



# GENOCIDE WATCH

## THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END GENOCIDE



### **Genocide and Mass Atrocity Warning: Nigeria – the Boko Haram Genocide Watch 26 October 2012**

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. The country is divided along religious, ethnic and socioeconomic fault lines, which split the country into a poor, predominantly Muslim North and a rich, predominantly Christian South. Boko Haram is a jihadist militant organization that has taken advantage of poverty and poor governance in the North. It is an Islamist movement that is a threat to stability in West Africa and has been compared to Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab. It strongly opposes westernization, specifically rejecting modern science and democracy. It seeks to impose sharia law in Nigeria.

The group was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusef with the aim of establishing Sharia law in Borno state. The group initially appeared to be peaceful and gained a large following. Yusef founded a mosque and school as a façade for recruiting and training jihadists for seven years.

In 2009 the Boko Haram Uprising began. Boko Haram attacked Nigerian security forces and Christian churches. The violence started with an incident in Borno but spread, and an estimated 700 - 1,200 people were killed before it temporarily subsided. Many of the victims who were targeted were Christians. Mohammed Yusef was killed during the conflict and was replaced by Abubakar Shekau.

In January 2011, the group resurfaced with its first terrorist attack, and since then, Boko Haram has regularly attacked and bombed Christian churches, U.N. property, and Nigerian police stations. Boko Haram has openly claimed responsibility for its attacks, which have claimed over 900 lives in the past year. The group has targeted Christians, educational institutions, Nigerian government buildings, and Muslims who reject the imposition of Sharia law or who express their opposition to Boko Haram.

Many respected Muslim leaders and organizations have rejected Boko Haram, including the Islamic Circle of North America, the Coalition of Muslim Clerics in Nigeria, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. They have condemned Boko Haram's terrorism as un-Islamic.

The group has used convoys resembling those of Nigerian government and UN officials to bypass checkpoints and attack their targets. It has orchestrated several prison breaks since 2011, to recruit violent criminals. It has also heavily used the Internet for recruitment. It has particularly attempted to recruit unemployed Muslim youth.

Boko Haram's terrorist attacks and massacres have created terror among Nigeria's northern Christian minority. The Nigerian Army has countered Boko Haram's attacks with vigorous counter-insurgency tactics. However, it must be careful to avoid alienating the Northern Muslim population.

Genocide Watch places Boko Haram's massacres at stage 6 of Genocide Watch's 8 stages of Genocide.

#### Recommendations:

- Nigeria should be given full support in its battle to suppress Boko Haram. Western military and human rights training should be offered if Nigeria's Armed Forces request such assistance.
- Nigeria's huge population and vast oil reserves in the Niger Delta give it unique strategic importance in the region. It is naturally the leading country in West Africa. However, to realize its potential and head off resentment in its own population that will feed discontent with the Nigerian government, Nigeria's rampant culture of political corruption must be overcome by courageous Nigerian leaders.