

NIGERIA

Nigeria continued to experience conflict in northeastern states related to the Boko Haram insurgency, which resulted in attacks on schools, universities, and students. Nigerian Security Forces used schools for military purposes during this period. Unlike the previous reporting period, attacks on education also occurred in the context of pastoralist-farmer violence in north-central Nigeria.

Context

In 2019, conflict in northeast Nigeria between the armed group Boko Haram and government military forces entered its tenth year. Boko Haram explicitly targeted Western education in the region.¹³⁹⁵ In addition, violence between Fulani pastoralists and farmer communities in north-central Nigeria (sometimes referred to as the Middle Belt), escalated to unprecedented levels.¹³⁹⁶

In February 2019, the UN described the situation in the northeast states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe as “volatile and unpredictable,”¹³⁹⁷ with 1.8 million people displaced as of December 2019.¹³⁹⁸ The UN estimated that 1.2 million people in those states were located in areas inaccessible to humanitarian assistance, as of November 2019.¹³⁹⁹ Violence in Borno State in January 2019 led to the forced displacement of 35,000 Nigerians into Cameroon, 9,000 of whom were forcibly repatriated by the Cameroonian government.¹⁴⁰⁰

In the north-central region, Amnesty International reported that at least 2,075 people were killed in 2018 due to fighting between armed Fulani pastoralists and farmer communities.¹⁴⁰¹ Another 300,000 were displaced in the same time period, according to Human Rights Watch.¹⁴⁰² Resource scarcity driven by climate change, population growth, and influxes of displaced persons, was noted as one of the major causes of conflict between pastoralists and farmers,¹⁴⁰³ although religious motivations for violence were increasingly cited during this reporting period.¹⁴⁰⁴ Fulani armed groups also reportedly violently confronted two Nigerian military deployments in 2018.¹⁴⁰⁵

Conflict continued to impact children during this reporting period. In 2017, the UN verified the recruitment and use of 1,092 children, primarily perpetrated by Boko Haram, though 41 children were recruited by the non-state group Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF).¹⁴⁰⁶ In addition to the 432 children killed and maimed in Nigeria in 2018, the UN reported that Boko Haram abducted 180 children, many of whom were girls, for recruitment, sexual abuse, forced marriage, or as carriers of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).¹⁴⁰⁷ In October 2018, CJTF released 833 children from its ranks, and the UN verified no new recruitments by that group in 2018.¹⁴⁰⁸

Conflict has severely impinged on the right to education in Nigeria. From 2009 until December 2018, 611 teachers were killed, 910 schools damaged or destroyed and more than 1,500 schools forced to close due to Boko Haram-related violence, interrupting the schooling of more than 900,000 children.¹⁴⁰⁹ GCPEA found that Boko Haram openly targeted students based on gender, distinctly impacting the education of girls and women.¹⁴¹⁰ In the north-central region, meanwhile, 149 schools were burned from 2011 to 2017 in Benue state,¹⁴¹¹ and fighting there between pastoralists and farmers forced 300,000 pupils from school in 2018.¹⁴¹² Crime-related violence also affected higher education personnel and university students, including a string of professors and provosts being abducted, often for ransom,¹⁴¹³ and break-ins to student housing.¹⁴¹⁴

On March 20, 2019, the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria approved the mainstreaming and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.¹⁴¹⁵ The 7th Division of the Nigerian Army also ordered military teachers to cease openly carrying weapons in schools; however, the ban is not security agency-wide and instructors continued to wear military uniforms in schools.¹⁴¹⁶

Attacks on schools

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA collected at least ten reported incidents of attacks on schools, which occurred in both the northeast and north-central regions. Reported attacks on schools appear to have increased in recent years, spiking in 2018. In 2016, GCPEA collected no instances of reported attacks on schools,¹⁴¹⁷ followed by reports of two such attacks in 2017.¹⁴¹⁸ In 2018, GCPEA identified at least six reported instances of attacks on schools;¹⁴¹⁹ the number then declined in 2019.¹⁴²⁰ In the previous reporting period, GCPEA only received reports of attacks related to the Boko Haram

conflict in the northeast, whereas in the 2017-2019 period, reports of attacks on schools related to inter-communal conflict in the north-central region and other regions were also identified.

Between 2009 and 2018, the UN reported that conflict in the northeast damaged or destroyed 910 schools.¹⁴²¹ In 2017, the UN verified four attacks on schools and one on a hospital, four of which were attributed to Boko Haram and one to Nigerian Security Forces.¹⁴²² In 2018, the UN verified five attacks on schools in the northeast, attributing most to Boko Haram.¹⁴²³ In 2019, the UN verified four attacks on schools.¹⁴²⁴

Examples of reported attacks on schools in the context of pastoralist-farmer violence, primarily in the north-central region, included:

- In January 2018, armed pastoralists reportedly attacked villages in Yugorobi district, Taraba state, burning a school, according to international media. The report alleges that at least 55 people were killed.¹⁴²⁵
- Local media source *The Guardian* reported that on March 14, 2018, pastoralists allegedly attacked the Ogane-nigwu Community Secondary School during an attack on the village in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi state; no deaths were reported to have occurred at the school. However about 50 houses in the village were reportedly burned, several people killed, and at least 200 people displaced.¹⁴²⁶
- International media source *Xinhau* reported that in Mbamondo village, Benue state, unknown armed actors allegedly attacked a school and church on April 26, 2018; those affected included displaced persons who had taken shelter in the two buildings.¹⁴²⁷
- On May 28, 2018, unknown armed actors reportedly attacked a seminary school in Jalingo city, Taraba state, injuring some students and two priests, according to international media. The event reportedly led some Catholics to demonstrate against the government response.¹⁴²⁸

GCPEA identified one reported incident of an attack on a school related to the Boko Haram conflict. On December 24, 2018, Boko Haram allegedly burned two schools in Kukareta and Ngaurawa villages, Yobe state, according to international media.¹⁴²⁹

During the reporting period, GCPEA collected one reported incident of a polling-related attack. Local and international media reported that on March 9, 2019, during governorship elections, armed individuals allegedly set a Roman Catholic primary school on fire in Aya town, Benue state, which contained electoral materials for the surrounding ward. In its report, *Radio France International* cited a tweet from the Centre for Democracy and Development which, apparently, had sent observers to the area;¹⁴³⁰ local media sources, *Vanguard* and *The Nation*, reportedly confirmed the event with an electoral officer.¹⁴³¹

Attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least ten reported instances of attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel. Compared to the previous reporting period, when attacks peaked in 2013 and 2014, reported attacks on students and education personnel decreased in the 2017-2019 reporting period.

In 2017, GCPEA collected three reports of attacks on school students and education personnel.¹⁴³² Two of these reported incidents were identified after the publication of *Education under Attack 2018*. In one such alleged attack, members of an armed group abducted six boys from a hostel at Lagos State Model College, in Epe, Lagos state, on May 25, 2017, according to local news sources. One local media outlet reported that the armed group relied on their sophisticated weaponry and large numbers to overpower police.¹⁴³³

The UN verified, and media sources reported, one attack on school students in 2018. On February 19, 2018, in Dapchi, Yobe state, Boko Haram abducted 110 girls and one boy from a girls' school.¹⁴³⁴ Eyewitnesses interviewed by GCPEA said that five girls died during the abduction and transport to the armed group's camp.¹⁴³⁵ 104 girls were later released;¹⁴³⁶ however, one girl, who reportedly refused to convert to Islam, was not returned.¹⁴³⁷ The school reopened on April 30, 2018 but reportedly less than a quarter of the enrolled students attended classes.¹⁴³⁸ This event represented Boko Haram's third largest abduction of students since the conflict began.¹⁴³⁹

In 2019, GCPEA identified at least seven reported attacks on students and education personnel.¹⁴⁴⁰ For instance:

- Unknown armed actors reportedly abducted an education official, along with one of his children, on April 29, 2019, in Kaduna state. The gunmen allegedly ambushed the chairman's car on the highway from Abuja, killing the driver, according to international media.¹⁴⁴¹
- On October 14, 2019, an armed group reportedly abducted the principal and three staff members from a secondary school, in Issele Azagba, Delta state. Local media reported that police secured their release on the same day.¹⁴⁴²

Military use of schools and universities

Between 2014 and 2016, Nigerian forces and Boko Haram reportedly used between five and ten schools per year.¹⁴⁴³ Reported instances of military use increased in 2017, with as many as 17 reported incidents of military use in Borno and Yobe states in May 2017,¹⁴⁴⁴ decreasing to 14 schools still in use by Nigerian Security Forces in December 2017.¹⁴⁴⁵ In 2018, UN reports of military use declined; Nigerian Security Forces reportedly used four schools for military purposes that year.¹⁴⁴⁶ The number then rose at the beginning of 2019, when 18 schools were reportedly used for non-educational purposes, four by the Nigerian military and one by the police, with the other schools used by unidentified groups.¹⁴⁴⁷

Sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school or university

As in the previous reporting period, GCPEA continued to collect reports of women and girls surviving sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, exploitation, and sexual harassment, perpetrated by both government forces and non-state armed groups.¹⁴⁴⁸ A GCPEA researcher found that when the Nigerian military and CJTF, a non-state group, were sent to secure schools and the University of Maiduguri, reports of incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by both groups increased.¹⁴⁴⁹ 112 of the 276 schoolgirls abducted on April 14, 2014, from a secondary school in the Chibok area, remained missing in 2019; many were presumed to have been forced into early marriage and pregnancy by their captors based on accounts from released girls.¹⁴⁵⁰ In 2018, at least 50 percent of children reported as abducted, recruited, or held by armed groups were reported to be survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.¹⁴⁵¹

GCPEA collected two instances of sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, universities in 2019:

- On June 9, 2019, unknown armed actors reportedly broke into university student housing in Plateau state, where they raped one female student and killed another student.¹⁴⁵²
- Local media sources *Punch* and *Vanguard* reported allegations that on August 23, 2019, a female student from a university in Ondo state was raped by at least one soldier stationed at a military checkpoint in that same state, while returning from her studies. The military subsequently dismissed the soldier alleged to have raped the student, placing him into police custody, according to media reports.¹⁴⁵³

Attacks on higher education

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least 30 reported attacks on higher education. Compared to the prior period, the rate of reported attacks on university students and personnel and higher education facilities increased slightly.¹⁴⁵⁴

In 2017, GCPEA collected reports of at least ten attacks on higher education, three of which were identified after the publication of *Education under Attack 2018*.¹⁴⁵⁵ In one of the newly identified reports, state security forces near the University of Maiduguri, in Borno state, identified two female suicide bombers, on April 10, 2017, and prevented them from entering the University, according to international media outlet *Xinhua*. One of the assailants allegedly detonated her explosives, killing them both; no other casualties were reported.¹⁴⁵⁶ In 2017, seven of the reported attacks on higher education involved suicide attacks at the University of Maiduguri.¹⁴⁵⁷

The University of Maiduguri continued to receive threats and attacks in 2018 and 2019, although the military and police appeared to better track and prevent such violence. The following instances occurred on campus:

- According to Scholars at Risk, on February 19, 2018, an unidentified attacker, presumed to be a Boko Haram operative, reportedly attempted to enter the University of Maiduguri around 7:20pm wearing an explosive device and was shot by soldiers, causing the explosive to detonate. Only the attacker was killed.¹⁴⁵⁸
- Scholars at Risk and *Punch Nigeria* reported that on April 8, 2018, Nigerian military officers thwarted an attempted attack on the University of Maiduguri. Two of the suspected attackers were allegedly killed.¹⁴⁵⁹
- During the night of September 15, 2019, the Nigerian military repelled a Boko Haram attack on the University of Maiduguri, which allegedly lasted for one and a half hours, according to local media. In addition to shooting at the military forces stationed outside the University, the armed group reportedly used a male suicide bomber in the attack.¹⁴⁶⁰

In 2018, GCPEA gathered eight reported attacks on higher education.¹⁴⁶¹ Aside from the University of Maiduguri attacks mentioned above, GCPEA identified the following instances:

- On September 30, 2018, a group of armed pastoralists allegedly attempted to raid a student hostel at the University of Jos, according to local media sources. Students reportedly organized a counter-attack; one student was killed and two were injured.¹⁴⁶²
- On December 4, 2018, unknown armed actors reportedly abducted eight people and killed one staff member at the Osun State College of Technology in Esa Oke, Osun state. The abductees, who were reported to be six staff and two students in one account by *Premium Times* and eight staff by *Nigeria Punch*, all either escaped or were later released.¹⁴⁶³

In addition to the alleged attacks by non-state armed groups, police were also reported to have used excessive force when dispersing student protests on three instances in 2018:

- On April 11, 2018, two days of student protests at Adekunle Ajasin University in Ondo state led to alleged excessive use of force by police against students, including the use of teargas, gunfire, and physical beatings, as well as the arrest of 46 students. Scholars at Risk reported that students were protesting a 500 percent increase in tuition.¹⁴⁶⁴
- Local media reported that on May 22, 2018, students protested against the re-opening of the Niger Delta University in Amassoma, Bayelsa state, after the university was closed due to protests over raised student fees and the forced retirement of university staff. According to the media reports, when the government deployed police forces to open the institution's gates, they reportedly clashed with demonstrators, killing between two and five protesters and injuring several others.¹⁴⁶⁵
- Scholars at Risk reported that state police used excessive force during a student protest at Kwara State College of Education, in Ilorin, Kwara state, on August 13, 2018. The students marched over the absence of exams, which had been postponed by lecturers to protest not having received their salaries. Riot police allegedly fired teargas and clashed with students and other bystanders, and arrested five students who had organized the march.¹⁴⁶⁶

In 2019, GCPEA identified 12 reported attacks on higher education that included abductions, killings, and protest repression.¹⁴⁶⁷ In some instances, unknown armed actors attacked higher education personnel in the north-central and northeastern regions of the country, such as:

- Local media source *The Guardian* reported that unknown armed actors allegedly abducted a staff member of Taraba State University, in Jalingo, on April 30, 2019.¹⁴⁶⁸
- Local media reported that on May 5, 2019, unknown armed actors allegedly invaded the residence of the Nasarawa State commissioner for higher education. The attack also reportedly resulted in the death of one student from the Federal University, Lafia.¹⁴⁶⁹

In 2019, GCPEA identified at least seven incidents of Nigerian police using excessive force to disperse student protests,¹⁴⁷⁰ some of which were violent:

- Local media outlet *Punch* reported that state police fired teargas to disperse university students protesting tu-

ition fees in Akure, Ondo State, on May 22, 2019. The students, from several tertiary institutions, reportedly threw stones at police officers.¹⁴⁷¹

- Scholars at Risk reported that on July 25, 2019, police fired teargas at Osun State University students protesting the arrest of fellow students suspected of internet fraud and phishing activities by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Student protests allegedly included blocking a major road with a bonfire.¹⁴⁷²
- According to local media reports, the Ogun State Police Command allegedly fired teargas at students and staff on the campus of Tai Solarin College of Education, in Ogun State, on September 9, 2019, reportedly injuring one female student. Students and staff reportedly aggressively protested and threatened the provost over unpaid staff salaries, as he returned to campus.¹⁴⁷³
- On September 10, 2019, police reportedly fired live ammunition on student protesters from the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) as they gathered to march against the limited power supply to their campus, according to Scholars at Risk and local media. Reports allege that police killed two students and injured two others in the protests.¹⁴⁷⁴

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