

December 2023 Security Report for Nigeria

By

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1.0 Overview

In the period covered, December 1st to 31st 2023, we monitored the erroneous aerial bombing of a civilian gathering in Kaduna by the Nigerian Army and its fallout, the activities of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), the efforts of the Nigerian authorities to arrest these situations via the use of force, the Christmas Eve Plateau attacks, the passing of the 2024 budget, Boko Haram-ISWAP civil war, and the Israel War in Gaza.

In this period, 785 fatalities were recorded, a 44.6% increase over November figures caused by the Plateau Christmas Eve attacks. The 537 abductions is a 45.1% increase from November numbers with the activities of bandits in and around the FCT a cause of the spike.

The states and FCTs with at least one record of abduction or fatalities fell from 34 in November to 31, a small fall in the spread of the security challenges in Nigeria in the month under review.



Nigeria December Security Report by PSJ UK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the period covered, **December 1st to 31st 2023**, we monitored the erroneous aerial bombing of a civilian gathering in Kaduna by the Nigerian Army, the activities of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), the deadliest single-day suspected Fulani militia attack since 2018, military campaigns against NSAGs, Boko Haram-ISWAP civil war, and the Israel War in Gaza



Security Trends

- Nigerian Army erroneous bombing of a civilian gathering
- Plateau Christmas Eve attacks by suspected Fulani militiamen
- Supreme Court ruling that separatist leader Nnamdi Kanu will face trial for treason
- Increased criminal activities in and around FCT Abuja
- Continual banditry in the North West and North Central
- Continual ISWAP and Boko Haram activities in the North East
- Boko Haram-ISWAP civil war in the North East
- Continual military campaigns against Non-State Actors

November vs December in Graphs



2.0 Methodology

PSJ UK data team collects data on security breaches in Nigeria by tracking premediated and suspicious incidents leading to injuries, arson, abductions, and fatalities based on hourly reviews of Nigerian media. Relying on press reports of violence presents its problems. For one, there is a shortage of accurate reporting across certain regions: death tolls can be imprecise and accounts of incidents vary. Again, there is the potential to underreport (or overreport) figures for political optics.

Given these limitations, we try to collect information from multiple sources, from eyewitnesses, and freelance reporter(s) we sometimes commission to investigate special events.

Nevertheless, this Security Report should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive of the security challenges in Nigeria in the review period.

3.0 Security Trends in the Month

In December 2023, we identified the following trends:

Nigerian Army's erroneous bombing of a civilian gathering

On December 3rd, 2023, a Nigerian Army drone strike hit a group of villagers marking Malaud in Tudun Biri village of Igabi local government area of Kaduna State. More than 120 people lost their lives in what was the 16th such erroneous strike on civilians since 2014.

Plateau Christmas Eve attacks by suspected Fulani militiamen

On 24th December 2023, suspected Fulani militiamen attacked more than 30 communities in Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, and Mangu local government areas of Plateau State, claiming the lives of at least 195 persons, hundreds of homes, and dislodging thousands. This set of attacks was the third in a row targeting Christian communities in the Middlebelt during a Christian feast since December 2023 and the deadliest since Agatu Massacre (Benue) of March 2016.

Supreme Court ruling that separatist leader Nnamdi Kanu will face trial for treason

The Supreme Court on December 15th ruled that the separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, leader Nnamdi Kanu, in detention since July 2021, will stand trial on terrorism charges, overruling the Court of Appeal October 2022 ruling dismissing all charges labelled against him. IPOB had declared sit-at-home every Monday to protest his detention in the South East.

Increased criminal activities in and around FCT Abuja

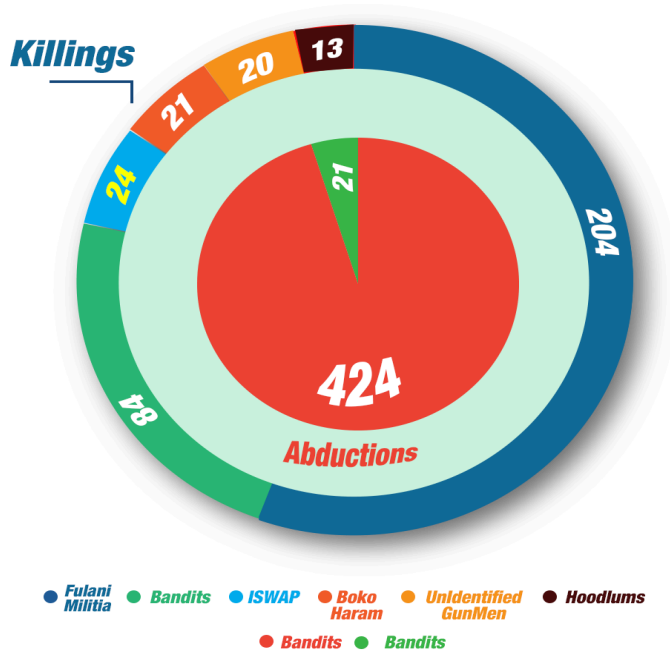
In December 2023, bandits continually abducted Nigerians in and around the federal capital, with more than 200 residents taken in the council areas of Bwari, Kuje, and Gwagwalada and the bordering villages in Kaduna and Niger State. One chance armed robbery has continued.

Continual banditry in the North West and North Central

Bandits in the North West and North Central have continued to kill civilians, destroy harvest-ready farmlands due to villagers' failure to pay "tax" to them and abduct scores for ransom. In a Katakaki Forest clash between bandits and vigilante men, bandits killed 19 vigilante men and lost forty.

TOP

Perpetrators of Killings and Abductions in Nigeria



Continual ISWAP and Boko Haram activities in the North East

The activities Boko Haram in the month in view against civilians were minimal. ISWAP was active in trying to plunge the North East into darkness by blowing up power lines.

However, both groups had firepower for the civil war between rival terrorist organisations Boko Haram and ISWAP first reported in November 2023 entered its third month. They carried raids and counter-raids at the other group camps. At least 40 terrorists lost their lives during a battle in Kukawa Borno on December 16th. Meaning these terrorists killed themselves more than they hurt Nigerians in the month covered.

Continual military campaigns against Non-State Armed Groups

The Nigerian Military sustained their campaign against various non-state armed groups in Nigeria most especially against the bandits in the North West/North Central and ISWAP in the North East. The December 6th Jikudna River strike and the December 7th Mangoro Munyi strike in Niger State claimed at 100 bandits plying the Zamfara-Niger axis. ISWAP on December 16th Air Force strike in Bukar Mairam, Marte LGA, Borno State, lost at least 40 fighters.

Regional Analysis

In the period covered, the geopolitical regions of Nigeria as a whole suffered 785 fatalities which amount to 130 fatalities per region, up by a 55.1% increase from November. The 537 abductions read 89.5 per region, up by 32.6 from the previous period. This is how the respective regions.

North East

The North East suffered 114 fatalities in the period covered. A bulk of these fatalities are recorded in the Boko Haram-ISWAP civil war and the ongoing military campaigns against NSAGs in the region. The 87 ISWAP/Boko Haram terrorists neutralised ensure that for the first time in 2023, the North East recorded more non-state fatalities than civilians killed.

North West

The North West suffered 250 fatalities in the period covered with just under half of these figures caused by the error-drone attack on civilians in Tudun Biri village in the Birnin Gwari area of Kaduna. Bandits activities accounted for the majority of the NSAGs' fatalities in the period. Zamfara with 109 abducted persons retained its position as the most terrorized state in each of the last six months except in October when it narrowly lost the lead to Kaduna.

North Central

Based on the number of fatalities alone, the North Central zone is on paper the worst-hit region in December. This figure is hyper-influenced by the Plateau Christmas Eve attacks in Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, and Mangu areas that claimed at least 195. The FCT however led the region in the incidents and total number of kidnapped individuals in December 2023. The combined casualties of 472 triples the November figure of 156 showing a sharp increase in security breaches in the period covered.

South West

The South West was the safest region in the country in the period under review. Its 44 casualties in December is the lowest and it also boasts of two states Oyo and Ekiti with zero recorded cases of insecurity breaches leading to death or abduction in the time. Ogun State with more than 20 fatalities accounts for more than half of all the security challenges in the region, causing an uptick from November figures.

South South

The South South with 42 fatalities and 19 proved to be the worst-hit region in the southern part of the country. It however managed to boast of a state, Bayelsa, with zero reported cases of fatalities/abductions. Conversely, Rivers and Cross River states account for more than half of the breaches in the region. For the first time in the quarter, the abductions of expatriates anywhere in Nigeria were recorded in Rivers State.

South East

The South East per state casualties is the most hit region in the south although its 28 fatalities and 30 abductions just fell below the combined South South figures. These numbers double the November figures, showing that the South East became twice more restive, owing to the increase in traffic and activities over the Christmas period. Anambra with 13 fatalities and 7 abductions led the states in the region closely followed by Enugu and Ebonyi with 15 combined casualties respectively.

Q4 2023 Analysis

The period between October 1st 2023 and December 31st 2023 saw 1767 recorded fatalities and 1314 recorded abducted victims. The North East recorded the most fatalities (574) with the South East (60) recording the lowest; the North West (776) recorded the most abducted victims with the South West (24) lowest. Borno with 386 fatalities and Zamfara with 382 abductees respectively led the states in both indices in the quarter.

Based on figures in this quarter, bandits are Nigeria's deadliest non-state actors, accounting for more than 1000 abductees and causing over 260 fatalities. Fulani militiamen are the second deadliest non-state armed group in the quarter by number of fatalities caused, the Christmas Eve attacks in Plateau which claimed about 200 lives ensured this position (of over 250 fatalities caused in the period). Unidentified gunmen are the second deadliest group by number of incidents.



During this period, the military campaigns against NSAGs saw bandits suffering the most casualties of about 250. ISWAP suffered the second highest casualties of just under 200, making ISWAP the only group to lose more fighters than they inflicted on the country. Boko Haram lost over 100 fighters putting them third in the ranking of eliminated NSAGs. Unidentified gunmen lost the least fighters among NSAGs targeted by security operatives.

Every one of the 37 states and FCT in the federation recorded at least one security breach in the quarter. However, Gombe in the North East, Jigawa in the North West, Ekiti in the South West and Bayelsa in the South South recorded fewer than double figures breaches, effectively making them the safest states in the country during the period covered.

2024 Security Forecasts

Based on security trends of 2023, the PSJ UK Data Team advises the following for 2024:

Severe Risk of Suspected Fulani militiamen attack Southern Kaduna, Plateau, and Benue Communities on the weeks of Easter and Christmas of 2024

High Risk of reprisal attacks on Fulani communities and prominent members of the community in Plateau State by Berom rioters

High Risk of Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks on security operatives and government installations e.g. power lines in Borno and Yobe states

High Risk of bandits attacks on all roads in Zamfara State (excluding roads in Gasau City), Katsina State (excluding roads in Daura, Katsina and Funtua towns), roads in Shiroro-Tafa-Rafi axis of Niger State.

High Risk of bandits attacks in communities and marketplaces in Zamfara, Northern Kaduna, and Shiroro-Tafa-Rafi axis of Niger State

High Risk of violent political protests in Kano and Nasarawa State after Supreme Court rulings on the gubernatorial election disputes.

Elevated Risk of Fulani militiamen attacking Southern Kaduna, Plateau, and Benue communities on any Sunday in 2024

Elevated Risk of bandits attacks in communities in Katsina, Kebbi, and Sokoto states

Elevated Risk of Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks on civilians in Borno and Yobe states

Elevated Risk of attacks by bandits in communities in Bauchi and Taraba states

Elevated Risk of armed attacks to abduct passengers on select sections of the following roads: Enugu-Markurdi Expressway, Otukpo section, Abuja-Lokoja Expressway, Lokoja-Ajaokuta Road, Abuja-Kaduna Expressway, Benin-Akure Expressway, most especially at nighttime

Elevated Risk of kidnappings in villages in Bwari, Kuje, and Abaji area councils of Abuja

Elevated Risk of unknown gunmen attacks on security operatives in all South Eastern states excluding Ebonyi State

Elevated Risk of cult/gang clashes in Rivers, Edo, Ogun, Benue, and Kwara State

Elevated Risk of inter-community riots in Cross River, Osun, Taraba, and Anambra states

Guarded Risk of Unknown gunmen attacking traders or road users in towns and cities of the East on Mondays or any IPOB-declared sit-at-home day(s)

Guarded Risk of Fulani militiamen attacking Southern Kaduna, Plateau, and Benue communities on any day of 2024

Guarded Risk of abductions in every other part of Abuja

Guarded Risk of violent political protests in Zamfara, Plateau, and Kaduna states after Supreme Court rulings on the gubernatorial election disputes

Low Risk of any form of attacks happening anywhere in Nigeria at any given period in 2024

Conclusion

In conclusion, the December 2023 Security Report for Nigeria, presented by the PSJ UK Team, reflects a disturbing escalation in security challenges throughout the country. The erroneous aerial bombing in Kaduna, the horrendous Christmas Eve attacks in Plateau, and ongoing conflicts involving Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) contribute to a significant rise in fatalities and abductions.

The regional analysis highlights varying degrees of impact across Nigeria, with the North Central region being notably affected by the Plateau attacks. The Q4 2023 analysis provides a broader perspective, emphasizing the activities of bandits as the deadliest non-state actors.

Looking ahead to 2024, the security forecasts underscore the persistence of threats, including suspected Fulani militiamen attacks, reprisals, and risks from Boko Haram, ISWAP, and bandits. The report serves as a crucial resource, but its indicative nature emphasizes the complex and evolving nature of security challenges in Nigeria.