



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Emergency: Nigeria July 2021

Genocide Watch is issuing an updated Genocide Emergency for Nigeria. Since 2009, Boko Haram and its ideological splinter group the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have terrorized civilians in Northeast Nigeria. Islamist inspired violence has also taken root in other parts of the country, such as the Northwest and Middle Belt, where Fulani jihadists are perpetrating a genocidal campaign against Christians.

Since 2011, Boko Haram (and later ISWAP) have killed more than [40,000 Nigerians](#), making Boko Haram the deadliest terror group in the world. Recent reporting from the UNDP puts the direct and indirect death toll from the twelve-year conflict at more than [350,000 people, including an estimated 300,000 children](#).

Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, died in May 2021 by detonating an explosive vest to avoid capture by ISWAP. However, it is unlikely that Boko Haram massacres and kidnappings will diminish. Boko Haram and ISWAP have recently expanded outside of their Borno state stronghold, and [Boko Haram fighters are potentially pledging allegiance to ISWAP after the death of their former leader](#).

In 2014, Boko Haram rose to international infamy following the abduction of more than 270 girls from the Chibok school. Today, the kidnapping of school children has become a regular occurrence. [Since December of 2020 a school is targeted for kidnappings every three weeks](#). Attackers have successfully stormed schools in the north of Nigeria three times in the past five months, resulting in the kidnapping of at least 667 children. This includes the [Boko Haram kidnapping of 344 students](#) from the Katsina all-boys school on December 11, 2020. Although the Katsina students were later released, fear elicited from these attacks, combined with COVID-19 restrictions, has increased the number of children unable to attend school from [7 million in 2020 to 10 million in 2021](#). School closures reflect broader insecurity in the region, yet also are consistent with the genocidal mission of Boko Haram and ISWAP against secular education.

The genocidal violence perpetrated by Fulani jihadists in Nigeria's Northwest and Middle Belt has received far less attention than Boko Haram massacres and kidnapping in the Northeast. While Fulani jihadists may lack the central organization of Boko Haram or ISWAP, they have demonstrated a clear pattern of genocidal behavior through the systematic targeting of Christian farmers. [Since 2015, Fulani militants have killed more than 11,500 Christians, according to the International Committee on Nigeria](#).

This violence has been framed as an inter-ethnic conflict driven by climate change that has reduced viable pastures for Fulani herders. This narrative is the official view of the Nigerian, US, and other governments. It is a narrative used for denial of the religious and jihadist nature of the massacres. Resource scarcity is only an [exacerbating factor](#) – not a root cause – for the pattern of genocidal violence perpetrated by the Fulani against Christians.

The Nigerian government's response to these ongoing genocides has been entirely inadequate. [Army counter-terrorism campaigns against Boko Haram and ISWAP often kill civilians](#), strengthening local support for the groups. President Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani, has done very little to stop the violence perpetrated by Fulani Jihadists.

Due to the continued systematic violence against civilians, which directly targets Christians and moderate Muslims, Genocide Watch considers Nigeria to be at **Stage 9: Extermination** and **Stage 10: Denial**. The Nigerian government has not acknowledged these genocides and therefore is in denial, as are the US and other governments.

Genocide Watch Recommends:

- The UN and Nigerian government should establish a commission of inquiry to investigate attacks on civilians and report to the Nigerian government and UN Human Rights Council.
- The Nigerian Army and police should establish a Strike Force, trained by international counter-terrorism experts, to investigate and arrest leaders of Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Fulani jihadists.
- Nigerian religious leaders should establish a network of monitors to provide early warnings of attacks.



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- The US should pressure the Nigerian Government to protect civilians targeted by Islamist extremists.
- The Nigerian government should [implement land use management plans](#) to reduce competition for resources between farmers and Fulani herders.