

## **BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE**

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### **Abstract**

The paper discussed the concepts of insurgency and terrorism, the impact and activities of Boko Haram sect in the Nigerian State. The Boko Haram sect has brought untold hardship on the people particularly the people living in the North Eastern States of Nigeria. The paper examined the origin, history and objectives of Boko Haram in Nigeria and stated that the Boko Haram insurgency started as a militia group which was sponsored by some prominent politicians in the North Eastern States during the build up to the 2003 general election. Time came when these politicians lost control of them which has resulted to what we are seeing today. The paper drew attention to the destructive and devastating consequences of this sect, which include, suicide bombing, burning of churches and destruction of lives and properties. The paper concludes by stating that the consequences of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria has destroyed the commercial lives of the people, increased the Number of refugees in other parts of the country and it has equally destroyed the Nigerian image abroad. Finally, it recommended a way forward, which among others include strengthening of the borders to making it so tight that the sect will find it difficult to receive re-enforcement from outside and those who are sponsoring them should receive capital punishment, without any option of fine whatsoever.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram insurgency, Terrorism, suicide bombing insecurity and lack of development

## 1. Introduction

Many Nations in the world today are facing Terrorist attacks. It has become a wide phenomenon in countries like Libya, Iraq, Israel and in fact many African countries, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and the Niger Republic and Nigeria is not left out. These Terrorists have migrated into Nigeria since the third Republic 1999 till date. Their activities in Nigeria have brought untold disaster and destruction in the Nigerian State particularly the Boko Haram insurgency. Many Nigerians particularly, the innocent civilians have lost their lives. No wonder the federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sees Terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or a segment of them (Dempsey and Forst, 2010:518).

The definition by (Abateru, 2009:7) properly explained the concept of Terrorism. He sees it as an act of destroying or injuring civilian lives or the act of destroying or damaging civilian or government property without the expressly chartered permission of a specific government, thus, by individuals or group acting independently or government on their own accord and belief, in the attempt to affect some political goals. (Omenma, 2001) was of the Opinion that Terrorism is the use of violence to achieve political objectives". The bottom line

of the above definition is that Terrorism as an aspect of political violence since September 11, 2001, with the multiple attacks on the twin tower of the world trade centre and pentagon in the united states of America, one cannot estimate or quantify the extent of damage the Boko Haram Terrorist group and activities have caused the Nigerian government and the citizenry in general. Even the areas where the Boko Haram group or sect did not reach the influence and upsurge of refugees have seriously, affected the economy and brought high level of food scarcity in the area.

Omenma, (2012) in a seminar presented at the Caritas University, stated that Boko Haram insurgents started as a militia group which was sponsored by some prominent politicians in the North Eastern states, during the build up to the 2003 general election. When these group laid and perfected the foundations of this insurgency in the area, other notable politicians in other areas of Northern Nigeria started sponsoring them and in actual fact made financial allocations to them for subsequent elections. They provided them with huge sums of money and training ground on the secret areas and mountains for protection. However, time came when these sects

have grown wide and they could not control them any more, hence these prominent politicians lost control of them.

According to the Human Right Watch (2014), Boko Haram insurgency has led to violation of human rights and has incurred serious abuses through the forceful attacks of persons, individuals and groups of other faith including Moslems. The level of casualties and death, the Boko Haram set has caused cannot be quantified. They have turned many women into widows and many children into orphans. The activities of the Boko Haram in Nigeria have devastated the Northern part of the country particularly the North East, North West and North central. In most of those areas, it will be very difficult to repair the extent of damage done to businesses and economy of the areas. The business men and women there who are from the southern part of the country have abandoned their businesses and ran to the East and West for their lives while many have been killed and businesses disserted. The commercial lives of the people are gone and Agriculture has died a natural death. The remnants of the people that are still there are at the mercy of God, while some are waiting days and times when death will take them away. (The Nations Newspaper Thursday 13, 2011).

## **2. EVOLUTION AND MOTIVES OF BOOK HARAM INSURGENCY**

Boko Haram activities in Nigeria date back to the year 2001 when the past governors of Bornu state and some politicians sponsored groups of Hooligans, which they use for the purpose of winning elections and intimidating their opponents, time came when the group became wide and destructive that those who sponsored them could no longer control them and since they have been used to violent actions, those who were financing them withdrew their sponsorship, the group went wide to invade communities and to raise money to take care of themselves.

Another version by (Ajaero, 2011:19) stated that in 2001, a muslin cleric by name, Mohammed Yusuf, in Maiduguri, North East of Nigeria, formed an organization known as Jama atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda await wal-Jihad, which in Arabic means people committed to the propagation of the prophets teachings on Jihad. However as a result of his hatred for non Islamic education, the sect was called Boko Haram. If it is translated into Hausa language means “Western education is sacrilege”. However, the insurgency took a dangerous tune, when in 2009, the Leader and organizer, Mohammed Yusuf was killed by the Nigerian police. Although after

the death of Yusuf, the Federal Government of Nigeria in a bid to settle and stop the activities of these sect paid a ransom compensation to the families, but this did not stop their activities, this is one of the reasons why some opinions and many Nigerians have concluded that, the sect is not only religious group but a powerful political sect (Obateru, 2009). Not minding his state of origin as an indigene of Girgir village in Jalasko Local Government area of Yobe State, the rate of destruction and death tool in this area, cannot be imagined, one would have taught that as an indigene of the area, his group would have sympathized and soft pedaled in the extent and rate of destruction.

Onwuamanam, (2012:2) was of the opinion that one of the main objectives of the sect is to Islamise Northern Nigeria and as a matter of fact the rest of the Nigerian state. This was confirmed by one of the Boko Haram spokesmen, Abu Oaqa, when he warned Christians in Northern Nigeria to accept Islam, which in his opinion is the true religion while others are false without it there, will be no peace. Looking at some of the statements made by these sects, the rate of killings, burning and destruction of lives and properties cannot be quantified and uncountable number of innocent citizens have been killed, the group have brought untold hardship on the generality of the people, many police and soldiers have equally lost their lives because of the activities of this group. How could one explain the action of a group who called themselves religious group burning churches and equally mosque if it is not politically motivated, sponsored by wicked and devilish people. Boko Haram bid to capture power and the pursuance of Religious expansionism have made many public opinion to reject the view of relating and comparing Boko Haram with other regional groups like movement for the actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra (MOSSOB) and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) in the Niger Delta and south East regions. (Daily Sun, 2012).

The point here is that whether anybody likes it or not Boko Haram is a Terrorist group most people have in one way or the other branded them Terrorist organization fueled by some individuals who want to destabilize the country Nigeria. People have equally called them faceless group. The number of casualties and death which these sect have destroyed are very much alarming which include many innocent people Christians inclusive, cannot be numbered, no wonder the federal Bureau of investigation (FBI) described them as Terrorist organization (Dansabo, 2006) though the Federal government of Nigeria under the Former, President

Goodluck Jonathan advised the United States Government not to described them as Terrorist group so that their activities might not be transferred into aggression against Nigerians living in other parts of the world.

### **3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The danger posed by the actions and activities of this deadly group have affected Nigerians politically, socially and economically. There are wide spread refugees in all the Neighboring towns and villages. Most foreigners have equally left Nigeria because of this group. Some churches have also closed down in those ravaged towns and villages, the economy of the Nation is at stack because most of the Igbos doing businesses have suffered serious blow, and the commercial lives of the town have drastically died down. As Omenma, (2012) puts it, some politicians in the Northern part of the country provided them with huge sums of money as well as protection against arrest by the federal government.

Just as one of the spokesmen or the leaders of this group Abu. Oeda in one of his confessions in 2012 stated that one of their major objectives is to weaken the government in power and make it ungovernable and dismantle the regime in power so as to impose their own religious objectives on the rest of the country, which in short is to Islamise Nigeria. The sect has brought untold hardship on the citizens of Nigeria, the hostility cannot be measured while the level of fears it has generated among the populace is heightened. The government of the day is no longer at rest since nobody knows the next action to be taken by the sect. The Nigerian soldiers are equally afraid not to talk of the Nigerian police, everybody is now security alert and conscious because of the activities of this sect. regrettably, since the inception of this group, some parts of the Northern Nigeria particularly, Bornu, Yobe, Adamawa and even Niger State have not seen peace. There have been daily killings, bombing and suicide attacks here and there. People no-longer go to public places, churches no-longer hold services regularly, market places are now a shadow of its past.

The Number of widows have increased and thus the Casualty rate cannot be imagined. It has led to high rate of sexual abuses on women folk (Human Right Watch 2014) Up-till now, the Chibok Girls kidnapped from the secondary school in Bornu state have not yet returned. Only recently, that 21 of the girls were released. Many parents and Guardians of those Girls have

continuously faced partial agony and some have equally died as a result of the shock. Many families have been displaced, insecurity have become the order of the day. The crime wave has equally increased in Nigeria, you can hardly distinguish between armed robbery/kidnapping and Boko Haram Terrorist attacks in Nigeria. Most of the Northern Towns have become very devastating and lives are now insecure. The statistics of the internally displaced people are un imaginable, and the influence of refugees continues to increase every day resulting to scarcity of food and shelter and some have equally died because of hunger, some orphans and little children whom Bomb Killed their parents continue to wonder in the bush aimlessly without help. According to National Commission for refugees report and account in 2014 showed that about (250,000) Two hundred and fifty thousand people had been displaced from Bornu State alone. When people are displaced, the trauma, discomfort and hunger cannot be explained. Some equally have died within a short period of time, because of the shock and hardship accompanying such displacement. Below are the list and records of the number of people killed by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Among the Terrorist in the world over, Boko Haram activities and destruction have been considered to be the worst. On their own, they killed without consideration, and anybody who did not accept Islam is on the danger of being killed. They recruit young boys, girls, youth and equally, old women whom you will never suspect as suicide bombers for their destructive activities and actions. Most families in the North and South can no longer recount their conditions and experiences. Lives will no longer be the same for them again. This is because most of them, their bread winners have been killed and life has become very difficult for them. If you look at the US data base of the incident of Terrorist attacks and death that resulted in 2007 – 2014 Nigeria is almost the highest in the world. This is because of the activities of the Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, which has resulted in the lost of so many lives and properties.

#### **THE WORLD DATA BASE FOR TERRORIST ATTACKS DEATH 2007 – 2014**

YEAR	TOTAL ATTACKS	DEATH CASUALTIES	INJURED	KIDNAPPED
2007	14,415	22,720	44,103	4,980
2008	11,663	15,709	33,901	4,680

2009	10,968	15,311	32,660	10,749
2010	11,641	13,193	30,654	6,051
2011	10,283	12,533	25,903	5,554
2012	6,771	11,098	21,652	1,283
2013	9,707	17,891	32,577	2,990
2014	13,463	32,727	34,791	9,428

Source: Us-based Global Terrorism Database 2014 as cited by Emeka Augustine Agba.

### **COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST TERRORIST ATTACKS 2014**

COUNTRY	TOTAL ATTACKS	TOTAL KILLED	TOTAL WOUNDED
IRAQ	3370	9929	15137
PAKISTAN	1821	1757	2837
AFGHANISTAN	1591	4505	4699
INDIA	763	426	643
NIGERIA	662	7512	2246
SYRIA	232	1698	1473

SOURCES: US-BASED GLOBAL TERRORISM DATA BASE 2014 AS CITED BY EMEKA AUGUSTINE AGBA.

### **LIST OF THOSE KILLED BY BOKO HARAM ATTACKS 2009 – 2012**

DATE	STATE AND LOCATION	DEATH
Dec, 24, 2011	Jos, Plateau State	80 people killed
March, 13, 2010	Jos, “ “	300 “ “
July 27, 2009	Potiskum, Yobe State	4 people killed
Oct 1 2010	Eagle Square, Abuja	12 people killed
Dec. 31, 2010	Mogadishu mammy market Abuja	10 people killed
May 30, 2011	Maiduguri, Bornu State	13 people killed
April 8, 2011	INEC Office, Suleja Niger State	8 corps members killed
June 7, 2011	Maiduguri, Bornu, State	5 people killed

July 9, 2011	“ “ “	35 people killed
July 25, 2011	“ “ “	8 people killed
Aug. 26, 2011	Un Building, Abuja	23 people killed
Sept 12, 2011	Misau Bauchi State	11 people killed
Nov. 4, 2011	Damaturu, Yobe State	150 people killed
Nov. 27, 2011	Geidam, Yobe State	7 people killed
Dec. 25, 2011	Madalla Niger State	50 people killed
Dec. 30 2011	Maiduguri, Bornu State	7 people killed
Jan. 5, 2012	Gombe State	6 people killed
Jan. 6, 2012	Yola Adamawa State	17 people killed
Jan. 20, 2012	Kano State	250 people killed
Jan. 22, 2012	Bauchi State	11 people killed

Source: Adeyemi (2012) works on Terrorism, 2012.

The above lists and figures for 2009 to 2012 and 2014 showed that Boko Haram sect had caused untold disaster and destruction of lives and properties in the Nigerian state. When one begin to examine the nature, strategies and even the weapons used for these massive destruction one will quickly run into conclusion that this group or sect are not naturally Nigerian and equally they are being sponsored by some powerful groups outside Nigeria. The revelation by the foreign minister of Niger Republic, Mohamed Bazoum that there is a Link between Boko Haram and Al Oaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, ARIM consisting primarily of the training given to element of Boko Haram cannot be doubted. Abimboye, (2012) That, notwithstanding the late chief Solomon Lar, the former Governor of Plateau State in the second Republic was of the opinion that the current upsurge and Terror of Boko Haram in Nigeria has been understood to be politically motivated. He went on to state that Boko Haram members were spent politicians who had lost elections but think that they can come to power by destroying Nigeria (Akhaine and Abdulsalami 2012).

There is no doubt about the intensions, sources and objectives of Boko Haram sect to Islamise Nigeria, no wonder the sect warned the churches in the North to surrender to Islam if they actually want peace. Their links with the outside organizations have given them enough ground to receive funds from groups in Saudi Arabia and the Uk. This group included the Al

Muntoda Trust Fund and the Islamic world society (<http://allafrica.com/stories/2012021141514.html>,2012) Because of the Large amount of money these group receive they were able to march the Nigerian army face to face and even in some occasions the Nigerian army run away because of them.

#### **4. BOKO HARAM AND NIGERIAN IMAGE ABROAD**

The activities of Boko Haram and the trouble it has caused the Nigerian state is something that has not left anybody in doubt of the danger and destruction it has caused the image and integrity of the country abroad. The only thing that now left for foreign nations is to declare Nigeria a terrorist state. Making an attempt to destroy the United Nations building in Abuja and giving warning to the foreign nationals to depart and even the Christians from the south to leave if they really wanted peace was not only a sign that there is problem in Nigeria but a serious indication which is capable of notifying the foreigners that Nigeria is not a place to visit, stay and to do business.

A Situation, where Boko Haram will go to police station, attack them and kill as many police officers as possible and carry away guns and ammunitions scot free. In some cases when confronted with the Nigerian soldiers, the soldiers will run away from them which is a serious indication to the foreigners not to visit Nigeria because it is not a safe place to go. The armed forces are the strength of any nation, when it has come to the point that this sect can operate freely for hours without being challenged shows that the problem is difficult to handle.

The business live of those areas particularly the North east and to be specific Boronu area down. Alawiye (2012) was of the opinion that most business centres have closed. People from the Eastern part of Nigeria that do business in the North have flown back home and some banks do not operate in full scale as before while some are considering closing down indefinitely.

Many foreigners have been kidnapped, some are killed while some are still being detained. The signal foreigners receive about Nigeria is that it is a no go area particularly, when they burn churches and many worship centres. Most people now no longer go to churches on Sundays. For example on September 23, 2012 St. John's catholic church in Bauchi was destroyed by a car bomb explosive (Gbadamose and Damed 2012) in march, the same 2012, St. Finbarr's catholic church was attacked and many people killed. The Boko Haram attacked

churches in Mandalla Niger state and More than 40 people were killed (Kupoluyi, 2012:18). The news of all these killings are announced over the air and many foreign media carried it. This is a slap on the image of the Nigerian state, where innocent citizens who went to worship God on Sunday were killed without consideration and element of sympathy. With this, on board, who is that foreigner that will venture to come to Nigeria unless such an individual does not value his or her life.

The problem facing Nigerian citizens abroad and even those at home who want to travel abroad is that they are very much scrutinized and searched before visas are given to them. Even those already in foreign nations are seriously molested and insulted. Wherever they go, people will see them as Terrorist. Evidence can be seen from the recent declaration by the leader of the Boko Haram in Nigeria pledging allegiance to the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria. Many have asserted that the Boko Haram in Nigeria has a Link with the Al Qaeda and the Al shabab group in Somalia (Asemah, 2013) There is strong indication that these sects receive support and sponsorship from these nations particularly Syria and Iraq. The world over are apprehensive of these two Terrorist groups and Linking Nigeria with them shows that Nigeria cannot really free itself from the act of Terrorism. That is why United Nation (2011) in (Asemah, 2013) stated that Terrorism is a criminal act intended to provoke a state of Terro in the general public and group of persons. Their activities will surely, pose problems to many Nigerians residing abroad. It has drastically reduced the number of Nigerians who want to travel abroad. Some Nations have refused and or reduced the number of visas they give to Nigerians travelling to their countries.

The intentions and activities of the Boko Haram are no longer hidden issue in Nigeria. It appears that the Nigerian government is tired of overpowering this group. The group has also gone ahead to encroach on some countries bothering Nigeria particularly Chad and Cameroon. This has made these countries who had been keeping quiet for a long time, who thought the Boko Haram case is a Nigerian matter alone, they saw the activities of this sect as a Nigerian problem which does not affect them. In some cases people have alleged that most of these neighboring states have offered support in one way or the other to these sects, because most of the arms and ammunitions the sect are using to commit havoc in Nigeria is shifted from Chad and other neighboring countries. But with the recent attack on their citizens and some parts of their areas have made them now to form an alliance with the Nigerian government to fight this

group. It is no longer seen as only the Nigerian problem but also something that equally affects them either economically or politically.

The America government has equally given a boost to the fight against this ugly sect by offering a total of \$7 million dollars reward for reasonable information on the source and location of the leader of this group Shekaru. With the United States of America coming in to this matter, it is an indication that the activities of this group is no longer the Nigeria matter alone but it also points to the increased international angle of the activities of this sect.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The Boko Haram sect which started as an unorganized sect which many took for granted metamorphosed into powerful organized sect linked with some international Terrorist organizations outside Nigeria. It started as purely a Nigerian matter now went into an uncontrollable terrorist group. The activities of this sect have caused the Nigerian government a great lose of human and material resources. This is even greater than what the civil war caused Nigeria. Besides the human and material resources lost in Nigeria, there is tension and apprehension on a daily basis. The commercial live of the people is completely destroyed while most of the foreign and multinational companies in Nigeria have left to other countries around Nigeria.

The Nigerians living abroad are being molested on a daily basis, and those trying to travel outside are subjected into untold hardship. Every Nigerian is regarded as a suspect because of the activities of the Boko Harams. Those Northern Governors that were alleged to have started the Boko Haram never envisaged that what they started as a child's play, in order to gain political control and to suppress their political opponent will get to this level. The handwork of their action has led many to their untimely death and citizen in the North and the South are affected disastrously while many have been displaced. The international dimension and linkage of the group is what those who sponsored and gave them support and training ground never thought of. For example the Nigerian former army chiefs of staff also claimed that there is strong evidence that the opinion that the group has training, logistics and dangerous equipment from other terrorist groups from Mali, Libya and Iraq cannot be doubted.

It was because of the activities of these sect and the consequences of their action that made the United States of American Intelligence Agency (CIA) to predict that Nigeria could split in 2015 (Punch 2012:8) To state the list, the Boko Haram has killed and murdered so many Nationals including a British National by name Christopher McManus and an Italian, Franco Lamolino both are Engineers working with Stabilini vision; they were abducted by a faction of Boko Haram known as Al Oaeda in their lodging place in Birnin Kebbi, how ever they were killed on march 8 2012 before an attempt to free them by Nigeria and British security forces (Punch, 2012) this alone is enough to provoke an attack by the home government on Nigeria in these areas and finally, it seriously affect the Nigerian image abroad.

## **6. THE WAY FORWARD**

To believe that Boko Haram is a group that forbade foreign education and are out to inforce Islamic religion is a camouflage Ndukong (2012) stated that Al muntada Trust Fund Headquarters in United Kingdom and the Islamic world society in Saudi Arabia have provided finance to Boko Haram is a proof that this group has other purposes and objectives. Although, the government has announced that Boko Haram has been seriously degraded and defeated, this appears to be political considering the non release of the remaining Chibok girls and the scores of bombings still going on.

Therefore, one of the first things Nigerian government should still do is to strengthen the borders and make it very tight so that it will be very difficult for the remnants of the group to receive reinforcement in form of weapons and financial support.

The method of pilling and gathering the captured members of this group in Nigerian prisons is not the best, as they are arrested judgment should be passed on them immediately inorder to deter those who are trying to join them. There is this allegation that some officers in the Nigerian army are giving them information and weapons, if this allegation is found to be true, capital punishment should be imposed on the culprits.

The fight against Boko Haram should not be a Nigerian matter alone. The countries living in the region should join efforts to fight this menace as some like Chad and Cameroon have been doing. The group receives finance and equipment from the Neighbouring states, if

these states and countries tighten up their security and borders the sect will be thus frustrated easily.

As suggested by Osuji (2012), the survival of any nation depends on the level of information network and internal spies directed to monitor the activities of certain individuals in the state.

The Nigeria airspace should be monitored and watched very serious. These areas suspected to be their hide outs should be combed on a daily basis and spies sent to watch certain actions going on in those areas. These Boko Haram insurgents are not spirit, they are human beings and they are living in certain areas, people should be security conscious just as the federal ministry of information is announcing on a daily basis that people should report any strange moves and activities of people living around them.

Finally, the federal government of Nigeria should put a price tag of not less than one hundred thousand naira to anybody who will give vital and reasonable information on the hideouts of these Boko Haram activists. This will motivate some people to move out to search for them. Lastly, the federal government of Nigeria should do what the Anambra State government has done on the Kidnappers, the governor announced that any house harbouring kidnappers would be pulled down and demolished. So if the federal government can announce that any house in the Northern or Southern Nigeria where the Boko Haram is located will be demolished and the people living in those houses will face government sanction. Perhaps as the action of the Anambra state government has reduced the level of kidnapping in Anambra State, this can also go a long way to reduce and or totally abrogate the activities of the Boko Haram, because they are being harboured by certain big and rich personalities in Nigeria.

It is very disheartening to hear that the Boko Haram member who bombed and destroyed the St. Theresa' Catholic Church in Abuja was finally captured at the governors house in Borno State which is an indication that this group is sponsored by some powerful personalities in Nigeria.

On the whole, while one will like to appraise the efforts of the federal government so far in the release of 21 Chibok girls, purported fall of Sambisa forest and degrading the military might of the insurgents, the above measures if adopted, will undoubtedly spell doom for Boko Haram in Nigeria.

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