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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 1 - Cameroon

Overview: In 2021, terrorist activity decreased in the Far North Region. The NGO Stand Up for Cameroon reported that Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa (ISIS-WA) killed 339 people in 2021, compared to an estimated 400 people in 2020, a 15 percent decline in fatalities. Attribution for the attacks is contested in the public sphere. Terrorists appeared to have intensified attacks on military targets, compared with attacks on civilians; however, terrorists continued to attack civilians, which caused many to abandon their villages. As of December 31, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees had identified 358,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 117,000 refugees in the Far North Region in need of humanitarian assistance because of terrorist activity.

Thousands of terrorists and associated family members surrendered and joined disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) centers after the death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in May. The government facilitated the voluntary repatriation of about 2,000 ex combatants and their families back to Nigeria from a DDR center in September. The Cameroon government began constructing a DDR center to host 1,500 ex-combatants in November and facilitated the voluntary return of 7,900 displaced persons to Nigeria in 2021.

Cameroon continued its counterterrorism cooperation with support from the international community. Over the course of the year, Cameroon participated in operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and remained a member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Countering terrorist threats remained a top security priority for the Government of Cameroon.

2021 Terrorist Incidents: Attacks included raids in search of supplies, indiscriminate killings, targeted murders, beheadings, suicide bombings, abductions, arsons, and lootings. A representative sample of the deadliest attacks in the Far North Region included the following:

- On January 8, Boko Haram suicide bombers killed 13 civilians in Mozogo. • On March 18, Boko Haram terrorists killed two civilians and burned at least 52 homes in Kangaleri.
- During July 24-27, ISIS-WA terrorists in military vehicles killed 13 soldiers and wounded several others in Sagme and Zigue.
- On August 30, ISIS-WA terrorists kidnapped 15 fishermen in Blangoua. • On October 6, Boko Haram terrorists shot and killed seven civilians in Assighassia.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Cameroon continued to use the 2014 antiterrorism law to prosecute suspected terrorists, but also to suppress dissent and arrest activists. In June, human rights lawyer Nicodemus Amungwa was imprisoned on charges of inciting terrorism.

Countering Financing of Terrorism: There were no changes since 2020.

Countering Violent Extremism: During September 21-24, the IOM and the government trained 30 participants on planning, implementation, and coordination of DDR programs and ways to increase women and youth engagement in the project framework. Training was provided within the context of the Lake Chad Basin Regional Stabilization Strategy to improve recovery and resiliency in terrorist-affected areas.

In September, the Rapid Intervention Battalion gave books and supplies to 300 students and teachers in Bodo, Far North Region, as part of a “Get Back to School” program to promote education in areas affected by terrorist attacks.

In 2021, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the IOM supported victims of Boko Haram and ISIS-WA through a project to promote social cohesion, facilitate economic recovery, and support the local government in Mayo-Sava, Mayo Tsanaga, and Logone-et-Chari, the three most-affected divisions in the Far North Region.

In 2021, the government invested \$10 million to rebuild infrastructure destroyed by Boko Haram. In October, the government launched the reconstruction of markets, security posts, and schools that terrorists in Amchide, Far North Region, had destroyed. The UNDP performed the reconstruction under the Lake Chad Basin Regional Stabilization Strategy.

The government facilitated the surrender of thousands of terrorists and their family members and provided food and accommodations for ex-combatants at DDR centers. It hosted at least 1,500 ex-combatants and their families at the DDR center in Meri and transformed many public buildings along the border with Nigeria into temporary DDR housing. In September, the government eased the voluntary repatriation of an estimated 1,993 ex-combatants and their families to Nigeria. From January through March, the government facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 7,900 refugees at the camp in Minawao, Far North Region. In November, the

government began constructing a \$2.6 million DDR center in Meme, Far North Region, that is expected to host at least 1,500 ex-combatants.

In May, National DDR Coordinator Francis Fai Yengo organized a seminar to explain the DDR process to stakeholders, including ex-combatants, security officers, administrative authorities, and host communities. Local languages Mandara and Kanuri were available during the seminar. The organizers urged ex-combatants and ex-associates at the DDR center to encourage other terrorists to drop their weapons.

The Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery Program for Lake Chad (RESILAC), funded by the European Union and the French Development Agency, promoted social cohesion between IDPs and local communities in the Far North Region. RESILAC created jobs and supported agricultural entrepreneurship.

In 2021, the State Department funded 13 civil society organizations to support locally led efforts in the Far North Region to prevent violent extremism as well as a project to strengthen social cohesion through trust-building activities between local communities and security forces.

International and Regional Cooperation: There were no changes since 2020.

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