

# U.S. SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS AND THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS



## The Case of Nigeria and the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF)

A collaboration between Brown University, Security Assistance Monitor, and InterAction  
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## **About the Factsheet**

This factsheet is a collaboration between Brown University's Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies (CHRHS), the Security Assistance Monitor (SAM) at the Center for International Policy, and InterAction. It provides an overview of key facts, data points, and analysis related to the U.S. partnership with Nigeria in the context of ongoing civilian protection and humanitarian assistance concerns in the country.

It is the second in a series of factsheets examining protection of civilian issues in geographies where the U.S. is a significant external security partner, following a first report published in [December 2021](#) on Ethiopia. The series aims to generate awareness of U.S. policies and practices on security cooperation and document their effectiveness in promoting civilian protection. Moreover, it is intended to help inform NGO advocacy and policy engagement strategies seeking to strengthen the protection of civilians, enhance humanitarian access, and minimize civilian suffering in contexts of U.S. security partnerships. In examining political and security developments in Nigeria, this paper focuses mainly on the policies and practices of the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF), the U.S. relationship with this actor, and leverage the U.S. may exert through this relationship to address civilian harm concerns in country.

The collaborators on this project have endeavored to provide data-driven and fact-based information on the nature of U.S. security cooperation with Nigeria and current civilian harm trends in the country. The information presented does not necessarily represent the institutional views of the contributing organizations. The recommendations in this factsheet reflect the assessments of InterAction and CHRHS contributors. Information collected for this factsheet stems from open-source information, including U.S. government and NGO reports, as well as interviews with experts, including U.S. policy specialists, international and field-based NGOs, and local experts.

Drawing on the insights and recommendations of NGO colleagues and experts working on Nigeria and U.S. security cooperation policy and practice, this product was developed by the following contributors:

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CHRHS, SAM, and InterAction would like to thank all the individuals and organizations who contributed to and provided guidance for this factsheet, including InterAction staff, members and partners.

## **About the Contributing Organizations:**

**Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies:** Housed within the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University, The Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies aims to promote a more just, peaceful, and secure world by furthering a deeper understanding of global human rights and humanitarian challenges, and encouraging collaboration between local communities, academics, and practitioners to develop innovative solutions to these challenges.

# Factsheet: The Case of Nigeria and the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF)

**Security Assistance Monitor:** The Security Assistance Monitor is a program of the Center for International Policy, that tracks and analyzes U.S. security sector assistance and arms sales programs worldwide. By informing policymakers, media, scholars, NGOs, and the public (in the United States and abroad) about trends and issues related to U.S. foreign security assistance, we seek to enhance transparency and promote greater oversight of U.S. military and police aid, arms sales, and training.

**InterAction:** InterAction is a convener, thought leader, and voice for NGOs working to eliminate extreme poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace, and ensure dignity for all people. InterAction convenes several thematic and country-specific working groups, including the Protection of Civilians Working Group (PoC WG), a coalition of 16 international humanitarian and human rights organizations working to shape U.S. policy and practice to minimize civilian harm in U.S. military operations and security partnerships.



This factsheet's cover image is a [photo](#) of U.S. Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander of the U.S. Africa Command, participating in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Nigeria Military National Cemetery in February 2021. The image is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

## Key Findings

- **Between 2000 and 2021, the United States provided more than \$232 million in security sector assistance, and notified \$593 million in foreign military sales, and \$305 million in direct commercial sales to Nigeria**—all designed to support Nigerian government security and counterterrorism efforts, increase defense trade, promote cooperation on maritime and border security, and strengthen military professionalization and security sector governance.
  - In addition to these sales, in April 2022, the U.S. announced a new \$997 million foreign military sale (FMS) of 12 AH-1Z Attack Helicopters and related training and equipment to Nigeria.
  - In 2017, the U.S. approved the \$593 million sale of 12 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft and weapons to Nigeria, constituting what was until 2022 the largest U.S. foreign military sale in sub-Saharan Africa.
  - The U.S. provided \$1.9 billion in humanitarian assistance in the same period, including an average \$350 million per year since 2017.
  - Despite reports of civilian casualties from Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) airstrikes and other concerns, the flow of U.S. weapons into Nigeria has not slowed. In fact, 2020 saw the largest influx of direct commercial sales to the country in the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup>
- Based on available information, **the United States provided 41,027 training courses to Nigerian military personnel between 2000 and 2021**, more than 35,000 of which came from the Peacekeeping Operations program. Of the remaining 5,930 courses, 46% were in other Train-and-Equip / Provision of Defense Articles programs and authorities and 45% in Education programs and authorities. The U.S. has not provided training from Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief related programs.
- Although U.S. trainings have included a focus on international law compliance and appropriate weapons use to mitigate harm, **there are continued reports of civilian harm caused by the NAF, including civilian casualties, enforced disappearances, sexual and gender-based violence, forced displacement, and obstacles on humanitarian access.** Humanitarian workers have also shared that Nigeria's security forces appear to have a limited understanding of humanitarian law and tools for effective engagement with local populations.
  - This suggests that trainings provided by the U.S. and others have been insufficient in either quantity and scope or have not been appropriately targeted to relevant personnel and chain of command. It is also unclear whether the U.S. monitors implementation with a view to ensuring NAF operations promote the protection of civilians—and informing security cooperation decisions accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> More recent direct commercial sales data is not available from U.S. government reports.

- The United States has made some efforts to engage the Nigerian military on civilian harm and humanitarian access concerns, including through training and outside of training, such as in bilateral dialogue. However, **the U.S. faces apparent limited capacity to shape the conduct of Nigerian security forces, notably on best practices to minimize civilian harm and follow up to allegations of abuse.**<sup>2</sup>
- Nigerian military leadership has taken some steps to promote international humanitarian and human rights law training among its forces and compliance with relevant domestic laws. However, **trainings have not been streamlined and integrated across the NAF and there is a clear gap in field-level implementation, notably in northern areas controlled or contested by non-state armed groups (NSAGs).**
  - Significant gaps remain, including command and control issues and limited doctrinal guidance to shape troop conduct in and outside of operations. Additionally, a lack of accountability for civilian harm hinders prospects for prioritizing civilian protection and avoidance of future harm. Much more needs to be done by the U.S. and Nigeria to encourage greater integration of civilian harm mitigation and best practice measures for engagement with humanitarian actors and local communities across NAF rank-and-file.

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<sup>2</sup> The extent of U.S. involvement in civil-military coordination and efforts to facilitate humanitarian access in Nigeria alongside humanitarian actors and NAF—and whether such efforts have been successful—remains an area for further research.

## Partnership Overview

### Objective and Purpose of Partnership

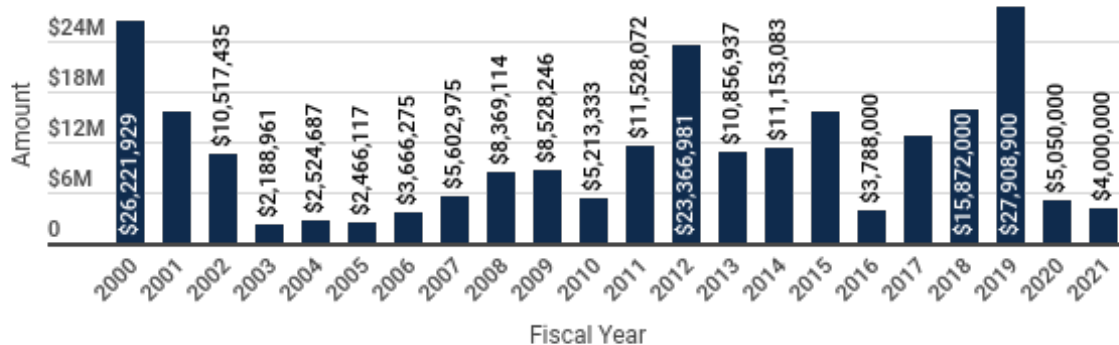
The U.S. security partnership with Nigeria is substantial, with more than \$232 million in security assistance, \$593 million in foreign military sales, and \$305 million in direct commercial sales over the last 20 years.<sup>3</sup> This partnership is part of a larger U.S. military presence throughout Africa in response to rising attacks by militant groups that have made West Africa and other parts of the continent key focus areas of U.S. counterterrorism goals. Nigeria is part of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)<sup>4</sup>, the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS, and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). According to the U.S. government, [joint security efforts with Nigeria](#) are focused on counterterrorism efforts against the armed groups Jammatul Ahlis Sunnah lid Daawa wal Jihad (JAS)—commonly known as “Boko Haram”—and the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP), increasing defense trade, promoting cooperation on maritime and border security, and strengthening military professionalization and governance of the security sector.

### Types of Assistance

U.S. security cooperation with Nigeria takes the form of security assistance (U.S. funding to support Nigerian security partners), arms sales (which include both government-to-government foreign military sales and direct commercial sales from U.S. manufacturers to the Nigerian government), and training of Nigerian security personnel.

U.S. security cooperation supports both the NAF and the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). The former is responsible for [external security](#) but also plays a role in domestic law enforcement efforts alongside the police, given capacity and staffing gaps in the latter. This assistance is designed to strengthen Nigerian state security and help fend off insurgencies in the northeast by [ISWAP and JAS](#), which continue to attack civilians as well as military, police, and civilian government targets, and cause large-scale displacement.

Figure 1. U.S. Security Assistance to Nigeria Since 2000



3 All security sector assistance data and data analysis in this section is taken from the Security Assistance Monitor databases, which house all publicly available information on U.S. security cooperation programming and cite each data point to its original source document.

4 The MNJTF includes forces from Nigeria as well as neighboring Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

## Security Assistance

Since 2000, the United States has provided more than \$232 million in security assistance to Nigeria. The largest category of security assistance funding to Nigeria comes in the form of Foreign Military Financing (FMF), which enables countries to purchase defense articles, services, and training, followed by Excess Defense Articles, a program whereby defense items no longer needed by the U.S. military are offered at reduced or no cost to other countries. A third, significant, program is International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funding, a program administered by the U.S. Department of State that works with police and justice actors, rather than the military. The large INCLE program is particularly notable, given extensive police brutality in Nigeria. The [stated goal](#) of the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in Nigeria is to "support the development of effective and professional Nigerian law enforcement and justice sector institutions to prevent, detect, respond to, investigate, and prosecute crime in order to safeguard its citizens and protect human rights." In particular, INL seeks to build capacity for civilian security actors, particularly the NPF to assume responsibility for security throughout the country, with particular focus on northeast Nigeria. It is notable that these programs do appear to address issues of good governance to some degree, while many other programs simply provide equipment and tactical training.

Table 1. U.S. Security Assistance to Nigeria by Program

U.S. Security Assistance Program	Total Value of Assistance, FY2000-FY2021
Foreign Military Financing	\$40,156,105
Excess Defense Articles	\$39,629,720
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	\$36,213,000
Section 333 Building Partner Capacity	\$32,355,900
Section 1004 Counter-Drug Assistance	\$21,924,073
International Military Education and Training	\$15,524,000
Emergency Drawdowns	\$13,000,000
Global Security Contingency Fund (DOS)	\$8,020,000
Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program	\$6,486,341
Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs	\$5,081,000
Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority	\$3,313,070
Peacekeeping Operations	\$2,385,000
Regional Centers for Security Studies	\$2,084,577
Global Security Contingency Fund (DOD)	\$2,000,000
Non-Security Assistance - Unified Command	\$1,684,269
Service Academies	\$1,139,263
Section 1033 Counter-Drug Assistance	\$874,000
Developing Country Combined Exercise Program	\$309,652
Aviation Leadership Program	\$183,257
Defense Institution Reform Initiative	\$130,880
Defense Institute of International Legal Studies	\$37,000
State Partnership Program	\$26,990

## Arms Sales

U.S. arms to Nigeria have mostly been provided through security assistance and direct commercial sales, with the exception of a newly announced \$997 million foreign military sale approved in April 2022 for [12 AH-1Z Attack Helicopters](#) and related training and equipment, and a \$593 million sale approved in 2017 for [12 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft and weapons](#), which included both equipment and training. These aircraft were [officially inducted](#) into Nigeria’s air force in August 2021. The \$593 million deal was the [largest approved foreign military sale program](#) in sub-Saharan Africa until the 2022 approval of the AH-1Z Attack Helicopters.

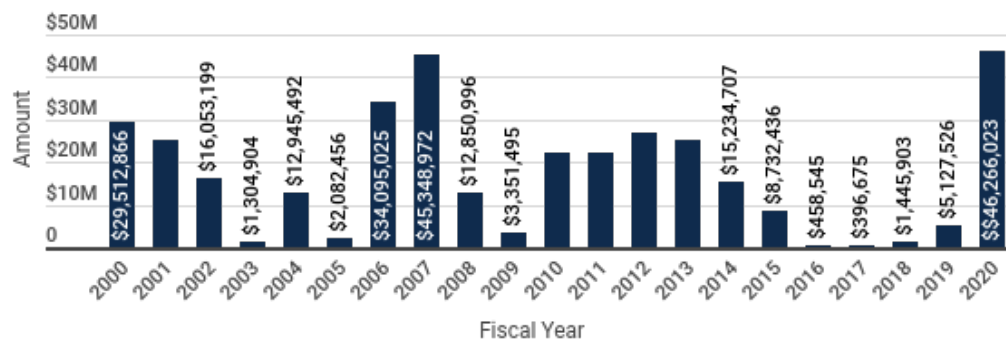
The AH-1Z Attack Helicopters and related equipment, which includes [Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System guidance sections](#), are meant to “better equip Nigeria to contribute to shared security objectives, promote regional stability, and build interoperability with the U.S. and other Western partners.” The announcement comes as Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has [called on Nigeria](#) to take on a greater leadership role across Africa, while also calling for greater accountability for human rights violations.

The [Super Tucano aircraft](#) are meant to “support Nigerian military operations against JAS and ISWAP and counter illicit trafficking in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.” These aircraft are specifically developed for partner countries requiring [air support for counterterrorism operations](#), and designed to [fly at a low altitude](#) to counter insurgents operating in the northern parts of the country. The Super Tucano aircraft sale was a controversial deal, opposed by some activists in Nigeria and subject of a [lawsuit in an American court](#) brought by the Indigenous people of Biafra, accusing Washington officials of violating U.S. law sending weapons to a military with a history of human rights abuses. In 2021, the U.S. Congress [paused the proposed arms sale](#) of 12 AH-1Z Attack Helicopters and associated hardware and systems) due to human rights concerns, including civilian deaths in the government’s battle against insurgents. The potential sale was finally [approved in April 2022](#).<sup>5</sup>

Direct commercial sales from the U.S. to Nigeria have been steadier and more consistent over time, at an average of about \$17 million per year since the year 2000.

The most relevant U.S. pieces of [legislation on arms transfers](#) are the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Both laws delegate authorities, restrict arms transfers under certain conditions, and establish Congressional oversight.

Figure 2. Direct Commercial Sales of Weapons from the U.S. to Nigeria



5 Both the \$997 million foreign military sale notification released in 2022 and the \$593 million sale approved in 2017 are not included in Direct Commercial Sales totals, as these constitute foreign military sales (government-to-government).



## Foreign Military Training

Nigeria is a major contributor to many United Nations peacekeeping missions, including most recently, the UN Mission in Liberia. As such, between 2000 and 2021, the majority of training courses (86%) were part of the Peacekeeping Operations program. The remaining U.S. training courses in Nigeria—i.e., those not linked to the development of peacekeeping capacity—over this period is relatively small in comparison. Indeed, just 5,930 training courses were delivered to a total estimated armed forces size of [135,000 active military personnel](#). It is unclear how many Nigerian military personnel which received Peacekeeping Operations training courses were deployed to UN, AU, or other regional peace operations, how many are currently stationed in Nigeria and/or have been deployed in counterinsurgency or law enforcement operations domestically. Additionally, it is uncertain how these trainings differ substantially in scope and content from other U.S.-provided trainings like the ones presented below.

Overall, most U.S.-administered training in Nigeria falls into one of two categories: Train-and-Equip / Provision of Defense Articles related programs and authorities (e.g., Peacekeeping Operations, Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Financing) and Education programs and authorities (e.g., International Military Education and Training, Regional Centers for Security Studies). Training is generally funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) and/or the Department of State (DoS) and are mainly executed by DoD—overseen by its Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and implemented by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and military contractors.

The U.S. has reportedly provided some training related to the protection of civilians and international humanitarian law (IHL). For example, the U.S. embassy in Abuja said the U.S. training for 64 Nigerian pilots of the Super Tucanos included a human rights component along with precision targeting skills and air-to-ground integration. According to the State Department, [U.S. training](#) “emphasized the Law of Armed Conflict and civilian casualty mitigation, which are fundamental principles of the Nigerian military’s professional education and training.”<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the U.S. government supports Nigeria’s [Air-to-Ground Integration \(AGI\)](#) program to mitigate civilian harm in targeting. The latest \$997 million sale of Attack Helicopters reportedly includes \$25 million of “case funds allocated for institutional and technical assistance” to the NAF to this effect. Since 2019, DSCA has initiated a [program on civilian harm mitigation \(CHM\)](#),<sup>7</sup> which involves developing foundational curricula, system-specific capability building, advisory services and risk assessments on CHM for U.S. security partners. It remains unclear to what extent DSCA’s new CHM programs have been deployed in the Nigerian context to date, although there are reports this has been the case.

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6        Aside from data on training programs and authorities, U.S. government reports on foreign military training do not specify the length (e.g., 1-hour, 1-day courses) or type / content (e.g., IHL compliance, targeting) of trainings provided.

7        In cooperation with DoS Political-Military Affairs Bureau and DoD Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy (Office for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs).

Table 2. U.S. Foreign Military Training Provided to Nigerian Security Personnel

U.S. Training Program	Courses Completed, FY2000-FY2021
Peacekeeping Operations	35,097
Foreign Military Sales	1,192
International Military Education and Training	1,081
Regional Centers for Security Studies	953
Section 1004 Counter-Drug Assistance	943
Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program	561
Foreign Military Financing	537
Non-Security Assistance - Unified Command	407
Global Security Contingency Fund	110
Humanitarian Mine Action	55
Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority	52
Service Academies	28
Aviation Leadership Program	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,027</b>

### Key Issues in the Security Partnership

Nigeria has been battling insurgents in the northeast for over a decade. In the course of these operations, its military forces and police have been responsible for killings, forced displacement, and other harms to civilian populations. In addition, [impunity within Nigeria’s security forces](#) remains a significant problem.

There is little evidence that U.S. security aid is helping alleviate the worsening security situation, as developments in the [northwest](#) and other parts of the country suggest. And the effect of the prevailing insecurity on civilians is only compounded by abuses committed by Nigerian forces. While the Nigerian government has won some tactical battles against insurgent groups with the help of U.S. training and assistance, in the absence of deeper, institutional reforms that help protect civilians in conflict, promote human rights, and lead to political settlements, security assistance will not translate into security for Nigerians.

Additionally, there is evidence of [weapons captured by insurgents](#), perpetuating the insurgencies and fueling harm against civilian populations. Armed groups JAS and ISWAP have raided [forward operating military bases](#), seizing assault rifles, ammunition, and even tanks and other vehicles and equipment for their own purposes and furthering their attacks against military and civilian targets alike. There have also been reports of heavy weapons systems [from EU member states](#) being seized by JAS.<sup>8</sup>

Aside from the loss of control of weapons, other concerns associated with weapons transfers to Nigeria include violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), a lack of accountability for civilian harm, and corruption by State security forces. Despite these concerns, the flow of U.S. weapons into Nigeria has not slowed, and in fact 2020 saw the largest influx of direct commercial weapons sales to Nigeria, at \$46 million, in at least the last 20 years.

The desire to arm, equip, and train Nigeria’s security forces sets up a dynamic whereby the U.S. continues to provide security assistance, and approve arms sales while calling on Nigeria’s government to [hold its security](#)

<sup>8</sup> Additionally, there are reports that JAS have made improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from unexploded ordnance, such as [cluster bombs employed by the Nigerian military](#).

[forces accountable for abuses](#) and continuing to provide significant humanitarian assistance.<sup>9</sup> However, there are apparent limits in the U.S. government's ability to influence the conduct of Nigerian forces to minimize and respond to civilian harm (including in but not limited to airstrikes), adopting best practice measures to this effect, or to improve accountability within security services. According to field-based NGOs with expertise on the issue, U.S. government representatives have in recent years made efforts to address civilian harm concerns directly with Nigerian military and government officials, but U.S. concerns have often been rebuffed.<sup>10</sup> Based on public statements from the U.S. government, [human rights](#) are increasingly cited as a priority in security cooperation with Nigeria, notably with view to addressing the drivers of insecurity. However, it remains unclear where human rights and civilian harm mitigation fall within the [broader set of U.S. priorities](#) in Nigeria including defense, regional security, and intelligence support for counterterrorism.

Experts interviewed on the subject have noted that the large array of other international partners providing security assistance to Nigeria constitutes a limiting factor in U.S. influence. Indeed, Nigerian government and military officials can instrumentalize the diversification in foreign security partners to fend off U.S. pressure on civilian harm and human rights concerns.<sup>11</sup> Other international actors providing military assistance (lethal and/or non-lethal aid) to NAF include: Austria, Brazil, China (People's Republic), Czech Republic, European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

The U.S. also appears to face challenges in assessing how its trainings—notably on appropriate weapons use, targeting procedures to mitigate harm, and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights laws—have been streamlined and integrated across levels of the armed forces, especially among relevant army units deployed in counterinsurgency and/or law enforcement settings and supporting air force commands and groups.<sup>13</sup>

Other issues appear to include limited extent and/or scope of civilian harm mitigation trainings provided by the U.S. government (and others); improper targeting of trainees or tailoring of content based on capability and theater-specific demands; and incomplete monitoring of U.S. assistance according to civilian protection and civilian harm outcomes. Continued reports of civilian harm despite U.S. training may also be explained by gaps in ground-level implementation; command-and-control issues; and a lack of follow up to abuses by NAF commanders or accountability for harm caused.<sup>14</sup>

Humanitarian workers have shared that Nigeria's security forces appear to have a poor understanding of humanitarian law and tools for effective engagement with local populations.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, training efforts appear to be insufficient or improperly targeted, given reports of the military—including ground and air forces—continuing to engage in abuses and [cause civilian harm](#), notably in anti-insurgent operations.

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9 The U.S. has provided an average \$350 million in humanitarian assistance per year since 2017. See: [U.S. Foreign Assistance by Country](#).

10 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

11 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

12 Among security assistance provided to Nigeria by international partners, lethal military hardware includes light combat aircraft, fighter jets, attack helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Types of non-lethal assets and other aid include cargo / transport, utility, maritime patrol, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, capacity development (general or system-specific programs, e.g., aircraft trainers), and joint training exercises.

13 In addition, more information would be needed to assess whether the U.S. government has encouraged other international, multilateral or humanitarian partners to deliver trainings to the NAF, and if so, how successful such efforts have been. See also: Global Protection Cluster, [gpc-civil-military\\_coordination-protection-outcomes.pdf \(globalprotectioncluster.org\)](#).

14 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

15 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

## Protection of Civilians and Civilian Harm in Nigeria

### Conflict Background

The early 2000s in Nigeria were marked by [clashes between Christian and Muslim communities](#) after Sharia law was adopted by several states in the north.<sup>16</sup> These clashes radicalized many in the region, leading to the formation of JAS, also known as Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist group based in northern Nigeria whose unofficial name translates to [“Western culture is forbidden.”](#) In [July 2009](#), JAS had its first major clash with Nigerian security forces in Maiduguri, Borno. The types of violence perpetrated by the group have since diversified, ranging from burning villages and bombing schools to kidnapping. Conflict [escalated](#) dramatically in 2014 and 2015, but after the group [declared allegiance to ISIL](#) in 2015, its power was [weakened](#) by military counterinsurgency campaigns. In 2016, JAS [split into two separate groups](#), with the emergence of the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP) as a rival faction.

Decades-old [intercommunal conflict](#) over land-use in Nigeria—notably between predominantly Christian farmer and predominantly Muslim herder communities<sup>17</sup>—have also [intensified](#) in [recent](#) years, as the nation urbanizes, environmental degradation takes its toll, and displacement continues. The International Crisis Group reported that by 2018, this crisis had claimed around [six times more](#) civilian lives than the JAS insurgency.

In the last twenty years, kidnappings have become a widespread tactic across Nigeria, used by different non-state armed groups (NSAGs) for both [economic](#) and political gain. Northwest Nigeria has seen an increase in banditry. Ransoms paid to kidnappers between June 2011 and March 2020 amounted to a minimum of [\\$18 million](#), only further encouraging the practice. In January 2022, the government altered their official terminology to referring to bandits in northwest Nigeria as [‘terrorists.’](#)<sup>18</sup>

In the south, [conflict burgeoned in 2004](#) near the oil-rich Niger Delta, as local militant groups attacked oil production, kidnapped foreign oil workers, and clashed with each other in the hopes of seizing greater regional control and oil wealth. These armed groups continue to create economic instability as attacks have [scared off](#) foreign investment. In the southeast, conflict pitting the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatist movement and its military wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), against government forces has [intensified](#) in 2021.

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16 Nigeria gained independence from the British Empire in 1960 and became a formal republic with a new constitution in 1963. Regional and ethnic divisions were exacerbated by colonial rule, with notable tensions between the Yoruba in the southwest, Igbo in the southeast, and Hausa-Fulani in the north. By 1967, two coups and serious violence led to the secession of the Republic of Biafra — an Igbo-led state — from Nigeria, causing a civil war which killed one million people before its conclusion in 1970. Instability wracked the country over the following thirty years as democracy crumbled and military regimes fought for control. In 1999 the nation emerged with a democratic constitution. See [“Nigeria - Military Regimes, 1983–99,” Britannica](#); and Fidelis Mbah, [“Nigerians Mark 50 Years of End of Bloody Civil War,” Al Jazeera](#), January 15, 2020.

17 Intercommunal conflict in Nigeria has also involved intra-farmer and intra-herder clashes along ethnic lines.

18 In northwest Nigeria, some security analysts claim that government efforts to push back against NSAGs are provoking further violence. For example, in January 2022 the military conducted air raids on bandit targets in Zamfara state. The following day, armed bandits retaliated with attacks on surrounding communities, killing at least 200 civilians as well as looting and burning many homes, leaving an estimated 10,000 displaced in the northwestern state. See Al Jazeera, [“At Least 200 Dead in Bandit Attacks in Northwest Nigeria,”](#) January 9, 2022.

## Civilian Harm in Conflict

NSAGs and Nigerian security forces alike have reportedly committed [human rights abuses](#) as well as violations of IHL. In particular, NAF and associated forces have contributed various harms to civilian populations, including civilian casualties, detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, damage to civilian objects and property, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced displacement, obstacles on humanitarian access, and other abuses. Ongoing violence has led to severe displacement within the country, with the UN recording an estimated [2.2 million](#) internally displaced people across northeastern Nigeria alone. Women, children, and the elderly have been especially vulnerable to civilian harm.

Reliable data on civilian harm and humanitarian needs in northeast Nigeria is limited due to significant [access constraints](#) in the region resulting from insecurity and significant distrust between military and humanitarian actors. Conflict parties have also contributed to this trend, as illustrated by geographic barriers on humanitarian assistance imposed by Nigerian security forces, pressures on humanitarian actors or [suspensions](#) on operations by the federal or regional governments as well as [increasing attacks, intimidation](#), and hostility toward aid workers by NSAGs like ISWAP. Yet civilians continue to experience the burden of conflict across Nigeria. Since mid-2019, the military has created garrison towns in the northern regions to better protect civilians and particularly IDPs from NSAGs. The establishment of [garrison towns](#) as part of Operation [Lafiya Dole](#)—formerly known as “Super Camp” strategy—has led to a de facto situation whereby humanitarian actors do not provide assistance outside these areas due to severe insecurity and significant restrictions, although they are not explicitly forbidden from doing so.<sup>19</sup>

## Civilian Casualties

In [January 2017](#), a Nigerian fighter jet seeking to target JAS militants instead bombed an internally displaced persons’ (IDPs) camp in Rann, with death toll estimates approaching [170 civilians](#), including camp residents and aid workers. This strike reportedly killed [134 children](#) and left 101 wounded. According to [AOAV reporting](#), 20% (280) of child casualties between 2017 and 2019 in northeast Nigeria were perpetrated by Nigerian security forces, most of which were related to the January 2017 incident. In [September 2021](#), the Nigerian Air Force struck a fish market in a village in Borno State, killing dozens of civilians according to estimates. Though the Air Force spokesman first [denied NAF involvement](#) in this attack, he later acknowledged that pilots had fired after noting “suspicious movement consistent with Boko Haram terrorists behavior.” Still, the NAF denies civilian casualties as a result of the attack, and no efforts to investigate this case have been mentioned or published.

According to field-based NGOs, cases of civilian casualties resulting from Nigerian airstrikes have increased considerably in recent years, accompanied by a notable lack of accountability and follow up to allegations by NAF.<sup>20</sup> The majority of airstrikes take place in areas outside government control where the Army is reluctant to carry out ground investigations following reports of civilian harm.<sup>21</sup> There is reportedly a widespread conception across military forces that any civilians who have not come out of the bush are affiliated with NSAGs. Additionally, NAF’s outreach to civilian populations and local communities appears very limited in the context of targeting decisions. The military seldom distinguishes between civilians and combatants and fails to take adequate precautions to mitigate civilian harm in anti-insurgent operations. There have been reports of farmers

19 Other contributing factors to this trend include the risk of being perceived as affiliated with NSAGs by delivering aid outside military-controlled garrison towns as well as counterterrorism restrictions.

20 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

21 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

seeking to access lands beyond military-controlled perimeters who have been targeted by NAF, as noted by humanitarian workers operating in northern Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> NAF's international partners and advisors like the U.S. have reportedly grown concerned about this trend of indiscriminate use of force, voicing frustration to Nigerian counterparts to little effect.<sup>23</sup>

Civilian casualties have also been a concern in the northwest, most recently in [February 2022](#), when the NAF reportedly struck a small village in southern Niger, killing at least 12 people including 4 children. The Nigerian military reportedly launched an [investigation](#) into the incident. In the southeast, clashes with the modern-day Biafran separatist movement IPOB have occasionally involved human rights abuses, such as a case of Nigerian security forces [killing at least 150 peaceful protesters](#) affiliated with IPOB in 2016. There have been recent concerns from government retaliation to the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of the IPOB. Amnesty International reported a wide array of [human rights abuses](#) in the first half of 2021, including mass arrests of people allegedly tied to ESN violence, though these allegations have been challenged by many. Furthermore, Amnesty recorded at least [115 killings](#) by security forces over the course of a mere four months, many of whom appear to be unaffiliated with the ESN or any other militant group.

### ***Damage to Civilian Objects and Property***

There have been reports of government forces [attacking territories](#) held by NSAGs with disregard for civilian objects and infrastructure in these areas. Although the military has consistently denied wrongdoing, multiple villages housing hundreds of civilians have been reportedly razed to the ground.

While attacks on civilian infrastructure by NSAGs have been common across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states, government forces have also occasionally been responsible.<sup>24</sup> While there is not much recent data on such attacks, reports from April 2013 of an instance in Baga attributed nearly [200 deaths](#) and over 2,000 destroyed buildings in the town to Nigerian soldiers.

The occupation of educational facilities remains a major concern across the northeast, including in contested or inaccessible areas controlled by NSAGs. Some reports have suggested a trend of Nigerian security forces occupying [schools and hospitals](#) for [military use](#). According to field experts, military battalions have been occupying schools and other educational facilities in Banki, Damasak, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, and Pulka (Borno State) as of early 2022. In most cases, the military uses these structures as bases or for their barracks.<sup>25</sup>

Such tactics can have significant consequences, including reduction of educational opportunities, and increasing likelihood of attacks on civilian infrastructure. Renewed efforts have been made by humanitarian actors to dialogue with the Nigerian military on this concern and encourage a reduction of schools occupied.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Enforced Disappearances, Detention, and Torture***

Civilian populations have been particularly vulnerable to abuse in the conflict, as illustrated by enforced disappearances, detention, and torture by Nigerian security forces. Unlawful arrests and enforced disappearances

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22 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

23 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

24 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

25 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

26 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

by the Nigerian military and police forces have long been an issue in the country's northeast, as Amnesty International reported in [2009](#) and [2015](#). The whereabouts of more than [1,200](#) people, who had been arrested by government forces in Borno State from 2011 to 2014, remained unknown as of 2015. With respect to Kaduna State, Amnesty International reported that as of [2020](#), "security agencies had not yet accounted for about [600 members](#) of the [Islamic Movement of Nigeria] who went missing in 2015, following an incident in which at least 347 [...] members were killed by the military."<sup>27</sup>

In the context of anti-insurgent operations, detainments often occur as people flee territories under the control of NSAGs, and Nigerian forces and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF or Yan Gora)<sup>28</sup> [suspect](#) displaced civilians to be affiliated with the organizations. As with civilians of all ages, the elderly are unlawfully detained, and die at much [higher rates](#) than their younger counterparts while held in military custody. According to Amnesty International, a minimum of [10,000](#) civilians have died in the custody of Nigerian security forces since 2011. Thousands of children have been held in [military detention](#) as they attempt to escape conflict and are presumed by Nigerian forces and CJTF of being aligned with the insurgency. The UN Secretary-General [report on children in armed conflict](#) notes that in 2018, "418 children were deprived of liberty in Nigeria for their or their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram," the majority of whom had been in detention for over two years. Per the same report, Nigerian authorities released 241 children from detention that year. Conditions in military detention centers holding the children are [notoriously poor](#)—often overcrowded, deficient in sanitation, and lacking in food and water. Amnesty International argues that these constitute the [war crime of torture](#) due to their severity. Cases of torture perpetrated by government forces have been documented in northeast Nigeria. In 2015, Amnesty International highlighted the [prevalence of torture](#) in detention centers, including beatings, sexual violence, and deprivation of basic needs.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)***

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and forced child marriage have been reported in northeastern IDP camps with perpetrators ranging from military forces to CJTF members to other civilians. Though cases of reported SGBV decreased from 2019 to 2020, underreporting of SGBV is common. SGBV is significant in the city of Maiduguri, among other areas in Borno and other northern states. Field-based NGOs consulted for this factsheet have noted high rates of SGBV in garrison towns, as well as occasional reports of SGBV perpetrated by members of the Nigerian armed forces,<sup>30</sup> as [corroborated](#) by Amnesty International. Per the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than [3,700](#) cases of SGBV were reported in 2020, although distinctions between perpetrators (NSAGs, NAF and associated forces, or civilians) are not available. Garrison towns are a breeding ground for SGBV because of the proximity of military forces to civilians. Indeed, the military has access to the camps and are in most cases the only government representatives in these towns, adding to the difficult conditions in camps which create conditions for negative coping mechanisms including transactional sex.<sup>31</sup>

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27 In 2020, the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor noted that "there is reasonable basis to believe" that from April 2013 onwards, members of the NAF committed the crime against humanity of "enforced disappearance of persons pursuant to article 7(1)(i)," among other crimes. See [Report on Preliminary Examination Activities \(2020\) \(icc-cpi.int\)](#)

28 CJTF is a civilian force affiliated with the NAF in counterterrorism operations against NSAGs.

29 Despite domestic anti-torture legislation passed in the wake of the End SARS protests in 2017, a [2020 report](#) by Amnesty International shows that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) still engaged in torture with impunity in both the northeast and south.

30 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

31 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022. In 2017, the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) highlighted [per-vasive sexual exploitation and abuse](#) committed by the CJTF.

## *Use of Child Soldiers and Irregular Forces*

In 2019, the [UN reported](#) that over 1,600 children were verified as being recruited and used in combat by CJTF up until 2017, with no new recruits in 2018. Irregular forces such as local vigilante groups have also recruited child soldiers. In September 2017, the CJTF signed an Action Plan agreement with UNICEF to end and prevent the [recruitment and use of child soldiers](#). In 2018, the [UNICEF](#) reported that a local militia within the CJTF alliance fighting NSAGs released over 800 children recruited for fighting. In 2021, the UN [delisted](#) the CJTF from the list of organizations using and recruiting children in armed conflict and [commended](#) the organization for its efforts to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

## *Forced Displacement and Returns*

The NAF has caused significant forced displacement from its military operations in the northeast, notably through its efforts to move civilian population into garrison towns, with the threat that civilians who do not relocate in those areas would be considered as “affiliated with terrorists.”<sup>32</sup>

As families flee violence, vulnerable population groups such as the elderly are often left behind. Not only do they then face repression and abuse perpetrated by NSAGs, but are also [often killed in military raids](#) as state security forces attempt to counter insurgent groups.

Most internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in Nigeria are in Borno State. In 2021, [Human Rights Watch](#) reported that Borno State Government (BSG) intended to close IDP camps, threatening to render thousands of civilians homeless with very little notice or support. To date, the BSG has closed [7 of 9 formal IDP camps](#) in Borno State, as part of its larger plan to [resettle 1.8 million people](#), a number which includes refugees in neighboring countries as well as IDPs. To date, over 140,000 IDPs have been relocated. Evidence to date suggests these population movements have not been informed or voluntary and thus, can arguably be considered as forced displacement under international humanitarian law.<sup>33</sup> Civilians being forced to return to their home communities have faced [attacks, insecurity, and limited reconstruction](#)—particularly lack of access to basic social services as well as land, food, and water.<sup>34</sup>

While forced returns are mainly executed by the civilian government, the military has in fact been opposing some relocations and returns due to gaps in its capacity to secure areas outside garrison towns. However, the NAF has, for instance, prevented people from fleeing certain areas during attacks (Dikwa in 2021, at least for a day).<sup>35</sup> It remains unclear whether this was done because civilians did not have a safe way out or to use civilians in garrison towns as a means of “shielding” the military from NSAG attacks. According to experts interviewed on the question, this incident was likely due to a combination of both.<sup>36</sup>

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32 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

33 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022. See also: ICRC, [Customary IHL - Rule 129. The Act of Displacement \(icrc.org\)](#).

34 In August 2021, [6 people were killed and 14 injured](#) in Agiri, Mafa in August 2021, one month after they were resettled. In early October 2021, at least [41 people died](#) during a cholera outbreak in the resettled camp in Shuwari, Jere Local Government Area.

35 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

36 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.



## Humanitarian Access Constraints

While the security situation and distrust between actors are the root causes of humanitarian access issues in northeast Nigeria, the NAF's actions have also contributed to access constraints notably through the 'militarization' of aid. The military's imposition of armed escorts on main supply routes in Borno State for humanitarian cargo has been a major challenge for humanitarian actors.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, due to insecurity on roads and risks of being perceived as associated with NSAGs, NGOs are largely reliant on UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) for operations outside of Maiduguri.

Military and civilian government restrictions in the context of counterterrorism operations against NSAGs have created additional obstacles to humanitarian assistance delivery and limited mobility for civilians seeking to access aid. These efforts involve [restricting humanitarian access](#) (through limitations on fuel, threatening arrest, banning certain goods, and more) and creating substantial barriers to gaining authorization for projects. The military claims that these actions prevent aid being diverted to NSAGs, but humanitarian organizations have noted severe hindrances on the provision of life-saving aid to civilian populations. Human Rights Watch alleged that military restrictions were "stifling" aid efforts, preventing aid workers from reaching millions of people. Restrictions on aid operations outside of government-controlled areas have left [1 million people in need](#) with no humanitarian assistance. While humanitarian actors are not explicitly prevented from accessing areas outside government control, they often cannot due to insecurity and significant risks they would face from doing so.<sup>38</sup>

On the civilian government side, significant administrative and [bureaucratic](#) impediments, such as import barriers on medicine and humanitarian supplies as well as delays in INGO registrations and visa delays for staff have repeatedly caused backlogs of life-saving cargo.

## Food Crisis

According to [UNWFP](#), 8.7 million people are food insecure in northeast Nigeria, and according to the [United States Department of Agriculture](#), Nigeria accounted for around 50% of West Africa's food insecure population in 2019. Access constraints posed by NAF exacerbate this food insecurity, according to UNOCHA. For example, the UNOCHA Nigeria [Humanitarian Country Team](#) reports that children living in areas inaccessible for humanitarian aid delivery suffer nutritional deficits when compared with the rest of the country.<sup>39</sup>

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37 The use of armed escorts risks perceptions among NSAGs that humanitarians are affiliated with the government, thereby compromising a principled humanitarian response and increasing the risk of targeting by NSAGs. This also limits humanitarians' ability to dialogue with NSAGs, contrary to humanitarian principles. Additionally, this has caused delays in the humanitarian response given the military's limited capacity to provide armed escorts, despite their imposition of this mechanism. Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

38 According to a recent BSG directive, NGOs are [not permitted](#) to provide food or non-food items (NFI) assistance in communities designated as resettlement areas following camp closures.

39 According to the March 2022 [Cadre Harmonize results](#), food insecurity has worsened, and so too has humanitarian actors' capacity to respond to this crisis. There is a projected outreach gap of 2.9 million people, and with nearly 600,000 people in emergency and crisis good security situation in areas that humanitarian organizations cannot access due to security concerns and government-imposed sanctions and counterterrorism measures. For recent data on food insecurity inaccessible areas, see also: [Humanitarian situation in Inaccessible areas - January, 2022 Monthly Bulletin Cadre Harmonisé Task Force on Inaccessible Areas | Food Security Cluster \(fscluster.org\)](#).

## *Extortion, Theft, and Constraints on Economic Activity*

In January 2020, the Borno State Governor accused Nigerian federal troops and police of [extorting](#) and collecting bribes from travelers along the Maiduguri-Damaturu without a national ID card. The Nigerian army [responded](#) to the allegation by insisting that any misconduct would be investigated, and appropriate sanctions would be applied were “infractions to be established.” According to field-based NGOs, the imposition of this and other layers of taxation by parties to the conflict, including NSAGs but also the military and police, is no secret.

Over the years, the Nigerian military has also enforced bans on economic activities such as [fishing](#) or [cattle trading](#), which it claims contributed to NSAG financing but remain significant sources of income for civilian populations in the region. With respect to fishing, [HumAngle’s](#) Ahmad Salkida writes that “rather than disrupt the entire production and supply chain [of fish], the Nigerian military only focuses on tokenism by seizing consignments from traders on their way to the local markets.” Additionally, there are reports that some supermarkets have been patronized, and others dismantled or burned down, and traders were extorted or suffered from intimidation by security forces.<sup>40</sup>

## **Government of Nigeria / NAF – Domestic Policies and Practices on the Protection of Civilians**

### *Civilian Harm Mitigation Policy*

A Draft National Policy on the Protection of Civilians and Civilian Harm Mitigation (POC-CHM) is [currently going through consultations](#) with [various Nigerian government ministries](#) and is expected to be ready for legislative consideration soon. While specific details on the draft policy—which, if enacted, [would be the first national PoC policy in Africa](#)—are sparse, it “recognizes...and builds [upon] existing best practices, which includes approaches that have been proven to be working in the northeast to address the crisis and improve the humanitarian situation,” “builds upon existing laws,” [and](#) “takes a government-wide approach to preventing, minimizing, and addressing civilian harm.” Currently, the policy remains at the Federal Executive Council (FEC) Secretariat and civil society organizations such as CIVIC have continued to push for its adoption.<sup>41</sup>

### *Transparency and Accountability*

Nigeria has taken some positive measures concerning transparency and accountability for alleged crimes against civilians. Notably, the Army [established a human rights desk](#) in 2016 to “investigate complaints of human rights abuses brought by civilians,” and desks are [now reportedly present](#) at the Army Headquarters Department of Civil-Military Affairs and in “all divisions of the Army across the nation.” In a November 2019

40 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022. Per [CIVIC reporting](#), CJTF elements have also been involved in extortion and theft, “including the diversion of humanitarian aid” from intended recipients.

41 In 2016, CIVIC conducted [research](#) on protection issues in northeast Nigeria and shared findings and recommendations with the Defence Headquarters (DHQ). This engagement prompted the Chief of Defence Staff to request CIVIC, in partnership with DHQ, to help draft a policy on the protection of civilians. The draft was first presented at a high-level dialogue hosted by the DHQ and CIVIC in November 2016. Since then, CIVIC and other partners have conducted advocacy engagement with key stakeholders to influence decisionmakers in supporting adoption of the policy.

[accountability hearing](#), Capt. Veronica Williams, a Human Rights Desk Officer, said that the Army had received 350 complaints in three years and treated 90% of cases, with 10% still under investigation. The Army also (at least in 2020) [had a standing general court-martial](#) in Maiduguri.

However, Nigeria has not pursued significant accountability for alleged rights violations committed by the NAF and its members, especially those reported within the course of the non-international armed conflict (NIAC) with JAS and ISWAP and has been insufficiently transparent with regard to evidence of civilian harm and associated adjudications. Upon completing the preliminary examination in December 2020 into alleged crimes committed by JAS [since](#) July 2009 and by the Nigerian security forces since June 2011, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court [found](#) that there was a “reasonable basis” to believe that members of the NSF had committed crimes against humanity and war crimes and determined that “potential cases likely to arise from an investigation into the situation” [would be admissible](#) on the grounds of both complementarity and gravity. The Office of the Prosecutor noted in the [2020 Report on Preliminary Examination Activities](#) that:

With respect to the [Nigerian security forces], the national authorities are deemed inactive because of the absence of relevant proceedings or, where proceedings are asserted to have been conducted, the information available did not demonstrate any tangible, concrete, and progressive steps by the authorities to address allegations against members of the [Nigerian security forces].

In addition to claims of poor accountability measures, the [2019 Report on Preliminary Examination Activities](#) also noted “with deep concern allegations of ongoing evidence tampering and of the alleged destruction of evidence” concerning the clash between the Islamic Movement of Nigeria and the NSF in Zaria in December 2015.

Amnesty International has gone even further, [concluding](#) that inquiries such as the Special Board of Inquiry (SBI) and the Presidential Investigation Panel to Review Compliance of the Armed Forces with Human Rights Obligations and Rules of Engagement (PIP) “were never designed and mandated to identify perpetrators and recommend any criminal investigations or prosecutions.” Reports from both investigations still do not appear to have been made public (although a summary of the former’s findings was released to the media), and most PIP hearings where “critical allegations against the military” were presented were “arbitrarily held in closed sessions.” The UN’s Committee against Torture expressed similar sentiments about transparency and accountability with regard to the SBI and PIP in [concluding observations](#) adopted in November 2021, noting that it “regrets the lack of information on conducted investigations and prosecutions, their outcome, and redress of victims.”

### ***Engagement with Humanitarian Actors***

The NAF’s historical engagement with outside actors on humanitarian access has been particularly poor and characterized by significant distrust of humanitarian agencies operating in the country. In August 2017, the military [conducted an “unauthorized search”](#) of an OCHA compound in Maiduguri, and in December 2018, [issued a three-month ban on UNICEF operations](#) in December 2018 on claims that staff were spying for Islamists and declared three workers persona non grata in April (both of these decisions were “swiftly reversed”). In September 2019, the government ordered the closure of three Action Against Hunger and five Mercy Corps offices in Borno and Yobe states for two months following unsubstantiated allegations by the military that these organizations were “[aiding and abetting](#)” the activities of JAS insurgents. The suspension was [temporarily lifted](#) the following month.

UN Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) and the NAF have had tense relations at times. A March 2020 Human Rights Watch [dispatch](#) stated that military authorities had reinforced the Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act's ban on aid operations outside of government-controlled areas "in verbal communications and with threats of arrests, including at weekly meetings of the [OCHA] Humanitarian Civilian Military Coordination Forum. However, cooperation has appeared at least somewhat better in recent months, as the October 1 (2021) [BAY states situation report](#) mentioned that the processing time for military approval and escorts for supply delivery to Damasak (Borno State) was reduced from four to six weeks to less than one, the result of efforts made through CMCoord. While coordination has appeared to improve, humanitarian workers consulted for this factsheet have pushed back against this reporting, instead noting continued challenges with the need to request armed escorts, as well as logistical and process issues with requests for approval including the new mechanism to help track these delays.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Civil-Military Coordination Mechanisms and Structures***

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) endorsed the [North-East Nigeria Specific Guidance on the Interaction and Coordination between the Humanitarian Country Team and the Nigerian Armed Forces/Multinational Joint Task Force](#) in April 2018. CMCoord arrangements established under this agreement included the OCHA CMCoord focal point in Damaturu, the OCHA-chaired CMCoord Working Group, the CMCoord Forum-Maiduguri, the CMCoord Forum-Abuja, and CMCoord meetings with various divisions of the Nigerian Army (Division 7, the Division 8 Task Force, and Division 3 Tactical are explicitly mentioned). Since then, the conflict context has changed significantly with worsening insecurity and, as a result, the guidance was not followed, according to humanitarian workers interviewed for this factsheet.<sup>43</sup> A Humanitarian Notification System for Deconfliction (HNS4D) does not appear to be operating in Nigeria currently.

While the military has certain structures in place to facilitate civil-military relations and substantive engagement with non-military actors has occurred, security governance issues have made it more difficult to ensure productive dialogue. The Army has a [Directorate of Civil-Military Affairs](#), and the National Human Rights Commission [has provided human rights training](#) for military personnel and facilitated the Nigerian Military Human Rights Dialogue Initiative. In addition, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) [has trained](#) NAF officials on how to identify trafficking victims, and NGOs such as [CIVIC](#) and the [ICRC](#) have regularly engaged with the NAF in trainings on protection of civilians and international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, respectively.<sup>44</sup> However, [weak institutional control over the military](#) has constrained the effects of this dialogue, contributing to "a lack of accountability and compliance with the rules of engagement."

### ***Good Practice and Lessons Learned on Protection of Civilians***

The NAF has shown some examples of good practice. In May 2019, the Chief of Defense Staff [inaugurated](#) the Rules of Engagement (RoE) Committee to continue working toward the development of a comprehensive RoE manual. In addition, according to the Chief of Civil-Military Affairs at the Army Headquarters, the Army "[regularly organizes](#) training and re-training programmes for its officers and soldiers on human rights issues," and "There is no member of the Nigerian Army who is not aware of...[its] human rights policies." Major General Anthony Omozoje also noted that, "Even in a situation where...military personnel are required to use 'dead-

42 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

43 Interviews conducted for this factsheet, February-April 2022.

44 See also: Global Protection Cluster, [gpc-civil-military\\_coordination-protection-outcomes.pdf](#) ([globalprotectioncluster.org](#))

ly force', there are stipulated conditions that must be established before the execution of action,"<sup>45</sup> and the "roles, actions, processes and procedures are planned with sophistication and...executed with briefings" when military battalions are set for deployment. However, per a 2019 [article](#) by a former group captain in the Nigerian air force, "there is still insufficient doctrinal guidance and normative material to guide the Nigerian military on the conduct of operations."

As for other examples of good practice, the air force has [examined](#) the proximity of "nearby civilian settlements" to "the line of fire" in previous operations through intelligence gathered in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions, and the military [has taken action](#) in communities in northeast Nigeria to address sexual exploitation and abuse by security forces and manage reckless use of firearms by soldiers, such as in Monguno and Banki respectively, following engagement from [community protection committees \(CPS\)](#).

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45 Current RoE principles on the use of force likely resemble previous ones, as described here.

## Annex

### Government of Nigeria: International Legal Obligations and Corresponding Domestic Laws

<i>Overarching international legal obligations and domestic policies</i>	
International Conventions	Main Relevant Domestic Policies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#"><u>Geneva Conventions</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Additional Protocol (1)</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Additional Protocol (2)</u></a></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <a href="#"><u>Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not domesticated</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <a href="#"><u>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</u></a></li> <li>4. <a href="#"><u>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</u></a></li> <li>5. <a href="#"><u>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination</u></a></li> <li>6. <a href="#"><u>International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance</u></a></li> <li>7. <a href="#"><u>Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</u></a></li> <li>8. <a href="#"><u>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</u></a></li> <li>9. <a href="#"><u>African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights</u></a></li> <li>10. <a href="#"><u>African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa</u></a></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#"><u>Geneva Conventions Act</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not concern the Additional Protocols</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <a href="#"><u>Nigerian Constitution</u></a></li> <li>3. <a href="#"><u>Anti-Torture Act; Administration of Criminal Justice Act</u></a> (domesticated in 30 out of 36 states)</li> <li>4. <a href="#"><u>Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act</u></a></li> <li>5. <a href="#"><u>African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification &amp; Enforcement) Act</u></a></li> <li>6. National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons</li> </ol>

*Protection of Children and Education*

International Conventions	Main Relevant Domestic Policies	Other Provisions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#"><u>Convention on the Rights of the Child</u></a></li> <li>2. <a href="#"><u>Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict</u></a></li> <li>3. <a href="#"><u>Optional Protocol to the CRC on Child Trade, Prostitution, and Pornography</u></a></li> <li>4. <a href="#"><u>Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour</u></a></li> <li>5. <a href="#"><u>Protocol on Trafficking in Persons</u></a></li> <li>6. <a href="#"><u>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</u></a></li> <li>7. <a href="#"><u>Safe Schools Declaration</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratified in 2019</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#"><u>Child's Right Act</u></a> (adopted in 27 states) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domesticates the CRC and ACRWC</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <a href="#"><u>Armed Forces Act</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibits (along with the Child's Right Act) voluntary state military recruitment of individuals under 18</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <a href="#"><u>Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domesticates the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. <a href="#"><u>Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act</u></a> (adopted in 27 states) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expands the definition of rape to include all forms of penetration and recognizes that rape can involve male victims</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#"><u>National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security</u></a></li> <li>2. <a href="#"><u>National Action Plan for Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism</u></a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Helps</u></a> "end use and recruitment of child soldiers by identifying and formally separating children from armed groups"</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <a href="#"><u>National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools</u></a></li> <li>4. <a href="#"><u>Minimum Standards for Safe Schools</u></a></li> <li>5. Safe Schools Declaration Trainer's Guide and Participants Manual for Nigerian Security Agencies and Human Rights Institutions</li> </ol>

Arms Control		
<p style="text-align: center;">International Conventions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Biological Weapons Convention</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Chemical Weapons Convention</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not domesticated</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Note: With respect to international political process on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA), Nigeria participated in a 2017 regional conference in Maputo, which produced a <a href="#">communiqué</a> whereby Nigeria and 18 other African States jointly committed to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. It does not appear Nigeria was actively involved in any of the three rounds of EWIPA political declaration consultations (2019–2021).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Main Relevant Domestic Policies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act of 2013</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amended version of the <a href="#">Terrorism Prevention Act of 2011</a></li> <li>• Prohibits the “manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of...as well as research into and development of biological and chemical weapons without lawful authority.”</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">Other Provisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Addis Ababa Commitment on Universalization and Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of 17 African states that issued the document</li> <li>• The Federal Executive Council <a href="#">reportedly approved a proposal</a> to ratify the CCM in June 2021.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

Women, Peace and Security		
<p style="text-align: center;">International Conventions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Convention on the Elimination of the Discrimination Against Women</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Protocol on Trafficking in Persons</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Optional Protocol on Child Trade, Prostitution and Pornography</a> (CRC)</li> <li>4. <a href="#">Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights of Women in Africa</a> (Maputo Protocol)</li> <li>5. <a href="#">African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</a></li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">Main Relevant Domestic Policies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Child’s Right Act</a></li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">Other Provisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nigeria is “<a href="#">in the process of developing</a>” a third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security to succeed the <a href="#">second one</a>, which covered 2017–2020, and 14 states <a href="#">have adopted</a> State Action Plans (SAPs).</li> </ol>