

## ***Nigeria: Extremism & Counter-Extremism***

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On September 25, 2018, at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari stated: “the terrorist insurgencies we face... are in part fueled by local factors and dynamics, but now increasingly by the international Jihadi Movement.” Nigeria is a participant in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and has received military training and equipment from the United States and, more recently, from the United Kingdom. (Sources: [Channels TV](#) [1], [U.S. Department of State](#) [2])

Nigeria continues to experience attacks at the hands of [Boko Haram](#) [3] and its ISIS-endorsed offshoot, ISIS in West Africa (ISWA). Although the groups share common roots, they diverge on the issue of targeting Muslim civilians. Under [Abubakar Shekau](#) [4], Boko Haram continues to target Muslims in suicide bomb attacks at crowded marketplaces in northeast Nigeria. Most recently, locals have begun to organize vigilante groups as a way to defend their villages against ambushes, which has led to a series of “reprisal” attacks carried out by terrorist entities. Accordingly, in July 27, 2019, suspected Boko Haram militants opened fire on people leaving a funeral in Nganzai. More than 65 mourners were killed and another 10 were injured. The attack was in retaliation for an ambush on the village a week before where local villagers managed to fend off and kill over a dozen of Boko Haram attackers. On the other hand, ISWA has attempted to avoid targeting Muslims and instead, carries out the majority of its attacks on military targets. On August 30, 2018, ISWA reportedly killed 30 Nigerian soldiers on a military base in Zari, a village in Borno State, Nigeria. (Sources: [Institute for Security Studies](#) [5], [Al Jazeera](#) [6], [New York Times](#) [7], [Global News](#) [8], [ABC News](#) [9])

### **Overview**

According to the U.S. Department of State, Boko Haram and its offshoots are responsible for the displacement of 2.5 million Nigerians, with approximately 200,000 seeking refuge in neighboring countries. Islamic extremism was a concern for 72 percent of the Nigerians polled in a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014 and has been a top priority for Nigerian politicians. After Muhammadu Buhari was elected president of Nigeria in March 2015, he stated: “we shall spare no effort until we defeat terrorism.” During his first few months in office, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari led a vigorous military campaign against Boko Haram and declared victory against the group in December 2015. Despite Buhari’s continued assurances that Boko Haram has been “technically defeated,” the group continues to carry out attacks and has maintained control over territory in northeastern Nigeria. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [2], [Pew Research Center](#) [10], [New York Times](#) [11], [International Crisis Group](#) [12], [Economist](#) [13], [Africanews](#) [14])

Since 2009, Boko Haram has carried out a regular string of attacks against Nigerian security forces and civilians. The group has killed more than 30,000 people in its effort to establish an Islamic caliphate. In August 2011, Boko Haram carried out its first attack against the West, killing 23 people in a suicide car bombing outside of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja. Boko Haram gained international notoriety after kidnapping 276 Chibok schoolgirls in April 2014. The kidnapping sparked the #BringBackOurGirls social media campaign, which was endorsed by high-profile individuals such as Pope Francis and then-U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama. With support from the International Committee of the Red Cross, Buhari’s government has secured the release 107 of the kidnapped Chibok girls. In January 2015—in Boko Haram’s deadliest attack to date—insurgents slaughtered more than 2,000 people in northeastern Nigeria. A few days later, the group allegedly remotely detonated explosives strapped to young girls in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State. (Sources: [Japan Times](#) [15], [U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#) [16], [Bring Back Our Girls](#) [17], [Guardian](#) [18], [New York Times](#) [19], [Wall Street Journal](#) [20], [CNN](#) [21], [NBC](#) [22])

In 2016, after ISIS recognized [Abu Musab al-Barnawi](#) [23] as the leader of the group, Boko Haram split into two factions. Militants loyal to longtime Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau have continued to carry out suicide bombings at crowded marketplaces in northeast Nigeria. Under al-Barnawi’s leadership, ISIS in West Africa (ISWA) has launched a series of attacks against Nigerian security forces and other government targets. The Nigerian government has continued to strengthen its legislation against terrorism and is working with regional and international allies against militant groups in and around Nigeria. (Sources: [Institute for Security Studies](#) [5], [Amnesty International](#) [24])

### **Radicalization and Foreign Fighters**

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### *Boko Haram*

Boko Haram is a Nigeria-based terror group that seeks to rid the country of Western and secular institutions and to resuscitate the Kanem-Bornu caliphate that once ruled over modern-day Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon. The group was founded by a Salafist cleric named Mohammed Yusuf in 2002. Yusuf opened the Ibn Taymiyyah Masjid mosque in Maiduguri and developed a significant following among disaffected youth in the area. Many of these followers went on to become Boko Haram militants. (Sources: [Brookings](#) [25], [Al Jazeera](#) [26], [Oxford Research Encyclopedias](#) [27], [BBC News](#) [28])

In 2009, Yusuf was killed by Nigerian security forces and Abubakar Shekau became the leader of Boko Haram. Under Shekau's leadership, Boko Haram has grown more militant and has developed a reputation for mass violence. In addition to targeting Christians, who represent approximately 50 percent of the Nigerian population, Boko Haram routinely targets Muslim civilians outside of the organization (who are, by virtue of that fact, considered infidels). Boko Haram's ideology and tactics have alienated Nigerians making it hard for Boko Haram to recruit new members. As a result, the group has resorted to the conscription of thousands of boys and girls, many of who are trained in boot camps in northeast Nigerian and neighboring Cameroon. (Sources: [Combating Terrorism Center](#) [29], [Brookings](#) [25], [Pew Research Center](#) [30], [Institute for Security Studies](#) [5], [Al Jazeera](#) [26], [Strategic Studies Institute](#) [31], [Wall Street Journal](#) [32])

### *Ansaru*

In 2012, a number of Boko Haram members who opposed Shekau's willingness to target Muslim civilians defected to form a splinter group called Ansaru. The group's full Arabic name, Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan, loosely translates to "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa." Ansaru is aligned with [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#) [33] and has executed a number of notable attacks against foreign targets. Shortly after announcing its formation, Ansaru abducted 63-year-old French national Francis Colump following an attack on a well-guarded compound in the northern town of Rimi, about 25km (15 miles) from Katsina city. The United States designated the group a terrorist organization in 2013. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [34], [Combating Terrorism Center](#) [35], [Bloomberg News](#) [36], [BBC News](#) [37], [U.S. Department of State](#) [38])

Nigerian authorities captured Ansaru's leader, [Khalid al-Barnawi](#) [39], in early April 2016. That September, analyst Jacob Zenn said that Ansaru had been "quiet," though it was "still active according to Nigerian army reports." A number of Ansaru members have reportedly reintegrated with Shekau's Boko Haram. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [40], [African Arguments](#) [41], [African Arguments](#) [42])

### *Boko Haram and the Islamic State*

In March 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau announced the Nigerian terror group's allegiance to ISIS. Shortly after, ISIS's now-deceased spokesperson [Abu Mohammad al-Adnani](#) [43] released an audio message directing individuals who could not enter Iraq or Syria to travel to West Africa. There is little evidence to suggest that Adani's message attracted a significant number of foreign fighters to Nigeria. On the contrary, an estimated 6,000 individuals, including the son of the former Nigerian Chief Justice Muhammad Lawal Uwais, reportedly left Nigeria and other African countries to fight with ISIS in Iraq and Syria. (Sources: [Institute for Security Studies](#) [5], [Reuters](#) [44], [The Punch](#) [45], [Daily Trust](#) [46])

Boko Haram split into two groups when ISIS appointed Abu Musab al-Barnawi as the head of the Islamic State's West Africa Province in August 2016. Although Shekau did not win the endorsement of ISIS, he refused to relinquish his authority and has continued to lead a group of followers under the banner of Boko Haram. Shekau has maintained his allegiance to ISIS and, in March 2017, began including ISIS logos in official Boko Haram videos. (Sources: [CNN](#) [47], [Institute for Security Studies](#) [5])

With ISIS losing territory in the Middle East, Nigeria has recently seen an influx of foreign fighters joining the ranks of Boko Haram and ISWA via Iraq and Syria. According to a CNN report, approximately 1,500 foreign fighters have joined Boko Haram and around 3,500 have joined ISWA. (Sources: [The Punch](#) [48], [CNN](#) [49])

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### *Kala Kato*

Kala Kato is an Islamic fundamentalist movement with a following in Nigeria. It is considered a Quranist movement: Kala Kato followers rely exclusively on the Quran and reject the religious authority of the Hadith (a series of books describing the words and actions of the Islamic prophet Muhammad). The movement's reasoning for dismissing the Hadith is reflected in the name "Kala Kato," which translates to "a mere man said it." Kala Kato considers those who follow the Hadith to be infidels, which has caused tension between Kala Kato and other Muslim sects. This tension has been exacerbated by the fact that Kala Kato has challenged conventional Muslim practices such as reciting the Islamic prayer *Nasilat* and the act of alms-giving, or *zakat*. (Sources: [Nigerian Research Network](#) [50], [Jamestown Foundation](#) [51], [Niger Times](#) [52])

Kala Kato followers have been known to publicly preach their views and promote militancy. The movement rejects western education and followers have reportedly tried to persuade Nigerian parents to pull their children out of school to study the Quran. According to a Nigerian security official, followers have successfully proselytized moderate Muslims in Nigeria and in neighboring countries such as Niger. (Sources: [Nigerian Research Network](#) [50], [BBC News](#) [53], [Northwestern University](#) [54])

### *Izala*

Izala is an anti-Sufi, Salafist organization that was founded by Sheikh Ismaila Idris in 1978 in the central Nigerian city Jos. The name "Izala" is short for Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'ah Wa'ikhamatul Sunnah, which translates to "society for the removal of innovation and reinstatement of tradition." Izala has established Islamic schools and mosques for purposes of recruitment and indoctrination and has reportedly managed to garner a significant following in and around Nigeria. (Sources: [University of Bayreuth](#) [55], [Oxford University Press](#) [56])

The organization finds its roots in the early 1960s as a movement centered on Sheikh Abu-bakar Gummi, a prominent preacher and scholar influenced by the Saudi Islamic doctrine [Wahhabism](#) [57]. Izala has maintained a connection to the Wahhabi movement and has reportedly received significant financial support from the Saudi Arabian government via its embassy in Nigeria. (Sources: [Strategic Studies Institute](#) [31], [Washington Post](#) [58])

### *Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN)*

Founded by Nigerian extremist Malam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, the Islamic Movement in Nigeria is a Shiite organization reported to be financially and ideologically supported by Iran. According to a 2013 report from the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, the IMN is considered "Iran's proxy" by some Iranian officials and has adopted the Iranian government's anti-American, anti-western, and anti-Israeli political views. In July 2014, more than 30 IMN members were killed in clashes with government forces including during the IMN's yearly Quds procession—an event held to demonstrate IMN's solidarity with the Palestinian cause. IMN has reportedly emulated many of [Hezbollah](#) [59]'s recruitment practices. The group allegedly runs a radio station, newspaper, and more than 300 schools. According to Nigerian intelligence, IMN hosts training camps for new recruits across northern Nigeria. Ever since the detainment of al-Zakzaky in 2015 following charges of murder, IMN followers have regularly held protests across the country. Although al-Zakzaky was ordered to be released by a federal high court in 2016, the army simply ignored the order. Their protests reportedly turn violent due to national hostility and police overreaction towards the Shiite marchers. In one confrontation in December 2018, Nigerian soldiers opened fire on unarmed demonstrators, which the military later justified as their right to defense. On July 29, 2019, the federal court allowed the government to designate the IMN as a terrorist organization. (Sources: [Strategic Studies Institute](#) [31], [Sahara Reporters](#) [60], [Combating Terrorism Center](#) [61], [Sahara Reporters](#) [60], [Middle East Institute](#) [62], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [63], [Radio Farda](#) [64], [New York Times](#) [65])

### *Movement for the Islamic Revival (MIR)*

IMN follower Abubakar Mujahid founded the Movement for the Islamic Revival (or Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah, Ja'amutu Tajidmul Islami) in the late 1990s in Kano, Nigeria. The group is known to exploit street violence and organize mass protests. Abubakar Mujahid and IMN founder Malam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky are reported to be an influential grass roots force capable of convening street demonstrations of up to half of a million people in Kano. Both Zakzaky and Mujahid are

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reported to have revered al-Qaeda leader [Osama Bin Laden](#) [66]. (Source: [Strategic Studies Institute](#) [31])

### **Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents**

Boko Haram and its dissident offshoot, Ansaru, have executed the majority of their attacks against civilian and military targets in northern Nigeria. These attacks have included kidnappings, beheadings, shootings, and bombings. Neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger have also been targeted, though to a lesser degree. Boko Haram militants are known for carrying out “hit-and-run” assaults, during which houses are destroyed, men of fighting age are killed, and women and children are kidnapped. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [67], [U.S. Department of State](#) [68], [Associated Press](#) [69], [Amnesty International](#) [24])

Boko Haram launched its deadliest attack to date on January 3, 2015, when insurgents opened fire on multiple northern Nigerian towns, killing more than 2,000 civilians. The multi-day assault began when militants entered targeted towns with cars and armored vehicles filled with motorcycles which were then unloaded. The jihadists shot indiscriminately at fleeing residents and destroyed more than 3,700 buildings. Amnesty International spoke to witnesses who characterized the damage as “catastrophic.” (Sources: [BBC News](#) [70], [CNN](#) [71], [Amnesty International](#) [72])

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari declared victory against Boko Haram in December 2015, though the announcement was followed by successive suicide bombings perpetrated by the terror group in the country’s northeast. As of August 2016, Boko Haram is split between militants that follow longtime leader Abubakar Shekau and those who follow ISIS-appointed Abu Musab al-Barnawi. (Sources: [Premium Times](#) [73], [Newsweek](#) [74], [Economist](#) [75])

- **May 1, 2018:**Two suicide bombings at a mosque and a market kill a total of 86 people in Mubi, a town located in northeastern Nigeria.  
Boko Haram is believed to be responsible for the attacks. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [6], [New York Times](#) [7]
- **February 19, 2018:**Boko Haram militants kidnap 110 schoolgirls from a boarding school in Dapchi, Yobe State. Five of the girls reportedly die while in transit to an undisclosed location. On March 21, Boko Haram returns 104 of the schoolgirls. One of the girls remains in captivity for refusing to denounce her Christian faith. Sources: [The Oracle](#) [76], [Vanguard](#) [77]
- **February 17, 2018:**Three female suicide bombers kill at least 20 and wound 22 others at a fish market in Maiduguri, Nigeria. There are no immediate claims of responsibility.  
Sources: [New York Times](#) [78], [Reuters](#) [79]
- **December 2, 2017:**Suspected Boko Haram suicide bombers kill 13 people and injure 53 others in a market in Borno State.  
The bombers strike as aid workers are distributing food to citizens. Source: [Australian Broadcasting Company](#) [80]
- **November 21, 2017:**A teenage suicide bomber kills over 50 people at a mosque in northeast Nigeria during morning prayers.  
Source: [Guardian](#) [81]
- **August 15, 2017:**A female suicide bomber kills 27 people at a market in northeast Nigeria.  
Almost simultaneously, two other suicide bombers detonate their devices near a camp for displaced persons. A total of 83 people are wounded in the three explosions. Sources: [Reuters](#) [82], [Chicago Tribune](#) [83]
- **July 25, 2017:**Boko Haram militants ambush an oil exploration team belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in northeast Nigeria.  
The attack kills more than 50 people. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [84]
- **June 7, 2017:**Boko Haram militants attack the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri with explosives and gunfire, forcing civilians to flee as Nigerian military forces repel the extremists.  
Source: [Reuters](#) [85]
- **May 7, 2017:**The Nigerian government releases six Boko Haram prisoners in exchange for 82 of the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped in 2014.  
Source: [New York Times](#) [19]
- **March 15, 2017:**Suspected Boko Haram fighters indiscriminately fire into civilian homes and kill “scores” of people in Magumeri, a town in northeastern Borno State.  
Sources: [Sahara Reporters](#) [86], [Reuters](#) [87]
- **February 22, 2017:**Boko Haram insurgents kill seven Nigerian soldiers during an attack on a military outpost in Gajiram, northeastern Nigeria.  
Source: [Vanguard](#) [88]
- **January 17, 2017:**Boko Haram insurgents attack a refugee camp hours after it is mistakenly bombed by the Nigerian air force.  
Source: [Fox News](#) [89]

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- **December 9, 2016:**Two school-aged, female suicide bombers kill at least 30 people and wound 67 others at a marketplace in Madagali, Adamawa State. The Nigerian government blames the attacks on Boko Haram. The Nigerian army liberated Madagali from Boko Haram in 2015, and since then, the terror group is believed to have carried out at least three attacks in the town. Sources: [Guardian](#) [90], [Al Jazeera](#) [91]
- **October 13, 2016:**Boko Haram releases 21 Chibok school girls to Nigerian authorities. The release comes after negotiations between the militants and the Nigerian government brokered by Swiss officials and the International Red Cross. Source: [CNN](#) [92]
- **September 18, 2016 - September 18, 2016:**Boko Haram insurgents launch three attacks in the village of Tallari in Borno State. Militants behead the village chief and his son, ambush a military convoy, and gun down eight Christians. A total of 40 persons are reportedly killed. Source: [Associated Press](#) [93], [U.S. Department of State](#) [94]
- **June 14, 2016:**Boko Haram militants kill 24 people as they mourn at a funeral in the village of Kuda in Nigeria's Adamawa State. Most of the victims are women. Source: [Guardian](#) [95]
- **March 16, 2016:**Two female suicide bombers, suspected to belong to Boko Haram, kill 22 people outside of a mosque in Maiduguri. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [96]
- **February 9, 2016:**Two female suicide bombers detonate explosives at Dikwa, a displaced persons camp, killing at least 58 people and wounding 78 others. Boko Haram is believed to be responsible. Sources: [New York Times](#) [97], [U.S. Department of State](#) [94]
- **February 1, 2016:**Insurgents belonging to Boko Haram kill at least 65 individuals in Dalori village near Maiduguri. Source: [CNN](#) [98]
- **January 28, 2016:**Six suicide bombers detonate explosives at a military checkpoint and a vegetable market in Chibok, killing a total of 16 people. Local residents blame Boko Haram. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [94], [Guardian](#) [99]
- **January 6, 2016:**Boko Haram suicide bombers kill seven in northeastern Nigeria in one of the group's first attacks since President Buhari announced its defeat in December 2015. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [100]
- **December 28, 2015:**Boko Haram insurgents kill at least 80 people with rocket-propelled grenades and multiple suicide bombings in northeastern Nigeria. Source: [Washington Post](#) [101]
- **December 25, 2015:**Boko Haram insurgents launch a Christmas day attack on a town in northeastern Nigeria, killing at least 14 individuals and wounding several others. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [102]
- **December 16, 2015:**Boko Haram militants attack three villages in northeast Nigeria, killing 30 people and wounding 20 others. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [103]
- **November 19, 2015:**Suspected Boko Haram suicide bombers kill 49 people and wound more than 80 in the eastern city of Yola, Nigeria. Source: [Associated Press](#) [104]
- **September 3, 2015:**Suspected Boko Haram militants kill 50 people in an attack on a town in the Gwoza, a local government area in Borno State. Source: [NAIJ](#) [105]
- **August 31, 2015:**Boko Haram gunmen on horseback kill 79 people in remote villages in northeastern Nigeria. Source: [CNN](#) [106]
- **August 23, 2015:**Boko Haram militants attack a convoy carrying Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, the new head of the Nigerian army. One Nigerian soldier is killed but Buratai is left unharmed. The troops kill 10 of the insurgents and capture five. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [107]
- **July 3, 2015:**Boko Haram insurgents murder more than 140 Nigerians in attacks across the northeast of the country. In one of the attacks, a young female suicide bomber kills 12 in a mosque in Borno. Source: [Business Insider](#) [108]
- **July 2, 2015:**In Borno State, Boko Haram militants gun down nearly 150 people as they pray in mosques during the holy month of Ramadan. Source: [Reuters](#) [109]
- **June 18, 2015:**Boko Haram insurgents carried out an attack on two towns in Niger's Diffa region near the Nigerian border. The assault targeted civilians and leaves 38 dead, mostly women and children. Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [110], [BBC News](#) [111]
- **April 30, 2015:**Nigerian troops rescue 160 women and children in the northeastern Sambisa Forest that had been taken hostage by Boko Haram. Source: [CNN](#) [112]

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- **April 28, 2015:**The Nigerian army rescues 200 girls and 93 women during an offensive against Boko Haram in the Sambisa Forest.  
This group does not include the schoolgirls abducted from Chibok in April 2014. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [113]
- **April 6, 2015:**Boko Haram militants, disguised as preachers, attack a village in Borno State, killing 24 men and women near a mosque.  
Source: [Voice of America](#) [114]
- **March 20, 2015:**A mass grave of approximately 70 individuals killed by Boko Haram is discovered in Damasak, Nigeria.  
Source: [BBC News](#) [115]
- **March 5, 2015:**Boko Haram militants armed with guns, knives, and petrol bombs invade Njaba, a remote village in Borno State, Nigeria and kill 68 people.  
The militants reportedly target children between the ages of 13 and 19 and elderly people. Source: [BBC News](#) [115]
- **March 2, 2015:**Coalition forces, consisting of troops from Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Benin, launch a ground and air campaign against Boko Haram.  
Source: [BBC News](#) [115]
- **February 2, 2015:**A female suicide bomber self-detonates in Gombe city in northern Nigeria, purportedly targeting Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan who had just left a campaign rally.  
Source: [BBC News](#) [116]
- **January 11, 2015:**Two ten-year old female suicide bombers kill at least three people in an open-air market in Potiskum, Yobe State.  
The girls are believed to be from the group of nearly 300 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram in April 2014. Sources: [Reuters](#) [117], [NBC](#) [22]
- **January 3, 2015:**Boko Haram launches its deadliest attack to date, killing over 2,000 civilians in a 10-day raid of multiple towns in northern Nigerian.  
Sources: [BBC News](#) [118], [CNN](#) [71]
- **December 21, 2014:**Boko Haram releases a video of its militants killing civilians.  
The audio explains that the individuals are being killed because “they are infidels.” In the video, the leader states, “...from now, killing, slaughtering, destructions and bombing will be our religious duty anywhere we invade.” Sources: [BBC News](#) [118], [CNN](#) [71]
- **November 28, 2014:**Gunmen, allegedly belonging to Boko Haram, detonate three bombs and open fire on worshippers at a mosque in northern Nigeria’s biggest city, Kano.  
The attack kills at least 81 people. Source: [Reuters](#) [119]
- **October 18, 2014:**Boko Haram gunmen abduct approximately 60 girls from a boarding school in a northern Nigerian town close to the border with Cameroon.  
Source: [New York Times](#) [120]
- **July 28, 2014:**Boko Haram militants kidnap the wife of Amadou Ali, Cameroon’s vice prime minister and one of the country’s most prominent political figures.  
Source: [New York Times](#) [121]
- **July 23, 2014:**Two Boko Haram suicide attacks in Kaduna, Nigeria, kill 82 people. One of the attacks targets former President Muhammadu Buhari.  
Source: [Reuters](#) [122]
- **May 4, 2014:**Boko Haram releases a video claiming responsibility for the kidnapping.  
In the video, leader Abubakar Shekau threatens to sell the girls “in the market, by Allah... Allah has instructed me to sell them. They are his property and I will carry out his instructions.” Sources: [Reuters](#) [123], [Al Jazeera](#) [124]
- **April 15, 2014 - April 16, 2014:**The Nigerian military claims it has rescued nearly all of the girls.  
The next day, the Nigerian military admits it has rescued none. Source: [New Yorker](#) [125]
- **April 14, 2014:**Twin bomb attacks during morning rush hour kill 71 and injure 124 in the Nigerian capital Abuja.  
On April 19, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau claimed responsibility and threatens more attacks. Sources: [Reuters](#) [126], [Associated Press](#) [127]
- **April 14, 2014:**In an overnight kidnapping, armed men in Nigerian military uniforms arrive at an all-girls secondary school in Chibok.  
The girls are told that they are safe as they are herded onto trucks and motorcycles. It is when the Boko Haram members shout “Allahu Akbar” as they depart that the girls realize they are not with Nigerian authorities. Source: [New Yorker](#) [128]
- **April 14, 2014 - April 15, 2014:**In one of its highest-profile attacks, Boko Haram kidnaps 276 girls from a boarding school in Chibok, Borno state.  
The kidnapping triggers international condemnation and social media demands to “Bring Back Our Girls.” Sources: [CNN](#) [129], [Al Jazeera](#) [130]
- **April 2014 - May 2014:**The #BringBackOurGirls campaign goes viral and the U.S. vows to help “in any way we can.”  
Source: [CBC](#) [131]
- **February 26, 2014:**Boko Haram militants shoot or burn to death 59 students at an all-male boarding school in Nigeria’s northeast Yobe State.

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Sources: [Reuters](#) [126], [Associated Press](#) [127]

- **January 15, 2014:** Ansaru militants release a video of French hostage Francis Colump, who was kidnapped in December 2012. The group warned the French and Nigerian governments that they were responsible for his fate. Source: [SITE Intel Group](#) [132]
- **December 20, 2013:** Boko Haram insurgents attack the Nigerian army barracks in Bama, southern Borno State, killing 20 military personnel and numerous civilians. Source: [SITE Intel Group](#) [132]
- **February 16, 2013:** Ansaru militants kidnap and kill seven construction workers in Bauchi State, Nigeria. Source: [Telegraph](#) [133]
- **January 20, 2013:** Ansaru militants open fire on a convoy of Nigerian troops on route to Mali. Ansaru confirms in a local newspaper that the attack was part of a mission to stop Nigerian troops from joining Western powers in their "aim to demolish the Islamic empire of Mali." The statement continues: "We are warning the African countries to ... [stop] helping Western countries in fighting against Islam and Muslims or face the utmost difficulties." Source: [Reuters](#) [134]
- **December 19, 2012:** Ansaru militants kidnap 63-year-old French national Francis Colump in Rimi, Nigeria, a small town close to the Niger border. Ansaru releases a statement saying: "The reason we kidnapped him is ... the law the government created which prohibits the wearing of niqab by French Muslim women. This is a denial of their religious rights. And again the participation of France in supporting the military attack on Muslims in northern Mali...." Source: [Reuters](#) [135]
- **August 26, 2011:** Boko Haram militants detonate a car bomb outside of the United Nations building in Abuja. The explosion kills 23 people and injures 76 more. Sources: [Reuters](#) [136], [New York Times](#) [137]

### **Domestic Counter-Extremism**

#### *Legislation*

On February 17, 2013, Nigeria's Senate and House of Representatives strengthened their anti-terror laws with the passage of an amendment to the 2011 Terrorism (Prevention) Act (the "Act"). In an effort to improve inter-agency counter terrorism efforts, the Act grants coordinating bodies with more power and delineates the specific counterterrorism functions of involved institutions. The Act allows law enforcement to detain and prosecute terror suspects. It also provides specific guidelines for judges to follow when setting punishment for terror crimes. Among other modifications, the amendment permits the death penalty for those found guilty of committing, attempting to commit, or facilitating acts of terror. (Sources: [Nigerian Securities and Exchange Commission](#) [138], [Reuters](#) [139], [Nigerian Securities and Exchange Commission](#) [138])

Nigeria's Terrorism (Prevention) Act gives the Office of the National Security Adviser ("ONSA") the responsibility of coordinating counterterrorism efforts between security and enforcement agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), the Ministry of Justice, and the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF). The AGF is tasked with ensuring that Nigeria's counterterrorism laws and policies are in accordance with international counterterrorism legal instruments. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [2], [Reuters](#) [139], [Vanguard](#) [140])

The international community has expressed concern over allegations that Nigeria's security forces have committed human rights violations. According to the U.S. Department of State, "in its response to Boko Haram and ISIS-WA attacks... Nigerian security service personnel perpetrated extrajudicial killings and engaged in torture, sexual exploitation and abuse, arbitrary detention, mistreatment of detainees...and destruction of property." An October 2013 Amnesty International report documented that nearly 1,000 people died in military custody in the first half of 2013. The international community also expressed concern when Nigerian authorities were unable to rescue the nearly 300 Chibok girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in April 2014. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [2], [Amnesty International](#) [141], [Henry Jackson Society](#) [142])

#### *States of Emergency*

In May 2013, Nigeria declared a state of emergency in three northeastern states where Boko Haram was wreaking havoc:

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Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. The state of emergency was renewed in November 2013 and again in May 2014. Under the first state of emergency, then-President Goodluck Jonathan created an interagency joint task force (JTF) with both military and police units to push back on extremists. These forces were reorganized into the Seventh Division, which reports to the chief of army staff. In some places, there are vigilantes known as the Civilian JTF Assist Division that attempt to provide supplementary policing to Nigeria's military and security forces. (Sources: [Voice of America](#) [143], [International Crisis Group](#) [144], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [145])

### ***Boko Haram Committee***

In April 2013, the Jonathan administration established the Boko Haram Committee to engage in a dialogue with the terror group's leadership. The committee's objectives included (a) negotiating a framework for Boko Haram disarmament and (b) providing compensation for victims of Boko Haram violence. Some Nigerians were skeptical of the committee's ability to succeed where previous governments had long failed. (Source: [Voice of America](#) [146])

In a November 2014 video, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau denied Nigerian government claims that a ceasefire agreement had been reached. Boko Haram Committee member and diplomat Bolaji Akinyemi stated: "We can accept this latest [Boko Haram] video at face value that this group is not willing to talk... maybe the solution is a military one." (Source: [BBC News](#) [147])

### ***Counterterrorism Measures under President Buhari***

Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari was elected in May 2015 and, in accordance with his election pledge, declared victory against Boko Haram in December 2015. Although Boko Haram appeared to wane in the months following Buhari's declaration, the terror group quickly regained momentum and has continued to carry out attacks in the country's north. In October 2016, the Buhari government managed to secure the release of 21 of the nearly 300 kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls and in May 2017, another 82 were freed in exchange for six Boko Haram captives. These negotiations were facilitated by the Red Cross and members of the Swiss government. (Sources: [Premium Times](#) [73], [International Crisis Group](#) [12], [Economist](#) [13], [CNN](#) [148], [Al Jazeera](#) [149], [Guardian](#) [18], [New York Times](#) [19])

### ***National Action Plan***

In November 2017, the Nigerian government launched a national action plan for preventing violent extremism (PVE). The framework—developed by the government's Office of the National Security Adviser in consultation with civil society organizations, the media, students, and the academic community—focuses on four key areas: (i) strengthening Nigerian institutions to PVE; (ii) strengthening the rule of law and human rights; (iii) building community engagement and resilience; and (iv) integrating strategic communication to PVE. President Buhari introduced the framework to government personnel at the state house in Abuja, requesting that it be implemented by civil society organizations, state, and local governments. This came after the United Nations called on member states to develop respective national action plans for PVE in December 2015. (Sources: [Counter Terrorism Center](#) [150], [This Day Live](#) [151])

## **International Counter-Extremism**

The 2011 Terrorism (Prevention) Act and the 2013 Terrorism (Amendment) Act give the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), along with the Minister of Justice, responsibility for ensuring Nigerian regulations abide by international policies and U.N. Conventions on Terrorism. The AGF responds to extradition requests and cooperates with international institutions and foreign states to prevent international acts of terrorism. Nigeria is part of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [68], [U.S. Department of State](#) [2])

### ***U.S.-Nigerian Cooperation***

Nigerian-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation ramped up in 2013 with the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission (BNC) Regional Security Working Group. The Nigerian government hosted the gathering in its capital Abuja. The working group defined challenges of mutual concern for the U.S. and Nigeria and outlined potential responses. Nigeria has been an active



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participant in regional events hosted by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and co-hosted a GCTF workshop on the “Criminal Justice Sector and Rule of Law” in 2013. The government of Nigeria formally requested assistance to develop an intelligence apparatus, the Joint Terrorist Branch (JTAB), to act as the interagency coordinating body for counterterrorism efforts. Nigeria has participated in U.S. counterterrorism capacity building programs under the U.S. Department of State’s Antiterrorism Assistance program. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [68])

The United States has, at times, been prohibited from assisting Nigeria under the Leahy Amendment. The Leahy Amendment is an Act that blocks U.S. aid to foreign military units found to have committed human rights abuses. In 2012, the U.S. State Department denied training requests from more than 200 Nigerian security officials and a Nigerian army battalion under the Leahy Amendment. (Sources: [Voice of America](#) [143], [Henry Jackson Society](#) [142])

In August 2017, the Trump administration approved a nearly \$600 million sale of high-tech attack planes to Nigeria to help defeat Boko Haram and other militants, despite concerns about human rights abuses by Nigerian security forces. The sale had been put on hold by the Obama administration after a Nigerian fighter jet in January 2017 bombed a displaced-persons camp, killing at least 230 people. (Source: [Associated Press](#) [152])

### ***U.K.-Nigerian Cooperation***

On August 29, 2018, U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May met with President Buhari in Abuja, the country’s capital. During the meeting, May pledged to provide military training and equipment to Nigeria in support of its fight against Boko Haram. The United Kingdom also promised to (a) invest approximately \$16 million in educational institutions for children living in conflict zones; (b) launch a crisis response program to improve Nigeria’s ability to respond to terror attacks; and (c) help hinder Boko Haram recruitment through promoting counter-narratives. (Sources: [Independent](#) [153], [Quartz Africa](#) [154], [Sky News](#) [155])

### ***Regional Cooperation***

In January 2013, Nigeria committed ground troops and logistical support to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria is also a member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and the Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering (GIABA) in West Africa. In 2013, Nigeria helped to establish the Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience (GCERF), a public-private partnership in Switzerland created to counter extremist messaging and recruitment. Nigerian counter-extremism efforts reportedly have been hampered by security forces’ harsh treatment of civilians, distrust between the security forces and communities, and the lack of economic opportunity in northeast Nigeria. (Sources: [Voice of America](#) [143], [BBC News](#) [156], [U.S. Department of State](#) [68], [U.S. Department of State](#) [94])

Following a Boko Haram attack in Cameroon on July 22, 2014, the Nigerian government announced that it would coordinate with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to create a force to fight extremists. The plan for a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was approved by the African Union on March 3, 2015. Since then, the MNJTF has operated in the Lake Chad region and has slowly gained ground on Boko Haram. The formation of the MNJTF followed a May 2014 intelligence sharing agreement between Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—in response to the Chibok girls kidnapping—in which the five countries agreed to improve border security. It is believed that Boko Haram separated the girls, sending them to various camps in some of those countries. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [157], [BBC News](#) [158], [Institute for Strategic Studies](#) [159], [CNN](#) [160], [Telegraph](#) [161])

In March 2016, President Buhari announced that Nigeria had joined Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Military Alliance: a counterterrorism coalition comprising 39 Muslim countries. Buhari explained: “We are part of [the alliance] because we’ve got terrorists in Nigeria that everybody knows which claim that they are Islamic. So, if there’s an Islamic coalition to fight terrorism, Nigeria will be part of it because we are casualties of Islamic terrorism.” (Sources: [Pulse Nigeria](#) [162], [Agence France-Presse](#) [163])

### **Public Opinion**

Various polling results from 2014 through 2018 revealed that Nigerians view religious extremism as the biggest threat to

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the country. According to findings published by the Pew Research Center:

- [93](#) [164] percent have an unfavorable view of Boko Haram;
- [72](#) [10] percent are concerned about Islamic extremism;
- [88](#) [165] percent say crime is a very big problem;
- [88](#) [165] percent say corruption is a very big problem;
- [89](#) [165] percent say electricity shortages are a very big problem;
- [74](#) [166] percent say the country is going in the wrong direction;
- [59](#) [167] percent say government officials do not care about the opinions of ordinary people;
- [50](#) [166] percent personally fear violence;
- [79](#) [166] percent were very or somewhat likely to vote in the presidential election;
- [72](#) [167] percent believe most politicians are corrupt; and
- [60](#) [168] percent are unsatisfied with how democracy works.

(Sources: [Pew Research Center](#) [164], [Pew Research Center](#) [10], [Pew Research Center](#) [169], [Pew Research Center](#) [165], [Pew Research Center](#) [167])