous allegations of extortion and bribe taking within the police force. Federal and state authorities have been criticized for disregarding due process, with prolonged pretrial detention of suspects even after courts ordered their release on bail. Children with suspected Boko Haram ties face military detention according to a 2020 United Nations report.

Accountability for the use of force during the 2020 #EndSARS protests has been lacking. In November 2021, a panel of inquiry found that authorities attempted to conceal their actions at the Lekki toll gate. While the panel made 32 recommendations to the Lagos state government that month, the government fully accepted 11 and modified 6.

Nigerians in the southeast risked arbitrary arrest during the government's campaign against the IPOB's armed wing, which began in January 2021.

In late June 2021, IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu was arrested in Kenya and returned to Nigeria, facing charges including treason. That July, Kanu's lawyer accused the Kenyan government of mistreating him before returning him to Nigeria, which it denied. Later that month, the United Kingdom called on the Nigerian government to explain the circumstances of Kanu's arrest; Kanu maintains British citizenship. A Nigerian court dropped all charges against Kanu in October 2022, ruling against the government to find that his arrest and extradition had been illegal. Though the court ordered Kanu's "immediate release," the government refused to comply. The government appealed the decision, and an appellate court placed a stay on the ruling's implementation. Kanu remained in prison at year's end.

F3 0-4 pts

**Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and 0 /
insurgencies? 4**

The military has been repeatedly criticized by local and international human rights groups for extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses, including during counterinsurgency efforts in the northeast and operations against separatist movements in the southeast.

A Reuters investigation published in December 2022 reported that, according to dozens of military and civilian eyewitnesses, the Nigerian military has “slaughtered” at least 60 children perceived to be “children of Boko Haram” since 2009. Unconfirmed witness reports claim the number of child deaths is significantly higher. The Nigerian military has denied the allegations.

In January 2021, the government launched a campaign targeting the IPOB’s armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), which was formed in late 2020 and targeted police stations and other public buildings. Security personnel used excessive force and extrajudicially executed residents during their campaign. Amnesty International reported that security forces killed at least 115 people between March and June 2021; many victims were not affiliated with the ESN.

Police have also been accused of using excessive force. Amnesty International reported that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was responsible for at least 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment, or extrajudicial killings between 2017 and May 2020. Although SARS was dissolved in 2020, allegations of police abuse persist.

Boko Haram and ISWAP remained active during 2022. Between January and March, the groups are reported to have carried out 81 attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In July, armed men attacked a prison near Abuja, allowing approximately 900 inmates to escape; ISWAP later claimed responsibility for the attack.

A rolling conflict between farmers and the Fulani, a seminomadic Muslim ethnic group, continued to destabilize northern Nigeria in 2022. The Fulani have abandoned degraded grasslands in the north, coming into increased conflict with farmers as they travel south to find new grazing lands.

Kidnapping and other forms of criminality are acute concerns. According to the Council on Foreign Relations’s (CFR’s) Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), more than 8,000 people were killed in 2022, and thousands of others were kidnapped. In one major incident in March, armed men attacked a train headed from Abuja to Kaduna, killing at least 8 people and kidnapping more than 60 others; the final kidnapping victim was not released until October. Approximately 30 Nigerian soldiers were killed in June when gunmen attacked a mine in Niger State. The following month, armed men attacked a group of soldiers at a checkpoint on a highway between Abuja and Kaduna, killing at least three and wounding several others.

Various vigilante groups are active in Nigeria. The National Assembly unsuccessfully attempted to give official recognition to the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) in 2017 and 2019. In November 2021, the lower house passed a bill to extend official powers to the VGN.

F4 0-4 pts

**Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the 1 /
population? 4**

Despite constitutional safeguards against ethnic discrimination, many ethnic minorities experience bias by state governments and other societal groups in areas including employment, education, and housing.

Women are subject to widespread societal discrimination regarding matters such as education and employment. Many poor families choose to send sons to school while daughters become street vendors or domestic workers. Women also face significant legal disadvantages in states governed by Sharia statutes.

LGBT+ Nigerians face widespread official and societal discrimination. Nigerians convicted of engaging in same-sex relationships can be imprisoned for as long as 14 years, while 12 northern states maintain the death penalty for same-sex relations. LGBT+ people are also subject to assault by police officers during arrests, extortion attempts, and discrimination when accessing public and private services. A 2019 survey showed widespread opposition to LGBT+ rights, with 74 percent of respondents supporting prison sentences for those engaging in same-sex activity. In January 2022, one person was killed when a gay wedding was attacked in Abuja. In December, Sharia police raided the wedding party of a same-sex couple, arresting 19 people in Kano State. Sharia courts are known to impose the death penalty. A Sharia court in Bauchi State sentenced three men convicted of “engaging in homosexuality” to death by stoning in July.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

While the freedom of movement is legally guaranteed, security officials frequently impose dusk-to-dawn curfews and other movement restrictions in areas affected by communal violence or militant activities. Railway services between Abuja and Kaduna were suspended for eight months following the armed attack on a train traveling between the two cities in March 2022. In April, the government eased most remaining COVID-19 restrictions, including lifting a nationwide curfew.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that nearly 2.5 million people in northeast Nigeria were internally displaced as of July 2022.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Nigeria’s poorly regulated property rights system hinders citizens and private businesses from engaging in the efficient and legal purchase or sale of property, including land. Bribery is a common practice when starting a business and registering property. Women belonging to certain ethnic groups are often denied equal rights to inherit property due to customary laws and practices.

However, the climate for private enterprise in recent years has benefited from advancements in credit accessibility, ease of starting a business, ease of paying taxes, and property registration.

The property rights of Fulani and of farmers are affected by violence as Fulani travel south to find new grazing lands. Herding groups’ grazing lands have been used for cultivation, while Fulani herders have

been observed expropriating farmers' land and crops. In May 2021, 17 state governors called for an open-grazing ban but President Buhari voiced his disagreement, questioning the proposal's legality.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size 1 / of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4

Despite the existence of strict laws against rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and child marriage, these offenses remain widespread, with low rates of reporting and prosecution. Women and girls in camps for displaced persons have reported sexual abuse by members of the military and other authorities. Boko Haram's attacks on women's rights have been particularly egregious, with victims often subjected to forced marriage and rape, among other acts.

Abortion is illegal unless the life of the mother is in danger. As a result, many women seek out dangerous illegal abortions, finding themselves at risk of medical complications. Women who face such complications often do not receive further medical treatment.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Nigerian organized crime groups are heavily involved in human trafficking. Boko Haram has subjected children to forced labor and sex slavery. Both Boko Haram and a civilian vigilante group that opposes the militants have forcibly recruited child soldiers, according to the US State Department.

Meanwhile, implementation of the 2003 Child Rights Act, which protects children from sexual exploitation and other abuses, remains uneven; at the end of 2022, two northern states had not implemented the legislation, though they were in the process of doing so.

The US State Department's 2022 *Trafficking in Persons Report* noted that Nigeria "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking." The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) continues to rescue trafficking survivors and prosecute some suspected traffickers, but its funding is reportedly inadequate and labor traffickers face few prosecutions. Survivors often find their freedom of movement withheld by NAPTIP in poorly managed shelters and experience discrimination when seeking access to public services after their release.

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