

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Land:	Nigeria
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB)
Titel:	Nigeria: Boko Haram [Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna li-Da'wa wal-Jihad, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, Jamaat-u-Ahli Sunna-Lidda-Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS)], including its areas of operation and influence; ability to track individuals who move to other areas of the country; profiles of individuals they would be motivated to track and target; state protection (2022–November 2024)
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7 November 2024

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Nigeria: Boko Haram [Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna li-Da'wa wal-Jihad, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, Jamaat-u-Ahli Sunna-Lidda-Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS)], including its areas of operation and influence; ability to track individuals who move to other areas of the country; profiles of individuals they would be motivated to track and target; state protection (2022–November 2024)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

According to the Canadian Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (Public Safety Canada, PSEPC), Boko Haram is a "Salafist jihadist group" and its "ultimate objective is to overthrow the Nigerian government and implement Sharia Law" (Canada 2024-06-07).

Media sources report that Boko Haram, also known as JAS [(People of the Tradition of the Prophet for Preaching and Striving/Group Committed to Propagating the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad) (Canada 2024-06-07)], was formed in 2002 in northeast Nigeria (Al Jazeera 2023-09-08; CNN 2023-09-01). Sources indicate that Boko Haram translates to "Western education is forbidden" (Afzal 2020-04, 1; CNN 2023-09-01) in Hausa (CNN 2023-09-01). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative also known as Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN), an NGO "dedicated to enhancing citizens' participation and improving security governance in Nigeria and West Africa," noted that Boko Haram formed "primarily" in response to "perceived governmental neglect and socio-economic grievances" and "[i]ts ideology is rooted in a radical interpretation of Islam that opposes Western education and influences, which it views as corrupting and detrimental to Islamic values" (PWAN 2024-10-26). The same source further indicated that "[o]ver the years, Boko Haram has evolved from a localized group advocating for educational reform to a formidable insurgency responsible for widespread violence, abductions, and terrorism across Nigerian neighboring countries" (PWAN 2024-10-26). According to a research paper on Boko Haram and education written by Madiha Afzal, a Fellow at the Brookings Institution, a non-profit public policy research organization in the US (The Brookings Institution n.d.), Boko Haram has "killed tens of thousands of people in Nigeria" since 2009 and displaced "more than two million" people (Afzal 2020-04, 1). International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) indicates that the "jihadist" organization emerged from a "social movement" in the 1990s and 2000s led by Mohamed Yusuf, a "Salafi preacher from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in north-eastern Nigeria" (2024-03-28, 3). The same source reports that Boko Haram, with the "support" of Al-Qaeda, "initiated an insurgent campaign from 2010" where it "began attacking state officials and hostile religious leaders, eventually moving to plunder villages and bomb markets and churches, as well as mosques it deemed 'infidel'"

(Crisis Group 2024-03-28, 4). Crisis Group notes that Boko Haram "operates on the basis of extreme violence, plunder and sectarianism, sanctioning suicide attacks on civilians, massacres and enslavement of people it deems 'infidels' or 'apostates'" (2024-03-28, 8).

1.1 Leadership and Splinter Groups

PSEPC explains that

[i]n 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and Boko Haram renamed itself the "Islamic States West Africa Province" [(ISWAP)]. However, the Islamic State appointed Abu Musab al-Barnawi as leader of Islamic States West Africa Province, resulting in the formation of two rival factions; one loyal to Shekau operating under the Boko Haram banner, and the other (Islamic States West Africa Province) led by Barnawi. (Canada 2024-06-07)

2. Areas of Operation and Influence

Sources report that both Boko Haram and ISWAP operate in the northeast region of Nigeria (Amnesty International 2024-04-23, 285; US 2024-04-22, 12). Human Rights Watch's 2024 annual report notes that Borno State is "the epicenter of the Boko Haram conflict" and that it "witnessed a resurgence in attacks and kidnappings by armed groups" (2024-01-11, 470). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati who studies Islam and politics in northwest Africa noted that Boko Haram and its offshoots are "primarily" active in northeastern Nigeria, particularly in Borno State, and around the Lake Chad Basin (Associate Professor 2024-10-21). PWAN stated that Boko Haram "primarily operates in northeastern Nigeria, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states" (2024-10-26). According to an article from the Australian government's

website on national security, Boko Haram's area of operations "encompass the Northern Nigerian Sambisa Forest and the Mandara mountains on the Nigeria-Cameroon Border" (Australia 2024-09-22).

Crisis Group notes that Boko Haram "has gained ground in the intra-jihadist fighting in north-eastern Nigeria" and in 2023 "took most of the islands in Lake Chad" which were previously under ISWAP control (2024-03-28, 1). The same source also states that Boko Haram is "now confidently in control of much of Lake Chad and the Mandara mountains" (Crisis Group 2024-03-28, 2). The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), a "disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping initiative" that collects information on "all reported political violence and protest events around the world" and "conducts analysis to describe and explore conflict trends" (ACLED n.d.), notes that "[d]espite facing significant setbacks following sustained counterterrorism efforts by the Nigerian government and its partners since 2015, Boko Haram continues to control territories in the Lake Chad Basin islands" (ACLED 2024-04-16). The same source also states that Boko Haram has "expanded its operations toward northwest Nigeria" (ACLED 2024-04-16). Similarly, the Associate Professor noted that Boko Haram and its offshoots "have also conducted substantial activities and recruitment in northwest Nigeria and in the Middle Belt/North Central Zone" (2024-10-21).

PWAN noted that Boko Haram's influence extends beyond northeastern Nigeria and that Boko Haram "has established bases in the remote islands of Lake Chad, facilitating cross-border operations" (2024-10-26). The same source indicated that Boko Haram has also been active in border regions with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger "exploiting weak governance structures" (PWAN 2024-10-26). The same source also stated that "[a]lthough less frequent, sporadic attacks have been reported in [northwestern] states like Kaduna and Zamfara" (PWAN 2024-10-26).

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), an open-source database on "domestic and international terrorist attacks around the world" that is managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) [1] at the University of Maryland (GTD n.d.b), has information on 490 attacks attributed to Boko Haram between 2019 and 2020, including 282 armed assaults, 9 assassinations, 73 bombings/explosions, 3 hijackings, 140 facility/infrastructure attacks, and 103 hostage takings (kidnappings) (GTD n.d.c). The same source indicates that targets of the attacks include businesses (18), educational institutions (8), government (diplomatic) (4), government (general) (13), military (197), NGOs (10), police (19), private citizens/private property (308), religious figures/institutions (11), telecommunications (3), terrorists/non-state militia/military (28), transportation (4), utilities (2), and "[v]iolent [p]olitical [p]arty" (1) (GTD n.d.d). According to the same source, of these attacks the majority occurred in Borno state, but there were also attacks in Adamawa, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Plateau, Yobe, and Zamfara (GTD n.d.e). Al Jazeera indicates that Boko Haram factions "have also found a sphere of influence outside their roots in the northeast" (2023-09-08).

The Associate Professor indicated that Boko Haram's presence in southern Nigeria has been "quite weak/light" (2024-10-21).

3. Ability to Track Individuals

Information on Boko Haram's ability to track individuals was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the Associate Professor in correspondence with the Research Directorate:

Boko Haram's capacity to track individuals would be "significant" in northern Nigeria and in the Middle Belt, but not in the south. Boko Haram has had "tens of thousands of members and sympathizers"

throughout its existence, "many of whom blend in with ordinary communities and neighborhoods, giving the group a substantial surveillance and intelligence capacity" (Associate Professor 2024-10-21).

The information in the following two paragraphs was provided by PWAN in correspondence with the Research Directorate:

"Boko Haram's tracking capabilities are strongest within their core operational areas in northeastern Nigeria. Their effectiveness diminishes significantly outside these zones." In southern Nigeria, Boko Haram's "influence is minimal due to stronger state presence and community resilience." In major urban centers, such as Lagos and Abuja, there is "better security infrastructure that complicates" Boko Haram's operations. In southwestern states, Boko Haram's "tracking capabilities are limited due to stronger law enforcement frameworks."

Boko Haram "employs various methods" to track individuals including:

- "Local informant networks" by relying on "community members who may be sympathetic or coerced into providing intelligence."
- "Infiltration of communities" by "establishing trust within communities" to gather information.
- "Exploitation of family/tribal connections" to identify potential targets.
- "Corruption of local officials" by "[b]ribing or coercing officials enables access to sensitive information" (PWAN 2024-10-26).

4. Profiles of Individuals Targeted for Tracking

Information on the profiles of individuals targeted for tracking by Boko Haram was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Associate Professor noted that Boko Haram has been "most attuned to its critics, especially Muslims who have made theological arguments against the group's doctrine," and has "sometimes punished

defectors" (2024-10-21).

5. State Protection

Information on state protection mechanisms available to victims and survivors of Boko Haram was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Crisis Group notes that the Nigerian army is able to protect "most" of the larger towns in Borno state, but "remains unable to challenge the insurgents in rural areas" (2024-03-28, 13). However, the same source states that authorities "still lack sufficient resources to help civilians" affected by Boko Haram (Crisis Group 2024-03-28, 13).

PWAN noted that the "effectiveness of state protection mechanisms varies significantly across different regions" (2024-10-26). The same source indicated that "[i]mproved military response capabilities have been observed in urban areas where resources are concentrated" and that "[i]ncreased focus on community engagement strategies aims to rebuild trust between security forces and local populations" (PWAN 2024-10-26). The same source however also noted that "[l]imited resources allocated to rural areas allow Boko Haram significant operational freedom" and "[c]orruption within security services undermines public trust and operational effectiveness" (PWAN 2024-10-26). The same source also stated that "[i]nconsistent implementation of protection programs creates gaps in coverage" (PWAN 2024-10-26).

The Associate Professor indicated that state protection mechanisms available to victims and survivors of Boko Haram have not been effective (2024-10-21). The same source noted that

[t]he state has not been able to effectively protect the displaced or returnees to affected communities, some of whom are forced to return under duress. Defector programs such as Operation Safe Corridor have

kept participants and former [Boko Haram] members mostly safe, but the state has limited capacity to track and protect former members who have completed such programs. (Associate Professor 2024-10-21)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

An article by *Vanguard*, a Nigerian newspaper, reports that according to the Solicitor General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Justice, specialized prosecutors have been assigned "to handle cases of violence against girls who were in Boko Haram captivity or violated by members of Boko Haram" (*Vanguard* 2024-10-08). Further information on the prosecution of such cases could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Note

[1] The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses (START) is based at the University of Maryland and has received support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO), and the US Department of Defense (GTD n.d.a).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: co-director of the Africa security initiative at an American think tank; professor at a Nigerian university whose research focuses on transnational crime and security threats, including terrorism, violent conflict, and organized crime; senior fellow for Africa studies at an American think tank; University of Maryland – National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism; visiting assistant professor of transnational security at a university in the US who specializes in African politics, international conflict, and security studies.

Internet sites, including: Africa Institute of South Africa; African Association of Political Science; African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes; African Union; Austrian Red Cross – ecoi.net; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Council on Foreign Relations; *Daily Independent*; *Daily Trust*; EU – EU Agency for Asylum; Freedom House; Good Authority; *The Guardian*; *The Guardian* [Nigeria]; Institute for Security Studies; *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*; *Leadership*; Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa; *Peace and Conflict Studies*; *Premium Times*; *The Punch*; Reuters; The Soufan Center; UN – Human Rights Council, UN Development Programme; United States Institute of Peace; US – African Centre for Strategic Studies, Congressional Research Service; World Bank.

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