

# Violations Of Right To Life And Education By Boko Haram In Yobe State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The issue of human rights violations has been a problem in developing countries right from the pre-independent era. In Nigeria, the feelings that independence and democratic governance would curb human rights violations was short-lived by prolonged military rule. The 1999 return to democratic governance in Nigeria is characterized by the activities of terrorism, which further seems to compound the problem of human rights violation. This research examined the impact of Boko Haram terrorism on the right to life and education in Yobe state, Northeast Nigeria. This research espoused David Easton's systems theory as its theoretical framework. The study adopted the qualitative approach and made use of both secondary and primary data. Semi-structured interview questions were employed as a guide to the administration of oral interviews. Themes and sub-themes were extracted through thematic analysis. The research revealed that Boko Haram terrorist activities have grossly violated the rights of the people living in northeast Nigeria. More so, the study disclosed that apart from the Boko Haram attacks on military bases in the Yobe state, the right to life and education are constantly under serious attack in the state. To surmount the danger of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, the study recommends, among others, that the Nigerian government should address the root causes of the problem through soft power approach, before strengthening her military strategies and seeking international cooperation and support.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Education, Human rights, Human security, Terrorism

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Human rights violations have placed Africa at another vital crossroads. This time around the crises ridden nature of the continent have exposed it to the penetration of terrorist groups, such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya, Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, and Libya, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, Ansar Dine in North-Africa, the Abdullah Azzam Brigades in Egypt, Al-Qaeda with heavy presence in Africa and Boko Haram in Nigeria, West Africa to mention a few. These groups and many others have contributed to human rights violations in the continent of Africa [1]. The notion that states have a monopoly over the coercive use of force no longer holds in Africa. In African many states cannot curtail some of the security issues confronting them. In Nigeria, several incidences demonstrate the above scenario. The history of human rights abuses in Nigeria predates the ongoing Boko Haram onslaught. Within the time boundary, it can be traced to the political struggles that were associated with the pre and post-independent Nigerian State. It is worthy of note that during colonialism and military rule (1966-79 and 1983-99), Nigerians were treated as subjects by their colonial masters. Both the colonizers and the military rulers used violence to stifle opposition. But in relative terms, the colonizers observed the rule of law better than the military rulers who came into power after Nigeria's independence. The observance of the rule of law by the British was simply to make colonial rule appear less cruel [2]. Despite the less authoritarian nature of the colonial regime, it violated the human rights of Nigerians in many ways. For instance, the policy that compelled Nigerians to change their pattern of

production from food crops to cash crop production was a gross violation of the people's rights. Whenever the Nigerian military takes over power from the democratically elected government, the constitution which is usually suspended becomes their first casualty. Prominent of human rights abuse under the military was the public execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and other eight non-violent human rights activist from Ogoni land on 10 November 1995 [3]. With the return to democratic governance in 1999, many Nigerians thought human rights violation will be a thing of the past, but their expectations were short-lived, as the culture of impunity continued to flourish under them. During Yar'Adua's presidency, there was a clash between Nigeria Armed forces and members of Sheik Mohammed Yusuf. This incident led to the extra-judicial extermination of Yusuf. The dreaded nature of the Boko Haram terrorist group we have today is the product of the extrajudicial killing of Sheik Yusuf. The activities of Boko Haram are marked by gross human rights abuses in many parts of northeast Nigeria Since 2009. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports that "some 20,000 civilians, including an undetermined number of women and children, have been killed by Boko Haram since 2009" [4]. The real number is likely to be higher, as many Civilians were shot, beheaded, amputated, stoned, drowned, burned and bombed in localities that were out of the reach of journalists. Over the years, the Boko Haram sect has waged a campaign of extremist, anti-government attacks. This terrorist group targets Nigerian Christians, government institutions and Muslims. The actions of Boko Haram constitute Human Rights abuses, ranging from killing, deprivation of movement, extortion, burning of houses and stealing money during raids to extrajudicial killings of suspects [5]. The abuse of human rights which are guaranteed by various international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Nigeria has ratified, has become a thing of concern to the international community and well-meaning Nigerians.

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## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Conceptual Clarification

This study adopts the definition of D'Anierri, which sees human rights as, "An array of inalienable individual rights, including civil liberty and political rights, some also include economic rights and cultural rights as well. He further makes reference to The Universal Declaration of Human (UDH) of 1948 which listed some inalienable rights that every individual is supposed to have or enjoy. They include, rights to "life, liberty, and security of persons"(Article 3), right to fair trial and hearing is contained in (Article 10 and 11), right to privacy, freedom from torture, right to political asylum and right to work are contained in Articles 12, 5, 14 and 23 respectively [6]. In this context, terrorism is a technique of violence used by actors (state and non- state) who are disenchanted with an existing political system. They intend to create fear in their targets who could be States or Non-state actors, combatant or non-combatant personnel. The act of violence is geared towards reinstating the power base of the actor carrying out the violent act or attaining goals that are not only political but also religious and ideological. By Boko Haram, we referred to an Islamic group which was a local radical Salafist group and later transformed into a Salafist-Jihadist terrorist organization after 2009. Etymologically, the expression Boko Haram is gotten from the blending of a Hausa word Boko (book) and an Arabic word, Haram (forbidden). By this combination, Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden" [7]. This name was given by the people who were affected by the activities of the group. Formally, Boko Haram is known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad an Arabic expression which stands for "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" [8] [9] [10].

### 2.2 Theoretical Analysis

The system theory, propounded by David Easton in 1953 is used as a theoretical base on which the study is positioned. Easton is the first major Political Scientist who has developed a systematic framework based on the systems analysis approach for the study of politics instead of merely adapting it from anthropology or sociology [11]. There exist many systems. To differentiate the political system from other systems like, physical, biological, social and psychological systems, Easton defines the political system as "that system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented" [12]. The System theory posits that a political system is an activity in which input from the environment is converted into outputs through the authoritative allocation of values. Consequently, as delineated by Easton, there are four main processes involved in a typical political system: the input process; the output process; the conversion and the feedback processes [13]. A typical political system has certain elements: first, a system is made up sub-system that functions as a whole. Second, a system has clear cut boundaries distinguishing it from the wider system within which it operates. Central to Easton's political system is the idea of systemic perseverance [13]. Hence much attention is paid to the causes of stress that could thwart the survival of the system [14]. Thus, the system

needs some adaptive and strategies to overcome any form of stress that can cumulate into a critical stage and cause the system to collapse. There is a link between the political system and its environment. The environment feeds the political system with the raw material in the form of inputs which are divided into demands and supports. These demands and supports do goes through a conversion procedure and come out as outputs- policies and decisions. Next is the action of the feedback loop whose function is to report the effects of the initial outputs back into the system as inputs. Related to the concept of demand, is the concept of over-load, due either because demands are excessive in quantity or, though few, very exacting. The central thesis of the systems theory is that all social occurrences including the political process are intertwined. It is therefore impracticable to understand any part of society in seclusion. In other words, the mixture of economic, social, cultural forces builds up pressure on the policy-makers [15] The theory applies to this study because it explains and analyses the essence and fundamental nature of the Nigerian political system. It provides the framework for the analysis of the demands on the Nigeria government for human security, the need for the Nigerian government to counterterrorism as one of the demands made upon the political system by the environment. This framework provides an understanding of the crisis and all forms of instability that have engulfed the Nigerian state. Leaning on the tenets of the systems theory, one can argue that the inability of the successive governments in Nigeria to convert demands or inputs generally, into acceptable outputs explains the critical stage and the support stress that has characterized the Nigerian state. This has resulted in armed groups taking up arms against the state. The resultant effect is that the people living in northeast Nigeria have become victims of circumstance, as their rights are out rightly abused.

### 2.3 Impacts of Terrorism on Human Rights

Terrorism is a breach and risk to human rights, its activities infringe on all the principles and provisions of international human rights. The most frequently affected aspect of human rights during terrorist attacks is the right to life. This is the ultimate human right as contained in the International Convention on Political and Civil Rights [16]. One would be right to agree with above position because whenever this aspect of human rights is attacked by terrorists, it leads to lawlessness and pandemonium and undermines the state. Consequently, all states are expected to guard this aspect of human rights from all intending peril and against the acts of terrorism. Apart from destabilizing the state, terrorism strives for the destruction of human rights of displaced persons, democracy and supremacy of law, it also attacks the principles that lie at the centered of the United Nations Charter [17]. There is a direct impact of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights, such as the rights to life, physical integrity, and liberty [18]. The emphasis placed on the right to life by global and regional human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has placed the right to life in the position of supreme rights, because, if this particular right is not successfully guaranteed all other human rights would have no foundation to build upon [19]. For this reason, states have the responsibility to protect the right to life of

every individual living within their territory. This right is so important that no deviation from this right is acceptable, even in times of community crisis. Boko Haram's activities have over the years been a basis of danger not only to lives and property but also to the communal existence of the Nigerian state [20]. Furthermore, terrorism has the capacity of affecting human rights negatively. For instance, economic activities almost came to a standstill in some parts of the northeast states. As both individuals and governments were affected in places like Maiduguri and Damaturu, because of the closure or reduction in working hours by many business centres and commercial banks due to continued attacks by terrorists [21]. The Nigerian state is conscious of this traditional duty and the significance of human rights. This is evident in her incorporation of fundamental human rights in chapter four of her 1999 constitution as amended. Despite the integration, Boko Haram has violated all the rights that are enshrined in chapter four of the Nigerian 1999 constitution as amended with maximum arrogance, in absolute disrespect to the fundamental law of the land and all the human rights treaties that the Nigerian state is a party to [22]. More so, Boko Haram activities have displaced a chunk of the human population in northeast Nigeria (Adebowale, 2013). More than 50,000 people are reported to have been displaced and some 10,000 Nigerians were said to have sought refuge in neighbouring states of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Specifically, around 8,100 Nigerians were refugees in Cameroon, 2,700 in Niger and 150 in Chad [23]. To collaborate the above position, a worrisome situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is captured, in which the activities of the Boko Haram sect have caused an increase in the number of IDPs in Nigeria. Most of the IDPs are children and women fleeing from the northeast states of Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa to other parts of Nigeria because they are displaced from their homes [7]. Another perturbing situation is that of the female gender. The female gender in the Northeast whose situation was already bad was later compounded by Boko Haram and counterterrorism operations as the duo destroyed the lives of women in northeast Nigeria. The feminization of terrorism made the female gender to suffer severely from the consequences of terrorism; they were abducted, forced into marrying against their will and also used as suicide bombers, girls as young as eleven years old were used in this regard [24]. This is a gross violation of the rights of the female gender

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Design of the Study

The design of the research was based on qualitative research approaches. The qualitative method is suitable for the interpretation and understanding of social realities. With the intention of an in-depth analysis of the impact of counterterrorism activities on human rights in northeast Nigeria, a case study design is adopted to achieve the needed result. The structure of qualitative research makes it possible for the researcher to get beneath superficial responses through the oral interview approach. The use of a purposeful selection of informants gave room for the right categories of informants to be interrogated.

#### 3.2 Data Source

Both primary and secondary data were sourced for this study. The primary sources of data included key informants, expert and community informants. The first category was made up of nine (9) individuals who were purposively selected from the various security agencies that constitute the counterterrorism force. They constitute the Key Informants (KI). Their selection is informed on their official designations and direct involvement in the fight against terrorism in Northeast Nigeria. The nine KIs were selected from the security agencies listed below:

1. Nigerian Air force (two commanders of the Air component of Nigeria's counterterrorism operation)
2. Nigerian Army (five informants involving, one intelligence commissioned officer and four soldiers from the army special force battalion who took part in the fight against Boko Haram)
3. State Security Service (one field officer operating in the northeast)
4. Nigeria Police force (one Mobile police field commander, heading a unit in the northeast).

The second group comprised of eight (8) individuals who are authorities in terrorism and human rights. They were selected from various universities within Nigeria based on their knowledge in terrorism and human security particularly human rights. They constitute Expert Informants (EI). The third group was a selection of twelve (12) non-security personnel four each from the three local government areas-Bade, Damaturu, and Potiskum. The three local government selected represents the three senatorial districts of Yobe state. They represent Community Informants (CI). Their selection was based on their firsthand information about the activities of Boko Haram terrorism. The list of this category are as follows:

- 1) Bade Local Government (four informants: One Catholic Priest, One businessman and two people who were displaced in Borno state and sort refuge in Bade Local Government Area).
- 2) Damaturu Local Government (four informants comprising one youth leader, one senior lecturer from Yobe state university and two community members).
- 3) Potiskum Local Government (four informants comprising of the Emir of Figa (represented by a senior adviser on youth affairs), one assistant Chief Imam Potiskum Central Mosque and two other community members.

Put together, a total number of twenty-nine informants were purposively selected and interviewed for this research. The names of the informants cannot be displayed due to the sensitive nature of the research. Most of the informants pleaded to be anonymous. Adherent to their request prompted the voluntary participants to provide information at their disposal without fear. The principle of confidentiality was observed throughout the investigation. On the other hand, secondary data for this study were gathered from various sources, which include published academic materials for example journals and textbooks. Other secondary sources of data used are Magazines, Newspapers, and online materials like e-books, e-journals, reports, and publications of

specialized agencies like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). These secondary sources were used to generate information on counterterrorism and human rights violations. More so, it guided the selection of sub-themes from the primary data.

### 3.3 Data Collection Technique

The oral data technique of one-on-one interviews with the selected informant was conducted and documented records were also used to obtain data for this study. The primary data was divided into three: key informants; experts' informant and community informants. For this study, a smaller number of informants who observed the campaigns of the Civilian-Joint Task Force and the Joint Task Force on Boko Haram were interviewed. The interviews were carried out in secluded places. Each section of the interview which did not last less than 45 minutes was audio recorded. The interview guide questions were the same for all the categories of informants. The interview guides took the form of open-ended question and the questions were all authenticated by professionals from the fields of Political Science and Security Studies.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

This study adopted the qualitative method of data analysis. This comprised the descriptive, explanatory, and content analysis. The descriptive and explanatory approaches were utilized for the analysis of data from the primary source. While content analysis method was used for the analysis of secondary data. Following the rules of qualitative analysis, the audio recordings during interviews were transcribed and appraised. The transcription of the primary data collected from the field was done by converting audiotapes written data. Data transcription was followed by coding in order to obtain themes. This was done with the help excel spreadsheet. The excel sheets were labeled accordingly, to display the view of the content at a glance. The themes generated were redefined by adding more words where necessary [25]. The need for coding was to look for regular patterns that emerged in the data. The excel spreadsheet facilitated the classification of the transcribed data into smaller bits that permitted detail scrutiny of similarities and differences. Through this procedure the frequently occurred themes were selected. To avoid the fallacy of textual meaning, much concentration was paid to precision during the in-depth interviews and data analyses [26]. This was to ensure that the views of the informants were adequately represented

## 4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Boko Haram and Yobe State Human Rights experience

Boko Haram terrorist activities in northeast Nigeria, particularly in Yobe state, have caused many families their breadwinners. Many women were hastily widowed and many parents lost their children and vice versa. As stated earlier, the most violated human right during terrorism is the right to life. Though during the height of the activities of Boko Haram terrorism human rights abuses were committed by different groups the terrorists are seen as the worst violators of the right to life which is the fundamental human rights. Without life, a

man cannot enjoy other rights. For instance, the students burnt to death on 6 July 2013, in a town called Mamudo, cannot claim their rights to education. These violations to life are many, but only those committed in the urban areas were reported by the media. Amnesty International captures the following situations wherein Damaturu, the Yobe State capital a bomb blast killed at least five worshippers celebrating the end of Ramadan on 17 July 2013. It also reported that about 17 people died in an explosion as they queued to enter Damaturu's main market on 26 July 2014 [27]. Figure 4 shows the number of killings by Boko Haram provided in a chart. An informant reported how in Yobe state Boko Haram fighters went to one college of education and slaughtered many students, thereby depriving them of the right to life and education. He further posits that Boko Haram is ready to waste any human being (KI-1, Personal interview 11th Sept. 2018).

### EQUATIONS

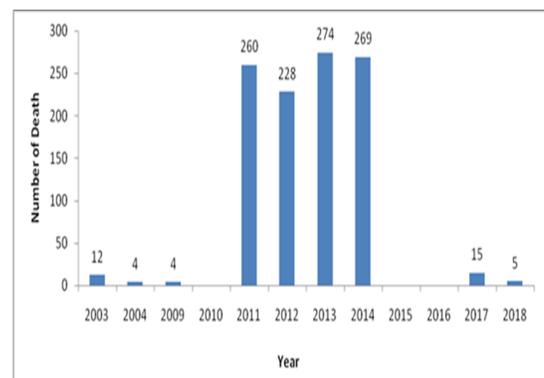


Figure 1: Some major Killings by Boko Haram in Yobe state  
Source: [28] [29] [30].

In Yobe state aside from the attacks on lives, schools were the next that suffered heavy casualties. The common practice in the days of reckless attacks was that Boko Haram terrorist would attack schools killed male students and teachers. For example on June 12, 2013, the terrorists killed Ali Musa Yin and Alhassan Shuabu. The duo was until their death teachers from Government Secondary School Damaturu. In some instances, the Boko Haram terrorists would issue threat letters to schools before carrying out their attacks. One such threat was issued to a boys Government Secondary School in Yobe state. They eventually attacked on July 6, 2013, leading to the death of twenty-two students, a teacher and five students badly injured [31]. Table 1 shows the attacks on schools by Boko Haram fighters in the Yobe state. Table 1, also revealed that the attacks on schools sometimes do occur simultaneously with attacks on life.

**TABLE 1** Boko Haram's Attacks on Schools in Yobe state

S/N	Date	Name of School	Town	Damages
1	April 2, 2012	Govt Senior Sec school	Daura	6 Classrooms
2	June 18, 2012	five primary schools	<b>Damaturu</b>	Whole schools
3	July 22, 2012	Yobe Children's Academy	Damaturu	30 Classrooms
4	Aug. 19, 2012	Central Primary School	Damagun	A section
5	Aug. 21, 2012	Goniri primary school	Goniri	Whole school
6	Sept 4-5, 2012	Two primary schools	Damaturu	Whole schools
7	Oct. 18, 2012	Layi Prim. Sch., Nahuta Prim. School, & Best Center Voc.Training Sch	Potiskum	Whole schools
8	Oct. 23, 2012	Govt Day Junior Sec Sch	Potiskum	25 Classrooms
9	Nov. 4, 2012	primary school	Fika	Whole school
10	June 16, 2013	Government Secondary School	Damaturu	7 killed and sch. Destroyed
11	July 6, 2013	Dormitories shooting	Mamudo	52 killed
12	Sept 28, 2013	College of Agriculture	Gujba	50 killed
13	Feb. 24, 2014	Federal Government College	Buni Yadi	29 killed, 24 Blocks destroyed
14	Nov. 10, 2014	School Assembly	Potiskum	26 killed
15	Dec. 1, 2014	Bukar Abba University	Damaturu	-
16	Jan. 3, 2015	boarding primary school	Babangida	-
17	May 8, 2015	College of Admin. and Business Studies	Potiskum	Many killed
18	19 Feb. 2018	Government Girls Science and Technical School	Dapchi	110 girls Abducted

Another case that confirms the attacks on schools in Yobe state can be seen in the incident of September 28, 2013, where about 100 terrorists stormed Yobe State College of Agriculture, Gujiba and killed 42 male students and a lecturer [31]. On a general note, when the terrorist group started attacking schools in 2012, many people were disenchanted because they saw the attacks as a gross set back to a state that was already backward in education. Attending these schools that were been destroyed was a prerequisite for a career in Yobe state and federal administration. Apart from the aforementioned, most people still believe that attending western education is of great benefit to the Muslim community [32]. The various attacks on the right to education and the educational system in Yobe state indicate infusion of fear and terror in the minds of all parties to the educational sector. One Community informant-1 argues that the activities Boko Haram has made a lot of children to stop attending schools for many years. This is because the schools are not safe, those who go there are either killed or abducted. Most parents would prefer to have their children alive even if they are not educated (CI-1, personal interview, 6th Oct. 2018). Apart from safety, most schools in northeast Nigeria have become IDPs camps and security bases. The temporal takeover of schools by IDPs and security agencies has overstretched the available facilities. To this extent, one would be right to assert that the right to education in Yobe state and the northeast at large is under attack.

## 5 CONCLUSION

This research has investigated human rights violations caused by Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria with particular reference to the violation of the right to life and education in the Yobe state. This is outrightly against Article 6(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which emphasizes that

all human beings have the right to life and should not be killed by other human beings. The study discovered that out of the human rights abuses carried out by Boko Haram, the right to life education are most affected. It is difficult to ascertain the number of people that are killed in this period of almost ten years of Boko Haram onslaught. This is because most of rural deaths are not reported. The large number of school attacks are premised on the fact that Boko Haram detest western education. The study disclosed that as a result of the incessant attacks on school many parent stopped their children from attending schools. To safeguard the right to life and education, the study suggest that the inhibition of the Boko Haram terrorism should not be based on military approach alone. Since the use of the military approach for over nine years has not stop the terrorist from violating the rights of citizens. There is need to apply diplomacy and other strategies that would address the root causes of terrorism in Nigeria. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the problems of severe poverty, widespread corruption, mass illiteracy, and unemployment. Overcoming human rights violations caused by terrorism in the Nigerian context thus requires concentrating on those causes of distress and the security environment in Nigeria that permit the terrorists to operate.

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