



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'OUR JOB IS TO SHOOT, SLAUGHTER AND KILL'

BOKO HARAM'S REIGN OF TERROR
IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL





A burnt church in Allagara village, Gwoza LGA, Borno State, July 2014. © Private.

Boko Haram has wreaked havoc and suffering on the lives of millions of people in north-east Nigeria since 2009. The armed group has killed thousands of people, abducted at least 2000 and forced more than a million to flee their homes. Through a campaign of almost daily killings, bombings, abductions, looting and burning, Boko Haram has crippled normal life in north-east Nigeria. Towns and villages have been pillaged. Schools, churches, mosques and other public buildings have been attacked and destroyed. Boko Haram is brutally mistreating civilians trapped in areas under its control and has disrupted the provision of health, education and other public services by the Nigerian authorities. Amnesty International's research shows that Boko Haram has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity with impunity.

This report documents Boko Haram's violent campaign against Nigerians since the beginning of 2014. It draws on 376 interviews with eyewitnesses, lawyers, journalists, local government officials and military sources, as well as videos, photos and documents. Amnesty International collected this evidence through four research trips to Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, to camps for internally displaced people in north-east Nigeria and to a refugee camp in northern Cameroon. Numerous interviews were also conducted by phone from London. The report builds on Amnesty International's research into the conflict since it began in 2009 and will be followed by a report on human rights violations committed by state security forces.

Boko Haram (Jamā'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lādda'awatih wal-Jihad [People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad], commonly referred to as Boko Haram [Western education is forbidden]) was established in 2002 in north-east Nigeria as a religious movement committed to a society based on its interpretation of Islam. After clashes in 2009 between the security forces and Boko Haram's members, during which the group's founder Muhammed Yusuf was extrajudicially executed, the group began a series of revenge attacks against the police. Boko Haram's attacks increasingly targeted civilians and from 2012 the group attacked schools, teachers and students to prevent people from receiving a western education. In mid-2013, state security forces pushed Boko Haram out of the cities and towns of north-east Nigeria where they had lived among the population. They moved to remote communities and camps, such as their headquarters in Sambisa forest, Borno state. From these bases, Boko Haram launched almost daily attacks against civilian targets.

In 2014 Boko Haram killed more than 4,000 people, although the true figure is almost certainly higher. In the first three months of 2015, Boko Haram fighters killed at least 1,500 civilians. The group bombed civilian targets across Nigeria, raided towns and

villages in the north-east and from July 2014 began to capture major towns. By February 2015, it controlled the majority of Borno state, as well as northern Adamawa state and eastern Yobe state. In August 2014, Abubakar Shekau, the group's leader, proclaimed this territory to be a caliphate. Tens of thousands of civilians were subjected to Boko Haram's brutal rule.

In February 2015 a counter-offensive by the Nigerian military, with support from Cameroon, Chad and Niger, forced Boko Haram from some major towns and released many civilians from Boko Haram's rule. It is too early to judge whether this has weakened Boko Haram's ability to threaten the lives and property of civilians in the north-east.

Boko Haram used improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including car bombs, and suicide bombers to kill civilians at markets, transport hubs, schools and other public institutions. They repeatedly attacked cities in the north-east, but also struck targets in cities across Nigeria. In 46 attacks between January 2014 and March 2015, the group killed at least 817 people.

Boko Haram's raids on towns and villages in north-east Nigeria terrorized civilians and disrupted ordinary people's livelihoods. Some attacks were carried out by just two or three gunmen on a motorcycle, some by hundreds of fighters supported by tanks and anti-aircraft weapons mounted on flat-bed trucks. The fighters shot civilians in the streets and in their homes. They stole from people's houses, shops and markets, burned these buildings and left. They frequently abducted civilians. In some attacks, Boko Haram gunmen quietly entered villages or towns and assassinated specific individuals identified in advance. In others, Boko Haram assembled civilians and preached to them, instructing them not to be loyal to the government and to follow Boko Haram's version of Islam. Boko Haram sometimes gave civilians a choice: to be killed or join the group. More frequently, fighters simply shot civilians or cut their throats.



People gather to look at a burnt vehicles at the site of a bomb explosion that rocked the busiest roundabout near the crowded Monday Market in Maiduguri, Borno State, on July 1, 2014. A truck exploded in a huge fireball killing at least 15 people on July 1 in the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri, the latest attack in a city repeatedly hit by Boko Haram Islamists. AFP PHOTO/STRINGER (Photo credit should read STRINGER/AFP/Getty Images) © STRINGER/AFP/Getty Images

Communities such as Kayamla in Borno state were raided repeatedly by Boko Haram and thousands of residents were forced to flee to the relative safety of Maiduguri as a result. On 5 May 2014, Boko Haram killed nearly 400 people in a raid on Gamborou, Ngala Local Government Authority (LGA), Borno state.

When Boko Haram fighters took control of towns and villages, they arrived in large numbers and first targeted the military or police presence. After forcing soldiers to abandon their barracks, Boko Haram fighters would capture arms and ammunition left behind. Then they proceeded to target civilians, shooting them as they tried to flee or searching out men of fighting age in their homes and executing them. Often the gunmen divided their forces during attacks, with one group going from house to house to collect valuables and set houses on fire, one looting shops, one killing people and one abducting residents or preventing them from fleeing.

From July 2014 to January 2015, town after town fell to Boko Haram. On 6 August 2014

Boko Haram attacked Gwoza, Borno state. They overran the 350 soldiers stationed in Gwoza and killed at least 600 civilians, although the true number is likely to be higher. Thousands of residents fled Gwoza and hid for several days in nearby mountains, waiting for Boko Haram to leave. However, instead of leaving, over the following days Boko Haram hunted down and executed people they found hiding in the mountains.

In January 2015, Boko Haram took control of Baga, Kukawa LGA, Borno state. Soldiers stationed just outside Baga received warnings that Boko Haram intended to attack Baga and repeatedly requested reinforcements from their superiors. No reinforcements were sent and at 6am on 3 January Boko Haram attacked the base and forced the soldiers to flee. Boko Haram fighters went on to attack Baga and neighbouring Doron Baga. They went through the streets shooting civilians in the streets and in their homes. Boko Haram gunmen hid among trees surrounding the towns and killed many more civilians as they tried to flee. Hundreds of civilians were killed in the attack.

Comparing satellite images taken days before and after the attack shows that more than 3,700 buildings were damaged or destroyed.

Some specific individuals or categories of civilians were deliberately targeted. Boko Haram fighters killed politicians, civil servants, teachers, health workers and traditional leaders because of their relationship with secular authority. Boko Haram called them "unbelievers". Christians living in the north-east were included in this category, but so were Islamic religious figures, from the leaders of sects to local Imams, if they publicly opposed Boko Haram or failed to follow the group's teachings. At times, Boko Haram gave such individuals the option of converting, whether Christian or Muslim, instead of being killed.

Many towns and cities formed state-sponsored militias, known as Civilian Joint Task Forces (Civilian JTF), to combat Boko Haram. Boko Haram subjected these communities to particularly violent treatment. In such locations, and in communities suspected



Abubakar Shekau, the current leader of the Boko Haram sect. Stills from videos posted online. © Private



of giving information to the security forces, Boko Haram killed any men of fighting age – regardless of whether they were members of the Civilian JTF or not.

During raids, Boko Haram abducted civilians, separating out unmarried women and girls, as well as men of fighting age and boys. They were taken to Boko Haram's camps in Sambisa forest or to remote communities under Boko Haram control.

In some cases women and girls escaped from Boko Haram or were freed after their families paid a ransom. Women and girls who remained were forced into marriage with Boko Haram members. In many cases a bride price was paid to family members or to the woman or girl herself, although the circumstances show that the marriage was forced. These wives were forced to perform domestic chores and were raped. Although rape was banned in territories under Boko Haram control, women and girls were also raped in secret outside forced marriages.

Men and boys abducted by Boko Haram were forced to provide services for Boko Haram or to join them as fighters.

Thousands of civilians were forced to live in Boko Haram's camps and in towns under its control and prevented from leaving. They were often placed under armed guard in large houses, at times in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. In some cases they could remain in their own homes, but women were not allowed to travel outside without permission. Boko Haram provided food, although it was often inadequate, and other necessities. Boko Haram required men to obtain permission before travelling between towns, to let their hair grow and to wear trousers that do not touch the ground. Men and women were forced to observe Boko Haram's prayers and receive religious education. Boko Haram enforced its rules with harsh punishments including public floggings and executions.

Since at least May 2013, the situation in north-east Nigeria has constituted a non-international armed conflict. In this context, Boko Haram is bound by international humanitarian law (IHL). Amnesty International has concluded that Boko Haram has committed serious violations of IHL amounting to war crimes. These include murder, attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. Members of Boko Haram should also be investigated for the war crimes of torture, rape, sexual violence, sexual slavery and forced marriages.

Boko Haram's attacks also constitute a widespread, as well as systematic, attack on the civilian population in furtherance of an organizational policy. In this context, Amnesty International believes that Boko Haram has committed murder as a crime against humanity. Boko Haram members should also be investigated for torture, persecution, imprisonment, rape, enslavement and sexual slavery as crimes against humanity.

Amnesty International calls on Boko Haram's leadership to immediately stop all killings and publicly condemn the killing and abduction of civilians by its members and all others fighting on its behalf, as well as sexual violence and torture. Boko Haram's leadership must issue orders that fighters should respect human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) and remove from the ranks anyone suspected of violating IHL or human rights. Boko Haram must immediately release all civilians detained and guarantee safe passage to all civilians.

All parties to the conflict must allow unfettered access by humanitarian agencies to assist civilians.

Despite the heavy deployment of troops in the north-east and the intensity of Boko Haram attacks on civilians, Nigeria's security forces have repeatedly failed to protect the civilian population from attacks. Ahead of many attacks, the group sent warning messages to the residents – either by letters to the local chiefs or by verbally warning individuals – hours or days in advance. Yet requests for troops to be sent, or for the existing military presence to be reinforced, received no response. Amnesty International has documented incidents in numerous communities where troops failed to turn up despite repeated requests for assistance or only arrived after Boko Haram had left.

Nigeria's government must take all necessary legal measures to guarantee the safety, security and protection of civilians and their properties. Nigeria must provide accountability, justice and reparations for the victims of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. It must initiate independent investigations into allegations of crimes under international law, with the aim of bringing suspects to justice in fair trials that are not subject to the death penalty. In light of the military's recent success in pushing Boko Haram out of major towns, the government should take immediate steps to meet the needs of the conflict's victims for medical care, humanitarian assistance and other forms of restitution and rehabilitation.



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(FRONT COVER IMAGE) A wall painted by Boko Haram is pictured in Damasak March 24, 2015. Boko Haram militants have kidnapped

more than 400 women and children from the northern Nigerian town of Damasak that was freed this month by troops from Niger and Chad, residents said on Tuesday. Nigerian, Chadian and Niger forces have driven militants out of a string of towns in simultaneous offensives over the past month. Photo credit: © REUTERS/Joe Penney

(BACK COVER IMAGE) A Boko Haram flag flutters from an abandoned command post in Gamboru deserted after Chadian troops chased them from the border town on February 4, 2015. Nigerian Boko Haram fighters went on the rampage in the Cameroon border town of Fotokol, massacring dozens of civilians and torching a mosque before being repelled by regional forces. STEPHANE YAS/AFP/Getty Images

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Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

Index: AFR 44/3060/2015, English, April 2015

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