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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Nigeria – January to June 2024

30 June 2024

08 January 2024

Plateau State: over 100 people killed in attacks on villages

Armed groups killed almost 200 people and destroyed several houses in a spate of at least 20 attacks carried out on various villages in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Bokokos and Barkin Ladi in the central Nigerian state of Plateau between 23.12.23 and 25.12.23. According to media reports, more than 300 people were injured. Amnesty International (AI) has criticized the slow response of the security authorities and the failure of the Nigerian government to stop the attacks.

Plateau State is located between the north of Nigeria which has a large Muslim population and the south which has a mainly Christian population. Violent clashes occur frequently between mostly Muslim nomadic herdsman and mostly Christian sedentary farmers (cf. BN of 22.05.23, 26.06.23 and 24.07.23). It is possible the attacks are being fuelled, inter alia, by the ongoing conflict over access to land, grazing areas, water and natural resources, but they may also constitute revenge for former acts of violence or – simultaneously – simmering ethnic rivalry. According to media reports, they represent the worst outbreak of intercommunal violence in Plateau State since May 2023 (cf. BN of 22.05.23).¹

Borno State: persons killed in Boko Haram attack

On 01.01.24, members of the Islamist Boko Haram group attacked two communities in Chibok Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno State in the northeast of the country, killing around 15 persons and kidnapping one woman. According to media reports, they also set fire to houses and stole livestock, food and medicine. Several people were reportedly wounded in the attack. Those killed include people who were returning from a funeral. For years, the Islamist Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) groups have been carrying out attacks and committing other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population, above all in the northeast of Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23). Boko Haram kidnapped more than 270 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014. The incident sparked an international outcry and triggered the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Around 100 of the schoolgirls remain in captivity. Several of them have been forced to marry members of the Islamist groups.²

Latest figures on the number of inmates held in custodial facilities

As of 18.12.23, a total of 77,849 persons were detained in prisons in Nigeria, 76,081 men and 1,768 women, according to media reports citing official figures provided by a spokesperson for Nigerian custodial centres issued on 22.12.23. No less than 3,413 prisoners are currently on death row and 53,836 prisoners are awaiting trial. According to a media report issued on 19.12.23, around 4,000 inmates have been sentenced to death, 353 of whom are being detained at Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison in Lagos alone. Media reports cite information provided by AI that seven executions have been carried out in Nigeria since 2007, the most recent one in 2016 (cf. BN of 16.10.23). On 18.12.23, around 4,068 inmates sentenced to various terms of imprisonment were released in a bid

to prevent overcrowding at custodial and correctional facilities (cf. BN of 20.11.23). The spokesperson of the Nigerian Correctional Services stressed that no riots had taken place at any of the custodial and correctional facilities since 2023. He thinks this is due to the deployment of enhanced surveillance systems and partly also to improved prison conditions.³

15 January 2024

Military strike against suspected terrorists

According to their own information, troops from the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) have killed a total of around 85 violent individuals designated as terrorists and arrested more than 100 others in several operations that have been carried out across Nigeria since the beginning of 2024. On 05.01.24, units of the Nigerian Air Force, for example, killed around 15 violent actors designated as terrorists as part of Operation Hadin Kai on the edge of the Sambisa Forest in Borno State. According to the military, high-ranking members were among those killed. In addition, military personnel freed around 40 kidnapped persons from a region in southern Nigeria and secured a significant quantity of various weapons and ammunition as well as stolen crude oil. According to a media report, the DHQ also announced on 05.01.24 that around 115 members of the Islamist group Boko Haram and their families had surrendered. In the past, the DHQ has repeatedly circulated similar success stories (cf. BN of 20.03.23, 03.04.23, 18.09.23, 16.10.23 and 04.12.23).⁴

Katsina State: deadly attack on village

Armed actors killed around 10 people, including the village head of Kukar Babangida, in Jibia Local Government Area (LGA) in Katsina State on 11.01.24. According to media reports, the violent actors stole food and money, among other things, and set fire to several vehicles. Several people were reportedly injured. According to a media report, an unspecified number of women and children were also abducted. Attacks on communities and kidnappings by armed groups have occurred in Katsina State in the past (cf. BN of 11.09.23 and 13.11.23).⁵

Expenditure on prisoners and prison conditions

According to media reports issued on 04.01.24 that are based on official information provided by the spokesperson of the Nigerian Correctional Service, the cost of feeding a prison inmate in Nigeria totals NGN 750 (approximately EUR 0.72, as of 15.01.24) per day. This information counters reports that the actual amount is only NGN 200 (approximately EUR 0.19, as of 15.01.24). The Nigerian Correctional Service spokesperson seized the opportunity, while making this clarification, to provide further details regarding the feeding of prisoners. He said that there is a ration committee in every custodial centre, which supervises the preparation and distribution of food rations to inmates. On 22.12.23, when commenting on the number of persons imprisoned in Nigeria (cf. BN of 08.01.24), the same spokesperson had provided information to the effect that improvements had been made in the areas of rehabilitation and reintegration, among others, in 2023. He added that many prisoners were also taking advantage of education and training opportunities. In addition, he said the working conditions of prison staff had improved in 2023.⁶

22 January 2024

Katsina State: attack on military base

More than 100 armed men stormed a military base in Batsari Local Government Area (LGA) in Katsina State on 14.01.24, setting vehicles and other properties ablaze. According to media reports, the attackers overpowered security forces at the military base following a battle that raged on for several hours. They also moved on to the village of Nahuta, where they stole valuables and livestock. The residents of Nahuta had fled to other villages. Katsina State has already been the target of attacks on communities by armed groups in the past (cf. BN of 11.09.23, 13.11.23 and 15.01.24).⁷

Zamfara State: dozens of people kidnapped

Armed gunmen described as bandits invaded a village in Kaura Namoda Local Government Area in Zamfara State on 14.01.24, killing three people and kidnapping around 50, at least 36 of whom were women, according to media

reports. The violent bandits went from house to house looking for possible kidnap victims. Several people were injured. Local security forces were outnumbered and were unable to prevent the attack. Kidnappings have been taking place with some regularity in northwestern Nigeria in recent times (cf. BN of 23.10.23, 27.11.23 and 04.12.23).⁸

FCT Abuja: dozens abducted

Violent actors attacked several travellers on the main Abuja-Kaduna road in the Kachia Local Government Area of Kaduna State in the second week of January 2024, abducting more than 30 of them. According to media reports, this is the first time security measures along the main artery have been breached. In addition, gunmen kidnapped at least 10 people from a village in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja on 07.01.24. According to media reports, three of the abductees were killed because relatives had failed to pay the ransom. On 02.01.2024, unidentified bandits kidnapped six sisters in Bwari LGA in the FCT. One of them was killed on 12.01.24 because the ransom was not paid. Nigerian security forces and police officers managed to locate and free five of the young girls in Kajuru forest in Kaduna state during a joint operation carried out on 20.01.24.⁹

29 January 2024

Plateau State: intercommunal violence claims lives

In the Mangu Local Government Area (LGA) of the central Nigerian state of Plateau, a total of around 50 people were killed in an outbreak of intercommunal violence on 23.01.24 and 24.01.24. According to media reports, the violent clashes began when armed actors attempted to steal livestock from people of the Fulani ethnic group. In addition, around six mosques and at least two churches were destroyed. The state's governor had imposed a 24-hour curfew on 23.01.24 to stem the violence. However, according to media reports, further clashes erupted the following day despite the curfew. Nine people were reportedly arrested by Nigerian security forces. Plateau State lies between the Muslim north of Nigeria and the predominantly Christian south. Violent clashes between nomadic herdsman and sedentary farmers have already occurred there in the past. As recently as the end of December 2023, armed groups killed almost 200 people and destroyed a number of houses in at least 20 attacks on various villages in the Bokkos and Barkin Ladi LGAs in Plateau State (cf. BN of 08.01.24). The background to the acts of violence could be conflicts over land, grazing and water rights, but also the desire for retribution for earlier acts of violence or – or at the same time – smouldering ethnic rivalries. The nomadic people involved are usually of Muslim faith and the sedentary people are often Christians.¹⁰

Katsina State: multiple kidnappings

Over 100 armed men described as bandits attacked a village in Batsari Local Government Area (LGA) in Katsina State on 21.01.24, kidnapping around 30 people. According to media reports, the armed men were disguised as security forces. A number of residents reportedly tried to flee. Kidnappings and attacks on communities by armed groups have already occurred in Katsina State in the past. A week earlier, more than 100 gunmen attacked a military base in Batsari LGA and set fire to a number of vehicles and valuables. On 11.01.24, violent assailants killed around 10 people in Jibia LGA (cf. BN of 13.11.23, 15.01.24 and 22.01.24).¹¹

Economic growth and inflation

Nigeria's gross domestic product is expected to grow by 3.5% in 2024. This is according to media reports referring to forecasts that were published by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group on 24.01.24. According to the group, various reform programmes introduced by the government are likely to trigger an upturn in economic growth as investment backlogs are eliminated and the low productivity in some sectors is remedied. The group says the services sector will remain the main driver of the economy, but the expected recovery of the oil sector will also lead to stronger growth in 2024. Furthermore, the group forecast an annual average inflation rate of 21.5% for 2024, compared to an annual average of 24.5% in 2023, which, to date, has also merely been an estimate. It said that one of several price-driving factors was the abolition of fuel subsidies in 2023 (cf. BN of 05.06.23 and 16.10.23).¹²

05 February 2024

Southeast: deaths in clashes between cult groups

On 31.01.24, the Ebonyi State police confirmed that three people had been killed in a clash that erupted between members of rival cult groups in a locality in Ezza North Local Government Area (LGA). According to media reports, two persons have been arrested in connection with the incident. The cause of the clash was said to be the battle for supremacy between the cult groups in the locality. On 14.01.24, members of a cult group allegedly killed three people in Benin City, the capital of Edo State. In December 2023, more than 30 people were reportedly killed in clashes that erupted between members of the Black Axe and Supreme Eiyé cult groups in Edo State. Common features of Nigerian cult groups include profit-seeking, readiness to use violence, initiation rites and a hierarchical organisational structure. Terms denoting criminal cults are not used consistently in media reports and accounts. Because of the history of some groups as student fraternities, "cults" (cult groups) and "confraternities" (brotherhoods) are among the common terms used. In reporting, the term "cults" is sometimes understood so broadly that numerous nonpublicly active organisations with a high need for loyalty can be subsumed under it. The Nigerian "Secret Cult and Similar Activities Prohibition Act, 2012" contains a blacklist of dozens of banned cult groups. In addition, several states have laws banning cults and cult activities. Some regions have "anti-cultism" police units (cf. BN of 14.08.23).¹³

Calls for the declaration of a state of emergency

A coalition of 48 civil society organisations called on President Bola Tinubu to declare a state of emergency at a press conference held in Abuja on 29.01.24, in light of the current security situation in the country. According to the civil society groups, around 2,400 people were killed in attacks by violent actors between May 2023 and January 2024 and around 1,900 people were abducted. At least 230 kidnappings also took place in the first two weeks of January 2024. A spokesperson for the coalition expressed concern about the insecurity in the country and called on the government to take measures to improve the security situation and curb attacks by violent groups.¹⁴

Benue State: fatalities caused by suspected herdsmen attacks

Armed actors attacked a village in Agatu Local Government Area (LGA) in Benue State on 31.01.24, killing at least 15 people. According to media reports, several people are missing. A number of people are also said to have been displaced from their homes. The reports said that the invaders were believed to be armed herdsmen.

Local authorities suspect a connection with smouldering conflicts over land, grazing and water rights between farming communities and nomadic people who live mainly from livestock farming. Ethnic and religious rivalries, also and especially in the central region where the violence occurred, are contributing to the complexity of the situation (cf. BN of 13.03.23, 24.04.23 and 23.10.23). It was reported that localities in the Agatu LGA had already been attacked several times in January 2024. On 18.01.24 and 27.01.24, armed invaders attacked three villages in Agatu LGA, killing at least 13 people. According to media reports, those killed included a security guard and military personnel.¹⁵

Southwest: schoolchildren abducted, traditional rulers murdered

The abduction of several schoolchildren, several teachers and a school bus driver near the town of Emure in the southwestern state of Ekiti has caused a huge media stir across the country. Reports vary on the number of children and teachers abducted on 29.01.24. According to media reports published on 04.02.24, a total of nine people were abducted. Of these, eight reportedly regained their freedom on 04.02.24. The ninth person, the driver of the school bus, was said to have died in captivity. It is reportedly not yet known whether a ransom was paid.

According to media reports, unknown individuals killed two prominent traditional rulers in the same state on 29.01.24. Traditional rulers are still very influential in large parts of Nigeria (cf. BN of 23.08.23).

Media reports state that on 01.02.24, unknown persons killed another traditional ruler, the Olukoro of Koro, in Kwara State, which directly borders Ekiti State to the north. The reports said that his wife and another person close to him were then abducted.¹⁶

12 February 2024

Katsina State: dozens kidnapped

Gunmen described as bandits kidnapped around 60 wedding guests in Damari village in Sabuwa Local Government Area (LGA) of Katsina State on 01.02.24 and killed at least three members of the local vigilante group. According to media reports, most of the wedding guests kidnapped, including the bride herself, were women and girls who had attended the wedding ceremony. At least two kidnappers were disguised as security forces. The armed gunmen published a video on 06.02.24 in which they threatened to marry the bride to someone else unless they receive a ransom of NGN 100 million (approx. EUR 65,600 as of 12.02.24) for her release. According to media reports, three of the kidnapped women can be seen in the video begging to be rescued. Kidnappings for ransom have already occurred in the northwestern state of Katsina in the past (cf. BN of 30.10.23, 13.11.23 and 29.01.24).¹⁷

Perception of corruption remains high

Nigeria has moved up five places in the Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2023 published by the NGO on 30.01.24, Nigeria now ranks 145th out of 180 in the global ranking. It shares this ranking with Liberia, Madagascar and Mozambique. The media report that this ranking is still alarming according to experts. The CPI, arguably the most widely used global corruption ranking in the world, measures how corrupt each country's public sector is perceived to be.¹⁸

19 February 2024

Zamfara State: deaths and abductions

Armed gunmen killed more than 10 people, including two police officers, and abducted at least 40 others in two attacks carried out on villages in Kaura Namoda and Zurmi Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the north-western state of Zamfara on 11.02.24 and 13.02.24. According to media reports, the majority of those abducted were women and children. On 15.02.24, terrorists killed seven persons and abducted 20 others in a community in Birnin Magaji LGA. Kidnappings and deadly attacks on communities have occurred in Kaura Namoda LGA in the past (cf. BN of 22.01.24).¹⁹

Katsina State: deadly attack

Actors described as terrorists killed at least nine people in an attack on a dual carriageway between the towns of Jibia and Batsari in Katsina State on 11.02.24. According to media reports, those killed were local traders who were returning to their community by car from the weekly market in Jibia. Deadly attacks by armed groups have already occurred in Katsina State in the past (cf. BN of 30.10.23, 13.11.23 and 15.01.24). The Nigerian government has labelled violent actors in the region as terrorists since the beginning of 2022 (cf. BN of 10.01.22).²⁰

Borno State: suspected Boko Haram members released

On 01.02.24, the government of Borno state released around 500 detainees from the Nigerian army's Giwa Barracks detention facility in the state capital Maiduguri. According to media reports, those released were suspected Boko Haram members. According to the Borno State Commissioner for Women's Affairs, several women had claimed that innocent people were being held at the Giwa barracks. All those released were reportedly handed over to the Borno State Government.²¹

26 February 2024

Katsina State: deadly attack and kidnappings

On 19.02.24, violent actors described as bandits attacked a village in the Faskari Local Government Area (LGA) of Katsina State, killing at least six people and abducting around 40. According to media reports, a traditional ruler was among those killed. At least 10 people were reportedly injured. The armed actors are also said to be responsible for setting several houses and vehicles ablaze and for stealing animals.

Kidnappings and deadly attacks on communities by armed groups have occurred in Katsina State in the past (cf. BN of 13.11.23, 15.01.24 and 19.02.24).²²

Kaduna State: deadly attacks

Kidnappings and attacks by gunmen on villages have already taken place in northwest Nigeria in the past (cf. BN of 28.08.23, 09.10.23 and 04.12.23). Media reports recently made the headlines, according to which unknown actors described as bandits killed at least 12 people and set fire to around 15 houses in an attack carried out on a community in Kajuru LGA in Kaduna State on 18.02.24. Several people were injured. A day earlier, on 17.02.24, gunmen allegedly abducted around 15 people in a community in Kachia Local Government Area and two days earlier, on 16.02.24, gunmen described as bandits attacked two communities in Kuru and Igabi Local Government Areas, killing at least nine people, abducting 35 people and injuring others.²³

Military admits accidental airstrike

The Nigerian Air Force has officially accepted responsibility for a deadly airstrike carried out in Nasarawa State in January 2023, according to media reports. A senior air force representative travelled to the affected area at the end of January 2024 to express his regret and explain that it was an accidental bombing. The cause of the incident, in which dozens of civilians belonging to the Fulani ethnic group were killed on 24.01.23, was initially unclear (cf. BN of 30.01.23). According to a media report, this is the first ever apology of this kind. In recent years, there have been several cases of mistaken airstrikes on civilians. For example, the accidental bombardment of a village in Kaduna State by a military drone on 03.12.23, in which at least 85 civilians were killed, sparked particular outrage. Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu ordered a thorough investigation shortly after the incident became known (cf. BN of 11.12.23).²⁴

Southeast: security forces destroy camps of armed insurgents

Nigerian security forces destroyed a camp used by armed insurgents in a village in Awka North Local Government Area in the southeastern state of Anambra on 19.02.24. According to media reports, the police chief gave the order to storm the camp after the insurgents disrupted the business activities of local traders on 12.02.24 while trying to enforce a so-called sit-at-home order. During the storming of the camp, several people were reportedly injured and vehicles, ammunition and firearms were also confiscated. Nigerian government agencies and other authorities regularly hold members of the groups that support the secession of southeastern Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), responsible for acts of violence in the southeast of the country. However, the latter just as regularly deny any such accusations. Observers of the security situation in the region point out that violent groups with no direct connection to independence efforts are also active there. Sit-at-home orders are a type of voluntary curfew (lockdown) imposed on the population in certain regions of southeast Nigeria. IPOB has already used such measures in the past to try and exert pressure on the Nigerian government. One of the specific aims of such orders is to secure the release of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu, who has been imprisoned since summer 2021 (cf. BN of 07.11.22). Anyone who disregards sit-at-home orders risks reprisals. There were several reports of separatist camps being destroyed in the region in 2023 (cf. BN of 31.07.23, 09.10.23 and 18.12.23).²⁵

04 March 2024

Nasarawa State: more than a dozen killed in attack on community

On 25.02.24, unknown persons killed the village head and other people in an attack on the village of Katakpa in the Toto Local Government Area (LGA) of Nasarawa State. Media reports vary on the total number of people killed. The total number of fatalities reported varies between 13 and 29. There are consistent reports that several people were killed in an attack carried out on the same village back in early January 2024. Survivors of the attacks are calling for the presence of security forces in the region and the provision of aid and shelter. Attacks by armed actors against communities have repeatedly occurred in the region in the recent past, for example in Benue and Plateau states (cf. BN of 08.01.24, 29.01.24 and 05.02.24).²⁶

Deadly military operations

According to information provided by the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) on 28.02.24, in various operations carried out in February 2024, Nigerian armed forces killed 974 people who they consider to be either terrorists or other dangerous violent actors, such as members of armed gangs or separatist groups. The DHQ also stated that during

the same period, the military rescued 466 kidnap victims and arrested 621 people labelled as terrorists or bandits. It added that the various military operations had also succeeded in recovering numerous weapons of all kinds and other equipment. During the same period, a total of 1,157 people belonging to the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) had surrendered to the armed forces. The DHQ has already reported success stories of this kind with a certain regularity in the past (cf. BN of 16.10.23, 04.12.23 and 15.01.24). This time, it was emphasised that one focus was the fight against oil theft through the destruction of illegal refinery sites in the Niger Delta.

The DHQ stated that a major air force operation against the threat posed by Islamist groups was conducted on 19.02.24. It said that the ISWAP commanders Abacha, Babangida and Bakura and other persons belonging to ISWAP were killed in the airstrike carried out in the far northeast of Nigeria in Marte LGA in Borno State.²⁷

Protests over rising cost of living

According to media reports, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) organised protests in several major cities on 27.02.24, demanding more measures from the government to mitigate the ongoing economic crisis. The reports said that the continuing high inflation, among other things, was causing exasperation. They stated that one of several factors driving up prices was the abolition of fuel subsidies in 2023 (cf. BN of 29.01.24), adding that a litre of petrol currently cost more than three times as much as it did nine months ago. The price of imported products had reportedly also risen sharply due to the depreciation of the Nigerian naira against the US dollar.²⁸

11 March 2024

North: several mass abductions

Armed actors abducted dozens of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the remote Gamboru locality in Ngala Local Government Area (LGA), near the borders with Cameroon and Chad, in the northeastern state of Borno on 29.02.24. According to media reports, the abductees are mostly women and children living in refugee camps who had fled to Gamboru because of previous acts of violence. At the time of the abductions, they were reportedly searching for firewood outside the camp. The UN puts the number of abductees at over 200. According to individual media reports, the kidnappers are suspected members of an Islamist group. The Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have been carrying out attacks and other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for years, particularly in northeast Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23).

A few days later, on 07.03.24, unidentified gunmen raided a school in the northwestern town of Kuriga in Chikun LGA in Kaduna State and abducted around 250 schoolchildren. According to a media report, the abducted pupils are aged between eight and 15. Security forces reportedly arrived in the city several hours later. It was said to be the largest mass abduction from a school since 2021.

On 09.03.24, gunmen invaded the dormitory of a school in Gidan Bakuso village in Gada LGA in the northwestern state of Sokoto and abducted around 15 pupils.

Abductions of pupils from schools in northern Nigeria have occurred before. The Islamist group Boko Haram abducted over 270 girls in the Chibok LGA in the northeastern state of Borno in 2014. The incident sparked international outrage and a campaign called #BringBackOurGirls. Almost 100 of them remain in captivity. Several were forcibly married off to members of the Islamist group.²⁹

Southeast: military kills suspected ESN member

Army troops killed a suspected member of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the militant wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group advocating the secession of southeast Nigeria, in Orsu LGA in Imo State on 02.03.24. This is according to media reports based on official military information released on 03.03.24. The incident reportedly took place in connection with a military operation to clear a suspected separatist camp. An intense firefight took place, among other things, and a homemade weapon, improvised explosive devices and various items of equipment were seized. It was reported that further military operations against IPOB/ESN hideouts were to be expected in the region.

Government agencies regularly hold members of the IPOB and ESN organisations responsible for acts of violence in the southeast of the country. However, these organisations just as regularly deny any such accusations. In recent

times, there have been a number of reports of separatist camps being cleared and destroyed by security forces in the southeastern states of Nigeria (cf. BN of 31.07.23, 09.10.23 and 18.12.23, and 26.02.24).³⁰

18 March 2024

Kaduna State: dozens more abducted

Armed bandits kidnapped over 60 people from two localities in Kajuru Local Government Area (LGA) in the northern state of Kaduna on 11.03.24. According to media reports, the fact that soldiers were in the vicinity prevented a higher number of abductions. Women and children were allegedly among the abductees. Unidentified, armed bandits stormed a school in the town of Kuriga in Chikun Local Government Area in Kaduna state on 07.03.24, kidnapping over 200 schoolchildren (cf. BN of 11.03.24). According to media reports, the authorities are seeking to negotiate with the kidnappers.³¹

Southeast: armed forces report destruction of dozens of separatist hideouts

According to media reports, security forces cleared and destroyed a total of 50 hideout tents of violent terrorists in the southeastern states of Imo and Anambra between 11.02.24 and 07.03.24. According to estimates by the armed forces, these hideouts are run by members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group, which is in favour of the secession of southeastern Nigeria, and by members of its armed militant wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN). According to reports citing official military sources, numerous people categorised as IPOB and ESN were killed in the course of the operations led by the Joint Task Force South-East Operation UDO KA (OPUK). Some of the hideout tents destroyed on 07.03.24 reportedly housed headquarters. During the clearing of the 50 hideout tents, numerous weapons, a considerable amount of ammunition and other equipment were seized. The security forces also discovered shallow graves indicative of idol worshipping. Reports on the destruction of individual separatist camps in the southeast have become more frequent in recent times, the most recent one at the beginning of March 2024 (cf. BN of 11.03.24).³²

25 March 2024

Kaduna State: more people kidnapped

Armed actors abducted more than 100 people, including women and children, in two attacks carried out on villages in Kajuru Local Government Area (LGA) in Kaduna State on 16.03.24 and 17.03.24.

According to media reports, the violent actors are also responsible for stealing food and supplies. These are the latest in a spate of attacks and kidnappings to have occurred in Kajuru Local Government Area. On 07.03.24 and 11.03.24, armed actors abducted over 60 people from two villages in Kajuru Local Government Area in Kaduna State and raided a school in the town of Kuriga in Chikun Local Government Area, abducting over 200 schoolchildren (cf. BN of 11.03.24 and 18.03.24). Kidnappings for ransom have already occurred in the north of Nigeria in the past (cf. BN of 13.11.23, 29.01.24 and 12.02.24).³³

Delta State: deadly clashes

Violent actors killed around 15 members of the Nigerian Army on 14.03.24 in Okuoma village in Bomadi Local Government Area in the southern state of Delta during an operation to end a violent conflict between residents of Okuoma and Okoloba villages. The media reported that the violent actors were young men. The conflict was triggered by disputes over land rights. A few days later, on 17.03.24, armed actors attacked the village of Okuoma, looting several houses in the village of Okuoma and then setting them on fire. Deadly disputes over land or compensation for oil spills by energy companies have already occurred in Delta state in the past.³⁴

Southwest: success in the fight against crime

In March 2024, success stories of the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), better known as Amotekun, caused a stir. The organisation is dedicated to the fight against crime.

According to media reports, members of an Amotekun Corps succeeded in arresting a human trafficker on 29.02.24 for reportedly trafficking five people, including four underage boys, from the southeastern state of Akwa Ibom to the southwestern state of Osun to work as labourers. The suspect and the suspected trafficking victims were

transferred to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) headquarters. The Amotekun Corps took action after reports were received by Amotekun command authorities in the region. On 21.03.24, an Amotekun commander announced that they had succeeded in foiling a bank robbery planned by a seven-man gang in Ondo State. Amotekun was reportedly founded in 2020 and is active in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo states. It is difficult to categorise Amotekun according to European standards. The organisation is not part of the Nigerian police or military. Human rights violations have reportedly been committed in connection with Amotekun's activities in the past.³⁵

Kaduna State: kidnapped schoolchildren released

Members of the Nigerian army, in cooperation with local authorities and government representatives, reportedly freed more than 130 of the nearly 300 children who had been kidnapped by armed actors from a school in the northwestern town of Kuriga in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, on 24.03.24 (cf. BN of 11.03.24). According to the governor of the state of Kaduna, all of the almost 300 children were freed unharmed several days before the deadline for payment of the ransom. Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Adekunle Tinubu had promised to free the children without paying a ransom. According to media reports, state actors rarely openly admit to paying ransoms to free abductees.³⁶

08 April 2024

Borno State: Dozens of suspected Boko Haram members released

The Nigerian army has informed that on 28.03.24, around 230 suspected members of the Islamist group Boko Haram were released in north-eastern Borno State. The reason given for the release was that the detainees had been recruited against their will and that no incriminating evidence was found following an investigation. According to media reports, there are doubts that the detainees are innocent. Apparently, concerns have been expressed that the release could lead to further destabilization in the region. Already on 14.02.24, the Borno State government had released around 500 suspected Boko Haram members from the Giwa barracks detention centre in the city of Maiduguri (cf. BN of 19.02.24).³⁷

Taraba State: Military prevents kidnappings

On 02.04.24, troops of the Nigerian army have reportedly killed five violent actors and prevented the kidnapping of several Christian believers in a church community in the Wukari Local Government Area (LGA) in eastern Taraba State. They also apparently seized a stockpile of weapons. On 04.04.24, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) stated that in various operations across the country between January and March 2024, the military killed over 2,300 violent actors designated as terrorists, arrested the same number of people and freed over 1,200 kidnapped people. The DHQ regularly publishes success stories of this kind (cf. BN of 04.12.23, 15.01. and 04.03.24).³⁸

Imo State: Armed forces report destruction of another separatist camp

Security forces have recently reported the destruction of separatist camps in south-east Nigeria on several occasions (cf. BN of 11.03. and 18.03.24). Most recently, an official army report dated 31.03.24 attracted particular attention, stating that on 28.03. and 29.03.24, troops of the Joint Task Force South-East Operation UDO KA (OPUK) cleared and destroyed another such camp in Imo State. Members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group, which favour the secession of south-eastern Nigeria, and members of its militant wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), were injured and fled in the course of the operation. In addition, several bodies were exhumed on the campgrounds, which the security forces believe to be abduction victims murdered by separatist forces.³⁹

15 April 2024

Northwest: Night curfew

To curb kidnapping-related crime in the region, the government of north-western Zamfara State has imposed a curfew from 7.p.m to 6.a.m along its borders to the States of Sokoto and Katsina starting on 02.04.24. Corresponding media reports refer to information from the state's commissioner for information and culture. The focus is on the Sokoto-Gusau-Funtua motorway, where travellers have been kidnapped on several occasions. Cases of kidnapping

to extort ransom money occur with a certain regularity, especially in north-west Nigeria (cf. BN of 25.03.24). The perpetrators are armed gang members labelled as bandits by Nigeria's government and other state agencies. They target villages, educational institutions, and travellers. Most recently, the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolchildren in Kaduna State has caused a particular stir (cf. BN of 18.03.24); meanwhile, the children have regained their freedom.⁴⁰

Innovative meningitis vaccine introduced

Nigeria is the first country in the world to use a so-called 5-in-1 meningitis vaccine. In March 2024, a first vaccination campaign was initiated to benefit around 1 million people in the country with the largest population in Africa. This is according to media reports based on an official WHO statement of 12.04.24. The innovative vaccine Men5CV protects against five meningococcal serotypes simultaneously and thus offers more comprehensive protection than other vaccines. According to Director-General of the WHO Tedros Ghebreyesus, the new vaccine has the potential to prevent future meningitis outbreaks and to save many lives.⁴¹

22 April 2024

Six months in prison for "misuse of the national currency"

Media report that on 12.04.24, a Nigerian court sentenced transgender woman Okuneye Idris Olanrewaju, better known by her stage name Bobrisky, to six months in prison for throwing banknotes of the local currency, the Naira, into the air at public events, with videos of this going viral on social media. This custom, known as "spraying", is peculiar to weddings and other large celebrations. Nigerian courts consider it a criminal offence, especially as the notes that fall to the ground might be stepped on. As a rule, however, no prosecution takes place. What is special about the Bobrisky case is not only that she was brought to court at all, but also that she was sentenced to the maximum prison sentence of six months. Media report that Bobrisky is expected to serve this sentence in a prison for male inmates. However, an appeal against the judgement is possible.

Human rights activists criticise the guilty verdict and denounce the selective enforcement of laws. Many see the harsh judgement in connection with Bobrisky's nationwide popularity on social media as a successful transgender person. In public opinion in Nigeria, LGBTIQ issues are considered a taboo subject. NGOs criticise laws against transgender and homosexuality.

On 14.04.24, a representative of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) stated in connection with the announcement regarding the prosecution in another spraying case that decisive action is currently being taken against the abuse of the Naira and that 24 people have already been convicted.⁴²

Southwest: Concerns about a strengthening of secessionist aspirations

Media report that on 13.04.24, around 20 secessionists attempted to seize the government secretariat of Oyo State in Ibadan with the aim of taking by force more state institutions. Security forces from the south-west, consisting of the military, police and the Amotekun organisation (cf. BN of 25.03.24), successfully fended off the attackers. On 17.04.24, a court in Ibadan ordered 29 suspects to be remanded in custody, i.e. more people than were arrested immediately after the incident. The violent incident has fuelled fears of a strengthening of secessionist tendencies in south-west Nigeria.⁴³

Inflation at record high

Inflation reached a 28-year high in March, rising to of 33.2 percent year-on-year. This is according to media reports based on official data from the national bureau of statistics. The high inflation is being driven by rising food and energy costs. Interest rate hikes have not been able to halt the trend. In the area of energy costs, the abolition of fuel subsidies in 2023 is seen as a price driver (cf. BN of 29.01. and 04.03.24).⁴⁴

29 April 2024

Over 20 people killed in attacks in the north

At least 23 members of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) teams were killed in attacks carried out by armed groups in the far north-west and far north-east on 27.04.24. This is according to reports based on information provided by CJTF representatives on 28.04.24.

In the incident in Isa Local Government Area (LGA) in north-western Sokoto state, an armed gang suspected of kidnapping for ransom attacked a CJTF team, killing at least 14 people. Apparently, this CJTF team had earlier destroyed a camp of that gang.

The other incident took place in north-eastern Borno state. There, the vehicle of a CJTF team drove over a mine allegedly planted by members of the Islamist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). At least nine CJTF members were killed in the blast. CJTF have existed in the north-east since 2013 and were founded to protect communities in the region and support the military in the fight against Boko Haram and later ISWAP. CJTF now also exist in other northern states, especially to combat kidnapping offences. CJTF are considered important for the security situation in several regions of Nigeria. However, they are not regular state security forces and, in particular, they are not subordinate to the military. The terms vigilante and people's militia do not fully describe their self-image and only partially correspond to the population's perception of their activities. Critical voices point to reports of massive abuses committed by CJTF teams.⁴⁵

Niger State: Six military personnel killed

On 19.04.24, unidentified assailants attacked an army patrol, killing six soldiers in Shiroro LGA, north-central Niger State media reported referring to official information from the army dated 21.04.24. This is not the first time that armed criminal gangs have inflicted casualties on the military in the region. Members of these groups, described by the state as bandits or terrorists, are active in several regions of the state and have been responsible for attacks on villages and other crimes. On 13.08.23, unknown assailants in Wushshi LGA had killed over two dozen security forces, among them high-ranking military officers (cf. BN of 21.08.23). Niger State, Nigeria's largest federal state in terms of area, is located in the west of the zone known as the Middle Belt and borders Benin to the north-east.⁴⁶

06 May 2024

Enugu State: Deadly attack on village

Media reports say that on 28.04.24, unidentified assailants attacked the village of Nimbo in the Uzo Uwani Local Government Area (LGA) in south-eastern Enugu State, killing at least four people. The attackers entered the village in the evening and opened fire. They are believed to be nomadic cattle herders belonging to the Fulani ethnic group. According to an eyewitness, there have been several such attacks in the area recently. This is partly due to the lack of security forces in the region. The incident is reminiscent of an attack on the same village in 2016, known as the Nimbo massacre, in which dozens of people had been killed.

Conflicts between nomadic herders and farmer communities also occur in neighbouring federal states. The background to these acts of violence, also known as intercommunal violence, can be conflicts over land, grazing and water rights, but also the desire for retribution for earlier acts of violence or - or at the same time - smouldering ethnic rivalries (cf. BN of 13.03.23 and 29.01.24).

Fulani herdsmen have also been blamed by some for a high-profile kidnapping case in southern Nigeria a few days before the attack in Enugu State. Media reports say that on 23.04.24, gunmen attacked a coach travelling from Delta State to Bayelsa State in Ughelli North LGA and kidnapped 18 people.⁴⁷

13 May 2024

Zamfara State: Deadly attack on village and abduction of over 100 people

Two separate incidents of violence carried out on consecutive days in the north-western state of Zamfara have caused widespread concern. According to media reports, armed men attacked the village of Bilbis in the Tsafe Local Government Area (LGA) on 09.05.24, killing at least 20 people, injuring seven others, and kidnapping two. The

attackers arrived on motorbikes and opened fire. Similar attacks have occurred recently in the same LGA and in Zurmi, Maradun, Anka and Bungudu LGAs.

On 10.05.24, gunmen attacked three villages in Birnin Magaji LGA and abducted over 100 people to extort ransom. This is according to media reports based on eyewitness accounts. Kidnappings for ransom have become a regular occurrence in north-west Nigeria. The perpetrators belong to armed gangs described by the Nigerian government and other state agencies as bandits or terrorists. The kidnappers mainly target villages, educational institutions, and travellers (cr. BN of 23.10., 27.11. and 04.12.23, 12.02. and 25.03.24). To curb kidnapping-related crime, the government of Zamfara state imposed a night curfew along the borders with Sokoto and Katsina from 02.04.24 (cf. BN of 15.04.24).⁴⁸

Investigative journalist detained for nine days

Daniel Ojukwu, a journalist from the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ) organisation, was released under strict conditions on 10.05.24 after nine days in detention without trial. According to media reports, the prominent journalist had been arrested by a special police unit on 01.05.24 on charges of violating the Cybercrimes Act. This law dates back to 2015 and, according to critics, has been used by Nigerian authorities several times to stifle press freedom. Specifically, Ojukwu has reportedly been targeted by the special police unit against cybercrime due to his reporting on misconduct by a government agency in 2023. On 09.05.24, the day before his release on high bail, media professionals and civil society organisations demonstrated peacefully in the capital Abuja.

Nigeria ranks 112 out of 180 in RSF's annual World Press Freedom Index, up from 123 last year (cf. BN of 05.06.23). Critics say that the improvement in the ranking cannot be reconciled with Nigeria's continuing deficits in the area of press freedom.⁴⁹

27 May 2024

Plateau State: Deadly attack

On 20.05.24, gunmen on motorbikes attacked Zurak village in the Wase Local Government Area (LGA), central Nigerian Plateau State, setting fire to several houses and killing around 40 people. According to media reports, several people fled to neighbouring villages. Nigerian security forces apparently arrived on the scene several hours later. Plateau State lies between the Muslim north of Nigeria and the predominantly Christian south. Violent clashes between nomadic herdsman and sedentary farmers have occurred there in the past (cf. BN of 08.01. and 29.01.24). At the end of January 2024, an outbreak of intercommunal violence in Mangu LGA of Plateau State had left about 50 people dead (cf. BN of 29.01.24).

The violence may have been triggered by conflicts over land, grazing and water rights, but also by the desire for revenge for previous acts of violence or - or at the same time - by simmering ethnic rivalries. The non-settlers involved are usually of Muslim faith, while the settlers are often Christians.⁵⁰

Niger State: Dozens of kidnappings

On 24.05.24, about 300 armed men described as bandits invaded the village of Kuchi in Munya LGA in Niger State, killing around ten people and abducting at least 160 others. According to media reports, the abductees are mainly women and children. Local security forces were also reportedly among those killed. The human rights organisation Amnesty International (AI) apparently expressed concern about the mass abduction. According to AI, the mass abductions and killings are evidence of the government's failure to protect the population. Members of these groups, described by the state as bandits or terrorists, are active in several regions of the state and responsible for attacks on villages. Niger State, Nigeria's largest federal state in terms of area, is located in the west of the Middle Belt zone and borders the north-east of neighbouring Benin.⁵¹

03 June 2024

Southeast: Deadly attack

On 30.05.24, around 15 gunmen attacked the town of Aba in southeastern Abia State, killing at least four army members. According to media reports, the attackers were suspected members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group, which advocates the secession of southeastern Nigeria. They apparently attacked security patrol

vehicles to enforce a so-called sit-at-home order on the occasion of the annual "Biafra Heroes Day". Video clips of the deadly attack are apparently circulating on social media. The IPOB group had declared the sit-at-home order for 30.05.24 in the five southeastern states. Nigerian government agencies and other authorities regularly blame IPOB and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), for acts of violence in the southeast. IPOB, in turn, regularly denies such accusations. Sit-at-home orders are a type of voluntary curfew (lockdown) imposed on the population in certain regions of southeastern Nigeria. IPOB has used such measures in the past to put pressure on the Nigerian government. Anyone who disregards sit-at-home orders risks reprisals. There have been several reports of separatist camps in the region being destroyed in 2023 and 2024 (cf. BN of 31.07., 09.10. and 18.12.23 as well as 11.03., 18.03. and 08.04.24).⁵²

Southwest: Success in the fight against crime

In May 2024, the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), better known as Amotekun, arrested 45 suspected criminals in southwestern Ondo State. This is according to media reports based on information provided by an Amotekun commander on 13.05.24. The suspects were arrested during round-the-clock patrols by the Amotekun corps. The crimes committed include shoplifting, kidnapping and offences related to criminal organisations known as cults. Timely information from the public is reportedly often crucial for these successes. The Amotekun organisation, founded in 2020 to fight crime, is difficult to categorise. It is neither part of the Nigerian police force nor the military.⁵³

Deadly military operations

On 30.05.24, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) stated that in various operations in May 2024, Nigerian troops killed a total of 640 members of violent groups, arrested 1,051 suspects and freed 563 kidnapped hostages, among them 206 hostages a single week. High-ranking commanders of violent groups were also killed. The military also recovered significant quantities of weapons and ammunition from such groups. The DHQ's official announcements refer to those killed as terrorists. The DHQ spreads such success stories with some regularity (see BN of 15.01., 04.03. and 08.04.24).⁵⁴

10 June 2024

General strike called off after wage offer

On 04.06.24, Nigeria's main trade unions suspended an indefinite nationwide strike to negotiate an increase in the minimum wage that had only begun the previous day. According to media reports, the strike had shut down the electricity grid, airports, industrial ports, banks, schools, government offices and many other public facilities. The government's promise to increase the monthly minimum wage from the current NGN 30,000 (approx. EUR 18.50, as at 10.06.24) to at least NGN 60,000 (approx. EUR 37, as at 10.06.24) led to the suspension of the strike. The government has also promised to meet with the unions for a week of daily talks.

The continent's largest country by population is experiencing an economic crisis with high inflation. Many blame President Tinubu's economic reforms for the soaring cost of living. The doubling of fuel prices, rising food and transport costs and a significant increase in the price of imported goods are reportedly the consequences of these reforms (cf. BN of 04.03. and 22.04.24).⁵⁵

17 June 2024

Northwest: violent incidents and reports of military success

Media report that on 09.06.24, unidentified assailants killed at least 25 people and abducted many others in the village of Yargoje in the Kankara Local Government Area (LGA) in northwestern Katsina State. Other reports on the same incident put the death toll at 50. Apparently, dozens of the attackers arrived at the scene on motorbikes. Similar acts of violence have occurred several times in this area recently.

Another report on gang crime in the region also attracted attention. According to media reports on 13.06.24, the Nigerian military killed Buharin Yadi (alias Buhari Alhaji Halidu), leader of a criminal gang, and 36 gang members in the border area with neighbouring Kaduna state. This gang is notorious in both states for raiding villages, stealing cattle, arms trafficking and drug smuggling. Reports of military success of this kind occur with some regularity in

various parts of Nigeria (cf. BN of 20.11.23 and 03.06.24). The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has informed that in early June 2024, the military killed a total of 197 members of violent groups and arrested 310 others in several regions within one week.⁵⁶

Niger State: Abductees released

Media reported on 11.06.24 that 40 of the 150 or so people have regained their freedom who had been kidnapped in Niger State on 24.05.24 (cf. BN of 27.05.24). In return, relatives and friends of the abductees handed over to the kidnappers six motorbikes worth NGN 1.2 million each (approx. EUR 750, as of 17.06.24) and cash amounting to NGN 2 million (approx. EUR 1,250, as of 17.06.24). Negotiations are ongoing regarding the release of the remaining hostages. Niger State, Nigeria's largest federal state in terms of area, is located in the west of the Middle Belt zone. Attacks on towns and kidnapping crime are a major security problem in the region (cf. BN of 31.05.21, 28.02, 07.03 and 28.03.22, 21.08.23 and 29.04.24).⁵⁷

Northeast: Travellers kidnapped by Islamists

On 10.06.24, unidentified individuals temporarily blocked a motorway near Auno town in northeastern Borno State and kidnapped an unknown number of travellers. According to media reports, the perpetrators are suspected to be members of the Islamist Boko Haram group. Kidnapping for ransom is a source of funding for Boko Haram.⁵⁸

24 June 2024

Southwest: More successes in the fight against crime

Between January and June 2024, the Ondo State Security Network Agency, known as Amotekun, has arrested a total of around 600 suspected criminals in south-western Ondo State. Media reports, citing information provided by high-ranking Amotekun commander Chief Adetunji Adeleye on 19.06.24, say that the detained include numerous kidnappers, burglars, robbers and arsonists, as well as members of Nigeria's peculiar, often mafia-like, so-called cult groups. As a result of Amotekun's successes, kidnapping in Ondo States has reportedly fallen by 90 percent, and those arrested are brought to justice. The Amotekun security outfit, set up in 2020 to combat crime, is active in six south-western states and has recently reported several successes (cf. BN of 25.03., 22.04. and 03.06.24). By European standards, Amotekun is not easy to categorise. According to Chief Adetunji Adeleye, it sees itself as a security outfit "of the people, by the people and for the people", which always seeks to work closely with the conventional security authorities.⁵⁹

President Tinubu: Economic reforms will continue

The economic reforms in Nigeria are continuing despite the hardship they are causing many people, President Bola Tinubu said in a televised address on 12.06.24. The reform measures include a drastic reduction in fuel and electricity subsidies, higher interest rates and the devaluation of the Nigerian naira in relation to the US dollar. Although this causes hardship, the reforms will create a basis for future growth in the long term, the President said. The rising cost of living has led to protests in several major cities (cf. BN of 04.03.24). On 04.06.24, Nigeria's main trade unions suspended a nationwide strike that had begun the day before to negotiate an increase in the minimum wage set by the government (cf. BN of 10.06.24).⁶⁰

Successful vaccination campaign

Seven million girls across the country have been vaccinated against the human papilloma virus (HPV) in two weeks as part of a large-scale immunisation campaign. This is according to media reports based on information from the global vaccination alliance Gavi on 19.06.24. The successful vaccination campaign is a major milestone in Nigeria's fight against cervical cancer and will save countless lives. The current campaign has focussed on the states of Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. Already in 2023, an HPV vaccination campaign had taken place, covering numerous federal states (cf. BN of 18.12.23).⁶¹

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