

# NIGERIA

*In 2022 and 2023, attacks on schools in Nigeria persisted in the context of armed conflict in northeastern states due to the presence of non-state armed groups, as well as armed violence in northwestern and northcentral states due to pastoralist-farmer tensions. Military use of schools, particularly by non-state armed groups, increased as compared to the previous reporting period, while attacks on school students and teachers decreased slightly.*

## CONTEXT

Armed conflict continued between Nigerian government forces and Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups, including the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), during the reporting period, primarily in the northeast, although ISWAP expanded operations southward.<sup>1</sup> For example, the non-state armed group claimed responsibility for an attack on a prison in July 2022 in the Federal Capital Territory, not far from the capital, Abuja.<sup>2</sup> Boko Haram, ISWAP, and other splinter groups also combatted one another, increasing violence.<sup>3</sup> Boko Haram has explicitly targeted what they perceive to be Western education for over a decade.<sup>4</sup> In Nigeria's northwestern and northcentral regions, violence between mostly Fulani pastoralists and mostly Hausa farmer communities persisted in 2022 and 2023, due in part to population growth and scarcity of land for farming and grazing, which is linked to climate change.<sup>5</sup> In addition, criminal groups commonly referred to as bandits, which emerged following years of violence between pastoralists and farmers and have been categorized as "terrorists" by the government, carried out kidnappings, killings, and other violence in the northwest.<sup>6</sup> Nigerian security forces responded with airstrikes, including one in Kaduna state in December 2023 which killed 85 people, according to Human Rights Watch.<sup>7</sup>

Sporadic violence coincided with national elections held in February 2023, as armed men targeted polling stations and voters, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project and media reports.<sup>8</sup> In the southeast, groups claiming to belong to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatist group continued enforcing a stay-at-home order on Mondays, which required residents to remain home and businesses to close, as a form of protest over the imprisonment of their leader.<sup>9</sup> Gunmen enforced the order by killing residents, although IPOB has condemned those actions, according to Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group.<sup>10</sup>

In 2022, violence forcibly displaced 1.2 million people,<sup>11</sup> while 3.2 million people, including 1.9 million children, were affected by flooding that displaced half of them, according to the UN.<sup>12</sup> Schools were temporarily flooded in the northeast in 2023, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) used other schools for shelter in both the northeast and the northwest.<sup>13</sup> Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and International Crisis Group reported that, in the northeast, the government closed IDP camps without adequate resettlement assistance, putting IDPs' safety at risk and cutting off aid to thousands of children and families in need.<sup>14</sup>

Over 20 million children in Nigeria were out of school as of mid-2022, according to the UN.<sup>15</sup> In the northeast,

conflict and displacement negatively impacted access to learning, with almost two million school-aged children unable to access schools in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states.<sup>16</sup> In the northwest, bandits threatened and abducted students in 2022, often for ransom, leading to the closure of over 400 schools.<sup>17</sup> Stay-at-home orders in several southeastern states, also prevented schools from opening in mid-2022, according to media reports.<sup>18</sup>

## ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

In 2022 and 2023, GCPEA collected at least 19 reported incidents of attacks on schools, primarily involving raids, the use of arson, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This is an increase compared to *Education under Attack 2022*, in which GCPEA reported six attacks on schools in 2021 and at least five in 2020.<sup>19</sup> As in the prior reporting period, GCPEA identified reports of attacks on schools related to both armed conflict and inter-communal tensions. In addition, 113 schools were closed as a result of insecurity in northeastern Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, between January and September 2023, according to the UN, a decrease from the number in 2022.<sup>20</sup>

In 2022, the UN verified five attacks on schools and protected persons by Islamic State West Africa Province.<sup>21</sup> However, it was unclear how many of these were attacks on schools, rather than attacks on education personnel, so they were not included in the total number of attacks on schools for this report, to avoid double counting.

GCPEA identified 15 reported attacks on schools in 2022.<sup>22</sup> The UN reported attacks on five schools on the same day in Kebbi state, attacks on three schools in Yobe state, and one attack on a school in Ngala town, Borno state, during the first half of the year;<sup>23</sup> these incidents were included in the total number of attacks on schools. Examples of attacks in 2022 included:

- On April 20, 2022, an alleged armed group set fire to the staff quarters of the Government Science and Technical College in Geidam town, Yobe state, according to local media outlets. *Premium Times* reported that state police confirmed the attack.<sup>24</sup>
- On April 24, 2022, government-run primary and secondary schools were reportedly set on fire in Bam-Buratai, Biu local government area, Borno state.<sup>25</sup>
- On May 17, 2022, an unidentified individual reportedly detonated a person-borne IED, also known as a suicide bomb, near a primary school in Sabon Gari area, Kano state, killing nine civilians and injuring others, although their status as educators or students remained unclear, as reported by the NGO Action on Armed Violence, and local media outlets.<sup>26</sup> According to *Sahara Reporters*, security forces arrested two armed group members several days after the attack.<sup>27</sup>

In 2023, the UN reported one attack on a school.<sup>28</sup> Separately, GCPEA identified four attacks on schools that year:

- On January 20, 2023, a primary school was raided in Alwaza, Doma local government area, Nasarawa

state, with the aim of abducting students (detailed below), as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>29</sup>

- On April 7, 2023, unidentified assailants raided a primary school in Mgban, Guma local government area, Benue state, killing and injuring some of the displaced people sheltering inside, as reported by Insecurity Insight and a local media outlet.<sup>30</sup>
- In June 2023, a primary school was attacked in Gujba local government area, Yobe state, resulting in a damaged classroom and the suspension of classes, according to the UN.<sup>31</sup>
- On November 30, 2023, police allegedly raided Mayigi Community High School, in Ilashe town, Ogun state, resulting in destroyed school property. They also threatened students and teachers with guns, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>32</sup>

## ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PERSONNEL

During the 2022-2023 reporting period, GCPEA identified at least 15 reports of attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel. At least 52 students or educators were injured, abducted, or killed in these attacks. This marks a decrease as compared to *Education under Attack 2022*, which included around 21 reported attacks on students and education personnel in 2020 and 2021, including the abduction of at least 1,436 children from schools in 2021.<sup>33</sup>

In 2022, GCPEA identified seven attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel.<sup>34</sup> For example:

- In April 2022, the head teacher of Shuwari primary school was abducted in Buni-Yadi town, Yobe state, according to Save the Children.<sup>35</sup>
- On June 10, 2022, in the evening, one student was killed and two others injured in Kuru community, Jos South local government area, Plateau state, while running an errand near the school, as reported by local media.<sup>36</sup>
- On December 13, 2022, unidentified gunmen reportedly abducted a female teacher from a primary school in Dutsinma local government area, Katsina state, while she was instructing classes. According to a local media report, another teacher was seriously injured in the attack but escaped abduction.<sup>37</sup>

In 2023, GCPEA identified eight attacks on school students, teachers, and personnel.<sup>38</sup> For example:

- On January 20, 2023, six students were abducted from a primary school in Alwaza, Doma local government area, Nasarawa state, as reported by local media outlet *The Guardian*.<sup>39</sup>
- On April 3, 2023, eight female students were abducted in Kachia district, Kaduna state, while they were on their way to school, as reported by international media outlet *Voice of America*.<sup>40</sup>
- On July 5, 2023, a suspected armed group beat students and teachers at a primary school in Enugu West district, Enugu state, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>41</sup>
- On August 14, 2023, a suspected armed group killed two teachers and wounded the vice principal at BECO Comprehensive Secondary School in Riyom local government area, Plateau state, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>42</sup>

## MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified at least 159 reported incidents of military use during the 2022-2023 reporting period. In comparison, *Education under Attack 2022* included seven and one reports of military use of educational facilities in 2021 and 2020, respectively.<sup>43</sup>

The UN reported that military forces occupied eight schools in Borno state in late August 2022.<sup>44</sup> In mid-November, the UN separately reported that military forces partially occupied a government-run primary school in Bulabulin Bolibe area, Borno state.<sup>45</sup>

In 2023, the UN reported that security forces occupied 23 schools in Borno and Adamawa states, three of which were vacated that year.<sup>46</sup> Separately, the UN reported that, between January and September 2023, approximately 134 schools were used by non-state armed actors for non-educational purposes in Zamfara state.<sup>47</sup> In Borno state, two schools were also occupied by non-state armed actors from January to September 2023, according to the UN.<sup>48</sup> Since it was unclear whether the eight schools occupied by military forces in Borno state in 2022 were the same as those occupied in 2023, these incidents were not included in the total number of educational facilities used for military purposes, to avoid double counting.

## ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

During 2022 and 2023, GCPEA identified 18 reported attacks on higher education in which over 20 students and academics were reportedly injured, abducted, killed, or threatened, and around ten were detained or arrested. Most of the reported attacks were on higher education students and personnel, rather than on infrastructure. In comparison, GCPEA collected approximately 15 and six attacks on higher education in 2021 and 2020, respectively.<sup>49</sup>

In 2022, GCPEA collected approximately nine reports of attacks on higher education facilities, students, and academics, including both conflict-related incidents and several incidents of education-related protest repression.<sup>50</sup> For example:

- On May 17, 2022, members of the Nigerian army reportedly fired live ammunition in the air to disperse protesting university students who had barricaded a highway in Akure city, Ondo state, according to Scholars at Risk. The students demonstrated to demand that the government reach an agreement with a union for academic staff striking at several universities, so that classes could resume.<sup>51</sup>
- On July 19, 2022, police reportedly dispersed protesting Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic Bauchi students, arresting several students, and injuring several others and a lecturer, in Bauchi city, Bauchi state. Media outlets reported that students set tires on fire and threw stones at police while demonstrating for the restart of classes which had been paused due to academic and non-academic union strikes.<sup>52</sup>
- On October 19, 2022, a lecturer was abducted on his way home from Isa Mustapha Agwai Polytechnic in Lafia town, Nasarawa state, as reported by local media.<sup>53</sup>
- Also on October 19, 2022, the provost of the Federal College of Education was reportedly abducted and

several of his colleagues were injured while traveling in a convoy in Onicha local government area, Ebonyi state.<sup>54</sup>

In 2023, GCPEA identified nine attacks on higher education facilities, students, and academics, including both conflict-related incidents and incidents of education-related protest repression.<sup>55</sup> For example:

- On September 7, 2023, police reportedly fired teargas to disperse protesting University of Lagos students and arrested two students in Yaba district, Lagos city and state. A local media outlet reported that students demonstrated against fee increases.<sup>56</sup>
- On September 23, 2023, a suspected armed group abducted at least 30 students, including at least 24 female students, enrolled at Federal University of Gusau in Bungudu district, Zamfara state, according to the European Commission.<sup>57</sup> Fourteen of the abducted students were later rescued, according to university authorities as reported by *the Associated Press*.<sup>58</sup>
- On October 4, 2023, five female Federal University students were abducted in Dutsin-Ma town, Katsina state, as reported by *Reuters*.<sup>59</sup>
- In mid-October 2023, a suspected armed group killed an official of Ebonyi State University while he was traveling in Imo town and state, as reported by International Crisis Group.<sup>60</sup>
- On December 4, 2023, a suspected armed group allegedly planted an explosive device outside the gate of University of Maiduguri in Maiduguri city, Borno state. Following the discovery, police performed a controlled detonation of the explosive device, as reported by a local media outlet.<sup>61</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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