

The security situation in northeastern Nigeria reached crisis proportions in 2014, as the militant Islamist group known as Boko Haram (formally Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, or People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad) increased the scope and intensity of its insurgency in the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Boko Haram's attacks and the Nigerian government's counterinsurgency operations resulted in at least 10,850 deaths during the year. In May, the UN Security Council added Boko Haram to its list of organizations subject to targeted financial sanctions and an arms embargo, following the U.S. Department of State's designation of the group as a foreign terrorist organization in 2013.

The government has been widely criticized for its ineffective response to Boko Haram's attacks and human rights abuses, including the group's high-profile April 2014 kidnapping of approximately 275 girls from a school in Chibok, Borno State. Reports from domestic and international advocacy groups in 2014 indicated that government forces involved in the fight against Boko Haram continued to commit gross human rights violations with impunity, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary mass arrests, illegal detentions, and torture of civilians.

Political parties were preparing for the February 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections during the year. In December, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chose incumbent Goodluck Jonathan as its presidential candidate, and the All Progressives Congress (APC), the main opposition party, selected former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari. There were concerns that the elections might have to be postponed in the northeastern states most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 18 / 40 (-2) [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 6 / 12

The president is elected by popular vote for no more than two four-year terms. Members of the bicameral National Assembly, consisting of the 109-seat Senate and the 360-seat House of Representatives, are elected for four-year terms. Although Nigeria's elections have been marred by gross irregularities and violence since the return of a multiparty system in 1999, the April 2011 elections represented a departure from this trend. Following the passage of electoral reforms and the appointment of a new chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), domestic and international observers generally regarded the 2011 elections as free, fair, and credible, despite postelection violence that killed some 800 people and left 65,000 displaced.

Jonathan, the PDP's candidate, won the 2011 presidential contest, defeating Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), 59 percent to 32 percent. The vote appeared to reflect the ethnic and religious fault lines of the country, with Buhari, a northern Muslim, winning primarily in the northern states, and Jonathan, a Christian from the southern Niger Delta region, gaining an overwhelming majority in the south. PDP candidates won a reduced majority in the legislative elections. In the House of Representatives, the PDP claimed 202 of 360 seats, while the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) won 66, the CPC took 35, and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) garnered 25. In the Senate, the PDP lost its two-thirds majority, taking 71 of 109 seats; the ACN won 18 seats, and the CPC and ANPP won 7 each. The PDP captured 18 of the 26 contested state governorships.

During 2014, the INEC began nationwide distribution of permanent voter cards for the 2015 elections. Domestic and international stakeholders considered the gubernatorial elections held in Ekiti in June and Osun in August to be credible and effectively administered.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 9 / 16

Nigeria's multiparty system provides opportunities for the participation of opposition parties in the political process. According to the INEC, there are more than 25 registered political parties. Although the PDP continues to dominate both national and state elections, opposition parties made significant inroads in 2011. In 2013, four opposition groups—the ACN, the CPC, the ANPP, and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)—merged under the banner of the APC. In 2014, the APC drew strength from defections by leading members of the PDP, including the speaker of the House of Representatives. The PDP has allegedly attempted to disrupt the activities of these defectors, especially those with presidential aspirations.

Citizens' political choices are impaired or undermined to some degree by vote buying and intimidation during elections, the influence of powerful domestic and international economic interests on policymaking, and the local domination of either the Nigerian military or Boko Haram militants in regions affected by the insurgency.

In December 2014, the 36 state Houses of Assembly approved proposed amendments to the 1999 constitution that include, among other provisions, independent candidacy in Nigerian elections, greater local government autonomy, and guarantees of equal rights for minorities. At the end of the year, the National Assembly had not yet passed the amendments approved by the states.

C. Functioning of Government: 4 / 12 (-1)

Corruption remains pervasive, and government efforts to improve transparency and reduce graft have been inadequate. There were several high-profile corruption scandals in 2014. In February, the then governor of the Central Bank, Lamido Sanusi, accused the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) of failing to remit as much as \$20 billion in oil

revenue to the government's accounts between January 2012 and July 2013. Although Sanusi was removed from his position shortly after the revelation, the Senate called for an independent audit of the NNPC. As of the end of 2014, the federal government had not released the findings of the audit, conducted by London-based firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. A 2013 report by the British think tank Chatham House had found that more than 5 percent of total oil output is stolen annually.

Although the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigeria's main anticorruption agency, secured more than 110 convictions in 2014, cases against high-profile politicians and businessmen are hampered by political interference and an inefficient judiciary. Moreover, the EFCC has been accused of targeting those who have lost favor with the government. Nigeria was ranked 136 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in the 2014 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

Despite the passage of the 2011 Freedom of Information Act, which guarantees the right to access public records, various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have criticized government agencies for routinely refusing to release information sought through the law.

Discretionary Political Rights Question B: -1 / 0 (-1)

Boko Haram has been accused of attempting to alter the religious and ethnic composition of the northeast, particularly in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, where it controls significant territory. The group has targeted Christians and moderate Muslims through mass killings, kidnappings, and other human rights abuses; imposed a crude form of Sharia (Islamic law); and sought to eradicate any sources of secular education. In 2014 alone, the conflict caused more than 10,850 deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Since May 2013, more than 100,000 refugees have crossed into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency estimated that nearly 870,000 people were internally displaced in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe as of December 2014, although other estimates put the figure at more than 1.5 million. In 2013, the International Criminal Court began investigations into whether Boko Haram should be prosecuted for crimes against humanity.

Civil Liberties: 25 / 40 (-1)

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 9 / 16

Freedoms of speech, expression, and the press are constitutionally guaranteed. However, these rights are limited by laws on sedition, criminal defamation, and publication of false news. Sharia statutes in 12 northern states impose severe penalties for alleged press offenses. Government officials also restrict press freedom by publicly criticizing, harassing, and arresting journalists, especially when they cover corruption scandals, human rights violations, or separatist and communal violence.

In 2014, the military made a number of attempts to punish critical reporting. In June, soldiers seized copies of several newspapers, including the *Nation*, *Daily Trust*, and *Leadership*, from key distribution points in a coordinated nationwide effort. An army spokesperson said the seizures were a “routine security action.” Several of the affected outlets had published articles critical of the military’s campaign against Boko Haram. In August, soldiers invaded the offices of the *Daily Trust* in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno, and arrested two managers for publishing an article about a mutiny over “inadequate weapons” in the fight against Boko Haram. The managers were released the same day without being charged. Journalists and media entities have also been attacked by nonstate actors, including Boko Haram. Cases of violence against journalists often go unsolved.

While the government generally does not restrict access to the internet or monitor personal communications, in January 2014 the *Premium Times*, an online investigative newspaper, experienced a denial-of-service (DOS) attack. This followed another incident in November 2013 in which the paper’s editors were prevented from posting links to its Facebook page for two months, because other users—whom the outlet alleged had been hired by the government—had reported the links to be “abusive.”

Religious freedom is constitutionally and legally protected and is generally respected by the government in practice. Nevertheless, in some instances state and local governments have placed limits on religious activities and endorsed a dominant faith. Nonstate actors have also attempted to limit religious freedom. Boko Haram has explicitly targeted Christians and their houses of worship, though Muslims still account for the majority of its victims. In January 2014, Boko Haram attacked a Catholic parish in Adamawa, leading to 22 deaths. In June, 30 people died and five churches were burned during a raid by suspected Boko Haram militants in Borno. Periodic communal clashes between Muslims and Christians have broken out for decades in the states of Kaduna and Plateau, especially around the city of Jos, often killing hundreds of people and displacing thousands at a time.

The federal government generally respects academic freedom. However, some state governments mandate religious instruction in elementary and secondary curriculums, and student admission and faculty hiring policies are subject to political interference. Boko Haram’s assault on secular education has included the destruction of numerous primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions; the intimidation, injury, and killing of schoolchildren and teachers; and the forced closure of schools throughout the northeast. The most widely publicized attack on an educational institution was the April 2014 abduction of approximately 275 girls from their secondary school in Chibok. While some of the girls managed to escape, the majority apparently remained in the custody of Boko Haram at year’s end; the Nigerian government, despite assistance from international partners, was unable to locate the girls or secure their release.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 7 / 12

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. However, federal and state governments frequently ban public events

perceived as threatening national security, including those that could incite political, ethnic, or religious tension. In June 2014, police in the capital announced a ban on all demonstrations associated with the abduction of the Chibok girls, claiming that the protests could be hijacked by rogue elements and undermine security. Some of the demonstrations had included criticism of the government for failing to free the girls. Nigerian NGOs condemned the ban as a violation of freedom of assembly and threatened to challenge it in court. Days later, the police allowed the protests to continue.

NGOs operating in regions affected by the Boko Haram insurgency experienced difficulties in carrying out their work in 2014. Members of some organizations faced intimidation and physical harm for speaking out against Boko Haram, or encountered challenges when investigating alleged human rights abuses committed by the military against Boko Haram suspects.

Under the constitution, workers have the right to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct strikes. At the same time, the government forbids strike action in a number of essential services, including public transportation and security.

F. Rule of Law: 4 / 16

Judicial independence in Nigeria is constitutionally and legally enshrined. The judiciary has achieved some degree of independence and professionalism in practice, but political interference, corruption, and a lack of funding, equipment, and training remain important problems. Certain departments, particularly the Court of Appeals, have frequently rejected election challenges or allegations of corruption against powerful elites, raising doubts about their independence.

The security forces commit abuses with near impunity, and corruption pervades their ranks. There were numerous allegations of torture, extortion, bribe taking, and embezzlement within the police force in 2014. In September, Amnesty International (AI) released a report documenting the alarmingly high rates of torture and ill-treatment experienced by suspects in police and military custody, as well as the government's failure to prevent acts of torture and prosecute offenders. Numerous rights groups have called for the criminalization of torture, and the creation of an independent commission to investigate and prosecute allegations of systemic corruption and human rights violations within the security forces. In October, Jonathan proposed a bill that would raise the wages of police officers and increase funding for training and equipment in an effort to reduce corruption and boost performance.

In 2014, the intensity and geographic reach of the Boko Haram insurgency increased significantly. The group took control of its first town, Damboa in Borno State, in July, and by the end of the year it was reported to be in control of large swathes of territory in Borno as well as parts of Adamawa and Yobe. Meanwhile, Boko Haram's attacks on civilians in other areas of the country became more frequent and deadly. In April two bombs exploded at a bus station in Abuja, leaving over 90 people dead and 200 wounded, and in May at least 118 people died in twin car bomb explosions in Jos.

The government's counterterrorism efforts, led by the Joint Task Force (JTF), have so far been unable to contain Boko Haram. Adamawa, Borno and Yobe were under a state of emergency between May 2013 and November 2014, and the JTF's ground and air assaults inflicted significant losses on the militants, but the group's advance on Maiduguri during the year put the military on the defensive and undermined its operational capacity. More generally, the military is hampered by pervasive corruption and mismanagement as well as a lack of resources and reinforcements, leading to waning morale among its troops. Several West African countries have agreed to cooperate in the fight against Boko Haram, while the United States and Britain have offered assistance with intelligence and surveillance.

Negotiations between the government and Boko Haram have failed to produce any meaningful results, and several conflicting and unproven claims of progress from key officials have either failed to materialize or have been denied by Boko Haram. In October 2014 the government announced a cease-fire with Boko Haram and the negotiated return of the kidnapped girls from Chibok. However, the purported leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, later released a video claiming that no agreement had been reached, and the conflict continued unabated.

The JTF has been widely criticized for human rights abuses. In August 2014, AI released detailed video footage of suspected Boko Haram detainees being murdered and buried in mass graves, allegedly by members of the JTF and state-sponsored militias. The military responded by establishing an investigative team to determine the authenticity of the video and prosecute those responsible for the killings. According to AI, the JTF carried out more than 600 extrajudicial killings between January and August.

Violent crime in certain areas of Nigeria remains a serious problem, and the trafficking of drugs and small arms is reportedly on the rise. Abductions are especially common in the Niger Delta and the southeastern states of Abia, Imo, and Anambra. Political figures, the wealthy, and foreigners are most frequently targeted. In February 2014, Inengite Nitabai, a close relative of the president, was kidnapped in Bayelsa State; police rescued him 18 days later. Despite the introduction of stringent antikidnapping laws across many southeastern states, the problem has not decreased significantly, and the conviction rate on such cases remains low because security personnel and local government officials are often involved in the criminal networks responsible.

Despite constitutional safeguards against ethnic discrimination, many ethnic minorities experience bias by state governments and other societal groups in areas including employment, education, and housing.

The government and society continue to discriminate against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. In January 2014, Jonathan signed the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act. Among other provisions, the law imposes sentences up to 14 years for entering into a same-sex marriage or union, and up to 10 years for those who support or facilitate same-sex relationships, or who "make [a] public show of [a] same-sex amorous relationship." The measure complements existing bans at the state level. In many southern states, same-sex relationships are punishable by up to 14 years in prison, while in northern states, Sharia statutes allow for the death penalty. The new law received immediate

condemnation from the international community. In October, the Federal High Court rejected a legal challenge filed earlier in the year claiming that the law violated the fundamental human rights of the Nigerian LGBT community; the court found that the man who brought the suit did not have standing to challenge the law because he was not gay and therefore was not directly affected by it.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 5 / 16 (-1)

Freedom of internal movement and foreign travel are legally guaranteed. However, security officials frequently impose dusk-to-dawn curfews in areas affected by communal violence or the Islamist insurgency. Nigeria's largely unregulated property rights system hinders citizens and private business from engaging in the efficient and legal purchase or sale of land and other types of property.

Women's educational opportunities continue to improve, and women hold several key government positions; in addition, they hold 24 of 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 8 of 109 Senate seats. Women have occupied important posts in the judiciary, including Aloma Mukhtar, who retired in November 2014 as the country's chief justice. However, throughout the country, women experience discrimination in employment and are often relegated to inferior positions. Gender discrimination is especially problematic in the states governed by Sharia statutes, and this has been exacerbated by the Boko Haram insurgency. In addition, women belonging to certain ethnic groups are often denied equal rights to inherit property due to customary laws and practices. Despite the existence of strict laws against rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and child marriage, these offenses remain widespread, with low rates of reporting and prosecution.

Illegal human trafficking to, from, and within Nigeria for the purposes of forced labor and prostitution is reported to be on the rise, though a recent report indicated that the authorities have become more successful in protecting human trafficking victims, prosecuting suspected traffickers, and dismantling their networks. Forced labor is illegal but common, especially bonded labor and domestic servitude, and the government makes very little effort to combat the practice.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology