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NIGERIA WATCH: EIGHTH REPORT ON VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Nigeria Watch

Eighth Report on Violence in Nigeria (2018)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD 2

LIST OF FIGURES 2

ACRONYMS 3

MAIN FINDINGS IN 2018 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 7

MAIN FINDINGS IN 2018

INTRODUCTION 8

1. GENERAL TRENDS OF VIOLENCE (2006-2018) 8

2. MAIN CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2018 9

2.1 CRIME 10

2.2 POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE 12

Boko Haram Insurgency 12

Islamic Movement of Nigeria 13

Pro-Biafra Agitations 13

2.3 ROAD ACCIDENTS 13

Road accidents by states 14

2.4 ETHNO-COMMUNAL VIOLENCE 15

3. THE MOST DANGEROUS STATES 16

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: MAIN TREND OF VIOLENCE 2006-2018 9
FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF FATALITIES RESULTING FROM DIFFERENT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE IN 2018 10
FIGURE 3: MAIN PROTAGONISTS OF VIOLENCE IN 2018 12
FIGURE 4: ROAD ACCIDENT FATALITIES, 2006-2018 14
FIGURE 5: FATALITIES RESULTING FROM ROAD ACCIDENTS PER STATE IN 2018 15
FIGURE 6: MAP: FATALITIES CAUSED BY COMMUNAL VIOLENCE PER STATE IN NIGERIA, 2018 16
FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF FATALITIES PER 100,000 INHABITANTS PER STATE IN NIGERIA, 2018 17

ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
DSS	Department of State Services
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FG	Federal Government
FRSC	Federal Road Safety Corps
GDP	Gross domestic product
IFRA	French Institute for Research in Africa
IMN	Islamic Movement of Nigeria
IPOB	Independent People of Biafra
IRD	Institut de recherche pour le développement, Paris
LGA	Local Government Area
MACBAN	Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria
MASSOB	Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra
NA	Nigeria Army

NAF	Nigerian Air Force
NAFDAC	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
NN	Nigerian Navy
NPF	Nigerian Police Force
NSCDC	Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps
NW	Nigeria Watch
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PRIO	Global Fellow, Peace Research Institute in Oslo
SSS	State Security Service
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD

This Eighth Annual Report on lethal violence in Nigeria covers the period between 1 January and 31 December 2018. The study has been conducted by Vitus Nwankwo Ukoji with the help of Abiola Victoria Ayodokun and Victor Chinedu Eze at the University of Ibadan.[1]

The publication of this report is a good opportunity to remind readers that the Nigeria Watch dataset is the most documented tracking service on lethal violence in Nigeria. Our methodology and sources are online.[2] They have been discussed in various books and occasions, especially during an international conference organized by IFRA at the University of Ibadan in October 2016.[3] The data are updated on a daily basis by a team of Nigerian researchers, they come from a wide variety of local sources and they are not limited by thresholds that would eliminate cases with lower levels of mortality.

The academic debate about the methodology of Nigeria Watch has rather focused on the reliability of open sources with discrepancies and gaps. Indeed, studies show that the media can be ethnically and politically biased.[4] In Nigeria, specifically, most press publications are based in the south and affiliated to strongmen, the so-called "godfathers", who rely on regional voter support to win elections.[5] As a result, some journalists are used to blame particular groups for being responsible of conflicts and they do not attempt to analyze the underlying structural socioeconomic causes of violence. For instance, researchers have revealed bias in the way the press reported the Niger Delta crisis in 2006-2007, Muslim-Christian riots in Jos in 2008, the Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 and alleged "Fulani herdsmen attacks", a key-word that explicitly designates the guilty party.[6] Sometimes, also, the wordings of some articles were not carefully weighted. Hence in 2002, a report in *This Day* about the Miss World beauty pageant was considered blasphemous and led to Muslim-Christian violence in Kaduna.

Fortunately enough, however, the Nigerian media seldom follow the 'Rwandan model' of deliberately enflaming tensions. Thus a content analysis based on three national newspapers between April 2014 and March 2015 showed that *The Guardian*, *This Day* and *The Nation* rarely used inciting language depicting

[1] The project benefits from the continuous support of the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria). Please visit www.ifra-nigeria.org for more information about IFRA.
[2] http://www.nigeriawatch.org/index.php?html=4
[3] Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine, Elizabeth Minor & Samrat Sinha (ed.), *Violence, statistics, and the politics of accounting for the dead*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2016, 140p.; Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (ed.), *Violence in Nigeria: A qualitative and quantitative analysis*, Ibadan, IFRA-Nigeria, Leiden, African Studies Centre, Waposo Series n°3, 2016, 217p. See also: http://www.everycasualty.org/newsandviews/casualty-standards-published
[4] Adesoji, Abimbola (2010), "Old wine in new bottle: The Nigerian Press in the era of constitutional democracy, 1999–2009", *The Journal of International Social Research* vol.3, n°10, pp.22–31; Demarest, Leila & Arnim Langer (Aug. 2018), "Peace journalism on a shoestring? Conflict reporting in Nigeria's national news media", *Journalism* vol.19, n°8, pp.1-18.
[5] Hall, Philippa [2011], « 'Penser pour l'empire' au sein du Nigeria colonial et postcolonial : Presse privée, médiatrice de la politique de l'État et de l'économie mondiale », *Afrique contemporaine* n° 240, pp.43-60.
[6] Aliyu, Musa & Ferguson, Neil (2013), "Enemy framing and the politics of reporting religious conflicts in the Nigerian press", *Media, War & Conflict* vol.6, n°1, pp. 7–20; Yusha'u, Muhammad (2015), "Regionalism and ethnicity in the Nigerian Press: An analysis of the coverage of Boko Haram and the Niger Delta conflicts in The Guardian and Daily Trust", *in* Mano, Winston (ed.), *Racism Ethnicity and the Media in Africa: Mediating Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*, London, I.B. Tauris, pp.137–156.

a particular ethnic group as the cause of conflict.[7] If the period under study, together with a small panel, does not allow to draw long-term conclusions, it certainly distinguishes the Nigerian press from social media and fake news that go unpunished. Indeed, the laws of defamation still have some significance for newspapers: in 2017, for example, a journalist was jailed and sued for reporting a false Fulani attack.[8]

Relying on several sources is very important in this regard. To limit possible bias, the Nigeria Watch project thus uses at least ten national newspapers to document fatal incidents with contradicting narratives. Moreover, it does not rely exclusively on digital sources online. To do so presents the risk of missing many articles available only on paper, as shown by a comparison between ACLED (the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project) and *The Guardian*, *This Day* and *The Nation* during a one-year period.[9] ACLED, for instance, has also been criticized for coding cases "twice from reports of the same event that were simply published on different dates".[10] Undoubtedly, the diversity and the cross-checking of sources are crucial to refine the documentation of lethal incidents.

Consequently, I am quite confident in the reliability of the findings of this eighth Nigeria Watch report. The analysis confirms trends about the prevalence of crime and political conflicts, with a slight increase in the number of violent deaths reported in 2018. Despite some improvement, roads also remained the killing fields of Nigeria, a fact that does not fit well into common narratives about the impact of terrorism or an alleged clash of civilization between the North and the South of the most populous country in Africa. Actually, car accidents do not only affect victims of all religions, ethnic groups and social classes. They also have an economic cost: the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) estimates that Nigeria loses over 3% of its Gross domestic product (GDP) to road crashes annually[11].

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[7] Demarest, Leila & Arnim Langer [Aug. 2018], "Peace journalism on a shoestring? Conflict reporting in Nigeria's national news media", *Journalism* vol.19, n°8, pp.1-18.
[8] Demarest, Leila & Arnim Langer, op. cit., p.5
[9] Demarest, Leila & Arnim Langer, op. cit.
[10] Vinson, Laura Thaut [2017], *Religion, violence, and local power-sharing in Nigeria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.135.
[11] Ezeobi, Chiemelie [16 Oct. 2018], "Panacea for Tanker Carnages on Nigerian Roads", *This Day* p.18.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There was a 1.4% increase in the number of violent deaths in Nigeria in 2018. Fatalities increased from 10,515 in 2017 to 10,665 in 2018.

Main causes of violent deaths in Nigeria were crime, political issues, land issues, religious issues, cattle grazing and road accidents.

Boko Haram conflict killed 2,135 in 2018, less than the 2,829 fatalities in 2017, accounting for 28% decrease.

Cult related killings accounted for 453 deaths in 162 incidents while 238 people were killed in 76 kidnap incidents.

In 2018, 2,331 victims were killed in 350 lethal incidents involving security operatives.

Ogun maintained its position in 2018 as the state with the highest prevalence of fatal road accidents.

The most dangerous states in Nigeria in 2018 included Borno, Zamfara, Benue, Kaduna and Adamawa. These states were mostly ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency, banditry and pastoral conflicts. On the contrary, Ekiti, Gombe, Jigawa, Osun and Kebbi states were relatively peaceful.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria Watch's methodology is online. The database relies on open sources to offer a systematic and credible means of analyzing trends of violence with a Geographic Information System (GIS).[12] It answers four critical questions:

• Where and when is fatal violence taking place?

• Is fatal violence increasing or decreasing?

• What are the main causes of fatal violence?

• What is the security risk

1. General Trends of Violence (2006-2018)

The consistent decrease in fatalities from violence in Nigeria since 2014 was halted in 2018 when the figures slightly increased by 1.4%, from 10,517 in 2017 to 10,665 in 2018. The year marked a rise in general crime across the country. Banditry was prevalent in Zamfara and Kaduna states. The first quarter of the year witnessed massive killings in Benue and Plateau states by alleged herdsmen. Rivers and Lagos states also recorded large incidents of cult attacks in 2018. Delta, Ebonyi, Cross River and Akwa Ibom witnessed rise in inter-state and intra-communal clashes that resulted in several loss of lives and properties. Despite the fact that the overall number of fatalities in Boko Haram insurgency reduced in 2018, many casualties were recorded in attacks on military bases in Tumbum Gini, Metele and Gashigar in Abadam LGA, Zari and Gudumbali in Guzamala LGA and Damasak in Mobbar LGA, Borno state, as well as in Kukareta in Damaturu LGA, Yobe state.

[12] In the online system, figures are updated whenever a new source provides a different report, which explains why trends may change slightly according to the current state of data when they are accessed. The algorithm used also rounds up figures a little differently per cause or per incident.

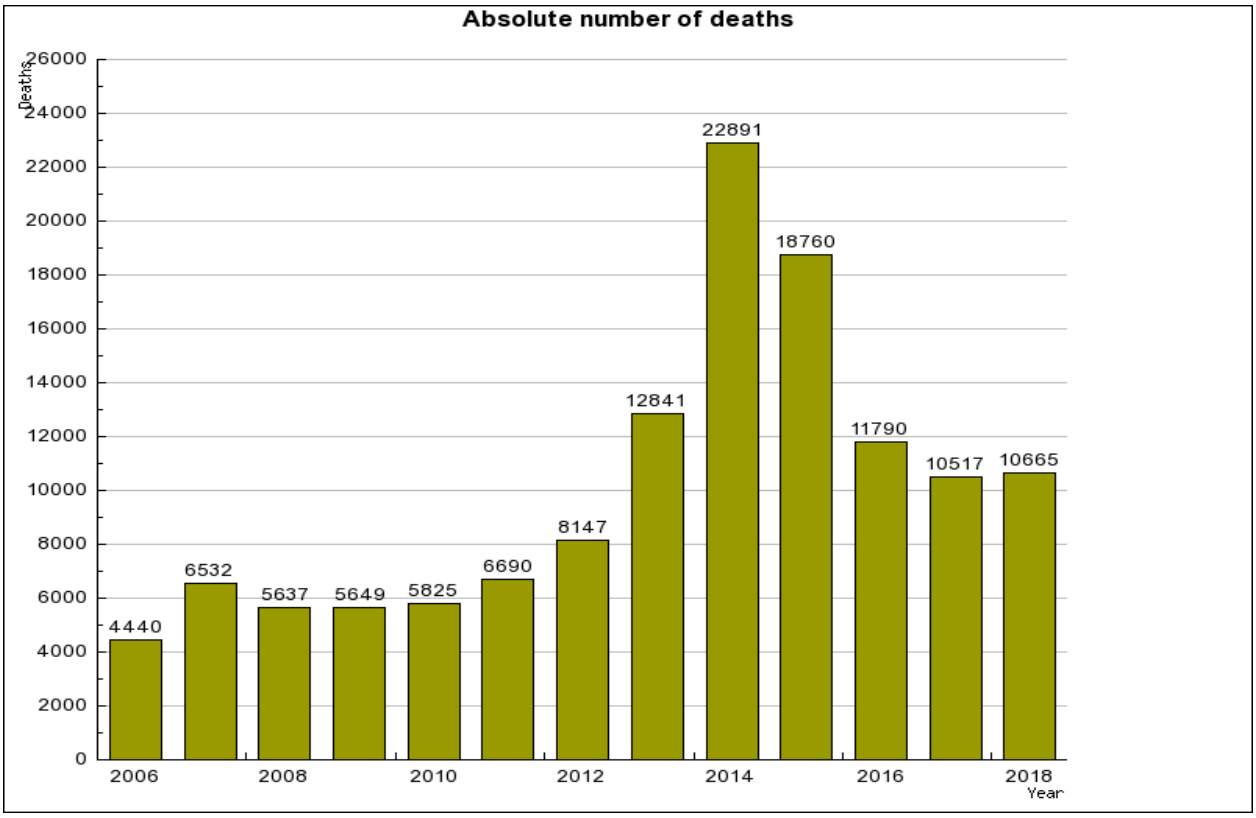

Figure 1: Main trend of violence, 2006-2018[13]

2. Main Causes of Violence in 2018

Crime overtook political and religious issues as the most important cause of lethal violence in Nigeria in 2018, with 3,425 fatalities recorded in 1,191 incidents. Zamfara state was most hit with fatalities from lethal criminal incidents as it recorded 896 victims, seconded by Kaduna state with 262 casualties. Both states are from the North West region which has largely been ravaged by banditry and cattle rustling. Lagos state came third in the ranking with 225 fatalities as it witnessed numerous incidents of cultism, domestic violence, hooliganism and extra-judicial killings. States with the least lethal crime incidents included Yobe, Borno and Gombe states, all in the North East.

Other causes of lethal violence in 2018 included land issues (2,106 fatalities), cattle grazing (1,867 fatalities) and road accidents (1,302 fatalities).

[13] Data for 2006 only cover the period from June to December.

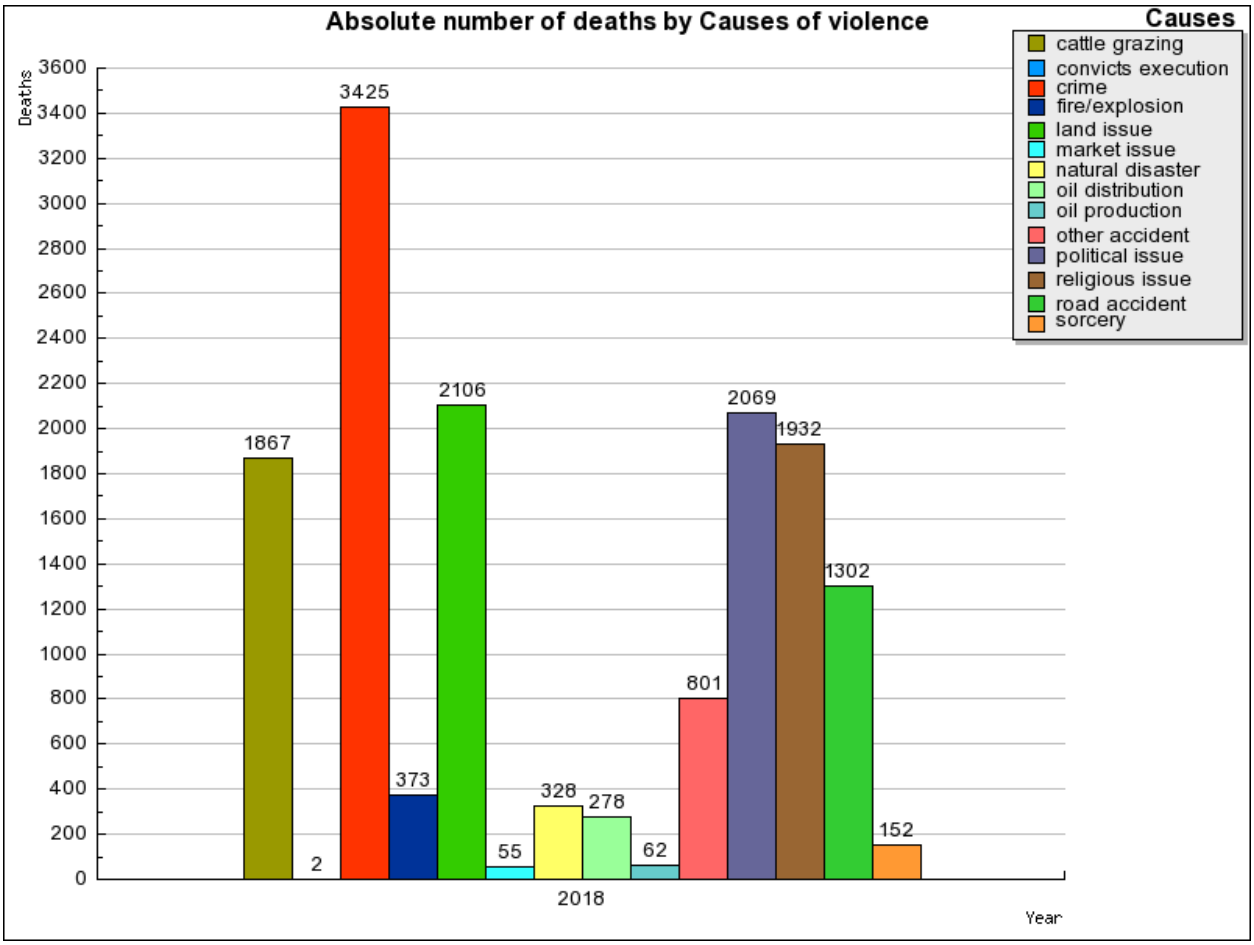

Figure 2: Number of fatalities resulting from different causes of violence in 2018.

2.1 Crime

Crime displaced political and religious issues as the leading cause of violent death in Nigeria in 2018. Kidnapping, cultism, armed robbery, piracy, cattle rustling, banditry, ritual and extra-judicial killings, among other forms of crime, were reported across the 36 states and the FCT. Out of 3,425 fatalities caused by criminal incidents, banditry resulted in 930 across 15 states, with Zamfara (714) and Kaduna (100) states accounting for over half of the total. The situation in Zamfara defied government's efforts to stem the tide. In June, 2018, the Federal Government drafted Special Army Forces drawn from various services including the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Air Force, the Nigerian Navy, the State Security Service, the Nigerian Police and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps to combat banditry into the state. However, 582 fatalities were recorded in bandit attacks on 10 LGAs in Zamfara following the arrival of soldiers in June, 2018. The period before the drafting of special forces was less violent and recorded 132

fatalities in 4 LGAs between January and May, 2018. There was also a shift in victim categories as bandits lost more of their members after series of raids and aerial bombardments by the military. Their hideouts were combed and destroyed. On November 29, 2018, not less than 104 bandits and 16 policemen were killed and 50 hideouts belonging to the bandits destroyed during a raid.

Cultism is another major form of violence that caused the death of 446 people in 153 lethal events in 2018. Among the affected 24 states and the FCT, Rivers and Lagos recorded the highest number of fatalities with, respectively, 70 and 49 people killed during the period under study. Yet the relative number of deaths from cultism per 100,000 populations placed Bayelsa state above others, followed by Rivers, Edo and Delta. Such a pattern confirms that people in the Niger Delta are more exposed to being killed in cult attacks than in other regions in Nigeria.

Unlike domestic violence, which decreased, kidnapping for ransom increased from 290 fatalities in 2017 to 358 in 2018, mainly in Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Ebonyi, FCT, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kebbi and Kwara.[14] Kaduna maintained its status as the most dangerous state in respect to kidnapping, with a record of 23 deaths in 15 incidents. Abuja-Kaduna expressway and Birnin Bwari LGA also remained hotspots for kidnapping activities. A special military operation in the zone, Operation Whirl Punch, was not able to eradicate kidnapping in the state. It, however, curbed the ease of operation and the frequency of abductions. Between September and October, 2018, about 30 kidnappers were killed by soldiers in Kamuku forest, Kidandan, Unguwan Bilya, Sofa and Unguwan Nakuli areas along Abuja-Kaduna Expressway.

Victims of high profile kidnap included foreigners, prominent politicians, traditional rulers and religious leaders. Some abductions were lethal. A total of 11 orderlies attached to two Canadians, two Americans, a German, two Syrians and one expatriate working with Nigercat were killed during kidnappings in Anambra, Kaduna, Kano, Rivers and Sokoto states. For instance, a policeman escorting the expatriate working with Nigercat, a construction company handling the Otuocha-Ibaji road in Anambra state, was killed during an attack on January 14, 2018. Similarly, 2 orderlies were killed when 2 Canadians and 2 Americans were kidnapped while on their way to inspect some projects in Kagarko LGA, Kaduna state, on January 16, 2018. Indeed, orderlies are often marked for murder in the bid to cut off resistance.

Pastoral conflict across 17 states claimed 1,882 lives in 2018. Farmers and herdsmen mostly clashed for grazing space. Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa states were the most hit in the Middle Belt. While Benue state recorded 532 fatalities, Plateau recorded 291 and Nasarawa 243. The implementation of Anti-Grazing bill by the Benue state government was blamed for the numerous herdsmen killings in the state. 300 people also lost their lives in Adamawa state because of such clashes, as against 282 people in Taraba.

[14] Lethal domestic violence dropped to 155 in 2018 from 160 fatalities in 2017. However, domestic violence spread from 29 states in 2017 to 31 in 2018, including the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja.

Figure 3 finally shows that the involvement of armed gang caused most of the fatalities related to crime. Government security operatives on the other hand were involved in fatal incidents that resulted in the death of 917 people. The army, police, customs, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and prisons services actually perpetrated 109 extra-judicial killings in 48 incidents across 23 states.

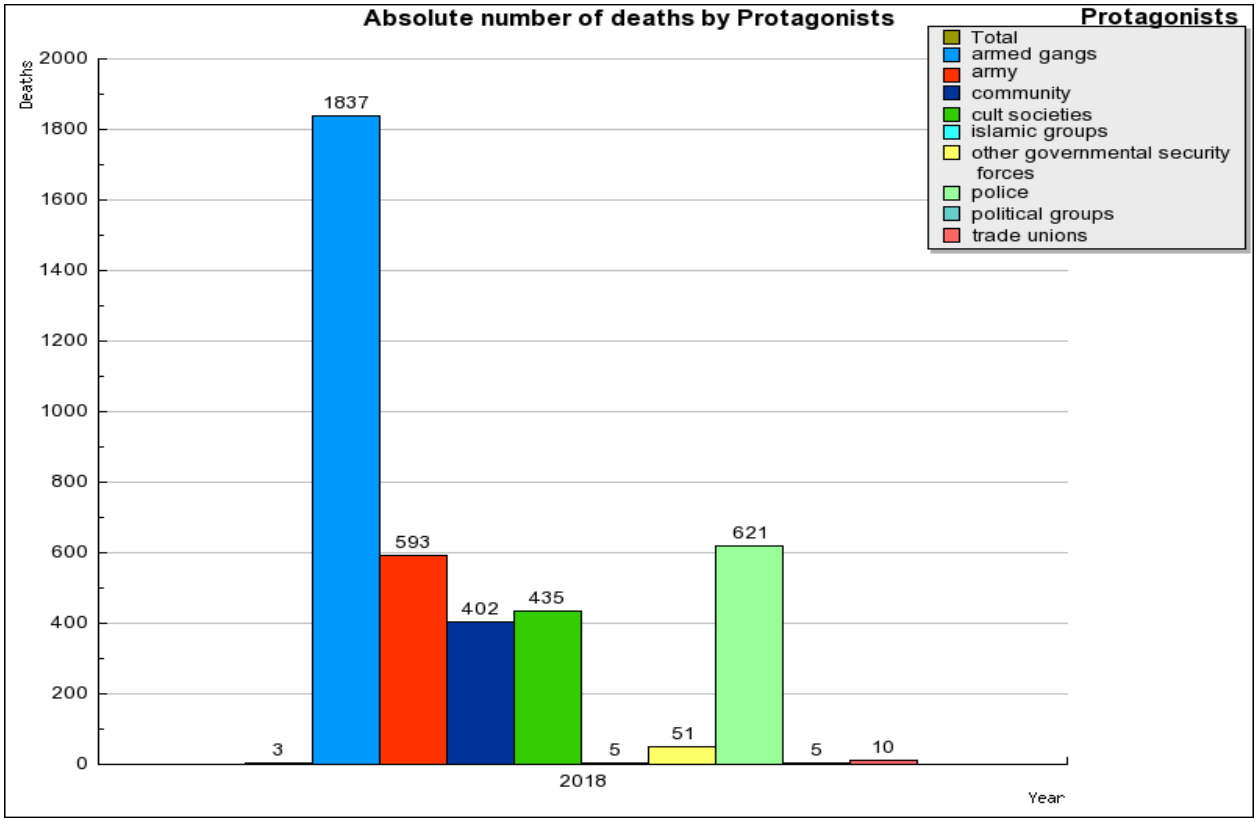

Figure 3: Main protagonists of violence in 2018

2.2 Political and religious violence

Boko Haram Insurgency

Despite its criminal dimension, Boko Haram is usually considered as being driven by political and religious issues. In 2018, Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states recorded 2,134 fatalities in 170 incidents related to the conflict. Borno state accounted for majority (89%) of the overall fatalities, followed by Yobe (7%) and Adamawa (4%). Out of 27 LGAs in Borno state, 20 came under Boko Haram insurgent attacks. Yet there were no reported fatal incidents in Bayo, Biu, Gubio, Kwaya Kusar, Marte and Shani LGAs.

The faction of Boko Haram called ISWAP (Islamic State in the West African Province) successfully carried out 15 attacks on 6 military bases in Borno (Abadam, Bama, Kukawa,

Mobbar, Guzamala and Konduga LGAs) and 4 in Yobe (Damaturu, Gulani, Gujba and Geidam LGAs). A total of 169 insurgents, 144 soldiers and 27 civilians were killed during these attacks.

Islamic Movement of Nigeria

Members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), popularly called 'Shiites', protested on different occasions in Kaduna state and Abuja over the detention of their spiritual leader, Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, by the Department of State Services (DSS) despite multiple court orders for his release. El-Zakzaky was arrested and detained in 2015 after a violent clash between his members and security operatives claimed over 300 lives. Since then, Shiites have taken to the streets of Kaduna and Abuja in protest for his release. Majority of those protest ended up in violent confrontations with security operatives, especially the army. In 2018, over 40 IMN members were killed in Kaduna and Abuja. Majority of the fatalities occurred on October, 2018, during clashes in Wuse, Zuba, Karu Bridge and Nyanya in the FCT. IMN lost 27 members in the incidents. A Police Inspector was stoned to death during the arraignment of El-Zakzaky and his wife in Kaduna State in June, 2018. The Federal Government remained adamant on the continued detention of the spiritual leader despite the violent protests.

Pro-Biafra Agitations

Agitations for an independent Biafra in the South-East claimed 53 lives and were mainly championed by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his group, the Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), in Aba, Onitsha, Owerri, Ebonyi, Enugu, Rivers and some parts of Delta state. Protests often ended in clashes with security operatives. In August, 2018, for instance, the bodies of 38 pro-Biafra agitators were found in Obiawom village, Ukwa West LGA, Abia state. The victims were mostly members of IPOB and were presumed to have been arrested during a military operation in the South-East codenamed "Python Dance". Also, 2 policemen were killed on November 23, 2018, during a clash with IPOB protesters.

2.3 Road accidents

Since 2013, road accident fatalities in Nigeria have continued to dwindle. Figure 4 shows that 2,136 died in road accidents in 2013, 1,958 in 2014, 1,855 in 2015, 1,685 in 2016, 1,561 in 2017 and 1,302 in 2018. Yet there were 393 fatal road incidents in 2018, against 357 in 2017, meaning that crashes in 2017 were more severe than in 2018.

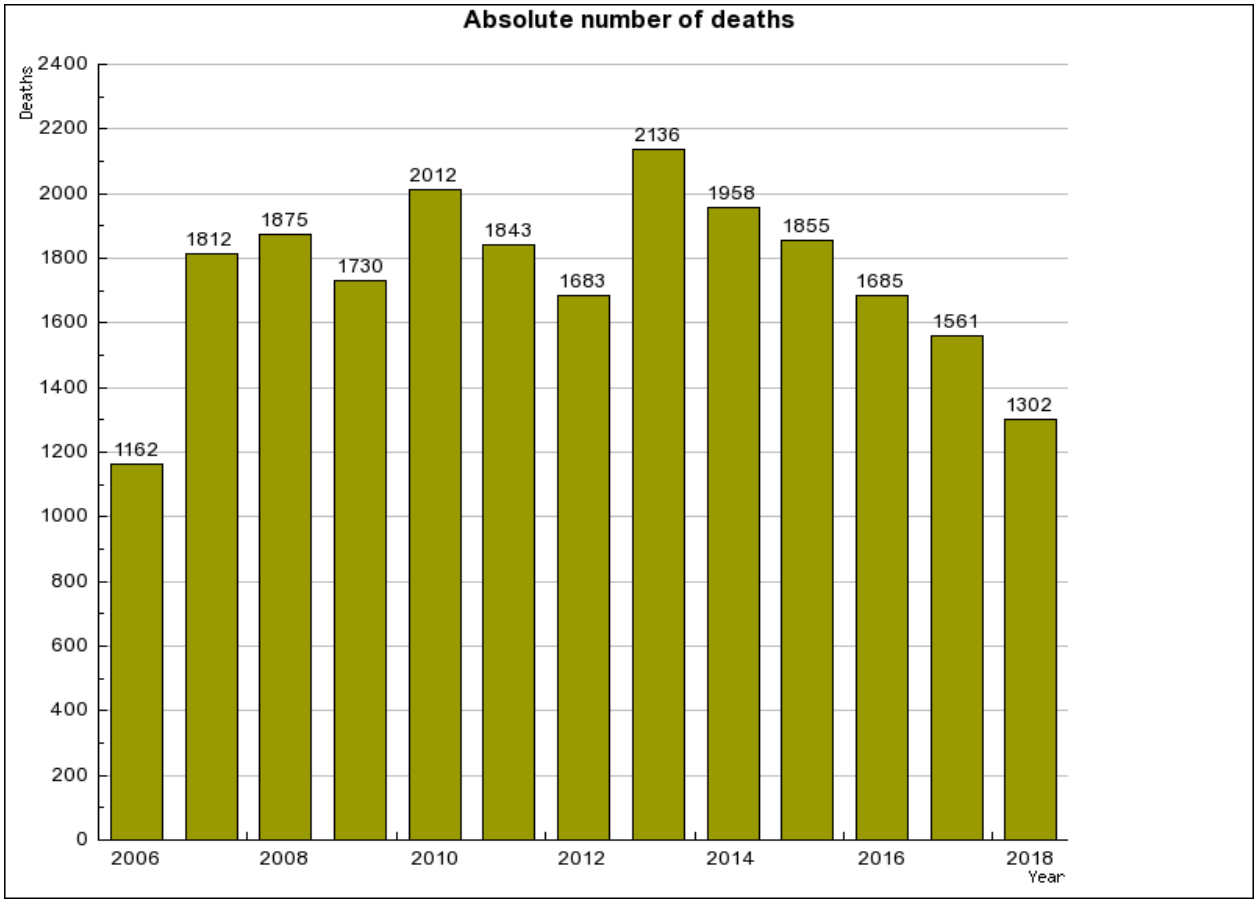

Figure 4: Road accident fatalities, 2006-2018

Road accidents by states

Three states in the South-West, Ogun, Lagos and Ondo, recorded the highest number of road accident fatalities in 2018. Lagos-Ibadan expressway that cuts through Ogun state contributed to the high prevalence of road fatalities in Ogun and Lagos states. The route serves as a major link between the North and South-West. It also serves as a major distribution path for refined petroleum products to different parts of the country. The highly combustible nature of petroleum products raises the likelihood of petroleum tankers going up in flames during crashes. For instance, 10 people lost their lives when a fuel-laden tanker crashed on Otedola bride along Lagos-Ibadan expressway on June 28, 2018. About 54 cars were burnt in the incident.

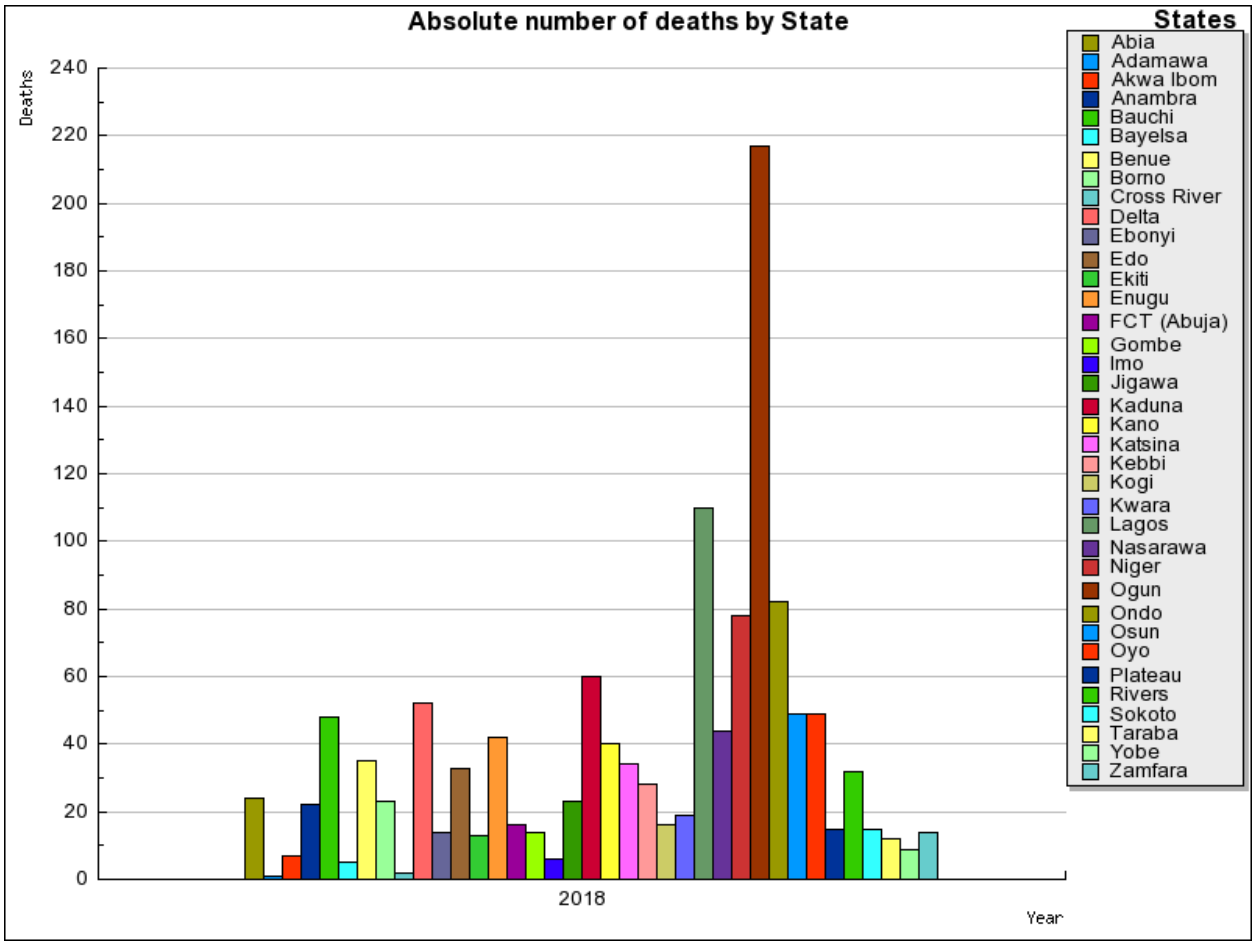

Figure 5: Fatalities resulting from road accidents by state in 2018

2.4 Ethno-communal violence

Land remains central to communal clashes in Nigeria, especially in Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Ebonyi, Cross River, Delta, and Akwa Ibom states. Benue state recorded 505 deaths. Majority of the fatalities occurred in Guma and Logo LGAs, where New Year attack by Fulani herdsmen claimed over 50 lives. Inter-state boundary conflicts were also reported in Cross River, Ebonyi, Akwa Ibom, Benue and Delta states.

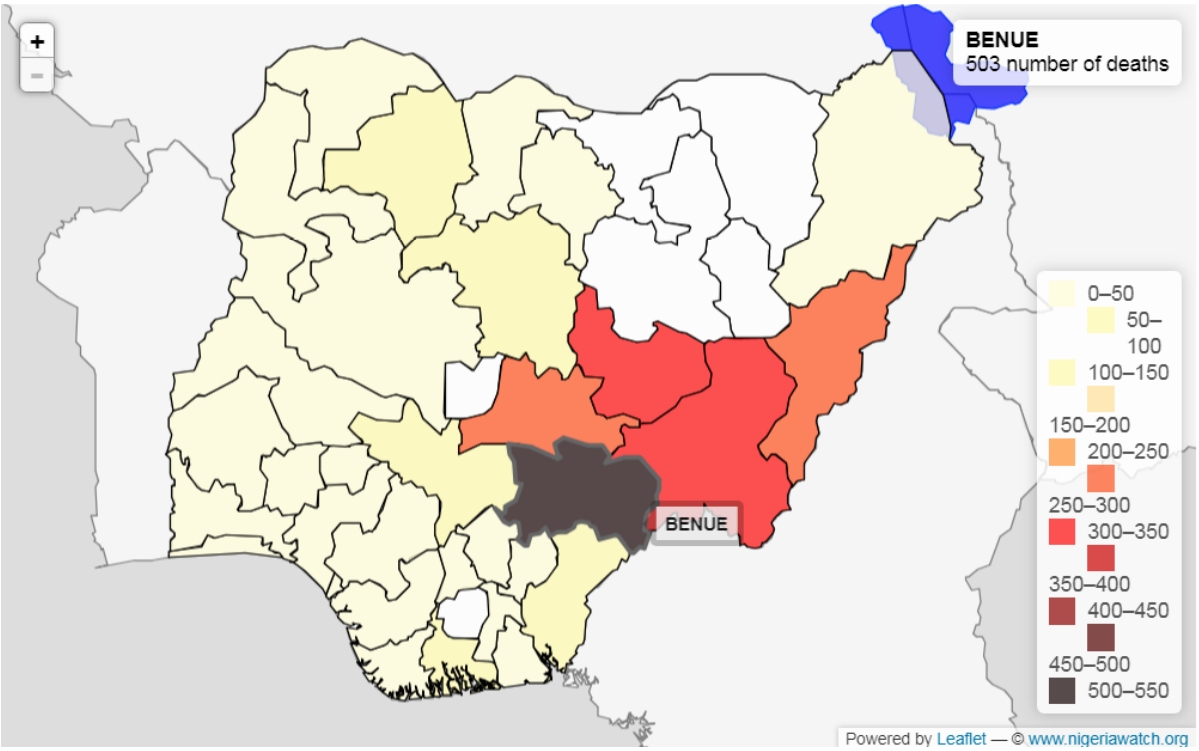

Figure 6: Map of the fatalities caused by communal violence per state in Nigeria, 2018

3. The most dangerous states

The overall assessment of violence in Nigeria shows that Borno remains the most dangerous state in Nigeria, followed by Zamfara, Nasarawa and Taraba. On the other hand, Kano, Kebbi, Osun, Gombe, Ekiti, Imo, Jigawa, Oyo and Bauchi were among the least violent states in 2018.

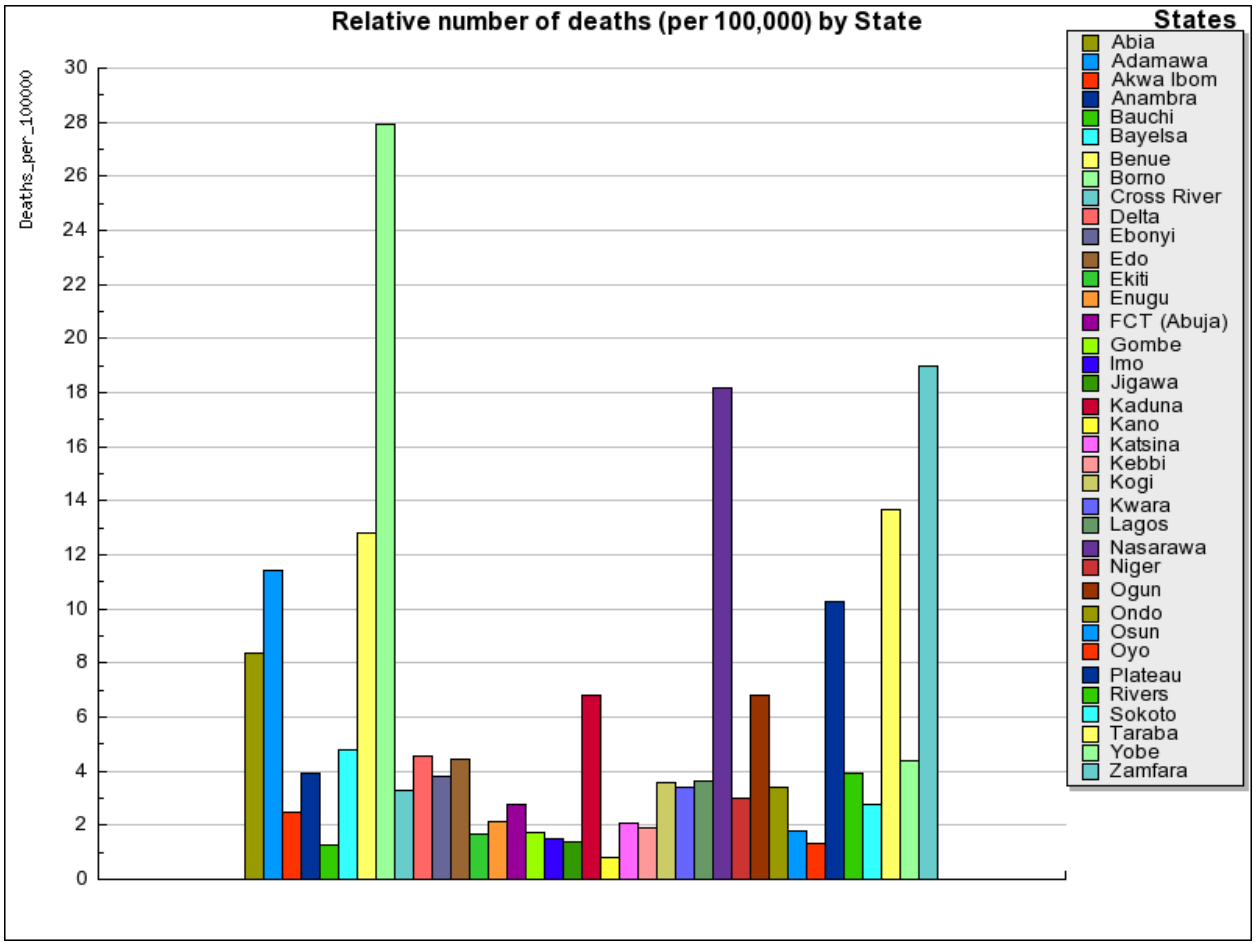

Figure 7: Number of fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants per state in Nigeria, 2018