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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Nigeria – July to December 2023

31 December 2023

03 July 2023

North-west: Mob kills Muslim for alleged blasphemous remarks

A Muslim man was killed in Sokoto State on 25.06.23 for alleged blasphemy. According to media reports, a dispute between the victim and colleagues at the abattoir in the city of Sokoto had escalated. During an argument about one or several beggars his colleagues had accused the man of making statements that could be interpreted as an insult to the Prophet Mohammed. When the police arrived, the mob fled, leaving the victim unconscious. The man's death was confirmed at the hospital. The authorities are searching for the perpetrators. The Sokoto governor called on the people to be law-abiding and calm. In May 2022, a university student in Sokoto had been killed by her fellow students over allegations of blasphemous comments on social networks (cf. BN of 16.05.22).

North-east: UN fears famine

According to UN data from 28.06.23, around six million people in north-eastern Nigeria are in need of humanitarian aid.

In the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, 4.3 million people are at immediate risk of hunger in the coming months. 700,000 children under the age of five are at acute risk of life-threatening malnutrition - twice as many as in 2022 and four times as many as in 2021. This is caused by Nigeria's difficult economic situation with high inflation and years of security crisis due to the threat posed by the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Insecurity prevents many from farming or earning an income. The UN Emergency Response Programme called on the global community to disburse planned aid.

10 July 2023

South-East: NGO rescues thousands of so-called witch children

The Child's Rights Rehabilitation Network (CRARN), an NGO based in the south-eastern state of Akwa Ibom, has rescued a total of around 8,000 so-called witch children between 2003 and 2023. Corresponding media reports are based on the NGO's own information released on 09.07.23. The organisation, which operates from Eket Local Government Area (LGA), has been working since 2003 to help children who have been labelled as child witches and sorcerers by their environment and who may have been cast out. The aim of the NGO's work is the reintegration of the affected children into society. At times, parents and other responsible caregivers are criminally prosecuted. Efforts by the Department of State Services and other security agencies are to be commended in this context, the NGO said. The NGO offers various forms of support for victims, including accommodation. Good educational opportunities are the lynchpin of its work, the NGO said.

Lagos State: Shelter opened

The Lagos State Government, through its Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), opened the "EKO HAVEN" shelter with about 30 beds for victims of sexualised and gender-based violence on 25.06.2013. According to media reports, this is part of its commitment to a holistic support for victims. The facility aims to protect people, strengthen self-determination and reintegrate them into society. The shelter's location is confidential and it is equipped with security installations, the announcement said. Violence and stalking in connection with sexual orientation and gender affiliation are not uncommon in Nigeria (cf. BN of 02.01.23). According to media reports, the Nigerian police said on 05.07.23 that it registered a total of 111 cases of gender-based and sexualised violence in Lagos State between April and June 2023, and expressed its concern about the high number.

Food crisis in the North-West

A food crisis is worsening in the north-west. The aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is stepping up its activities there. In a press release dated 03.07.23 MSF warns that the aid currently being provided in the region may not be sufficient to avert a severe humanitarian crisis in the near future. Specifically, MSF has opened three new outpatient therapeutic feeding centres - in addition to the ten inpatient and 32 outpatient centres already operating in Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states. Between January and May 2023, 10,200 severely malnourished children with medical complications had been treated as inpatients in north-western Nigeria. Already last year, MSF had pointed out the alarmingly high number of children affected by malnutrition in the region (cf. BN of 10.10.22). According to UN data, children in the north-east are also at risk of malnutrition (cf. BN 03.07.23).

17 July 2023

Benue State and Plateau State: Deaths in attacks on several localities

Armed assailants of the regional militia Sankera attacked the villages of Adogo and Akpuuna in Benue State on 07.07. and 08.07.23, killing at least 24 people. This was reported by the media. In addition, people were injured and houses were burnt down. Military personnel had taken action against the aggressors, according to the reports. Attacks with numerous fatalities have not been uncommon in Benue State recently (cf. BN 12.06.23 and 22.05.23). According to media reports, the Nigerian authorities had struck a peace pact with the Sankera militia in 2020, which had been known locally for crimes such as murders, kidnappings, robbery and cattle theft. After the military killed the leader of the Sankera militia, it took up arms again.

On 08.07. and 09.07.23, violent groups in Plateau State attacked several villages in Mangu Local Government Area (LGA) and Jos South LGA, as reported by the media. A total of about 20 people, including an infant, were reportedly killed and many people displaced. In response, the responsible governor imposed a 24-hour curfew in Mangu LGA. Inter-communal violence is also widespread in Plateau State, especially in Mangu LGA (cf. BN of 22.05.23 and 26.06.23). According to the Chief of Staff of the Nigerian Army (COAS), the security problems in Plateau are largely due to unresolved conflicts between pastoralists and farming communities.

According to a recent report by Beacon Consulting, a Nigerian-based security consultancy organisation, around 460 attacks were recorded across Nigeria in June 2023, resulting in more than 800 deaths and around 240 abductions. The incidents took place in 234 different LGAs and in the capital Abuja.

Enugu State: Police kill suspected separatists

Police forces in the south-eastern state of Enugu reportedly killed four armed men on 07.07.23. They were trying to enforce a controversial one-week sit-at-home order by a faction of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement, which has been banned in Nigeria since 2017. According to media reports, the police also confiscated weapons and ammunition during the incident in Enugu South Local Government Area (LGA). The underlying sit-at-home order was called by Simon Ekpa (cf. BN of 06.03.23), an IPOB leader. Sit-at-home orders are a kind of voluntary curfew (lockdown) of the population in certain regions of south-eastern Nigeria. Already in the past, IPOB has tried to exert pressure on the Nigerian government with such measures. One of the specific aims of such orders is to secure the release of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu, who has been in prison since the summer of 2021 (cf. BN of 07.11.22). Those who disregard sit-at-home orders risk reprisals.

State of emergency due to food shortage

President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency for food security on 13.07.23 to address rising food prices and shortages, according to media reports. In order to address food supply shortages, the government has designed immediate, medium and long-term interventions, he said. These range from the provision of fertilisers and cereals to the transfer of responsibility for food and water to the National Security Council and other measures. Poorer households would also receive financial benefits. According to media reports, the International Monetary Fund has also warned of rising food prices in Nigeria. Among the many causes also the consequences of flooding and high fertiliser costs were cited.

24 July 2023

Plateau State: Inter-communal violence claims lives

Armed men killed at least two people in Wereng community in Riyom Local Government Area (LGA) on 19.07.23. According to media reports, the attackers were militiamen of the Fulani ethnic group. Operation Safe Haven (OpSH) forces were initially able to repel the attackers, who then proceeded to advance into the communities Kuru Station, Rinyan and Wereng, though. The forces also seized at least 1,000 cows and a large number of sheep. According to media reports, the animals had been released by herders from the Fulani ethnic group to graze on farmland in communities in Mangu Local Government Area (LGA). The actors involved in the conflict are herdsman and sedentary farmers. The violence is probably the result of disputes over land, grazing and water rights as well as ethnic rivalries. The fact that the nomadic people are mostly Muslims and the sedentary people often Christians, adds to the volatility of the situation (cf. BN of 22.05.23). Inter-communal violence is widespread in Plateau State, especially in Mangu LGA (cf. BN of 26.06.23).

Imo State: Traditional ruler killed

According to media reports, armed men invaded the residence of traditional ruler Eze Nnamdi Mmirioma in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area (LGA) of southeastern Imo State and shot him dead on 17.07.23. So far, no reason for the killing of the ruler of Ezuhu na Amadi autonomous community could be established. According to the police, the incident has caused great fear among the local population. Traditional rulers are still very influential in large parts of Nigeria. Already in November 2022, the killing of a traditional ruler in Imo State had caused a great stir (cf. BN of 21.11.22).

Katsina State: Air force kills dozens of people

On 17.07.23, the Nigerian Armed Forces killed about 22 people in air strikes in Batsari and Jibia Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the northern state of Katsina. According to media reports, the air strikes were directed against criminal groups, designated as terrorists, operating in the region, who are allegedly responsible for several kidnappings and violent attacks. In August 2022, the Nigerian Air Force had killed the leader of the violent group, Alhaji Abdulkareem Lawal (alias Kareem Boss), and some of his followers in Katsina State. He was responsible for organising kidnappings for ransom, cattle rustling and deadly attacks, according to media reports. The government of Nigeria has designated violent actors in the region as terrorists since the beginning of 2022 (cf. BN of 10.01.22).

31 July 2023

Bauchi State: Fatalities and abductions

Armed men ambushed and killed at least nine people, including people from the Kaja community and residents of Tamba village in Ningi Local Government Area (LGA) in Bauchi State on 21.07. and 25.07.23. This follows from concurring media reports. An unknown group also allegedly abducted at least two other people. A member of the local vigilante group was reportedly killed while trying to fight off the attackers. Several individuals stated that the attack was an act of revenge by actors described as bandits after two kidnappers were killed by security forces in the area.

Adamawa State: Arrests after prevented attack on opposition candidate

Security forces in Adamawa State arrested three suspected Boko Haram fighters in Yola, the regional capital, on 23.07.23. According to media reports, they had plotted a deadly attack on the presidential candidate of the

opposition party PDP, Atiku Abubakar. The arrests came amid ongoing court battles over the outcome of Nigeria's February 2023 presidential election (see BN 06.03.23). The PDP party claims that the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party only won by electoral fraud and that the attack was financed by the ruling party because of the ongoing election scrutiny. The APC party denies the allegations.

Southeast: Military destroys separatist camps

Army personnel destroyed several camps operated by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement, which has been banned since 2017, and its armed wing Eastern Security Network (ESN) in Anambra State on 23.07.23. Media, citing official military sources, reported that one person associated with IPOB was killed. The troops also arrested several people and confiscated weapons and vehicles. The military operations, which include Anambra West Local Government Area (LGA), were part of a resumed offensive against suspected IPOB members in the South-South and South-East geo-political zones. An army spokesperson highlighted the military's collaboration with the local vigilante group, Anambra Vigilante Group (AVG), in the operations targeting the camps. Nigerian government agencies and other authorities regularly blame members of the pro-secessionist groups IPOB and ESN for violence in the country's southeast. These groups, however, regularly deny such accusations. Observers of the security situation in the region point out that also other violent groups are active there which have no direct relation to independence efforts. According to media reports, it is a fact that attacks on security forces and state institutions, such as police stations, increased since the ESN was founded in December 2020. In the southeast, the states of Imo and Anambra have been particularly affected by violence recently (see BN of 22.05.23).

07 August 2023

Zamfara State: Fatalities and abductions

Violent actors described as bandits attacked Mayanchi community in Maru Local Government Area (LGA) of Zamfara State on 31.07.23. They killed three people and abducted about 13, according to media reports. Among those killed were members of the local vigilante group. Other people were injured during the stampede triggered by the attack. The violence occurred only a few days after the abduction of at least 23 women in Maradun Local Government Area (LGA) on 27.07.23. Zamfara State is considered one of the states in the country's northwest that have been most affected by banditry for a long time already (cf. BN of 28.11.22 and 02.01.23).

The Nigerian Air Force killed at least 16 members of violent groups in Zamfara State and destroyed their camps on 28.07. and 29.07.23. According to media reports, the air strikes were carried out in Zurmi and Tsafe LGAs. Air strikes against criminal groups allegedly responsible for kidnappings and violent attacks are not uncommon in the region (cf. BN of 02.01. and 24.07.23).

Kaduna State: Inter-communal violence claims lives

Since 21.07.23, armed men have killed about six people and abducted at least 40 others in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State. According to media reports, the victims are sedentary people, among them the vice-chairman of the local chapter of the Islamic sect Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'ah Wa Iqamatus-Sunnah (JIBWIS).

The attackers also destroyed several agricultural fields. According to observers, the attacks against the farming population pose a threat to agricultural yields and increase concerns about the food situation in the region.

Successes in the fight against human trafficking

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) section in the northwestern state of Kebbi says since February 2022 it has intercepted a total of 52 victims of human trafficking before they left Nigeria and handed them over to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). This is according to media reports of 03.08.23. The persons concerned were on their way to Libya. Among them were many, mainly female, youths from different parts of Nigeria, the reports said.

According to media reports, the Director General of NAPTIP officially announced at an anti-trafficking event on 27.07.23 that the agency had secured a total of 624 convictions for human trafficking offences since 2004 - 80 of them last year alone and 48 so far in 2023. On this occasion, the Director General explained that Nigeria had a comprehensive law from 2003 dealing with this type of offences. NAPTIP reports regularly state the number of

victims of trafficking freed during rescue operations or the number of persons convicted of trafficking in a certain period of time (cf. BN of 04.10.21, 25.04. and 25.07.22).

14 August 2023

Borno State: Military strike against Boko Haram

In collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), troops of the Nigerian military killed 11 Boko Haram members on the outskirts of Sambisa Forest in Bama Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State on 04.08. and 05.08.23. This follows from a media report citing information from an expert on the Lake Chad region. The military also arrested four other Boko Haram members and destroyed six of their camps.

Furthermore, troops attacked a suspected Boko Haram base in Konduga LGA in the same state, killing two Boko Haram members and recovering weapons, according to statements of the Nigerian Army on 10.08.23. One terrorist has surrendered, the army said.

According to media reports, the military is continuing its campaign against several militant and criminal groups in the country's northeast. Success stories of this kind are not uncommon (cf. BN of 30.01. and 06.02.23). The Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have staged attacks and other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for years, especially in Nigeria's northeast (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23).

Plateau State: Numerous fatalities in attacks

According to media reports, armed men attacked two localities in Barkin Ladi LGA of Plateau State on 10.08.23, killing at least 20 people. Civil society groups say that ethnic Fulani herdsmen are responsible for the acts. Clashes between non-sedentary herders and sedentary farmers have not been uncommon in recent times. Conflicts over land, pasture and water rights might well be behind the acts of violence. The non-sedentary people involved are usually Muslims and the sedentary people are often Christians (cf. BN of 22.05.23).

Troops from Operation Safe Haven have been deployed to restore order, according to media reports. The acts occurred despite an ongoing military operation aimed at curbing attacks in Plateau State, which have killed hundreds of people since May 2023 (cf. BN of 22.05., 26.06., 17.07. and 24.07.23).

Lagos: Cult groups kill over a dozen people in five months

According to a media report dated 02.08.23, cultists killed at least 15 people in the Lagos metropolitan area between March and July 2023.

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. Because of the history of some groups as student fraternities, "cults" 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 strong 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.

According to observers, the phenomenon has become more significant recently, especially in the metropolis of Lagos. For example, on 30.06.23, several people were arrested who were allegedly members of a group known as the Kesari Brotherhood and associated with cult crime. The observers say that atrocities attributed to cultists continue to be not at all uncommon. Recently, cult groups are said to have been relatively successful in recruiting new members. The recruits are mostly young adults from different educational backgrounds and professions. A police spokesperson stated on 10.08.23 that a Lagos State police command recently foiled the admission of nine male minors aged between nine and 14 years to a cult group.

21 August 2023

Niger State: Numerous fatalities in attack on village

Violent actors described as bandits attacked a locality near Zungeru in Wushshi Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State on 13.08.23, killing at least 26 members of the Nigerian security forces. Some of the victims were highranking members of the military, according to media reports. Several members of local vigilante groups were

injured. In addition to the deadly attacks, the bandits are said to be responsible for attacks on sedentary people and for rustling. Troops deployed to drive the bandits out of the village killed more than 30 of the approximately 70 attackers, according to media reports.

Niger State is Nigeria's largest state, located in the west of the Middle Belt zone between northern and southern Nigeria. According to an expert on the region, a decrease in attacks on localities by violent actors in Niger State has been noted recently. In 2022, several deadly attacks on localities (cf. BN of 28.02.22, 07.03.22 and 28.03.22) had occurred in Niger State.

Borno State: Hundreds killed in clashes between Islamist groups

Fighting between rival Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) left more than 100 members of both groups dead in the Lake Chad region on 12.08.23. Boko Haram members also reportedly captured 60 members of ISWAP on 13.08.23 on their way to Damasak in Borno State. The captives include senior members, according to media reports. The situation had escalated because several ISWAP members had recently joined the so-called Buduma group of Boko Haram.

Battles between the Islamist groups Boko Haram and ISWAP with numerous casualties are not uncommon (cf. BN of 27.03.23). The rivalry has existed since the ISWAP group split from Boko Haram in 2016. Since then, the Boko Haram factions Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and ISWAP are sometimes referred to as Boko Haram, but in some reports Boko Haram is only used for the JAS group. The term Boko Haram is also used as a generic term for both ISWAP and JAS. Both groups have been carrying out attacks and other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for years, especially in northeastern Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23).

Southeast: Police kill suspected separatists

Police forces stormed a camp of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement, which has been banned since 2017, killing three suspected IPOB members in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State in the southeast on 10.08.23. This is according to media reports citing official police statements of the same day. Those killed are said to be IPOB members who try to enforce illegal sit-at-home orders and do not shy away from violence against civilians. IPOB tries to put pressure on the Nigerian government with sit-at-home orders in the southeast of the country (cf. BN of 17.07.23). Government agencies and other authorities regularly hold IPOB or its armed wing Eastern Security Network (ESN) responsible for many acts of violence in the southeast. On 23.07.23, the military destroyed several IPOB or ESN camps in the southeastern state of Anambra (cf. BN of 31.07.23).

Success in the fight against FGM at regional level

Following complaints by the Nigerian NGO Save Haven Development Initiative, 15 communities in the southeastern state of Cross River have abandoned the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). This follows from a media report of 15.08.23, which refers to statements made by the founder of the NGO at an event against FGM in Lagos. Another success story concerns the Local Government Area (LGA) Iju Ifako in the north of Lagos State. According to the local traditional ruler, FGM is no longer permitted there. Traditional rulers are still very influential in large parts of the country. Reports of successful anti-FGM campaigns and measures at regional level are not uncommon in Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.11.20, 22.02.21, 09.05.22 and 21.11.22). According to evaluations of scientific surveys, the prevalence of FGM among Nigerian girls and women has been declining for years (cf. BN of 23.01.23).

28 August 2023

North: Several abductions

Violent actors abducted at least 13 people in two separate incidents in Zamfara State on 19.08.23 and 25.08.23. According to media reports, members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), a village headman and several sedentary people from a farm are among those abducted. Ransom was reportedly demanded. Armed actors described as bandits raided villages in Ningi and Toro Local Government Areas (LGA) in Bauchi State on 21.08.23, abducting at least 13 people. Members of the Islamist group Boko Haram abducted at least 48 women from their fields in Mafa LGA, Borno State, on 22.08.23. According to an expert on the Chad region, they were freed again on 23.08.23 because their family members had paid ransom to Boko Haram. Boko Haram members also abducted at

least eight sedentary people in a village near Maiduguri in Borno State on 27.08.23. Kidnappings for ransom are not uncommon in northern Nigeria (see BN of 17.07.23, 31.07.23 and 07.08.23).

04 September 2023

Delta State: Dozens arrested at gay wedding

On 29.08.23, Nigerian police arrested at least 100 men for alleged homosexuality in a hotel at an event near Warri town in Delta State. According to media reports, the event was the marriage ceremony of a homosexual couple. 67 of them are to be charged. According to the Nigerian police, it is one of the largest arrest operations in the country targeting homosexuals. LGBTIQ persons are tabooed and discriminated against in Nigerian society. Homosexual acts are punishable under both secular and Sharia law. Arrests at LGBTIQ events, such as "gay weddings", are not uncommon in Nigeria (cf. BN of 02.01.23).

Borno State: Military frees several hostages

Nigerian army troops liberated at least 25 people, including several women and children, from captivity by the Islamist group Boko Haram in Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA) on 26.08. and 27.08.23, according to media reports. The military is waging a sustained campaign against militant and criminal groups in the north-east of the country. Military success stories of this kind are not uncommon (cf. BN of 06.03.23, 26.07.23 and 14.08.23).

Kaduna State: Attack with fatalities

Armed actors attacked a mosque in a village in Ikara Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State on 01.09.23, killing at least seven people. This is according to media reports. Two other people were injured. Violent actors have wreaked havoc in Kaduna State in recent years, abducting and killing several people (cf. BN of 17.04.23, 24.04.23 and 15.05.23).

11 September 2023

Court ruling on the confirmation of the presidential election

On 06.09.23, the Nigerian election court rejected the challenge of the February 2023 presidential election and confirmed the victory of Bola Tinubu (cf. BN of 06.03.23). Nigeria's opposition candidates Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Nigerian Labour Party (LP) had applied to the court to declare the election invalid, according to media reports of 06.09.23. Reasons for challenging the last presidential elections are said to be electoral fraud and the failure of the electoral authority to publish the results electronically (cf. BN of 06.03.23). According to media reports, Abubakar will appeal the court ruling and will not accept Tinubu's election victory. Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, no challenge of any presidential election result has been successful. Already on 21.03.23, a challenge filed against the presidential election result was rejected by the competent electoral court by direction of the Nigerian electoral authority Inec (cf. BN of 17.04.23).

Katsina State: Fatalities and abductions

Violent actors described as terrorists killed seven people and abducted 12 others in an attack on a village in Sabuwa Local Government Area (LGA) of Katsina State on 05.09.23. This is according to a media report. Several people were reportedly injured. The armed actors were also said to be responsible for cattle rustling in the community. Since the beginning of 2022, the Nigerian government designates violent actors in the region as terrorists (cf. BN of 10.01.22). Sabuwa LGA borders Kaduna State and, according to media reports, is not infrequently affected by attacks of armed groups.

18 September 2023

North: Military strike against suspected terrorists

Nigerian armed forces killed about 150 violent actors described as terrorists and arrested about 450 others in various operations in northern Nigeria between 31.08 and 14.09.23, according to the Defence Headquarters (DHQ). This is reported by the media. The arrests took place in Borno State and Yobe State, among others. The dissemination of success stories by DHQ is not uncommon (cf. BN of 06.02., 20.03. and 03.04.23).

Sokoto State: Fatalities and abductions

Violent actors attacked a community in Goronyo Local Government Area (LGA) in Sokoto State on 15.09.2013, killing four people and abducting about 30 others. This is according to media reports. The armed actors were also said to be responsible for cattle rustling in the community. Several people have fled to other localities and many villages have been abandoned. Attacks by armed actors are a frequent occurrence in Sokoto State (cf. BN of 12.06.23).

Cross River State and Benue State: Deadly clashes between communities

The Cross River State Governor has imposed a night curfew in four communities in Yala LGA after at least seven people were killed and others injured in violent clashes between people from communities in Cross River State and Benue State on 10.09.23, the media reported. According to the reports, about 15 houses were set ablaze. The reason for the conflict between people from the neighbouring states was the non-payment of leases for land on which settlements had been built. Many people from the area fled to other towns. The curfew was meant to prevent further deaths and loss of property and allow security agencies to get the situation under control. Clashes between non-state actors over farmland are not uncommon in Nigeria (cf. BN of 22.05. and 14.08.23).

25 September 2023**Delta State: Release of persons arrested at alleged "gay wedding"**

According to media reports, on 19.09.23, a court in the southern state of Delta released 69 people on bail who had been arrested on 29.08.23 as participants in an event called a "gay wedding" near the city of Warri. According to the Nigerian police, this was one of the largest arrest operations of this kind made as yet (cf. BN of 04.09.23). According to the lawyer of the released prisoners, the bail set per person was NGN 500,000 (about EUR 600, as of 25.09.23). The court did not consider the alleged offence to be a capital offence. Human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, expressed concern about the public presentation of the suspects in the media. In Nigeria, homosexuality is widely seen as morally unacceptable and taboo in public opinion. In 2014, the country introduced an anti-homosexuality law that sanctions certain behaviour, including and especially the holding of so-called gay weddings. Already in the past, there have been arrests at events which the security forces considered to be gay weddings (cf. BN of 02.01.23). According to media reports, police in Lagos had taken action against 47 men under said law in 2019. The court did not pursue the case any further at the time because the law enforcement authorities had failed to name witnesses (cf. BN of 02.11.20). On 08.12.19, 26 young men dressed as women had been arrested in Kano State. They had been admonished and then handed over to their parents (cf. BN of 16.12.19), according to the reports. 19 persons arrested on 18.12.22 in Kano State who allegedly wanted to celebrate the marriage of a homosexual couple were, according to media reports, not punished but received counselling (cf. BN of 02.01.23).

Imo State: Attack on security forces

According to media reports on 19.09.23, unknown armed actors killed at least five members of Nigerian security forces in an attack on a community in Ehime Mbano Local Government Area (LGA) in Imo State. According to the authorities, violent supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement, which has been banned since 2017, were responsible for these acts. IPOB denies the accusations. Deadly attacks against security forces are not uncommon in south-eastern Nigeria (cf. BN of 27.02.23). The aim of IPOB and its armed wing Eastern Security Network (ESN) is to detach Nigeria's south-east from the nation state as a whole (cf. BN of 06.03.23). Observers of the security situation in the region point out that violent groups with no direct connection to independence efforts are active there as well (cf. BN of 31.07.23).

Zamfara State: Abductions of several female students

Armed actors abducted at least 30 people, including about 24 female students from three hostels of the Federal University Gusau (FUG) in north-western Zamfara State on 22.09/23. Members of the Nigerian army rescued about six people and killed at least five of the kidnappers, according to media reports. This is the first mass kidnapping of students since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu took office in May 2023. Kidnappings for ransom are not uncommon in northern Nigeria (cf. BN of 17.07.23, 31.07.23, 07.08.23 and 28.08.23).

09 October 2023

Zamfara State: Kidnapped female students freed

According to the university authorities, on 25.09.23 security forces freed a total of around 16 female students who had been abducted from student hostels of the Federal University Gusau (FUG) in the north-west of Zamfara State by armed actors on 22.09.23 (cf. BN of 25.09.23). Members of the army, the air force and the police led an operation to rescue the remaining kidnap victims. This was the first mass abduction of female students since president Bola Ahmed Tinubu entered office in May 2023. Numerous armed civil defence militias have been established in Zamfara State with the aim of taking action against the armed actors. Kidnappings to extort ransom money are no rare occurrence in the north of Nigeria (cf. BN of 17.07.23, 31.07.23, 07.08.23 and 28.08.23). According to reports in the media, armed men abducted five female students from a university in the north-western state of Katsina a few days later, on 04.10.23. One suspect has been taken into custody.

Zamfara State: Killings and abductions

On 24.09.23 armed men killed around 14 people and injured at least 60 in two municipalities in the north-western state of Zamfara. According to a report in the media, the armed actors are presumed to be members of an Islamist group. Violent actors referred to as terrorists attacked a number of vehicles on a road leading from Magami to Gusau in Zamfara State on 07.10.23, killing ten people. According to a report in the media, several persons were abducted and vehicles were set on fire. Members of the local civil defence militia are said to be among the dead.

Edo State: Human trafficker sentenced to twelve years in prison

A court in Benin City, capital of Edo State in the south-east of Nigeria, sentenced human trafficker Felicia Osaigbovo, alias Mama Masha, to twelve years in prison on 03.10.23. According to reports in the media, the 62 yearold must also pay a fine of NGN 24 million (approx. EUR 30,000 as per 09.10.23). At the end of the trial, which began at the end of July 2021, the court considered it proven that the convicted woman was guilty of recruiting twelve young Nigerian girls and transferring them abroad for the purpose of sexual exploitation as a member of a human trafficking syndicate in 2015. The director-general of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) said she was pleased at the verdict and stressed NAPTIP's role in the proceedings. She thanked various parties involved, including the Belgian police authorities, the British National Crime Agency, which was involved as part of the Joint Border Task Force initiative and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for their efforts to achieve justice for victims of human trafficking. She added that the conviction demonstrated the determination of NAPTIP and other institutions to resolutely combat human trafficking. Announcements by NAPTIP regularly state the number of victims of human trafficking freed in rescue operations and the number of people convicted of human trafficking (cf. BN of 04.10.21, 25.04.22, 25.07.22 and 07.08.23).

Imo State: IPOB members killed during clearance of separatist camps

It has been reported in the media that troops of the Joint Task Force South-East cleared four camps of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) - an independence movement which has been banned since 2017 - and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), in an operation with the code name UDO KA II which was carried out in Okigwe Local Government Area (LGA) on 01.10.23. Two suspected IPOB members were reportedly killed and four injured in the operation. A spokesman for the Joint Task Force stated that numerous explosive devices were found on the routes to the separatists' camps. He said that items seized when clearing the camps included cash, cement, four motorbikes, one e-bike and solar collectors. He added that it was assumed that atrocities had occurred in the camps. It is not rare for such announcements of successful operations to be propagated (cf. BN of 31.07.23 and 21.08.23).

16 October 2023

North: Military strike against suspected terrorists

Security forces comprising members of the police, the military and the local civil defence militia have rescued at least 20 kidnap victims and killed around 67 suspected kidnappers in Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area (LGA) in Bauchi State. According to reports in the media, this was confirmed by the governor of Bauchi State on 09.10.23.

The governor has reportedly donated a number of motorbikes and around NGN 10 million (approx. EUR 12,000 as per 16.10.23) in support of the local security forces.

Security forces of the Nigerian air force thwarted a possible attack when they killed dozens of actors described as terrorists who were believed to be about to stage an attack in Maru LGA in Zamfara state on 10.10.23. According to a report in the media, the violent actors were intending to attack a military outpost in Danko Wasagu LGA, Kebbi State.

According to information from the Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ), in the space of one week at the beginning of October 2023 the military killed some 50 actors described as terrorists in various operations in the north-east, centre and north-west of the country, arrested at least 114 such actors and freed around 49 kidnapped hostages. It is not rare for such announcements of successful operations to be propagated by DHQ (cf. BN of 06.02., 20.03., 03.04. and 18.09.23).

Nasarawa State: Students abducted

Attackers described as terrorists abducted at least four students of Nasarawa State University in the town of Keffi in Nasarawa State on the night of 09.10.23. Kidnappings of students to extort ransom money are no rare occurrence in the north of Nigeria (cf. BN of 31.07., 07.08., 28.08. and 09.10.23). According to information from the university authorities, as recently as on 25.09.23 security forces had freed around 16 female students who armed actors had abducted from student hostels of the Federal University of Gusau in the north-west of Zamfara State on 22.09.23 (cf. BN of 25.09. and 09.10.23). A number of days later, on 04.10.23, armed men abducted five female students from a university in the north-western state of Katsina (cf. BN of 09.10.23).

Trade unions suspend nationwide strike over pay

On 02.10.23 the two largest trade unions in Nigeria, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), suspended an indefinite strike which was to begin on 03.10.23. According to reports in the media, the trade unions were demanding a pay rise to the equivalent of US\$ 260 a month, in order to offset the rising cost of living. It has reportedly been agreed that the government will meet the employees' demands within 30 days, in return for which the unions will suspend the strike for 30 days. Following consultations with the unions and the federal government, on 01.10.23 president Bola Tinubu announced a temporary pay rise for 15 million low-income employees corresponding to around US\$ 70 a month for the next six months. He also promised to suspend valueadded tax on diesel, in order to lower transport costs. According to reports in the media, Tinubu is under pressure to ease economic hardship after abolishing petrol subsidies which had been in place for decades and allowing a devaluation of the naira currency, which has led to a rise in prices.

Police officer sentenced to death

On 09.10.23 a court in Lagos State sentenced police officer Drambi Vandi to death by hanging for murder. According to reports in the media, the court found him guilty of having shot dead lawyer Bolanie Raheem from point blank range on 25.12.22. The crime occurred in connection with a traffic check which escalated out of control. The convicted man has a right of appeal. Should the sentence be confirmed, it will fall to the governor of Lagos to decide whether Vandi is to be executed. Citing information from AI, media report that seven death sentences have been executed since 2007, the most recent case being in 2016. Vandi's conviction is considered to be ground-breaking, as while members of the police and other security forces are frequently accused of arbitrary harassment, extortion and other criminal offences, they are rarely prosecuted. Dozens of people died in protests against police violence which were staged for several weeks under the #EndSARS banner in the commercial capital of Lagos in the autumn of 2020 (cf. BN of 26.10.20).

23 October 2023

Zamfara State: Dozens abducted

Abductions and attacks on villages and educational establishments by armed actors described as bandits in order to extort ransom money have recently been taking place with a degree of regularity (cf. BN of 07.08., 28.08. and 09.10.23). A major stir has been caused by recent reports in the media, according to which armed assailants on motorbikes attacked a mountain village in the north-western state of Zamfara on 17.10.23, abducting at least 50 people, including women and children and setting a number of homes on fire. Three people were reportedly killed

and seven injured. As part of operation Hadarin Daji, on 15.10.23 troops of the Nigerian military freed four students of Federal University Gusau (FUGUS) in Zamfara State who had been abducted by armed men from their hostel outside of the campus on 14.10.23. This was the second time within less than 30 days that students of Federal University Gusau had been abducted from their hostels (cf. BN of 25.09. and 09.10.23). According to reports in the media, several people from a community in the Kaura Namoda Local Government Area (LGA) of Zamfara State blocked the motorway from Gusau to Kaura Namoda on 17.10.23 to protest against attacks and kidnappings by actors in the region which the government refers to as terrorists and to demand intervention by the government.

Benue State: Several people killed in attacks attributed to herdsmen

It has been reported in the media that armed actors killed at least eleven people in two different attacks on two communities in the Logo and Gwer-West LGAs in Benue State on 17.10.23. Homes in the villages were reportedly looted and a number of people were injured. It is suspected that the violent actors were armed herdsmen. Local authorities suspect a link to simmering conflicts over land, grazing and water rights between arable farming communities and vagrants who live first and foremost from livestock farming. Ethnic and religious rivalries, particularly in the central region in which the violence occurred, contribute to the complexity of the situation (cf. BN of 30.01., 13.03. and 24.04.23).

Third anniversary of #EndSARS protests

Three years after the protests which continued for several weeks under the #EndSARS banner in the autumn of 2020, at least 15 people who were arrested at the time in Lagos remain in custody. This is revealed in a report published by AI on 20.10.23 in which the individuals concerned are referred to by name and are quoted directly. Most of them reportedly remain in custody without trial. Dozens of people died in the protests against police brutality in Lagos in October 2020 (cf. BN of 26.10.20). The protests went by the name of #EndSARS because one of the demonstrators' key demands was the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). According to AI, more than 40 of the people arrested during the protests were still in custody in October 2022 (cf. BN of 24.10.22). AI disputes claims by government agencies that comprehensive police reforms have since been carried out, noting that Nigerian security forces continue to commit human rights violations which often go unpunished. A court in Lagos State nevertheless sentenced a police officer to death on 09.10.23 for committing a murder in the course of his duties. The verdict is not yet final (cf. BN of 16.10.23).

30 October 2023

Gombe State: Arrests at "gay wedding"

On 21.10.23 security forces of the Nigerian military arrested around 76 people who were allegedly attending a "gay party" and had organised a wedding ceremony between two men in the northern state of Gombe. The spokesman of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has stated that 21 men who openly acknowledged that they were homosexual were among those arrested. On 19.09.23 a court in Delta State released 69 people on bail who had been arrested as participants in an event described as a "gay wedding" near to the city of Warri on 29.08.23. Public opinion in Nigeria continues to regard homosexuality as a taboo issue which is morally unacceptable. In 2014 an anti-homosexuality law was introduced in the country, imposing sanctions on certain practices, including the holding of so-called "gay weddings" in particular. There have been previous cases of arrests at events deemed by security forces to constitute "gay weddings" (cf. BN of 02.01., 04.09. and 25.09.23).

Katsina State: Killings and abductions

It emerges from reports in the media that armed actors described as terrorists killed around nine people and abducted a number of people in an attack on the town of Dan Musa in the Local Government Area (LGA) of the same name on 22.10.23. A number of people were reportedly injured. It appears that the armed actors also seized personal belongings. Nigeria's government has been referring to violent actors in the region as terrorists since the beginning of 2022 (cf. BN of 10.01.22). According to a report in the media, on 28.10.23 police forces and the military freed four kidnap victims in Dandume LGA who had been abducted at different locations in the Katsina State. Attacks on communities and kidnappings by armed groups are no rare occurrence in Katsina State (cf. BN of 11.09.23).

Court revokes ban on IPOB

The ban dating from 2017 on the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement and its classification as a terrorist organisation by the Nigerian government and the governors of the South-East region was declared unconstitutional by the supreme court in the city of Enugu, in the state of the same name, on 26.10.23. According to reports in the media, the competent judge found that self-determination did not constitute a crime and thus could not serve as a basis for the arrest, detainment and criminal prosecution of IPOB's leader, Nnamdi Kanu. IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu has been detained in Nigeria since the summer of 2021 (cf. BN of 07.11.22). According to a lawyer representing IPOB, pursuant to the provisions of the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights the ban on IPOB constitutes a breach of the Nigerian constitution, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. The lawyer further asserts the ban to be a breach of Kanu's civil rights. In January 2023 Kanu brought an action against the Nigerian government in connection with the ban. The court has now ordered the Nigerian government to make a public apology to Kanu and to pay him damages to the amount of around NGN 8 million (approx. EUR 5.9 million, as per 30.10.23).

The aim of IPOB and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), is the separation of Nigeria's South-East region from Nigeria (cf. BN of 06.03.23). Government institutions and other authorities consistently attribute many acts of violence in the South-East region to IPOB and ESN (cf. BN of 21.08.23). Such accusations are equally consistently denied. In the past, IPOB has sought to exert pressure on the Nigerian government by measures such as sit-at-home orders (cf. BN of 17.07.23). This is a form of voluntary lockdown for the population in certain regions of south-eastern Nigeria. One of the specific aims of such orders was reportedly to secure the release of IPOB's imprisoned leader, Nnamdi Kanu (cf. BN of 07.11.22). Anyone who defies sit-at-home orders risks reprisals.

06 November 2023

Borno State: Security improved

The governor of Borno State announced on 27.10.23 that none of the state's 27 Local Government Areas (LGAs) are now under the control of any Islamist groups. He praised the cooperation between the Nigerian army, the police, the paramilitary forces and the airforce in maintaining security. According to reports in the media, the military has carried out a sustained campaign against a number of militant and criminal groups in the north-east of the country. Such announcements of successes are no rarity (cf. BN of 30.01., 06.02. and 14.08.23). 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 many years, above all in the north-east of Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23).

Abia State: Dozens of bodies of suspected kidnap victims discovered

On 30.10.23 authorities in Abia State discovered at least 70 bodies, some of which had been decapitated. The bodies had been buried near to a cattle market in Umunneochi in Abia State. A number of dead children are reported to have been found among the corpses. Some of the corpses were reportedly buried some time ago. The bodies are said to be kidnap victims whose families were unable to pay the demanded ransoms. There are no indications as to who is suspected of being behind the killings. According to Abia's governor, the market place is a handover location for ransoms and a hotspot for prostitution as well as arms and drug trafficking.

On 26.10.23 armed actors killed and subsequently beheaded a member of the local civil defence militia in an attack on security forces in a community in Osioma Ngwa LGA in Abia State.

Yobe State: More than 40 killed in Boko Haram attack

Suspected members of the Islamist group Boko Haram attacked the village of Gurokayeya in Geidam LGA in the north-eastern state of Yobe on 30.10.23, killing at least 17 people in all. An explosive device which blew up in the village on 31.10.23 killed at least 20 more people. According to the local police, this represents the biggest attack in Yobe State for 18 months. According to reports in the media, the attack took place because villagers had failed to pay their taxes. There have been instances in the past of members of Islamist groups killing and kidnapping people, above all in neighbouring Borno State (cf. BN of 30.01., 13.03. and 08.05.23).

Kano State: Floggings for cross-dressing

On 31.10.23 a sharia court of the Hisbah police unit in the northern state of Kano sentenced eight men to ten lashes for the offence of cross-dressing. Cross-dressing refers to the wearing of clothing which is generally not considered to be in keeping with a person's gender role. According to reports in the media, the men were arrested at a wedding at which they were allegedly wearing feminine attire. The court reportedly further sentenced the men to three months in prison, should they be unable to pay bail of NGN 10,000 (approx. EUR 12 as per 06.11.23). The floggings were carried out in public on the premises of the Hisbah police on 31.10.23. The "Hisbah police units" are decentrally operative, non-state groups of Muslims who feel obligated to monitor the observance and enforcement of religious rules. 26 young men in women's clothing were arrested in Kano State on 08.12.19. They were given cautions and subsequently returned to their parents (cf. BN of 16.12.19). On 18.12.22 the Islamic Hisbah police arrested 19 Muslim men and women who were intending to celebrate a homosexual couple's marriage. According to reports in the media they were not punished but underwent a form of counselling (cf. BN of 02.01.23). Kano State is one of the states in the predominantly Muslim north of Nigeria in which sharia law can be applied to Muslims.

13 November 2023**Borno State: Fatal attacks on villages**

Suspected members of the Islamist Boko Haram group attacked three villages in Mafa Local Government Area (LGA) in Borno State in the north-east of the country on 05.11.23, killing at least ten people and abducting a number of people. According to reports in the media, those killed were sedentary farmers who were harvesting rice at the time of the attack. They were reportedly killed in a barbaric manner. The attack apparently took place because the villagers had failed to deliver the demanded food and funds. Only a few days before, on 30.10.23, suspected Boko Haram members had attacked the village of Gurokayeya in Geidam LGA in the north-eastern state of Yobe, killing around 40 people in all (cf. BN of 06.11.23). Boko Haram has been carrying out attacks and other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for many years, above all in the north-east of Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22 and 27.03.23). On 28.11.20 Boko Haram members killed dozens of people in an attack on a number of localities in the same area of Borno State (cf. BN of 30.11.20).

Katsina State: Killings and abductions

On 05.11.23 armed attackers killed at least 13 people, most of whom were children, and abducted 20 people in the community of Rugar Kusa in Musawa LGA, Katsina State. According to a report in the media, the victims were pupils of an Islamic school who were taking part in a religious ceremony. Around 20 pupils were injured. The attack was allegedly an act of reprisal. On 07.11.23 violent actors attacked another community in Katsina State, killing around five people and abducting five others. According to a report in the media, the attackers were looking for objects of value and livestock. A number of people were reportedly injured. Attacks on communities and kidnappings by armed groups are no rare occurrence in Katsina State (cf. BN of 11.09.23).

Positive announcements on national health service

Two announcements concerning Nigeria's health service indicated a positive course of development at the beginning of November 2023: According to reports in the media on 03.11.23, Nigeria's federal government and the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) have reinforced efforts to fight the spread of HIV by stepping up corresponding health initiatives. The broader availability of HIV tests, treatment and care services is cited as one specific area of improvement. According to reports in the media on 09.11.23, 2.3 million children in Anambra State received polio vaccinations in September 2023. The government campaign is still ongoing and is being carried out in cooperation with the WHO, among other partners. Nigeria's public health system is generally considered to be underfunded and disadvantaged by a very limited infrastructure in some areas. There is also a substantial disparity between urban and rural areas with regard to the available levels of healthcare.

Ratification of protocol to protect the rights of older persons

On 24.10.23 president Bola Ahmed Tinubu issued approval for ratification by Nigeria of the protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights, Peoples' Rights and the Rights of Older Persons. This emerges from an announcement

by Amnesty International on 25.10.23, which notes that this makes Nigeria the 13th member state to affirm its obligations to strengthen the rights of older persons via binding legal instruments.

20 November 2023

Katsina State: Security forces prevent attack

According to a report in the media, members of the Nigerian police thwarted an attack on a village in Jibia Local Government Area (LGA) in Katsina State on 11.11.23, freeing at least three kidnap victims in the process. On 12.11. and 16.11.23 troops belonging to the 1st Division of the Nigerian armed forces killed around ten attackers referred to as 'bandits' in Kajuru and Birnin-Gwari LGAs in neighbouring Kaduna State. Such reports of successes are no rarity (cf. BN of 06.02. and 14.08.23).

Borno State: Military strike against suspected terrorists

The Nigerian Air Force killed a number of actors referred to as 'terrorists' in the localities of Ajigin and Banki Junction in Borno State. In two air strikes carried out as part of Operation Hadin Kai on 08.11. and 11.11.23. Among the resources destroyed in the attacks were four trucks loaded with weapons. According to reports in the media, the military is conducting a sustained campaign against a number of militant and criminal groups in the north-east of the country. There have been similar reports of successes in the past (cf. BN of 06.02. and 14.08.23).

Anambra State: Success in the fight against human trafficking

Police freed two underage girls and 18 adult women from the hands of individuals referred to as human traffickers during a raid on a hotel in Oba Town in Anambra State in the south of the country on 01.11.23. According to reports in the media, the individuals arrested in the raid are to be put on trial. Systematic exploitation and violence are said to have prevailed at the establishment. The women and girls concerned, who are aged between 16 and 24, were reportedly forced to hand over the money which they earned from prostitution to the person running the accommodation and, in particular, to individuals whom they referred to as 'madams'. The madams had intimidated to the women and girls that they would be released from the establishment after a year. Similar reports of successes achieved by government agencies in the fight against human trafficking have appeared in Nigerian media in the past (cf. BN of 07.08. and 09.10.23).

Thousands of prisoners released

The Nigerian government announced on 19.11.23 that 4,068 prisoners had been released on the previous day to reduce prison overcrowding. According to reports in the media citing official information from the interior minister, the inmates concerned were in prison for failing to pay fines up to the equivalent of EUR 1,100. President Bola Tinubu is reportedly planning further measures to relieve the strain on overcrowded prisons. According to information from the UN, penal institutions in Nigeria are 147 % overcrowded, one reason for this being the large proportion of inmates who have been remanded in custody pending trial. It emerges from reports in the media on 09.10.22 that 68 % of all inmates in Nigeria's prisons are prisoners awaiting trial, some of whom are held on remand for a number of years before their cases are brought to trial (cf. BN of 31.10.22).

27 November 2023

Zamfara State: Killings and abductions

Violent actors described as terrorists attacked a community in Maru Local Government Area (LGA) in Zamfara State on 19.11.23, killing one member of the police at Maru police station and abducting 13 people. According to a report in the media, several women and two children are among the kidnap victims. The purpose of the attack was reportedly to extort ransom money and to seize farm products. It has been reported that armed actors carried out a further attack in Zamfara State on 21.11.23, killing three people from the town of Kaura Namoda. Nigeria's government has been referring to violent actors in the region as terrorists since the beginning of 2022 (cf. BN of 10.01.22). Maru LGA has already witnessed fatal attacks and kidnappings in the past (cf. BN of 07.08.23).

Dozens die in clashes between Islamist groups

More than 60 people died in fighting between members of the rival Islamist groups Boko Haram und Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad region of Borno State on 17.11. and 18.11.23. According to reports in the media, ISWAP members attacked a number of Boko Haram boats on an island in Lake Chad. Nine boats belonging to Boko Haram reportedly sank, taking people on board and dozens of kidnapped civilians with them. Both Islamist groups are said to have suffered casualties. An expert on the region sees the incident as a reprisal for the killing of ISWAP members by Boko Haram's so-called Buduma or Bakura faction (cf. BN of 21.08.23). At the beginning of November 2023, Boko Haram members had attacked and looted another island on Lake Chad and kidnapped dozens of people who lived there. A number of women were reportedly among those kidnapped. According to reports in the media on 17.03.23, more than 200 people have died in fighting between Boko Haram and ISWAP on the edge of Lake Chad in Borno State, close to the border with Niger. ISWAP fighters reportedly killed hundreds of Boko Haram members back at the beginning of March 2023 (cf. BN of 27.03.23). Violence between the Islamist Boko Haram and ISWAP groups involving high death tolls is no rare occurrence (cf. BN of 27.03. and 21.08.23). The rivalry between the two groups has existed since the ISWAP broke away from Boko Haram in 2016. Since then, some reporting has referred to Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and ISWAP as Boko Haram fractions, while in other instances the term Boko Haram is used solely for the JAS group. Boko Haram is also used as a generic name for both ISWAP and JAS. Both groups have been carrying out attacks and other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for many years, above all in the north-east of Nigeria (cf. BN of 27.03. and 08.05.23).

Anambra State: Success in the fight against arms smuggling and extortion rackets

On 18.11.23 the police arrested three suspected arms smugglers in Anambra State in the south-east of the country. According to reports in the media citing information from the police, the arrests followed weeks of intensive surveillance. 23 automatic pump guns and 625 live cartridges were reportedly seized. Arms smuggling is a particularly fraught topic in the region, owing to the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement. The Nigerian government blames this movement and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), for many lethal attacks in the region. For its part, the IPOB denies any involvement (cf. BN of 30.10.23).

It was reported in the media on 16.11.23 that a number of arrests relating to the two organisations in the same state had caused a stir. The police apparently arrested three men who were specialised in extorting money from civilians by posing as ESN members. In one case they had sent a text message demanding that the recipient pay a substantial sum of money in order to avoid him and his daughter being abducted and killed by the ESN.

Gender-based violence in Lagos State: Current figures and conviction of a prominent figure

On 24.10.23 the Special Offences and Domestic Violence Court in Lagos State sentenced a prominent doctor to life imprisonment for the rape of an underage female relative. The doctor is also to be entered in the state's register of sex offenders. This emerges from a detailed report in the media published on 24.11.23, which also lists convictions of other offenders from 2022 and 2023 and states current figures on gender-based violence. Lagos State's Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) registered 5,624 cases in the period from August 2022 to July 2023. In addition to registering cases of gender-based violence, the DSVA is also responsible for instituting the corresponding criminal proceedings. In this connection, the public are requested to report such cases via a toll-free hotline.

04 December 2023

Zamfara State: 150 people abducted from villages

Armed men killed one person and abducted at least 150 in attacks on four small villages in Maru Local Government Area (LGA) in the north-western state of Zamfara on 24.11.23. According to reports in the media citing eye witnesses' accounts, the attackers entered the villages on motorbikes. The incident is said to be linked to the killing of four men belonging to the attackers' group by Nigerian security forces. Prior to the attack on the four villages, it became known that the group's leader, Lawali Damana, had demanded compensation to the amount of approx. NGN 100 million (EUR 116,000 as per 04.12.23). Other media suspect a link between the abductions and the failure of people living in the region to pay levies demanded by armed groups. Abductions from villages and educational establishments for the purpose of extorting ransom money have been relatively common in north-western Nigeria

in recent times. Maru LGA is affected by banditry with a degree of regularity (cf. BN of 07.08. and 27.11.23). Air strikes by the Nigerian military against criminal groups are no rarity in the region (cf. BN of 02.01., 24.07. and 16.10.23).

Kaduna State: Eight people abducted

It emerges from media reports citing eye witnesses that armed men abducted at least eight people in Chikun LGA on 28.11.23. Investigations are already in progress, according to information from a police spokesperson which was publicised on 30.11.23. The purpose of such abductions is generally to extort ransom money. Schools, travellers and smaller villages have recently been targeted relatively frequently by kidnappers in north-west Nigeria. Chikun LGA has also witnessed kidnappings in the past. The military has successfully freed kidnap victims from the hands of bandits on numerous occasions (cf. BN of 19.09. and 06.12.22, 13.03. and 15.05.23).

North: Military strikes against suspected terrorists

According to information released by the Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ) on 01.12.23, in the space of one week at the end of November 2023 the military killed a total of 180 actors described as terrorists in the north of the country, arrested 204 such actors and freed 234 kidnap victims. By its own account, the military also seized a diverse array of weapons together with ammunition and other items of equipment in its various operations. It is not rare for such announcements of successful operations to be propagated by DHQ (cf. BN of 06.02., 20.03., 03.04., 18.09. and 16.10.23).

Media reports that around 50 people belonging to the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) group had been killed when a landmine exploded in Borno State on 26.11.23 were a particular focus of attention. The death toll was reportedly so high because both the truck which passed over the mine and the truck directly behind it were full of people. There is conjecture that the mine may have been laid by ISWAP members some time ago and that it was intended to target the Nigerian army, which carries out regular patrols in the area.

11 December 2023

Compensation for unlawful detention of a Yoruba activist

It has been reported in the media that on 05.12.23 the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ordered the government of Benin to pay compensation of 20 million CFA francs (EUR 30,500; fixed exchange rate) to Sunday Adeyemo for unlawful detention. Adeyemo, who also goes by the name of Sunday Igboho, is a Nigerian activist who champions self-determination for the Yoruba. In February 2022 Igboho brought an action before the ECOWAS Court of Justice against his detention in Benin over a period of several months beginning in July 2021. Igboho's supporters consider his detention to have been politically motivated (cf. BN of 07.03.22). Nigerian authorities accuse of Igboho of having incited violence (cf. BN of 26.07.21). According to reports in the media, Nigeria spent a number of months endeavouring to secure his rendition in 2021 and 2022, but without submitting a formal request for extradition (cf. BN of 14.03.22). The Yoruba are one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and also make up a share of the population in Benin.

Dozens die in mistaken attack by military drone

At least 85 civilians died in the village of Tudun Biri in the northern state of Kaduna when a military drone carrying bombs was mistakenly deployed on 03.12.23. In addition, at least 66 people were injured in the incident, according to reports in the media. The mistaken attack allegedly took place because the military misinterpreted the happenings at a religious festival in the bombed locality as activities by violent groups in a camp. Air strikes against criminal groups by the Nigerian military have recently been taking place with a degree of regularity in the north of Nigeria (cf. BN of 02.01., 24.07., 16.10. and 20.11.23). Since the beginning of 2022, the government and military have been referring to armed groups operating in northern Nigeria as terrorists, rather than bandits or militias (cf. BN of 10.01.22). Air strikes carried out mistakenly on civilians have previously occurred on a number of occasions (cf. BN of 21.02. and 11.07.22). After the bombing of Tudun Biri came to light, Nigeria's president Bola Tinubu ordered an in-depth investigation. The village is situated 250 km to the north of the capital, Abuja, in Igabi Local Government Area (LGA).

Press Council Act partially unlawful

On 24.11.23 the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ruled that parts of the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) Act of 1992 breach human rights and are consequently unlawful. It emerges from reports in the media that the relevant passages of the act include provisions on the minimum age and required accreditations of media representatives. The ECOWAS Court of Justice judged this to constitute an unlawful curtailment of the rights of people who wish to or who already work in the media, e.g. as online journalists or social media influencers. The relevant provisions of the Press Council Act must now be amended. The ruling stems from an action brought by a female and a male Nigerian online journalist in 2021 after they had been temporarily detained in connection with breaches of the provisions which have now been declared unlawful. Nigeria currently ranks 123rd among the 180 countries included in the RSF World Press Freedom Index (cf. BN of 05.06.23).

18 December 2023

North: Islamist groups making situation insecure

On 30.11.23 the US State Department published a Country Report on Terrorism 2022 focusing on Nigeria. The report highlights attacks by Islamist groups on security forces and the civilian population in Nigeria's northern and central regions in 2022, in the course of which people were killed, injured and abducted and property was destroyed. According to the report, the attacks by members of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in 2022 posed a challenge to Nigeria's national security. In the fighting between the rival Islamist groups Boko Haram and ISWAP, Boko Haram has reportedly been weakened while ISWAP has been able to extend its sphere of influence. Security forces from Nigeria and its neighbouring countries are working together with the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to combat terrorist activities in the region. The attacks by members of Boko Haram and ISWAP have reportedly led to the internal displacement of around two million people in Adamawa, Borno and Yobo states, and are said to have contributed to the flight of more than 333,000 Nigerian refugees to the neighbouring countries. On 28.11.23 the governor of Borno State in the north-east of the country called for more military personnel to be deployed in order to drive members of Boko Haram out of their camps in Borno and other Nigerian states. The aim here is reportedly to secure Nigeria's borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon in the north east, in order to prevent infiltration by violent actors and arms trafficking.

On 06.12.23 around 100 people representing the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) and the Arewa Youth Movement (AYM) demonstrated in the entrance area of the National Assembly in Abuja in protest at the increasing insecurity in the north and called for the resignation of the defence minister, Muhammad Badaru.

Anambra State: Military destroys separatist camps

On 11.12.23 military personnel destroyed a number of camps in Ihiala Local Government Area (LGA) in the southeastern state of Anambra which were allegedly run by the independence movement Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which has been banned since 2017, and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN). Citing official information released by the military on 12.12.23, reports in the media state that one person attributed to IPOB was killed in the operation and a number of people were wounded. The military operation was reportedly carried out by troops belonging to Operation Golden Dawn III, who were supported by other security forces and local civil defence militias. Arms, ammunition and various items of equipment were reportedly seized. Nigerian authorities regularly attribute acts of violence in the south-east of the country to members of the IPOB and ESN groups, which are campaigning for the secession of south-east Nigeria. Such accusations are equally consistently denied. Anambra State and Imo State have recently been particularly severely affected by violence in the south-east of the country (cf. BN of 22.05., 21.08. and 27.11.23). There have been numerous similar reports of separatists' camps destroyed in the region (cf. BN of 31.07. and 09.10.23).

Separatist leader Kanu remains in custody

Nigeria's supreme court ruled on 15.12.23 that the trial of separatist leader Nnamdi Kanu is to continue. According to reports in the media, this constitutes the de facto revocation of the ruling by a lower court in 2022 (cf. BN of 07.11.22) to the effect that Kanu should be released from custody. Kanu is the leader of the IPONB independence movement which is seeking the secession of Nigeria's south-east region in which the Igbo ethnic group is predominant. He was detained for the second time in 2021, following an initial period in custody in 2015. The charges levelled against him include terrorism and treason (cf. BN of 25.10.21 and 02.05.22).

Positive developments in healthcare

Positive reports on developments in Nigeria's healthcare system appeared in the media at the end of November and the beginning of December 2023. Enugu State has reportedly launched the construction of 260 new primary healthcare centres (PHCs), for example. The existence of such facilities is seen as an important step on the way to the government's declared long-term objective of universal health coverage offering everyone access to affordable healthcare. According to another recent success story, vaccination campaigns to combat human papillomavirus infections (HPV) in 14 Nigerian states have reached the targeted immunisation rate of 80 %.

Nigeria's public health system is generally considered to be underfunded, however, and is disadvantaged by a very limited infrastructure in some areas. There is also a substantial disparity between urban and rural areas with regard to the available levels of healthcare (cf. BN of 13.11.23). An additional challenge which has recently arisen is the substantial rise in the costs of antibiotics combined with a general increase in the cost of living.

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