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NIGERIA

Federal Republic of Nigeria

Head of state and government: **Muhammadu Buhari**

Thousands of civilians were killed, injured or displaced by the armed conflict between the armed groups Boko Haram and Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP) and the Nigerian military in north-eastern Nigeria. All parties to the conflict committed violations of international law, including war crimes, with impunity. Elsewhere, unlawful killings and violence were perpetrated by bandits and the authorities responded with enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions to freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. Media outlets and journalists had their freedom of expression curtailed by the authorities. Activists and protesters faced restrictions on their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. More than 60,000 people were forcibly evicted from their homes. Failure to protect people from the effects of climate change led to deaths and displacement.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

The state failed in its responsibility to protect people from various abuses committed by Boko Haram and ISWAP as well as unknown gunmen. According to media reports, they killed at least 6,907 people, abducted 6,157 and forcibly transferred or internally displaced at least 2,000.

Attacks by Boko Haram, which had been predominantly in the north-east, spread to some states in north-central and north-western Nigeria during the year. Attacks by Boko Haram directed against civilians, such as those targeting villagers, farming communities and highway and train passengers, amounted to war crimes.

Civil society organizations reported that, on 26 May, Boko Haram killed at least 60 people in Rann community, Borno state.

On 5 July, gunmen attacked Kuje Prison in Abuja and freed more than 60 suspected Boko Haram members.

According to media reports, on 15 November, Boko Haram reportedly killed more than 15 women in Gwoza community, Borno state, after accusing them of being witches.

Of the hundreds of schoolchildren abducted by Boko Haram in previous years, 110 girls remained in captivity at the end of the year.

SECURITY FORCES

Security forces consistently violated human rights in the context of military operations conducted against Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria.

In December, Reuters reported that the Nigerian military had conducted a secret forced abortion programme in the north-east since 2013, ending at least 10,000 pregnancies without the consent or prior knowledge of the women and girls concerned, which could amount to war crimes and a crime against humanity.

The Nigerian authorities consistently failed to hold security officials accountable for crimes committed against civilians.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

On 13 January, the government lifted a seven-month ban on the social media platform Twitter. On 14 July, the ECOWAS court declared that the Twitter ban had been unlawful and ordered the Nigerian state to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights to freedom of expression, information and media freedom.

On 2 February, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) suspended a programme on the Vision FM radio station for discussing the alleged incompetence of the head of the National Intelligence Agency, Rufai Abubakar. On 3 August, the NBC sanctioned four media outlets for showing a documentary perceived to "promote" terrorism.

On 16 October, Zamfara state government shut down five media outlets for broadcasting an opposition party's campaign rally.

On 7 November, a court in Kano sentenced social media celebrities Mubarak Muhammad, known as Uniquepikin, and Nazifi Muhammad to a week's detention, flogging and a fine for allegedly defaming the Kano state governor in a comedy sketch.

ACTIVISTS AND PROTESTERS

The government continued to clamp down on protests. On 5 April, Mubarak Bala, president of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, was sentenced in Kano to 24 years' imprisonment under criminal charges for breaching the peace. The charges related to Facebook posts from April 2020 in which he allegedly insulted Prophet Muhammad.

On 14 May, the governor of Kaduna state, Nasir el-Rufai, banned religious protests in the state.

On 27 July, the Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State committed activist Inibehe Effiong to prison without trial for one month for "contempt".

Prisoners of conscience Omoyele Sowore and Olawale Bakare continued to face trumped-up charges and prolonged trials for organizing peaceful protests to demand respect for human rights and the rule of law.

On 20 October, police used tear gas against protesters during the two-year commemoration of the #EndSARS protest at Lekki toll gate. At least four people were arrested and detained.

JOURNALISTS

On 21 March, a Federal High Court in Calabar dismissed trumped-up charges of treason against journalist Agba Jalingo. He had previously been detained for more than 179 days.

On 13 May, blogger Bashiru Hameed was detained for publishing the alleged criminal records of the governor of Ogun State. He was released after being compelled to withdraw the publication.

On 13 October, journalists Abdulasheed Akogun from Fresh Insight TV and Dare Akogun from Sobi FM radio station were detained by police in Ilorin Kwara State over a

WhatsApp message which alleged misappropriation of public funds by the Kwara State governor.

On 22 July, five staff of the Peoples Gazette were arrested in Abuja following an allegedly defamatory report published by the newspaper about the former Chief of Army Staff.

Umaru Maradun, a Leadership newspaper correspondent in Zamfara State, was detained for undisclosed reasons on 23 July and released the following day without charge.

On 4 August, Casmir Uzomah, a radio worker in Imo State, was detained for more than two months by the State Security Service for airing a song considered "offensive" to the state governor.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

At least 40 protesters remained in detention without trial in Agodi Prison, Ibadan, and Kirikiri Prison, Lagos, two years after participating in the #EndSARS protests against Nigerian security forces. On 4 February, 21 #EndSARS protesters held incommunicado for 15 months at Afaraukwu Prison, Umuahia, were released without charge.

On 23 June, the Abuja High Court awarded damages to Glory Okolie over her detention for 150 days on allegations of spying for the separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

On 13 October, the Court of Appeal cleared IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu of criminal charges and declared his abduction from Kenya to Nigeria illegal and a violation of his right to a fair trial.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remained pervasive within the criminal justice system. At least 21 #EndSARS protesters were tortured while in detention. At the Criminal Investigation Department, Umuahia, and in other police facilities, police officers tortured the arrested protesters by tying their hands to iron bars and flogging their ankles with rods. Victims reported to Amnesty International

that at least two protesters were tortured to death.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Several men were forcibly disappeared by the authorities in response to the activities of IPOB.

Sunday Nwafor, Uzonwanne Ejiofor and Wilfred Dike, who had been secretly detained by the military without charge or trial since 27 February 2020, were released on 14 September.

Government critic Abubakar Idris remained missing since his abduction by suspected state agents in 2019.

EXCESSIVE AND UNNECESSARY USE OF FORCE

Security forces used excessive force to disperse peaceful protests and assemblies. On 19 October, police fired tear gas at para-athletes protesting in the Surulere district of Lagos over their exclusion from the National Sports Festival.

On 17 October, a coroners' court found that police had shot dead Jumoke Oyeleke during a Yoruba Nation rally in Ojota, Lagos State. On 4 October, police killed one person and injured two others who were protesting against harassment by officials of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in the town of Ughelli, Delta state.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

Nigerian security forces killed at least 122 people in response to increasing violence and killings of their officers in south-eastern Nigeria.

On 17 July, at least seven people were extrajudicially executed by state-sponsored Ebubeagu paramilitary agents in the town of Awo-omamma, Imo State.

FORCED EVICTIONS

On 17 August, officials of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and security agencies demolished around 100 structures in the Dubaidna Durumi 3 Indigenous community, Abuja. Security agents used unnecessary and excessive force, tear-

gassing and physically assaulting residents. Some residents sustained injuries and several children were exposed to tear gas, resulting in two children passing out. The pressure on the Indigenous community to vacate their ancestral land persisted.

Other communities in the Federal Capital Territory – including in the Airport Road area, Gishiri and Banana Village – were demolished, while several others remained under threat of forced evictions by the FCTA.

On 29 January, Rivers State authorities forcibly evicted thousands of residents of waterfront communities from their homes in Diobu, Port Harcourt. The forced eviction was conducted without adequate notice or consultation.

RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

Authorities ignored early predictions of heavy rainfalls and floods, which the UN said were exacerbated by climate change, and failed to put in place sufficient measures to mitigate the impact. According to the UN, more than 1.9 million people were affected by floods across 25 states, at least 500 people were killed, and more than 1.4 million were internally displaced across Nigeria. The floods triggered an outbreak of waterborne diseases, especially in north-eastern states. More than 320 deaths were reported from cholera in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa States.

Banditry activities intensified in the north-west, including attacks and abductions. Due to a lack of measures to protect communities by the authorities, competing armed groups effectively gained control of some areas of Nigeria, imposing taxes and curfews, and limiting people's movement and livelihood pursuits. In the south-east, unidentified gunmen carried out hit-and-run attacks, killings and theft of property leading to hardship in local communities.

Military operations were carried out against banditry in the north-west, and against the Eastern Security Network of IPOB in the south-east. Security forces consistently violated human rights in the context of these operations. According to media reports, on

17 April, military officers opened fire on civilian residents at Orlu, Imo State, killing an estimated four people.

Vigilante attacks became commonplace. Between January and December, there were more than 75 reported deaths from vigilante attacks across Nigeria. Security experts attributed the increasing incidence of these attacks to people's lack of confidence in the justice system.

On 28 March, at least 65 people were abducted and eight killed by gunmen who attacked a train between the capital, Abuja, and the city of Kaduna.¹

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Oil-related pollution and environmental damage continued to undermine people's human rights in the Niger Delta. On 16 June, Nigeria's Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling which prevented Shell from selling its Nigerian assets until the resolution of a dispute in relation to compensation to the Niger Delta community over a 2019 oil spill. The clean-up by Shell remained inadequate.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

More than 1,776 schoolchildren had been abducted by armed groups since 2014. Nigerian authorities continued to fail to investigate these attacks and to protect children.

According to UNESCO, an estimated 20 million children and young people were not attending school in Nigeria due to economic barriers and socio-cultural practices that discouraged formal education. This was exacerbated by the high level of insecurity and abduction of schoolchildren.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In March, the National Assembly voted against five bills that sought to promote gender equality. After several protests by women's groups and civil society organizations, the National Assembly committed to reconsidering three of the bills.

The Federal Capital Judiciary designated four judges to prosecute all sexual and gender-based violence cases within the

Federal Capital Territory – the area of central Nigeria that includes Abuja – to accelerate hearing of such cases and ensure access to justice for victims.

Borno, Taraba, Gombe and Zamfara states passed the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act during the year, bringing the number of states that have passed the Act to 35 out of 36. Nevertheless, violence against women and girls remained endemic and there were increased reports of domestic and sexual violence.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In June, three gay men – Abdullahi Beti, Kamilu Ya'u and Mallam Haruna – were arrested under the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013 and subsequently sentenced to death by a Sharia court in Ningi, Bauchi state.

On 1 May, around 50 LGBTI activists protested in Abuja against a bill criminalizing "crossdressing".

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

There remained more than 2.4 million internally displaced people in north-eastern Nigeria. In an attempt to resettle all internally displaced people living in Maiduguri, the Borno state government closed four camps in July and resettled 11,000 households. Most of the resettled people lacked sufficient food and access to basic amenities.

DEATH PENALTY

Courts across Nigeria continued to impose death sentences. No executions were carried out. On 28 June, Zamfara State amended its laws to allow the death penalty for kidnapping.

In August, the Court of Appeal ordered the retrial of musician Aminu Yahaya-Sharif, who was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2020.

1. ["Nigeria: 50 days into their abduction, at least 62 Kaduna-Abuja train passengers remain in captivity", 17 May](#)