

# BOKO HARAM/ NIGERIA



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largest economy and oil producer, as well as America's number one trade partner in Africa.

Though some Boko Haram abductees have been recovered, many more remain missing. Among the missing are over two hundred school girls kidnapped in Chibok in April 2014. Buhari has indicated that the state is willing to release detained Boko Haram militants in exchange for these girls. Some reports suggest that in the past year at least some of these girls have been married off to their captors, carry their babies, and/or been trained to fight alongside the insurgents. The ongoing violence, including suicide bombings from young male and female insurgents, lead concerned Nigerians and others to claim that education is going to be a necessary tool to defeat Boko Haram. In an area where there is less than 20% literacy, Nigeria's northeast region has been a hotspot for the insurgents. A former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, calls education the most effective solution to Boko Haram, and wants to see the government dilute the insurgents' message by winning the hearts of its citizens through improved education and even social media campaigns (to counter successful Boko Haram campaigns). The world expressed outrage at Boko Haram's kidnapping of the Chibok school girls last year, but horrible events such as these – including brutal murders of children and adults alike – take place with some frequency in Nigeria. Nigeria is set to eclipse the United States as the world's third largest population by 2050, making the health of its people and economy of increasing global importance.

## Updated Timeline:

**September 2014:** Boko Haram declares a caliphate in northeastern Nigeria; Nigerian officials reject claim.

**March 2015:** Boko Haram claims ties to Islamic State.

**May 2015:** Muhammadu Buhari takes office as Nigeria's president after a democratic election in March.

**June 2015:** [Amnesty International](#) accuses Nigeria's military of war crimes.

**July 2015:** President Buhari travels to U.S. to meet with President Obama and other U.S. officials.

## Links to outside resources:

U.S. News & World Report: <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/07/21/nigerian-leader-forces-ready-soon-to-take-on-boko-haram>

Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/01/boko-haram-glance/>

-Shelley Brooks, Ph.D., CHSSP Statewide Office

Two months into his presidency Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari has predicted that Nigeria will defeat the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram within eighteen months or less. In order to achieve this difficult goal Buhari has replaced the top leaders of the Nigerian military, formed a regional coalition with neighboring countries, and sought U.S. aid. Since 2009, Boko Haram has been responsible for the deaths of between 13-15,000 people, hundreds of abductions, and the displacement of over one million residents. The insurgents' fighting has extended beyond their stronghold in northeastern Nigeria, and threatens nearby Cameroon, Niger and Chad. These countries have lent military support to Nigeria, and along with others in the region, are seeking to better share information in order to stop the flow of money and weapons to Boko Haram from outside supporters. In March 2015 Boko Haram claimed affiliation with the Islamic State, and President Buhari believes the insurgents also have ties to militants in northern Mali.

This week Buhari traveled to the United States to meet with President Obama and military, trade and finance officials. In extending an invitation to Nigeria's Buhari, Obama indicated his interest in helping to put a stop to Boko Haram's terrorism. Buhari, who briefly trained at the U.S. Army War College, was the one-time-military leader of Nigeria (who was overthrown in a coup in 1985, after a harsh 1 ½ year rule), and came back into office in May 2015 through a democratic election and peaceful transfer of power. His predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan, was widely criticized for doing too little to combat Boko Haram, or to reform internal corruption. Amnesty International has blamed the Nigerian military for its complicity in the deaths of 8,000 detainees thought to be linked to Boko Haram. Concern over such tactics led the U.S. to suspend sales of military helicopters to Nigeria in 2014. President Buhari, with new military leadership in place, has promised military retraining and international compliance. He now asks for the U.S. to lend its support with training facilities, equipment, and intelligence information. Nigeria carries considerable weight as Africa's most populous nation,



Today Nigeria is under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South who presides over what many Nigerians and outsiders consider a corrupt government.

Analysts argue that Boko Haram will continue to thrive as long as the Nigerian government, military, and police continue with corrupt policies that cripple economic growth and cause regional and ethnic tensions. Since 1970 Nigeria has produced in excess of \$400 billion in oil revenue, but elites have used this money for personal and political gain rather than investing the revenue in national or regional infrastructure. This volatile political system has hampered Nigeria's ability to address critical domestic issues such as civil strife and poverty (around 70% of the population lives on \$1.25/day or less). A lack of education for northern Nigerians is of considerable concern, but is unlikely to improve until the Nigerian government works with Muslims in the north to establish a school system that is not perceived as in opposition to Islamic teachings. Northern Nigerians who pursue a western education, meanwhile, repeatedly find themselves in harms way. The April abduction is just one of several Boko Haram attacks against schoolchildren, and threatens these youth with forced entry into slavery. Child slavery is well entrenched in Africa, where children work in mines, plantations, or are sometimes sold as wives. Around 80 million children live in exploited situations akin to slavery throughout Africa (an estimated total of 250 million children worldwide suffer under these conditions, the majority in Asia). In addition to these challenges, many Nigerians distrust, if not fear, their police force because the police are seen as seldom acting in the interest of the community. While the north is frequently in the news headlines today, the oil region of the Niger delta has seen its fair share of conflict and protest against a state that has been criticized for allowing oil exploitation to take priority over the environment, local economies, and community welfare.

Boko Haram's strength – its widespread appeal among disillusioned, poor, northern Nigerians – is also what makes it such a challenge to contain. Peace negotiations are hampered by the fact that Boko Haram operates on a cell-like structure, making it unlikely that any single person could speak, or negotiate, for all Boko Haram members. A national assembly member from the North estimated that 95% of youth in Borno have a connection to Boko Haram, a state where locals acknowledge that Boko Haram is better armed and better motivated than government troops. And even in states where Boko Haram holds less sway, citizens are afraid to collaborate with Nigerian security forces out of fear of violent reprisals from Boko Haram fighters. Meanwhile, the abducted schoolgirls wait in captivity while Boko Haram demands release of its members held in Nigerian prisons.

*-Shelley Brooks, Ph.D., CHSSP Statewide Office\**

In April 2014, the Muslim extremist group Boko Haram abducted more than 200 Nigerian girls from a boarding school in the northeastern state of Borno. Boko Haram can be translated as “western education is forbidden;” its opposition to western education is only part of its larger goal, however, which is to create in Nigeria an Islamic state, ruled by the Koran's Shari'a law. In 2002 Mohammed Yusuf established the group that would become known as Boko Haram in the state of Borno, under the name “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad.” Yusuf called for withdrawal from what he perceived as a corrupted society, and attracted many youth in this impoverished region through outreach programs like job training and direct aid. As violent clashes between Muslims and Christians intensified, while the government pursued harsh reprisals – including extrajudicial killings – against Boko Haram members, the group turned to a more radical separatist agenda. In 2009, Boko Haram began a campaign of violence; their assassinations, bombings, and kidnappings have become so widespread that Nigeria's president declared a state of emergency in early 2013. It is estimated that close to 2000 people have died in 2014 alone as a result of these attacks.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, contains over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, whose religious affiliations are predominantly regional, divided between Christianity (in the South) and Islam (in the North). This religious division influences the nation's politics, with the North and the South registering distinct majorities in the most recent presidential election (see map). The region's history helps explain this division. The former Muslim Sokoto Caliphate in the North predated British imperial rule, and made the region resistant to Christianity, while southern communities that coalesced around councils of elders – reflecting the value of community consensus and ancestor worship – were more receptive to British missionaries (and their schools and hospitals). Despite these differences, the British fought to control the disparate regions as a single colony, under imperial rule until 1960. Following independence, Nigeria experienced a number of political coups as well as several popular elections.

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**1804** - Islamic revolution establishes the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria, spreading Islam.

**1846** - Church Missionary Society establishes mission in Abeokuta, spreading Christianity in southern Nigeria.

**1861** - British annexes Lagos as Crown Colony, and forms protectorates throughout other regions of Nigeria over the next five decades.

**1898 - 1909** - Ekumeku resistance movement against British colonial rule and the Royal Niger Company of the British Empire.

**1914** - Nigeria established as a country, under the rule of the British Empire.

**1944** - The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) forms as a pro-independence political party.

**1956** - Petroleum discovered in the Niger delta.

**1960** - Nigerian independence from Britain.

**1963** - Nigeria becomes a republic, with a president as head of state.

**1966** - First of several military coups.

**1971** - Nigeria joins Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and rising oil prices give the Nigerian government the bulk of its revenue, enriching political elites at the expense of the average citizen.

**1993** - Military coup led by General Sani Abacha who leads the country until 1998, known for his violent repression of dissent.

**2000** - Several northern Nigerian states adopt the Koran's Sharia law, leading to violent clashes between Muslims and Christians.

**2002** - Mohammed Yusuf establishes a separatist Islamic group in northern Nigeria, soon to be known as Boko Haram.

**2004** - State of emergency declared in central Plateau State after Christians kill 200 Muslims; counter-attacks follow.

**2008** - Muslims and Christians clash in central town of Jos, leading to 200 deaths. One of many such clashes in the city of Jos over the coming years.

**2009** - A clash with police over motorbike helmet law, leads to violence between Boko Haram and police, including an armed uprising in the north that is suppressed by the Nigerian army, leaving 800 dead. Following this event, Boko Haram begins violent attacks on Nigerian police, military, and civilians.

**2010** - Vice-president Goodluck Jonathan (a southern Christian) succeeds President Yar'Adua (a northern Muslim) after Yar'Adua's death. Jonathan is elected in 2011, thereby upsetting the tradition of power sharing between North and South by alternating between a northern and southern president after every two four-year terms.

**2011** - Boko Haram claims responsibility for suicide attack at the UN headquarters in the capital city, Abuja. 23 people die. To date, this is the only Boko Haram attack that was focused on an international target.

**2012** - President of Chad asks countries bordering northern Nigeria to establish a joint military force to oppose Boko Haram, out of fear for ongoing regional instability.

**2013** - President Jonathan declares state of emergency in the face of Boko Haram's recent murder of hundreds of drivers throughout the north, as well as the group's attacks on students.

**2013** - U.S. labels Boko Haram a terrorist organization.

**2013** - Amnesty International reported that in the first half of 2013 close to 1000 people, mostly Islamist militants, died in military custody.

**April 2014** - Boko Haram kidnaps more than 200 school girls, many of whom are still missing.



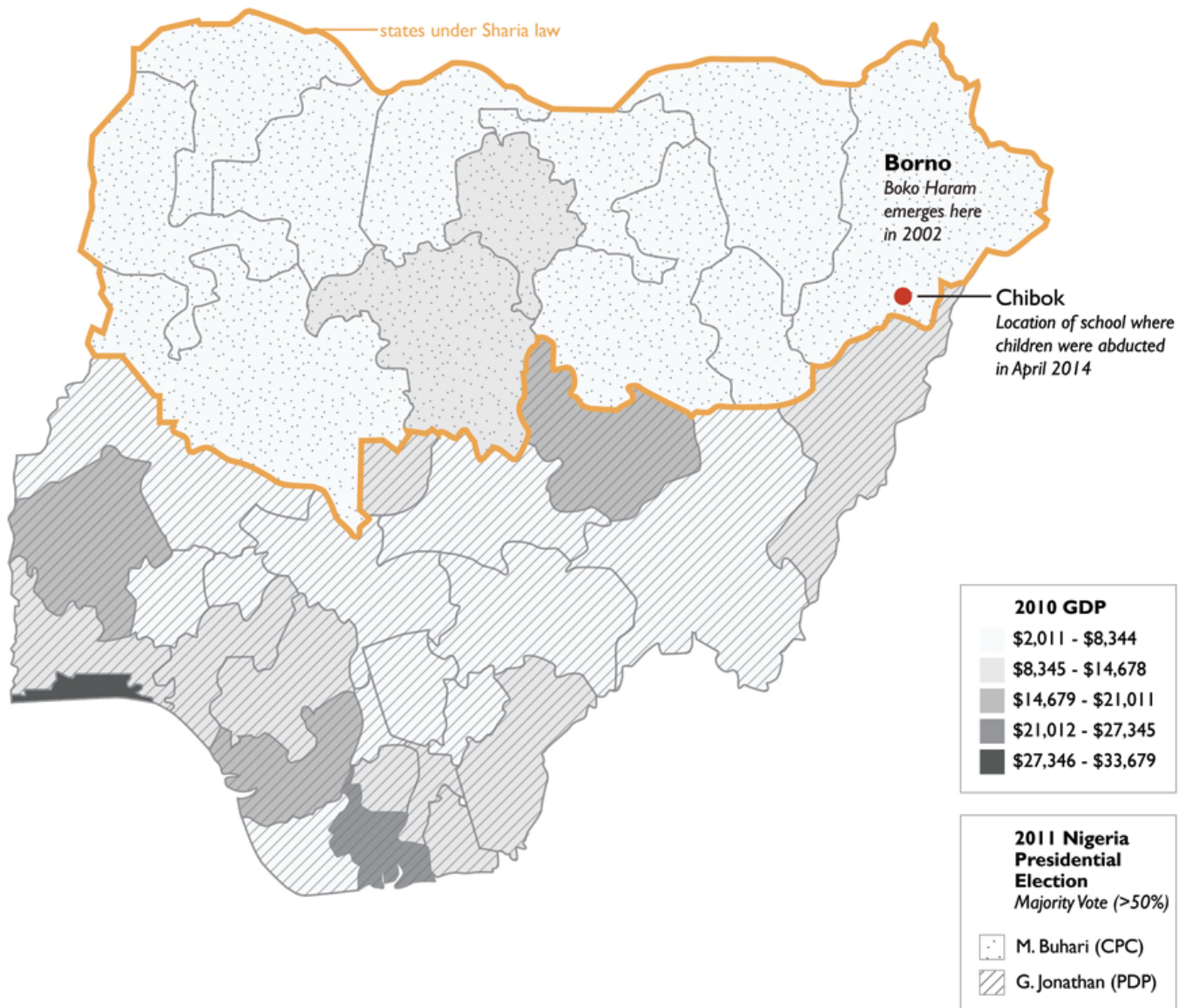
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## Nigeria



Map created by Kevin Tsukamoto, CHSSP Statewide Office.



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Visit our blog for teaching suggestions for this issue: [http://chssp.ucdavis.edu/copy\\_of\\_blog/beyond-the-violence-nigeria-from-a-socio-economic-perspective](http://chssp.ucdavis.edu/copy_of_blog/beyond-the-violence-nigeria-from-a-socio-economic-perspective)

## Additional Resources\*\*

### Background Materials:

- U.S. Institute of Peace: [www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf)
- BBC News: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>
- PBS News: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/boko-haram/>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>
- Federal Ministry of Information, Nigeria: <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/2012-10-29-11-05-46/history-of-nigeria>
- The Global Awareness Initiative: <http://www.globalawarenessmap.org/CountryDetail.aspx?id=85>
- The Wall Street Journal: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303749904579578583009927934>

### Maps:

- Business Day: [http://businessdayonline.com/2014/05/maps-of-boko-haram-activity-show-groups-evolution-ihs/#\\_U4T2KS9RaUc](http://businessdayonline.com/2014/05/maps-of-boko-haram-activity-show-groups-evolution-ihs/#_U4T2KS9RaUc)
- Vox: <http://www.vox.com/2014/5/13/5710484/boko-haram-maps-charts-nigeria>

### Timeline of events:

- BBC News: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13951696>

\*I would like to thank Dr. Chau Johnsen Kelly for her thoughtful contributions to this piece.

\*\*The resources listed above are provided for further research and do not imply an endorsement by the California History-Social Science Project or the University of California.