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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Nigeria – January to June 2023

30 June 2023

02 January 2023

Arrests at gay wedding

According to unanimous media reports, the Islamic Hisbah police arrested 19 young Muslim men and women in the northern state of Kano on 18.12.22 for allegedly celebrating the marriage of a homosexual couple. According to a news report, those arrested will not be punished but will be required to undergo some form of counselling. The 15 women and four men deny the charges. Hisbah police units are decentralised, non-governmental groups of Muslims who are committed to ensuring religious rules are monitored and observed.

Catholic priest kidnapped

A Catholic priest was kidnapped in the southern Nigerian state of Abia on 17.12.22. Media reports indicate that the incident occurred just days after another Catholic clergyman kidnapped on 08.11.22 in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna was released. The acts are by no means isolated incidents. The extortion of ransom money is a frequently recurring motive. In 2022, kidnappings of priests were reported from several regions of the country (cf. BN of 18.07.22 and 29.08.22).

Kaduna State: villagers killed in spate of attacks

Armed unidentified persons killed over 20 residents of villages in Kaura Local Government Area (LGA) in northern Kaduna State on 18.12.22. The number of casualties cited in media reports varies and is reported to be as high as at least 38. Criminal gangs have been attacking villages in the region for years in order to loot and kidnap people for ransom (cf. BN of 01.08.22 and 15.08.22).

Zamfara State: dozens killed in airstrikes

Nigerian forces killed at least 64 people in airstrikes carried out in Maru Local Government Area (LGA) in north-western Zamfara State on 18.12.22. The airstrikes targeted what were described as terrorist criminal groups operating in the area. Media reports indicate that civilians were among those killed in the military operation. Zamfara is one of the states in the northwest of the country that has long been most affected by banditry (cf. BN of 28.11.22).

16 January 2023

Katsina State: abduction of devout Christian women

According to consistent media reports, at least five women who wanted to attend a Christian service were abducted in the Kankara region on 15.01.23. In addition, a priest was injured during the attack. No official statement has been issued yet by the police.

Niger State: attack on Christian priests

According to media reports, the local priest was fatally injured in an arson attack on his house in Kafin Koro village, Paikoro district in the early hours of 16.01.23. Another clergyman was shot while trying to escape flee. The attackers managed to flee before the police arrived.

Ekiti State: 80 % of Nigerian women are victims of FGM

In an informative measure to raise awareness and end female genital mutilation (FGM), a health educator stated that no less than 80 % of women and girls living in Nigeria are victims of FGM. The data, according to the statement, was gleaned from a survey conducted in 20 states in 2018. According to the HACEY Health Initiative, which supports the above-mentioned sensitisation campaign, the victims are mostly between 15 and 49-years-old.

23 January 2023

Police kill three suspected IPOB members

On 18.01.23, police forces in Imo State killed three members of the IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) independence movement, which has been banned since 2017 when they attacked a police facility. This emerged from media reports issued on 20.01.2023, citing a police spokesperson as the source. The incident reportedly took place in Agwa, a community in Oguta Local Government Area (LGA). The IPOB independence movement is known for its advocacy of secession from Nigeria's southeast.

Third promising candidate for the presidential election 2023

Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Nigerian Labour Party (LP), delivered a much-acclaimed speech in London on 16.01.23 regarding his election promises. While observers of the presidential election campaign originally expected a duel between the candidates of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Adekunle Tinubu (cf. BN of 20.06.22) and the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar (cf. BN of 30.05.22), recent poll results suggest that 61-year-old Obi is now also considered to be a serious contender. The country's next President, inter alia, will be elected at the general election scheduled for 25.02.23.

Steady decline in the prevalence of FGM

A scientific analysis of surveys on FGM prevalence rates carried out in Nigeria since 2008 published on 13.01.23 comes to the clear conclusion that the proportion of Nigerian girls affected by female genital mutilation (FGM), with the exception of Bauchi, Kaduna and Taraba states, is steadily declining. A decrease is particularly noticeable in urban areas and in the south of the country. The individual risk of being subjected to FGM, on the other hand, is reportedly higher for girls whose mothers are poor, do not have access to education and media, and are excluded from household decision-making.

Reliable data on the prevalence rate of FGM among Nigerian girls and women can be obtained from the official scientific Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which is published every five years, as well as from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) on Nigeria, which was last published in 2018 and 2022. The MICS global survey programme was developed by UNICEF in the 1990s and continues to receive technical support from UNICEF when conducting surveys.

A comparison of the survey results published in the NDHS 2008, 2013 and 2018 reveals that the percentage of Nigerian women affected by FGM in the age group of 15 to 49-year-olds decreased steadily across the country, from 30 % (NDHS 2008) initially to 25 % (NDHS 2013) and then to 20 % (NDHS 2018). These findings are corroborated by the MICS reports, as the MICS survey published in 2018 shows that the proportion of girls and women aged between 15 and 49 affected by FGM in Nigeria was around 18.4 % in the 2016/2017 survey period. According to data provided in the MICS report published in 2022, the rate of Nigerian women between the age of 15 and 49 affected by FGM in the 2021 survey period was 15.1 % and the rate in the age group of new-borns to 14-year-olds was 8.2 % in the same period.

Information provided by individual persons (cf. BN of 16.01.23) that the prevalence of FGM is currently much higher among Nigerian girls and women does not concur with the results of the NDHS and MICS scientific surveys presented here. The actual further decline in prevalence rates may be associated with the implementation of successful anti-FGM campaigns and measures at regional level which are not uncommon in Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.11.20, 22.02.21, 09.05.22 and 21.11.22).

30 January 2023

Dozens of Fulani killed in bomb blast

At least 54 civilians belonging to the Fulani ethnic group were killed in a bomb blast in central Nigeria on 24.01.23. Security authorities only confirmed a lower death toll to begin with. According to media reports, the incident occurred in the border area between Benue and Nasarawa states, when Fulani were moving in excess of 1,000 cattle from Benue to Nasarawa. Details of the crime remain unclear. According to reports in the media, the bombardment could have been caused by a drone attack, or even a bomb or could possibly have been an accidental attack by the air force. The incident is particularly explosive against the backdrop of smouldering conflicts between sedentary and non-sedentary people over land, pasture and water rights in large parts of Nigeria, including and especially in the Central Region where the above-mentioned act of violence occurred. Ethnic and religious rivalries add to the complexity of the situation and make it difficult to find a solution. Acts of revenge have also been reported in the past (cf. BN of 03.01.22 and 24.10.22).

Troops free over 100 hostages in northern Nigeria

Military personnel killed 84 terrorists and freed 122 kidnap victims in the north-east and north-west of the country within two weeks in January 2023. This was revealed in media reports issued on 27.01.23, citing information provided by the Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ) on 26.01.2023. An army spokesperson stressed that during the two-week period of Operation Hadin Kai in the north-east, not only were 42 individuals belonging to the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) killed, but 14 others were also arrested. In addition, a total of 267 persons designated as terrorists or family members of terrorists by Nigerian government agencies reportedly surrendered in various locations in the north-east. In the north-west, 42 terrorists were killed, four terrorists were arrested, and 26 abducted civilians were rescued in Operation Hadarin Daji in several land and air operations carried out during the same period. The DHQ has circulated similar reports in the past (cf. BN of 28.03.22, 30.05.22 and 05.09.22).

North-east: troops foil attack on major city

According to media reports, troops in Borno State have foiled an attack by Islamists on Monguno, a major city in the far north-east of Nigeria. According to a statement issued by an army spokesperson on 20.01.23, troops participating in Operation Hadin Kai and the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) were involved in the successful operation. Two assailants were killed, and others sustained bullet wounds. Weapons, vehicles and other equipment belonging to the terrorists were recovered.

According to media reports issued at the end of January 2023, large numbers of people who fled Islamist violence in Nigeria to Cameroon began returning in the second half of January. On 20.01.2023 alone, for instance, a total of 455 Nigerian men, women and children were reportedly welcomed at the border by authorities in their home country. Media reports say UNHCR was involved in organising the return operation. Some of the returnees reportedly spent more than eight years in Cameroon.

South-east: another fatal shooting of police officers

Unidentified gunmen shot dead at least three policemen and injured another at a road checkpoint on the Enugu/Abakaliki motorway in south-eastern Nigeria on 28.01.2023. According to media reports, the assailants opened fire when they arrived in two vehicles at the checkpoint located in the border area between Enugu and Ebonyi states. Recently, the number of deadly attacks carried out on security forces, police stations and other state facilities in the South-east by unknown individuals has been on the rise (cf. BN of 28.03.22, 30.05.22, 27.06.22, 10.10.22, 21.11.22 and 23.01.23). The authorities usually accuse the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which has been banned since 2017, or members of its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), of being responsible for the violent incidents occurring in south-eastern Nigeria. However, the IPOB and ESN organisations consistently deny any involvement.

06 February 2023

South-east: another attack against the Electoral Commission office

Unknown assailants destroyed at least 700 ballot boxes and over 200 polling booths in an attack carried out on an Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office in Ojoto, south-eastern Anambra State on 01.02.23. This was reported in the media citing police and electoral authority sources. According to police sources, a police station and a residential building were also attacked during the incident. One person was shot dead and another suffered gunshot wounds. The incident occurred less than a month before the upcoming general elections (cf. BN of 23.01.23), in which, among other things, the country's next President will be elected. According to a media report, over 50 attacks on INEC facilities have been reported in 15 states since 2019.

Northern Nigeria: armed gang kills over 40 members of a vigilante group

At least 41 people were killed in a clash that erupted between a local vigilante group and members of an unidentified armed group in a forest in the northern state of Katsina on 01.02.23. According to authorities, the vigilante group is one of the local volunteer groups known as Yankasai who fight against criminal groups in the region. In the above-mentioned incident, the vigilantes were searching for stolen cattle. According to media reports, the members, who were drawn from eleven different localities, were ambushed on this occasion.

North-east: military strike against Boko Haram

Troops involved in Operation Hadin Kai, carried out in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force (believed to belong to Boko Haram, including key leader Abu Illiya, in Borno State, according to media reports issued on 29.01.23. Vehicles belonging to the Islamists were also destroyed in the military operation carried out in Konduga Local Government Area (LGA). Success stories of this kind are not uncommon (cf. BN of 30.01.23).

13 February 2023

Northern Nigeria: over 100 killed in fighting with criminals

According to media reports, more than 100 people were killed in clashes that erupted between vigilantes and members of unidentified armed groups in Katsina State (see BN of 06.02.23) in early February 2023. The information on events that day is inconsistent. However, reports concur that fighting took place between gunmen described as bandits and local volunteer groups fighting criminals in the area in Bakori and Kankara Local Government Areas (LGA) during the period between 01.02.23 and 03.02.23. According to some reports, civilians not belonging to vigilante groups were among those killed during several clashes. The authorities have announced they will launch an inquiry into the incidents.

Universities to close in the run-up to elections

Nigerian universities will be closed between 22.02.23 and 14.03.23. This was reported in the media on 09.02.23, which refer to an order issued by the National Universities Commission (NUC). The decision is based on concerns about the safety of employees and students around the General Elections scheduled for 25.02.23, at which the next president of Africa's most populous country will be elected. Almost 40% of the registered voters are reportedly under 34 years of age. According to observers, a disproportionate number of this voter group supports the Labour Party's presidential candidate, Peter Obi (cf. BN of 23.01.23). Media reports say that on 02.02.23, conflicts broke out between students and military personnel on the campus of a university in the state of Edo - but that this had nothing to do with the upcoming election.

Over 14,000 children missing

According to media reports, 14,000 of the 25,000 missing persons in Nigeria are children. The number of undocumented cases is probably higher. The various security crises afflicting the country, especially the threat posed by Boko Haram and other Islamists in the north-east are responsible for the high number of missing persons. It is also particularly problematic that Nigeria does not keep its own register of missing persons and is therefore dependent on data supplied by NGOs such as the International Red Cross. According to a government representative, however, the establishment of a national register of missing persons is imminent. The pilot phase is already underway in the north-east of the country.

20 February 2023

Attacks on police stations in the South

According to media reports, men dressed in Nigerian army uniforms attacked a police station in the town of Ogijo in the south-western state of Ogun on 15.02.23, injuring several people. The attack was allegedly triggered by a violent altercation between a policeman and a soldier. However, there is no official confirmation for the details of the incident. Recently, there have been increased reports of attacks against security forces and state institutions in Nigeria's southeast, often from Imo and Anambra states. In the most recent incident which occurred on 19.02.23, unknown persons attacked a police station in Ogidi in Idemili North Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State, killing three policemen.

Warning of election-related violence

Observers fear outbreaks of violence during the general elections scheduled for 25.02.23, in which around 93.5 million registered voters will go to the polls to vote for the next president of Nigeria, among other things. Massive security measures are planned for election day. All universities will be closed from 22.02.23 to 14.03.23 (cf. BN of 13.02.23). Support for the three promising presidential candidates Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (cf. BN of 30.05.22), Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) party (cf. BN of 20.06.22) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) (cf. BN of 23.01.23) can also be attributed, at least in part, to the origin and ethnic and religious affiliation of the candidates and their supporters.

27 February 2023

General elections: vote counting in progress

Presidential and parliamentary elections took place on 25.02.23 under considerable security precautions. With around 93.5 million registered voters, it was the largest ballot ever held in Africa. Border crossings remained closed on election day. According to consistent media reports, the major outbreaks of violence feared by observers (cf. BN of 20.02.23) did not occur, by and large. However, some polling stations had to be reopened on 26.02.23 due to various delays. It will take several days to count the votes. The most promising presidential candidates are the former governor of the south-eastern Anambra State, Peter Obi (cf. BN of 23.01.23), Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (cf. BN of 30.05.22) and Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) party (cf. BN of 20.06.22). For the first time, no officer or former military ruler is running. To win the presidential election, a candidate must win the most votes nationwide and at least a quarter of the votes in two-thirds of the states. If no candidate succeeds, there will be a run-off election. Nigeria's next president will face a number of major challenges, including an economic crisis with high inflation and various security crises in several parts of the country (cf. BN of 06.12.22 and 12.12.22). According to experts, the elections will set the course for democracy and stability in the region.

South East: attacks against politicians and security forces

It has been reported in the media that on 22.02.23, unknown gunmen shot dead a senatorial Labour Party (LP) candidate and two aides in Enugu State. An attack on a People's Democratic Party (PDP) convoy left one driver dead. According to the authorities, violent separatists are responsible for these acts. According to others, political opponents could be behind the attack on the LP politician. In the South East, attacks on security forces increased in the days running up to the General Elections held on 25.02.23. Unidentified assailants killed seven police officers within a few days.

06 March 2023

Government party candidate wins presidential election

The former governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) party, was elected the next president of Nigeria after garnering about 37% of the votes in the General Elections held on 25.02.23 (cf. BN of 27.02.23). This was announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the capital Abuja on 01.03.23. The voter turnout was reportedly 27%.

Considered to be one of the most influential and wealthiest politicians in the country, the 70-year-old is due to take up his new post on 29.05.23. He beat 17 other contenders, including Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) and Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who were also considered to have good prospects of winning the election (cf. BN of 23.01.23). According to the electoral authority INEC, Abubakar received around 29% of the votes, Obi about 25%. The latter was particularly successful in several large cities, including the economic metropolis of Lagos. The election was overshadowed by allegations of rigging and a number of technical and logistical glitches. The electoral authority was accused of irregularities in the transmission of results. Election observers from the EU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) noted poor planning and a lack of transparency. The defeated candidates are expected to have the election results reviewed in court. However, this is not expected to delay Tinubu's inauguration.

The challenges facing Africa's most populous and economically powerful country include the deteriorating security situation in several parts of the country and an economic crisis with high inflation. Most recently, a cash reform launched shortly before the election but then stalled has affected the lives of many Nigerians. Tinubu's concrete election promises include investment in Nigeria's infrastructure, better pay for the security forces and a halving of unemployment.

IPOB activist arrested in Finland

According to media reports, Simon Ekpa, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) independence movement, which has been banned in Nigeria since 2017, was temporarily arrested at his home in Finland on 23.02.2013. He is alleged to have used social media to incite violence in Nigeria. He leads a faction within the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which is fighting for a breakaway state in south-eastern Nigeria. Mr Ekpa, a Finnish citizen of Nigerian origin, denies any links to the killings and violence in this region, saying they were carried out by the Nigerian government. According to the Nigerian state, Ekpa is an agitator and the independence movement IPOB is a terrorist organisation. IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu has been in detention in Nigeria since the summer of 2021 (cf. BN of 07.11.22).

13 March 2023

Borno State: Islamists kill dozens of people

Militant Islamists killed several dozen civilians in north-eastern Nigeria on 08.03.23. According to media reports, the incident took place in a remote area of Borno state not far from the border with neighbouring Chad. According to a police spokesperson's report on 10.03.23, security forces eventually managed to repel the attackers and bring the area back under control. According to official reports, the fatalities include internally displaced persons who had fled Islamist violence in the north-east.

Benue State: dozens killed in suspected herdsmen attacks

Unknown assailants killed about 50 people, injured many others and burnt down numerous buildings in Kwande Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State on 03.03.23. Media reports indicate that the assailants coordinated their attacks against several communities over an extended period of time. According to an eyewitness, they are herdsmen belonging to the Fulani ethnic group. Most of the population in the affected villages belong to the Tiv ethnic group. The exact reason for the violence is not known. However, there are long-standing disputes over land and water use rights between farming communities and non-settlers who live mainly from livestock. Other incidents at local level can also trigger violence (cf. BN of 30.01.23).

Kaduna State: outbreak of violence and release of hostages

Unknown assailants killed at least 17 people in Zango Kataf Local Government Area (LGA) in southern Kaduna State on 11.03.2013. In response, authorities imposed a 24-hour curfew. According to media reports, similar to the incident in Benue State (see above) in early March 2023, unresolved conflicts between settled and non-settled groups could be behind the violence and may have triggered it. Also in Kaduna State, military personnel managed to free 14 kidnap victims from the hands of bandits in Chikun LGA, according to media reports of 04.03.23.

20 March 2023

Katsina State: gangs kill dozens of civilians

Armed gangs killed at least 30 people in the north-western state of Katsina on 11.03.23. According to media reports, fighting also broke out between criminal gang members and self-defence groups as a result of the attacks. The latter were joined by volunteers to protect the communities. Attacks by unidentified armed groups are relatively frequent in north-western Nigeria (cf. BN of 02.01.23 and 13.02.23). The increased deployment of security forces has not succeeded in putting an end to the threat.

North-east: hundreds of family members of Islamists arrested

In the border area between Nigeria and Niger, security forces have arrested over 900 suspected family members and collaborators of Islamist groups. According to a statement issued by the spokesperson of a task force of several African countries on 15.03.23, most of those arrested were women, children and the elderly. They are to be handed over to the competent state authorities. Troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon cooperate in the border region of their countries in the fight against Islamists.

The Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has recently shared similar success stories. In January 2023, for instance, 267 persons designated as terrorists or family members of terrorists by Nigerian government agencies were said to have surrendered in various locations in the north-east (cf. BN of 30.01.23).

27 March 2023

Results of gubernatorial elections

Official results are now available for most of the states where gubernatorial elections, originally scheduled for 11.03.23, were held on 18.03.23. According to the results, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) won in 15 states and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in nine states. The successes in the northern state of Kano and the south-eastern state of Abia, respectively, of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), and the Labour Party (LP), which were founded only a few months before the election, are remarkable. This is the second gubernatorial election won by the party of presidential candidate Peter Obi. Also notable is that only in the north-western state of Zamfara was the incumbent voted out of office. Voter turnout averaged 29 %, slightly higher than in the presidential election held on 25.02.23 (cf. BN of 06.03.23). Not all governorships were won by candidates from the party that controls the state legislature. This raises hopes for greater democratic control in the future.

Hundreds killed in clashes between Islamist groups

Fighting between the rival Islamist groups Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) has left more than 200 people dead in north-eastern Borno State, according to media reports issued on 17.03.23. According to intelligence sources, fighting between the two groups escalated in the villages of Gerere and Juma'a Toro on the edge of Lake Chad near the border with Niger. ISWAP fighters are said to have killed several hundred Boko Haram members in Borno State at the very beginning of March 2023. The rivalry has existed since the ISWAP group split from Boko Haram in 2016. Since then, there has been some talk of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and ISWAP although Boko Haram is only used for the JAS faction in reporting. Furthermore, the term Boko Haram is used as a generic term for both ISWAP and JAS. Both factions have been carrying out attacks and many other acts of violence against the military and the civilian population for years, especially in north-eastern Nigeria (cf. BN of 30.05.22).

Victims of human trafficking repatriated back to Nigeria from Niger

Eleven Nigerian women who were to be brought to Libya by human traffickers were apprehended in neighbouring Niger and have meanwhile been repatriated to Nigeria, according to media reports issued on 14.03.23, quoting Nigerian sources. The majority of the women came from the south of Nigeria. The plan is to bring them back to their families following a stopover in the state of Sokoto.

03 April 2023

Islamists lose members

According to official figures from the Nigerian military, 51,828 Boko Haram members and/or members of their families have surrendered to the armed forces since July 2021. This is according to media reports of 26.03.23. The military has set up facilities where repentant terrorists can be rehabilitated. Success stories of this kind are not uncommon (cf. BN of 25.07.22, 05.09.22, 30.01.23 and 20.03.23). There were also media reports that Awana Gaidam, an Islamist known for making bombs, was accidentally killed by his own explosive device in north-eastern Nigeria on 27.03.23. According to Nigerian intelligence, he was a senior member of Boko Haram's command structure.

17 April 2023

Benue, Kaduna, Zamfara states: Several people kidnapped

Media report that on 02.04.23 armed individuals attacked the Pentecostal Church in Akenawe, Benue State, during a night vigil. One person was killed and several others were abducted.

In Kaduna State, at least eight to ten students and an unknown number of other people were attacked and abducted on their way home from school on 03.04.23. This is the first case of kidnapping in Kaduna since a long period of calm. On 12.04.23, another incident occurred in a different region of the state when eight people were reportedly killed and four injured in an attack by gunmen on a community in the Zangon Kataf local government area.

On 08.04.23, unidentified gunmen abducted at least 80 people in Zamfara State. The victims were reportedly engaged in collecting firewood. Media reports say that there are many women and teenagers among the kidnap victims whose release was demanded on 12.04.23 by the West African Economic Community ECOWAS. The police said that ECOWAS is cooperating with the military and local security authorities to free the abductees.

Inauguration of the President despite challenge to results

A challenge filed on 21.03.23 to the results of the February 2023 presidential election (cf. BN of 06.03.23) is to be rejected by the competent electoral court, according to the will of the Nigerian electoral commission INEC. The second and third placed candidates of the election, Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, as well as others are rejecting the election results and demand that they be annulled. The winner is accused of widespread vote-rigging. Observer groups have criticised the election process as falling short of standards.

Despite the criticism raised and calls for the results to be annulled, the Minister of Information has announced that the inauguration of the newly elected president will take place as planned on 29.05.23.

24 April 2023

Benue State: Dozens of villagers killed by gunmen

A group of unknown gunmen has killed at least 51 people in Benue State, according to official reports. Media report that dozens of attackers invaded the village of Umuogidi (also: Umogidi) on 03.04 and 04.04.23. Local authorities suspect links to simmering conflicts over land, pasture and water rights between arable farming communities and non-settlers who live mainly on cattle herding. Ethnic and religious rivalries, particularly in the central region where the violence occurred, add to the complexity of the situation (cf. BN of 30.01.23 and 13.03.23).

Kaduna State: Schoolgirls escape kidnappers

Eight abducted schoolgirls have regained their freedom, according to media reports of 18.04. and 19.04.23. They were abducted by unknown gunmen on 03.04.23 while on their way home from a government secondary school in Awon, southern Kaduna State (cf. BN of 17.04.23). A security spokesman said that they were taken to a densely forested area near the border with the neighbouring state of Niger. From there they were able to escape. They were taken to a military facility for medical treatment. The purpose of such kidnappings is often to extort ransom money.

Military frees 468 kidnapped in northern Nigeria

Nigerian forces have rescued 468 kidnap victims and killed 54 people suspected to be terrorist in the north of the country in two weeks of April 2023. This was reported by the media on 20.04.23, citing information from the Nigerian Defence Headquarters (DHQ) of the same day. According to the DHQ, various military operations in the

North-East, North-Central and North-West had led to these successes. A significant amount of weapons and ammunition was also recovered. The troops arrested 122 people who the military classified as terrorists, bandits, collaborators and other criminals. Military operations have also been successful, particularly in the north-east of the country, resulting in the killing or arrest of many Islamists. The DHQ has reported similar successes several times recently (cf. BN of 05.09.22, 30.01.23, 06.02.23, 20.03.23 and 03.04.23).

Malaria vaccine approved

According to press reports on 13.04.23, Ghana has become the first country in the world to approve a malaria vaccine for use in the country. Trial data indicate that the vaccine, which is to be given to children between five and 36 months, is up to 80 percent effective.

Media report that Nigeria also approved the above vaccine on 17.04.23.

08 Mai 2023

Kogi State: Security forces rescue dozens of hostages

Police forces in central Kogi State, in a joint operation with local vigilante groups fighting criminals in the region, have rescued 58 people kidnapped by gangs. Media reports of the successful operation did not specify how long the hostages had been held. A police spokesperson said on 07.05.23 that the rescue operation took place in the Udulu forest. One of the hostages did not survive the operation and an unknown number of kidnappers escaped injured.

ISWAP activities in April 2023

A recent BBC report provides an overview of the violence perpetrated by the Islamist group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) over the past month. The sources used are ISWAP statements, media reports and social media research. The compilation published on 03.05.23 shows, among other things, that the ISWAP group has claimed responsibility for 29 attacks in April 2023, which is a decrease compared to 38 attacks in March 2023. During the Ramadan period from mid-March to mid-April 2023, a total of 39 attacks were reported to have resulted in 107 deaths or injuries. Most of the incidents targeted security forces in north-eastern Borno state. There were also four attacks on Nigerian territory. One attack was recorded for the first time in northern Jigawa state and another one for the second time in south-eastern Edo state. When reporting on Islamist groups in Nigeria, it should be noted that the terminology is not always used consistently. This holds particularly for the terms Boko Haram, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and ISWAP (cf. BN of 27.03.23).

15 Mai 2023

Kaduna State: Worshippers kidnapped from church

On 07.05.23, a group of unknown gunmen attacked the Bege Baptist Church in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna and abducted 25 worshippers, including several children. This is according to media reports quoting authorities and other sources. The kidnappers initially held 40 people, but some of them managed to escape on the day of the attack. Eleven people were released a short time later. The remaining hostages are believed to be held in a nearby forest for ransom. Media report that this is already the fourth attack on a Baptist church in Kaduna State in 2023. Violence in the state, which is not far from Nigeria's capital Abuja, has been reported frequently (cf. BN of 02.01.23, 13.03.23, 17.04.23 and 24.04.23). In the same LGA where the Baptist church was attacked, the military recently freed 14 hostages (cf. BN of 13.03.23). A survey by the NGO Global Rights published on 05.05.23 states that a total of 658 people were kidnapped across the country in the first quarter of 2023, with the north of Nigeria more affected by violence than the south.

Edo State: Cluster of attacks in rural areas

According to media reports in late April 2023, there has been an increase in attacks by armed groups on villages in remote areas of southern Edo State. Observers of the security situation in the region believe that the perpetrators are herdsmen who have migrated from more northern areas of Nigeria and are operating with collaborators. Ten small villages in the Ovia North-East Local Government Area (LGA) were the latest to be affected when groups of unidentified men apparently went from house to house killing and kidnapping people for ransom. Reportedly, the

communities of Igolo and Abumwenre are now completely deserted. Witnesses say that Igolo was attacked three times within one week. Many parents have stopped sending their children to school because of security concerns. Some of the affected people are now living in an IDP camp in the same LGA. There are complaints about the low presence of state security forces. Although military posts have been set up in strategic locations in Edo State, this at best curbs the attacks, but does not put a permanent end to them. The latest incidents may reflect a further escalation in the conflicts between sedentary and nomadic people, which have so far claimed victims mainly in the central region (cf. BN of 13.03.23 and 24.04.23).

Northeast: UN fears food crisis

Around 4.3 million people in north-eastern Nigeria may face a severe food crisis between June and August 2023. This is according to media reports from late April 2023, citing assessments by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Above all, children are at risk, particularly in the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. WFP and UNICEF need to step up their efforts in the region. However, funding for scaling up these activities is not yet secured.

22 Mai 2023

Plateau State: Inter-communal violence claims over 100 lives

More than 100 civilians were killed in several days of violence by non-state actors in the central Nigerian state of Plateau during the week of 15.05.23. Media reports, citing official sources as of 19.05.23, say that hundreds of houses were destroyed and thousands of people displaced in the violence in Mangu Local Government Area (LGA). Apparently, the parties to the conflict are nomadic herders and farming villagers. The escalation of violence may be due to simmering conflicts over land, grazing and water rights in large parts of Nigeria, but also, or at the same time, ethnic rivalries. The fact that the non-settlers involved are usually Muslims and the settlers often Christians adds to the volatility of the situation. Also in the central state of Benue, around 50 people were killed in similar incidents in early March 2023 and early April 2023 (cf. BN of 13.03.23 and 24.04.23).

Southeast: US diplomatic mission staff killed and abducted

On 16.05.23, unidentified assailants attacked a convoy of vehicles carrying staff of a US diplomatic foreign mission and other people in Ogbaru Local Government Area (LGA). Media report that seven people travelling in the convoy were killed in the incident; two others were kidnapped but regained freedom unharmed on 19.05.23. All the victims were Nigerian nationals. The identity of the attackers and their possible affiliation to a gang or other armed group is unclear. Government agencies and other authorities regularly blame the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), an independence movement banned since 2017, or members of its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), for acts of violence in the region. However, these regularly deny such allegations. Observers of the security situation in the region point out that violent groups without any direct link to independence efforts are also active in the region. However, media reports say that attacks on security forces and state institutions like police stations have increased since the forming of the ESN in December 2020. Violence incidents in the southeast have recently been recorded particularly in the states of Imo (cf. BN of 19.12.22 and 23.01.23) and Anambra (cf. BN of 06.02.23 and 20.02.23).

05 June 2023

Three million girls benefit from education programme

The Madubi programme, supported by the World Bank through the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), has already reached more than 3 million girls in Nigeria. This was announced by the AGILE project coordinator on 10.05.23 at the national presentation of the programme. The programme, which is currently running in seven states, improves girls' access to education and works to increase the number of female teachers in schools. More states are expected to join the programme.

Attacks on media professionals

According to media reports on 03.05.23, the Press Attack Tracker Nigeria platform recorded a total of 45 attacks on journalists in the first quarter of 2023. The number of incidents in this period, ranging from threats to detentions

to physical assaults, is worrying if only because it exceeds the total number of reported incidents in 2022. As many as 71 percent of the incidents, particularly in the south, were related to the elections held in February 2023. In early May 2023, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the International Press Institute (IPI) in Nigeria appealed to the new President of the Republic, Bola Tinubu, to work for the safety of media professionals. Press freedom advocates commented in this regard on the updated RSF World Press Freedom Index, also released in early May 2023. They argue that Nigeria's improvement from 129th (cf. 16.05.22) to 123rd place is not in line with the actual situation. In fact, there have been no positive developments regarding in the area of press freedom, they said.

Rivers State: Six women freed from child trafficking facility

Nigerian police have freed six pregnant women from a so-called baby factory during a raid in Choba community in Rivers State. This is according to media reports citing police sources on 31.05.23. One arrested woman, believed to be the owner of the facility, had confessed to her involvement in child trafficking. The phenomenon dubbed 'baby factories' by the media refers to illegal facilities where imprisoned women are sexually exploited and the children born to them in captivity are offered for sale by the operators (cf. BN of 20.06.22).

New president sparks concern over fuel shortages

The new president, Bola Tinubu, announced the abolition of fuel subsidies at his swearing-in ceremony on 29.05.23, saying that the subsidy could no longer be financed by the national budget. According to media reports, a lack of information about the start of this measure or a planned subsequent pricing policy has caused great concern among the population. Petrol stations have either closed completely or increased their prices by up to 200 percent in some cases; there have been panic purchases, and bus companies have already been unable to fill their vehicles due to the increased costs. Amnesty International (AI) said in an appeal on 01.06.23 that poverty in the country must not be allowed to worsen. Meanwhile, the group managing director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPCL) has announced after a meeting with the government that Tinubu has ordered relief measures to mitigate the impact of the subsidy removal. Tinubu's inauguration is overshadowed by the opposition's legal challenge to the election results (cf. BN of 06.03.23 and 17.04.23) and by major difficulties regarding the economic and security situation as well as the partly difficult humanitarian situation.

57 dead in military operation

Media reported on 29.05.23 that in May, the Nigerian and Nigerien militaries killed a total of 55 terrorists, including high-ranking members of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) group, in a joint operation lasting several weeks. Two soldiers were also killed. The main target of the operation was the ISWAP stronghold of Arege in north-eastern Nigeria near the border with Niger.

12 June 2023

Sokoto State: Dozens killed in attacks on villages

Official police reports say that during the first weekend of June, unidentified gunmen on motorbikes killed more than 30 people in attacks on residents of a total of six villages in north-western Sokoto State. The media, quoting some of those attacked, reported that the assaults may have been in retaliation for refusal to pay protection money. The attacks appear to have been coordinated, coming just days after the new president, Bola Tinubu, took the oath of office (cf. BN of 05.06.23) and promised reforms to improve the security situation, which is very challenging in parts of the country.

Benue State: At least 25 killed in attacks on villages

In the early hours of 03.06.23, unidentified gunmen reportedly killed at least 25 civilians in attacks on villages in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area (LGA), central Benue State. Also, many civilians were injured and buildings were set on fire during the attacks. The chairman of the Katsina-Ala LGA reportedly believes that local criminal gangs are behind the attacks. Mass casualty attacks have not been uncommon in Benue State recently (cf. BN of 22.05.23).

19 June 2023

Borno State: Massacre of civilians

On 15.06. and 16.06.23, unidentified assailants attacked at least two small villages in the north-eastern state of Borno, killing at least 15 civilians. According to media reports, the attackers were believed to be Islamists. The victims were killed in a gruesome manner. The villages are in Jere Local Government Area, not far from the state capital.

26 June 2023

Plateau State: more than a dozen people killed in intercommunal violence

At least 16 people were killed in an outbreak of inter-communal violence in the central Nigerian Plateau State on 20.06.23. In one of the two incidents, unidentified gunmen attacked a local farmers' self-defence group in the Rayom area and killed six of its members, media reported citing official military statements of 22.06 and 23.06.23. In the other violent incident, a total of ten civilians were killed in simultaneous attacks by unknown individuals on several communities in Mangu Local Government Area (LGA). Buildings were also set ablaze. Around 200 people have reportedly been killed in the region since May 2023 in conflicts between farming communities belonging to the Berom ethnic group and non-settled (herdsmen) communities of the Fulani ethnic group.

It should be noted that outbreaks of intercommunal violence in central Nigeria and elsewhere often result in mutual killings, and the motivation and specific concrete trigger for a particular violent event are often impossible to pinpoint. It may be the result of unresolved conflicts over land, grazing and water rights, or the desire for revenge for previous acts of violence, or simmering ethnic rivalries. The fact that the non-settlers involved are usually Muslims and the settlers often Christians adds to the volatility of the situation (cf. BN of 22.05.23). The lack of effective state law enforcement in the region also encourages the emergence of criminal gangs that carry out deadly attacks on small communities, sometimes with the aim of kidnapping people for ransom. This situation, sometimes referred to as the 'Plateau crisis', is one of the most obvious security challenges the country is currently facing, if only because of the relatively high number of deaths.

Military rescues 33 kidnapped in northern Nigeria

In the first half of June 2023, the Nigerian military said it had eliminated a total of 42 bandits, terrorists, and other criminals and freed 33 kidnapped civilians in several operations in the north-west and north-central regions. Nearly 100 suspected criminals were also arrested by security forces in the same regions. This is according to a media report dated 15.06.23. Military success stories of this and similar kind are not uncommon (cf. BN of 05.09.22, 06.02.23, 20.03.23 and 24.04.23).

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Briefing Notes
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