



Issue: The ongoing issue of Boko Haram
Forum: Security Council
Position: President
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Introduction

“As many as 200 girls were abducted from their boarding school in north-eastern Nigeria by heavily armed Boko Haram Islamists who arrived in trucks, vans and buses, officials and witnesses said.” - CNN¹, “More than 8,000 refugees cross the border into Cameroon after Nigerian town of Rann is burned to the ground” - The Guardian.² These kinds of headlines have become ordinary for an overwhelming amount of people in Western Africa. For years some of the countries in Western Africa have been terrorised by Boko Haram, urging them to flee their country or face death and sex trade. But the violence is not enough for Boko Haram, they are withholding food and water which has caused famine in parts of the countries, they abduct women in order to use them as sex slaves. Boko Haram, officially the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), is a jihadist group active in eastern Nigeria, Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. They have been on their destructive and inhumane path since 2009, and still there is no solution to keep the people of Western Africa safe and keep them alive.

Definition of Key Terms

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

A Salafi jihadist militant group and former unrecognised proto-state that follows a fundamentalist, Salafi doctrine of Sunni Islam. It is the department of the international terrorist group Islamic State active in Iraq and the Levant.

Jihadism

A term that has been constructed in Western languages to describe militant Islamic movements that are perceived as existentially threatening to the Western world.³

¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/04/15/world/africa/nigeria-girls-abducted/index.html>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/jan/17/thousands-flee-north-east-nigeria-after-devastating-boko-haram-attack-rann-cameroon-bodo>

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https://books.google.nl/books?id=RM0AAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA263&dq=jihadism+definition&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=jihadism%20definition&f=false

Radicalisation

The action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues.⁴

Insurgency

An occasion when a group of people attempt to take control of their country by force.⁵

Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)

Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) are foreign organizations that are designated by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as amended. FTO designations play a critical role in our fight against terrorism and are an effective means of curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups to get out of the terrorism business.⁶

General Overview

Boko Haram was originally founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, and started out as a nonviolent group, with their main goal being the purification of the Islamic faith in Northern Nigeria. In 2009 the group obtained a new leader, Abubakar Shekau, and aligned with ISIL from March 2015 up until August 2016. The current insurgency started in 2009 and has been going on ever since then. Tens of thousands of people have been murdered and over 2.3 million people have been displaced from their homes.⁷ So why did a nonviolent group turn violent, and become one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world?

The violent uprising has its roots in July 2009, caused by several important events. The first of them was a routine traffic stop, about a motorcycle helmet violation. Previously the regulations for motorcycle helmets had been a point of discussion between the group and the government, with Mohammed Yusuf stating that the helmet interfered with the traditional Islamic headdress. The traffic stop ended violently with a fire exchange between the police officers and Boko Haram.⁸ Boko Haram responded to this incident by unleashing attacks of a police station in the Bauchi and Yobe states, with Yusuf provoking the tension by spreading video sermons in which he specifically threatens the state and the police with violence.⁹

These actions eventually caught the attention of the government, which authorised a response by the security sector. This led to a brutal five-day crackdown on Boko Haram, about 700 to 1000 members of the insurgency led by Boko Haram were killed. Many of the

⁴ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/radicalization>

⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/insurgency>

⁶ <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

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https://web.archive.org/web/20151121020206/http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/11/17/world/africa/ap-af-boko-haram.html?_r=0

⁸ A. Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?*

⁹ Walker, *What Is Boko Haram?*

suspects that were killed did not get a fair trial.¹⁰ Muhammed Yusuf was detained during the crack down, and was asked by his interrogators how he felt about being responsible for the killings of his followers, to which he responded that they themselves were responsible.¹¹

Almost immediately after his interrogation, Yusuf was assassinated by officials, the government claimed this happened during a supposed escape-attempt, however witnesses stated it was an execution.¹² Pictures of his body and the tape of his interrogation were widely spread by journalists. The government believed this action had put a stop to Boko Haram, which did stay silent for almost a year, only six people were killed by Boko Haram during this period.

Boko Haram regrouped under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau. To understand the rhetoric behind Shekau and his ideas is near impossible, as the man is fairly 'unknown', there is almost no information about him due to his underground life. He did supposedly marry three of Yusuf's wives and provided for his children. It is also known that he is fluent in several languages, and relatively well-educated despite his condemnation of Western education. The changes in Boko Haram under his leadership were radical, no longer were the group's primary complaints levied at the inadequacy and corruption of local politicians and religious groups; instead, the group's primary target became the Nigerian government and those within the population who did not abide by their specific interpretation of the Quran.¹³

Boko Haram re-emerged in September 2010, when they freed over 700 inmates in the Bauchi State¹⁴. A series of attacks followed, such as bombings of government and security installations and explosive attacks on churches. They moved away from targeted assassinations, which were the usual form of attack during Yusuf's leadership, and used many new techniques.

¹⁰ Higazi, "The Origins and Transformation of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Northern Nigeria."

¹¹ Higazi, "The Origins and Transformation of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Northern Nigeria."

¹² M. Smith, Explaining Nigeria's Boko Haram and Its Violent Insurgency (Africa Check, 2014).

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<http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-119>

¹⁴ Higazi, "The Origins and Transformation of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Northern Nigeria."

The three most significant changes in the rhetoric of Boko Haram, which led to radicalisation and violence, are the expanded scope of grievances, the increase of advanced tactics and the tolerance for civil casualties. They not only expanded their scope of grievances, but they also expanded their geographical scope, moving into Chad and Niger for example. In this period the group developed ties to al-Qaeda and fell under the protection of al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), a department of al-Qaeda active in Algeria¹⁵ However, an overwhelming amount of evidence suggest the members remained dependent on local financing, weapon trade and recruitment of new members. These three factors gained even more importance following the death of Muammar Gaddafi, a Libyan politician, when foreign fighters returned to Nigeria from Libya. They raided weapons stores and used the weaponry as an alternative source of income. The increased amount of advanced weapons available to Boko Haram led to an even more destructive terrorist group. In two arms seizures in July 2012, the Nigerian government intercepted 13 rocket-propelled grenades, 10 rocket bombs, 10 AK-47 assault rifles, and 14 improvised explosive devices (IEDs).¹⁶ Even though there are many international weapons in Nigeria, the weaponry market in Nigeria is large enough for advanced weapons to be acquired.¹⁷ The advanced tactical was accompanied by an emphasis on propaganda about Boko Haram's role as a vanguard for the persecuted Muslim community.¹⁸



Fig. 1: Map of Africa

¹⁵ D. Gartenstein-Ross and J. Zenn, "Boko Haram's Doomed Marriage to the Islamic State." *War on the Rocks*, August 26, 2016.

¹⁶ Al Jazeera, *Porous Borders and Boko Haram's Arms Smuggling Operations in Nigeria* (Al Jazeera Center for Studies. Al Jazeera, 2013), 1–8.

¹⁷ Higazi, "The Origins and Transformation of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Northern Nigeria."

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<http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-119>

In 2013 the Nigerian government finally flagged Boko Haram as a terrorist group. Before doing so, they had urged the United States not to declare Boko Haram a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). In May 2013 the government also declared a state of emergency in three northern states of Nigeria; Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa.¹⁹ During this state of emergency a joint task force (JFT) consisting of 2000 members of the security sector, was sent to urban strongholds of Boko Haram. This due to the government had to recognise the urban strategy of Boko Haram, but they easily switched to a rural strategy. The joint task force was a major disaster, as the JFT was deployed by the federal security sector, which was largely unfamiliar with the communities they were monitoring, making it hard for them to see the difference between a Boko Haram member and a civilian. Many human rights activist groups, such as Amnesty International, have stated this inability of the JFT led to high levels of civilians casualties and thrusting the region into a vicious cycle of retributive violence.²⁰ In many ways the JFT worsened the crisis, interviews with former insurgents suggest that abuses by the security sector against civilians influenced many of those who joined Boko Haram voluntarily during this period.



Fig. 2: Map of Nigeria with active areas of Boko Haram

The Chibok kidnapping marked a turning point for the insurgency, as it appears that “the relative ease with which it carried out the Chibok abductions appears to have emboldened Boko Haram to carry out more abductions elsewhere, however the insurgents abducted both boys and girls from schools and villages in the months and years leading up to Chibok and have continued the practice since.²¹ Boko Haram forces the abductees to converse to Islam and enforce strict decrees. Girls interviewed by Human Rights Watch reported that those who refused to convert after their capture were “subjected to physical and psychological abuse; forced labour; forced participation in military operations, including carrying ammunition or luring men into an ambush; forced marriage to their captors; and sexual abuse, including rape.”²² They also reported that their captors attempted to protect them from sexual predation; which suggests that a political or ideological agenda accompanies the abductions. Some rescued women stated that the abducted women were referred to as the *mustadafin*, an Arabic term that means “oppressed.” According to these women, the *mustadafin* were instructed by the insurgents, through daily or near-daily

¹⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2014/05/19/boko-haram-inside-the-state-department-debate-over-the-terrorist-label/?noredirect=on>

²⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/16000/afr440432012en.pdf>

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<http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-119>

²² <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/10/27/those-terrible-weeks-their-camp/boko-haram-violence-against-women-and-girls>

Quranic education, before entering into the insurgency's ranks (typically as wives).²³ This shows an ideological rhetoric behind Boko Haram, despite their violent actions.

But not only women and girls were abducted. Human Rights Watch has estimated that approximately 10,000 boys between 2013 and 2016 were abducted. Like the women, they were forced to convert to Islam and Boko Haram's interpretation of the Quran. These young men had to care for younger members of the insurgency, help older members with their weapons, or were trained as fighters.²⁴

Between that same time, Boko Haram started to territorialise the north-eastern region in Nigeria, by attacking communities all over the region. A new tactic they used for this purpose were suicide bombers, especially women and child suicide bombers. They targeted civilian outpost and urban centres. Out of all insurgencies, they are most dependent on female suicide bombers, with Boko Haram deploying more than 240 female suicide bombers between 2014 and June 2017.^{25 26}

Boko Haram is to this day still one of the most violent and lethal groups in the world. Many more civilians are being abducted, despite actions to prevent this. And many more civilians are being killed on the daily. Boko Haram is not a terrorist group that plans a few attacks per year, they attack their region on a frequent basis, making the living situation almost unbearable.

Timeline of Key Events

1960	Nigeria became independent
2002	Founding of Boko Haram by Mohammed Yusuf
July 2009	Traffic stop leading to violent attacks by Boko Haram and the start of the insurgency
July 30, 2009	Interrogation and assassination of Mohammed Yusuf
September 2010	freeing of 700 inmates in the Bauchi State
October 20, 2011	Death of Mummer Gaddafi
2013	The Nigerian government declares Boko Haram as a terrorist group and a state of emergency in 3 states

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<http://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-119>

²⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/happened-10000-boys-kidnapped-boko-haram>

²⁵ <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/women-as-symbols-and-swords-in-boko-harams-terror/>

²⁶ <https://ctc.usma.edu/report-exploding-stereotypes-the-unexpected-operational-and-demographic-characteristics-of-boko-harams-suicide-bombers/>

April 14, 2014	Chibok kidnapping
March 2015 - August 2016	Alignment between Boko Haram and ISIL
May 29, 2015	Inauguration of Muhammad Buhari as president of Nigeria
March 25, 2018	Nigerian Government announces negotiations with Boko Haram

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

The Nigerian government has tried time and time again to solve the issue and eliminate Boko Haram, but without success. The first real attempt to eliminate them was the five-day crackdown in 2009, in which 700 to 1000 suspected members were killed by the security sector. In this crackdown, they also killed the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf. The crackdown led to a year of relatively no attacks from Boko Haram, but as it turned out they were regrouping themselves and coming up with new tactics that would be more lethal.

In 2013 the Nigerian government declared a state of emergency in three states terrorised by Boko Haram; Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. The government also deployed a joint task force to the urban strongholds of Boko Haram in these states. This attempt was problematic in several ways. The first mistake was the unforeseen ability of Boko Haram to switch to a rural strategy and continue their attacks in these areas. The government and security sector were very present in the urban areas, but did not have the same hold over rural areas in Nigeria. The second mistake was the difficulty the JFT had with recognising of the Boko Haram members, leading to a high level of civilian casualties. The members of the JFT were unfamiliar with the communities driving a wedge between them. This led to a lack of trust in the JFT and thus a low flow of information about possible insurgents by the civilians, and the JFT therefore had to rely on their instincts.

In 2015 a new president was elected, Muhammad Buhari. He made some modest reforms to improve the military's effectiveness against Boko Haram. Buhari, a former military dictator (1983–1985), moved the military's headquarters from Abuja to Maiduguri, increased funding for operations in the area, and appointed new military leadership.²⁷

Nigeria also asked neighbouring states to support them in the fight against Boko Haram, which had also suffered attacks from Boko Haram after their expansion. Since 2015, Chad, Cameroon and Niger have deployed thousands of troops as part of a multinational force authorized by the African Union. These troops have helped the Nigerian military regain much of their territory lost to Boko Haram. They also successfully scaled back the violence of Boko Haram.

²⁷ <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/nigerias-battle-boko-haram>

The Council on Foreign relations stated in an article that following the abductions in Chibok, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States pledged additional assistance, including equipment and intelligence support. U.S. assistance related to Boko Haram totalled more than \$400 million by early 2016. In early 2018, U.S. President Donald J. Trump pushed through a roughly \$600 million deal to sell a dozen Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria to support its counterterrorism efforts.²⁸

The Nigerian government has also tried several times to start negotiations with Boko Haram. However, it is said Shekau is unwilling to take part in any of these. The minister of Information, Lai Mohammed announced on the started negotiations with Boko Haram on March 25th 2018. They were negotiating a possible ceasefire and permanent end to the conflict, but have not reached an a agreement. It is likely that these negotiations weren't directly with Boko Haram but the fragmentations of the group that are open to negotiations with the Nigerian government.^{29 30}

Possible Solutions

Some researchers have stated that an increase in community participation is crucial in the fight against Boko Haram. They found large differences in levels of attacks between states and communities within Nigeria. The insurgency has spread out from communities and they have the responsibility but also the capacity to end it. But the Nigerian community is very weak due to several reasons such as ethnical and religious clashes, as Nigeria is a cocktail of a large amount of ethnicities and religions. This makes the resilience of the Nigerian community very low, thus improving the participation of individual communities could strengthen the resilience of these separate communities. This research was all published in the book 'Community Resilience to Boko Haram Insurgency'.³¹

It is also extremely important to remember to look at all factors attributing to the insurgency. The government of Nigeria mainly focusses on the military approach and is paying no attention to the underlying reasons for the violence, the political and economic conditions in Nigeria. They do not have to kill or defeat Boko Haram, but eliminate their reasons to fight. To successfully eliminate Boko Haram's support network and their motivation to fight, the Nigerian government must refine its current use of military power to both minimise civilian casualties and provide a secure environment that allows for the employment of state-building activities addressing Boko Haram's stated motivations.³² They should also remember that the group was originally founded to protest against the religious oppression of the government.

For a permanent end to the conflict the solution should consist of long and short term measures. These long and short terms were all explored in an article of Pambazuka News,

²⁸ <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/nigerias-battle-boko-haram>

²⁹ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/nigerian-government-has-been-negotiating-boko-haram-some-time>

³⁰ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-nigeria-boko-haram-negotiating-possible-stop-to-hostilities/>

³¹ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/235609-nigeria-can-overcome-boko-haram-insurgency-researchers.html>

³² <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/how-to-eliminate-boko-haram/>

written by Okachikwu Dibia. In the following paragraphs a summary of these solutions will follow, however I would encourage you to read the entire article to get a better understanding of these solutions.

In the short term, government should quickly constitute a discussion and reconciliation committee peopled by respected African social leaders in order to render apologies for past mistakes on the part of the government and discuss the grievances of Boko Haram. so they can reach a common understanding of what the solution should look like and reconcile Boko Haram with the government so they can execute the agreement. The government should also rehabilitate the group, which will need amnesty for the members of Boko Haram. Granting them amnesty will move them out of their thinking and engage them economically. They will also need to disarm the members and discourage them from violence.

In the long term various steps should be taken. One of those steps is to improve the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and their focus. the NOA should put in place a national re-orientation programme through which they can regularly interact with idle Nigerian youths and be able to discover the talents of these youths and retrain them through a robust free education system. Another step is for the government to needs to put total free education in place. The educational system should encourage children to find out their talents and use them to earn a living. Unemployment is chiefly caused by the talent-education-productivity disconnection occasioned by the irrelevant nominal education system adopted in Nigeria and indeed in most Third World countries. Moreover, the Nigerian government also needs to seriously rearrange their security sector and army. The entry qualification into the police should be a university degree and those without it should gradually leave the system. When we have a police force that understands its work and goes about it sincerely, respecting the public and seeing an accused person as being innocent until proved otherwise, the police will surely have the cooperation of the general public.³³

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