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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Boko Haram

aka Nigerian Taliban; Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad; Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad; People Committed to the Prophet’s Teachings for Propagation and Jihad; Sunni Group for Preaching and Jihad

Description: Nigeria-based Boko Haram (BH) was designated as a FTO on November 14, 2013. The group is responsible for numerous attacks in northern and northeastern Nigeria and in the Lake Chad Basin in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger that have killed thousands of people since 2009.

In March 2015, BH pledged allegiance to ISIS in an audiotape message. ISIS accepted the group’s pledge, and the group began calling itself ISIS-West Africa. In August 2016, ISIS announced that Abu Musab al-Barnawi was to replace Abubakar Shekau as the new leader of the group. Infighting then led the group to split. Shekau maintains a group of followers and affiliates concentrated primarily in the Sambisa Forest; this faction is known as Boko Haram, while al-Barnawi’s group is now separated and designated as ISIS-West Africa.

Activities: BH crosses porous Lake Chad region borders to target civilians and military personnel in northeast Nigeria, the Far North Region of Cameroon, and parts of Chad and Niger. The group continued to evade pressure from Lake Chad country forces, including through the regional Multinational Joint Task Force. Since 2009, BH has killed an estimated 20,000 people and displaced more than two million others.

In 2014, BH killed about 5,000 Nigerian civilians in various attacks. The kidnapping of 276 female students from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, brought global attention to BH’s activities and highlighted its deliberate targeting of non-combatants, including children. The group continued to abduct women and girls in the northern region of Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, some of whom it later subjected to domestic servitude, other forms of forced labor, and sexual servitude, including through forced marriages to its members. For further information, refer to the *2018 Trafficking in Persons Report* (<https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2018/index.htm>).

Between January 3 and 7, 2015, BH carried out a massacre in Baga, Borno State; reported casualties ranged from 150 to more than 2,000 killed, injured, or disappeared. The January 2015 attacks and other BH operations in surrounding smaller villages in 2015 displaced an estimated 35,000 people and allowed BH to gain control of Borno State.

In February 2016, the group conducted attacks in Nigeria, killing 30 people on February 13 in a spate of attacks in Borno State that included forcing worshipers into a mosque and killing them. In October, BH released 21 Chibok schoolgirls to Nigerian authorities in exchange for the release of selected BH members; it was the first mass release of Chibok hostages since the 2014 abductions.

In 2017 and 2018, BH increased its forced abduction of women and girls and ordered them to carry out suicide attacks on civilians, including the January 2017 attack against the University of Maiduguri in Borno State, and twin attacks against a mosque and market in Adamawa State, Nigeria in May 2018, killing 86.

In April 2018, 18 BH militants launched an attack using suicide bombers, mortars, and gunmen, targeting two villages and a military base, killing 14 civilians and one soldier. In July 2018, BH insurgents ambushed a convoy of vehicles in Borno State, torching 27 vehicles and killing 30 people. In January 2018, Abubakar Shekau claimed responsibility for a series of attacks in northeast Nigeria in December 2017, including attacks on Nigerian soldiers and suicide bombings in crowded markets.

Strength: Membership is estimated to be several thousand fighters.

Location/Area of Operation: BH operates in northeastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, southeast Niger, and areas of Chad along the Nigerian border.

Funding and External Aid: BH largely self-finances through criminal activities such as looting, extortion, kidnapping-for-ransom, and bank robberies.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of Boko Haram (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



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