



Mass
Atrocities
Casualties
Tracking

2019
Report

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Executive Summary



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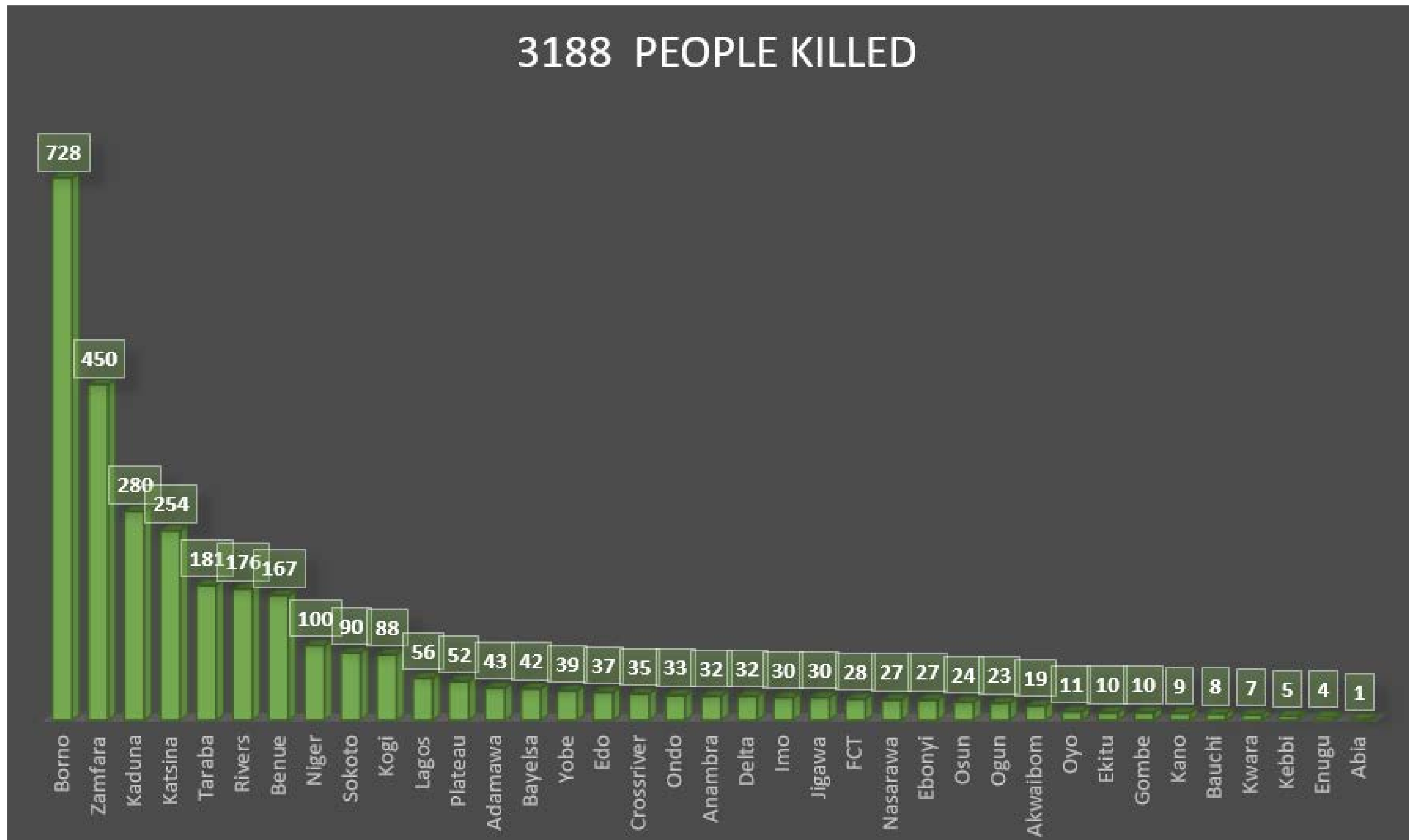
ur tracking of casualties of conflicts, violent clashes and extrajudicial killings across Nigeria for 2019 informs that at least **three thousand, one hundred and eighty-eight (3188)** lives were lost between January and December 2019 as a result of violent incidents which include: gang clashes, extra-judicial killings, resource crises, kidnappings and, Boko-Haram/ ISWAP attacks. Of the above number, two thousand, seven hundred and seven (2707) were civilians, while

481 were state security agents. In other words, for every 5.5 deaths recorded, at least 1 of them was of a security officer.

The state with the highest number of fatalities remained Borno state in the North East, closely followed by Zamfara state in the North West.

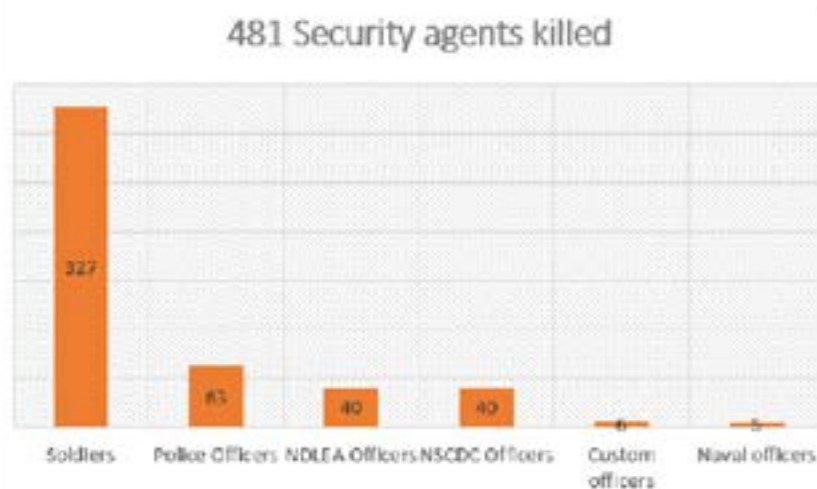
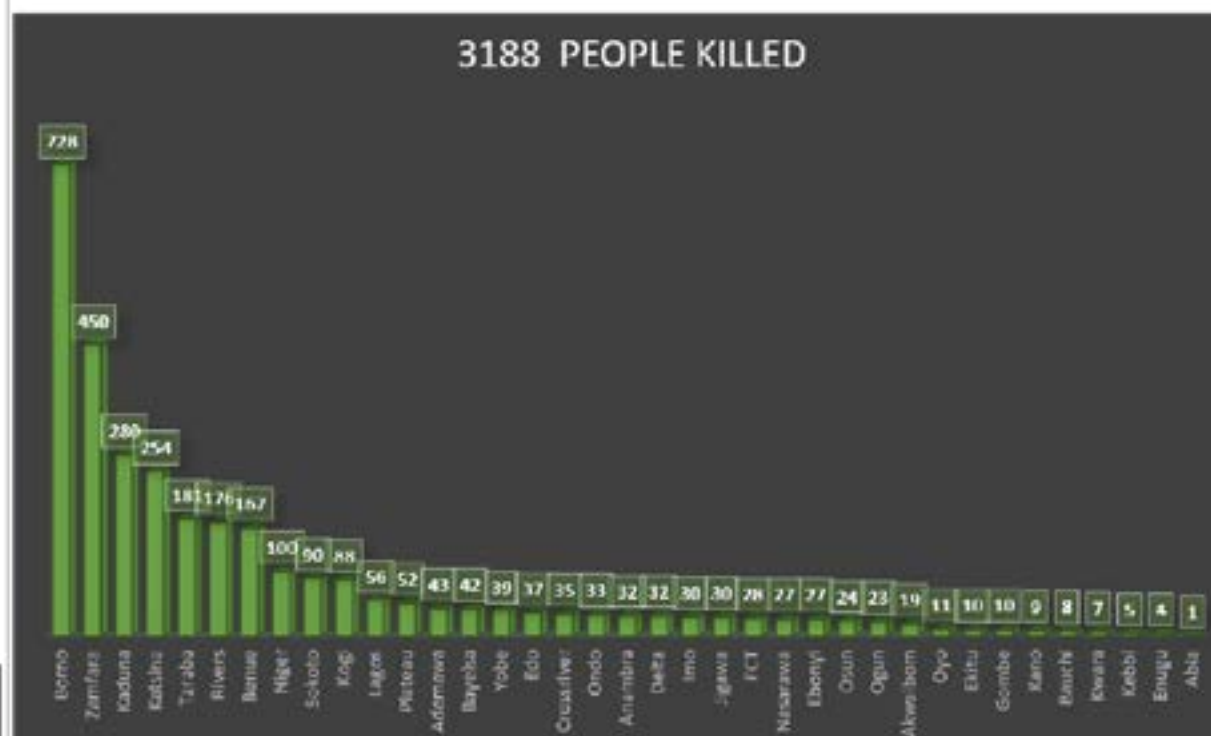
Below is an analysis report of the trends and what they portend for Nigeria's future.

Reported Violent Killings Breakdown for 2019





10 STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF CASUALTIES

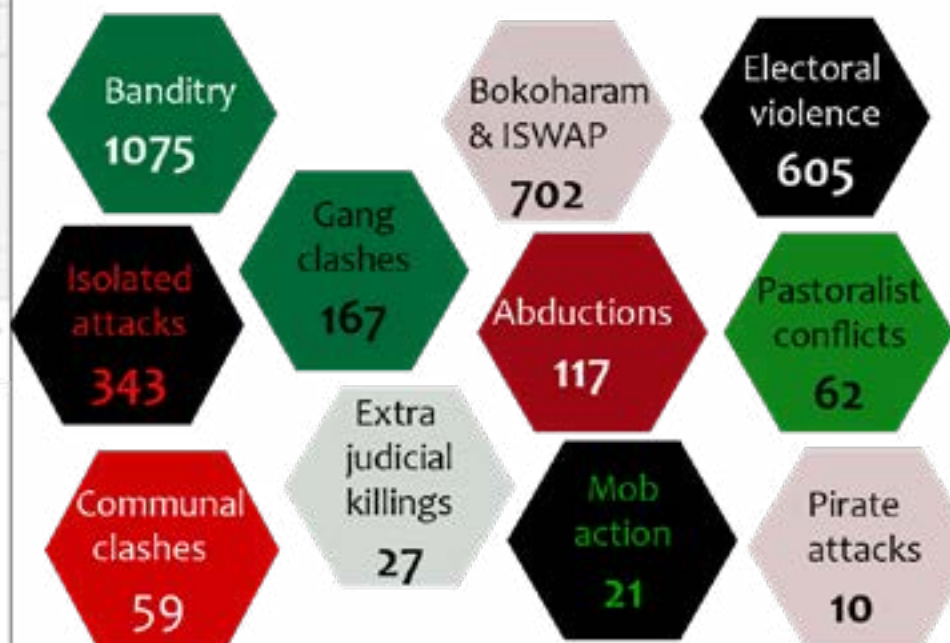


2707 Civilians



481 Security Personnel

BREAKDOWN OF KILLINGS



#Nigeriamourns

#Stopthekillings

#Notjustnumbers

Violence Analysis

Violence related deaths were recorded in every state in Nigerian with Abia notably the least impacted, with one (1) death recorded. While Borno state remained the highest impacted with Seven hundred and twenty-eight (728) deaths. The North and Middle Belt region recorded the highest numbers of casualties, while Rivers state recorded the highest numbers in the South with one hundred and Seventy Six (176) Deaths – largely due to cult gang clashes.

Based on available data, the 10 most vulnerable states in Nigeria by the number of deaths recorded were:

Bornu – 728, Zamfara – 450, Kaduna – 280, Katsina – 254, Taraba – 181, Rivers – 176, Benue – 167, Niger – 100, Sokoto – 90, and Kogi – 88

In **January** 2019, Nigeria took off to a bad start – data indicates that at least **208** persons were killed from incidents related to: Boko Haram/ISWAP attacks, banditry, pastoralist conflicts, kidnappers, and violence perpetrated by rival political party affiliates. Disaggregated, at least: 156 civilians, 49 soldiers, 2 police officers and 1 naval officer were killed.

In **February**, at least **238** persons died. A fair number of the violent incidences nationwide were attributable to the acrimoniously contested Presidential elections. Other violent incidents recorded were: farmer/herder crisis, Boko Haram/ISWAP attacks, rival gang clashes, political related violence and banditry. Disaggregated, at least: 213 civilians 21 soldiers and 4 police officers were killed.

In **March**, at least **276** people were killed in

violent incidents across the nation, these occurred largely with the background of the state level elections which were held that month, and relatedly, about 45% of these deaths were incidental to this. Other incidents include herdsmen attacks, banditry, isolated attacks, communal wars, Boko-Haram/ISWAP attacks and mob actions. The spike in killings attributable to elections is indicative of the quality of candidates, which defines the kind of support their followers provide. The ‘over securitization’ of elections by the government itself also aggravates tensions and distrust in the polity resulting in violence.

In **April**, at least **412** persons were killed. In that month, we observed a shocking rise in the number of deaths resulting from the menace of ‘bandits’ that had widened their dragnets beyond Zamfara, Katsina, and Katsina states to other parts of the North, distressing residents, and dislodging them from their towns and villages. Incidents of abductions, extrajudicial killings, Boko Haram/ISWAP attacks, cult clashes, and post electoral violence were also recorded.

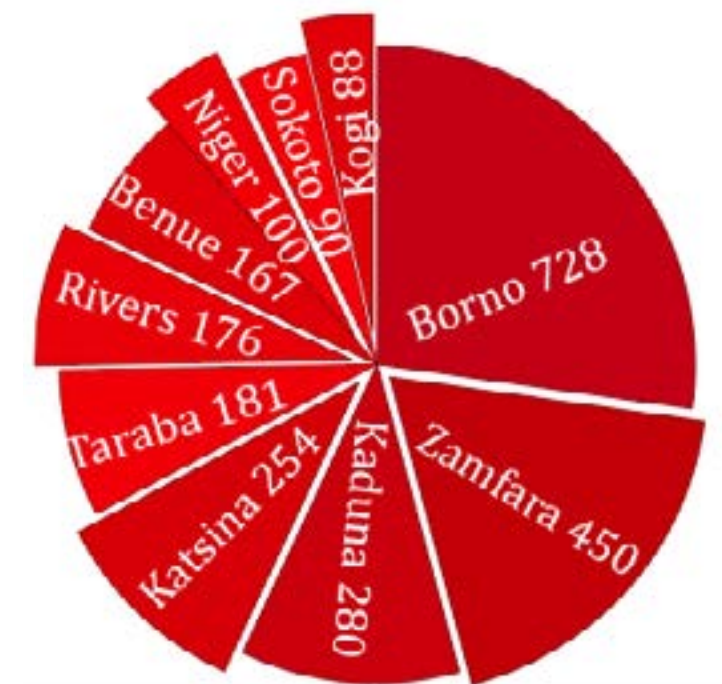
May 2019 recorded at least **310** deaths including the extra judicial killings of citizens by security forces in different parts of the country. Iconic at the period was the brutal murder of **Mr. Kolade Johnson** by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police Force in Lagos State.

Security forces also suffered loses. At least 7 military bases in the North-East were overrun by Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgents and at least 53 Nigerian soldiers lost their lives in the unfortunate incidents. Other deaths resulted from the herdsmen/farmer resource crises, banditry, and cult/gang clashes. In these

attacks, the carnage of properties were difficult to document.

The month of **June** recorded the highest number of deaths with at least **504** lives lost. Of this number, at least 51 were security agents (42 soldiers, 5 police officers, 3 NSCDC Officers and 1 custom officer). Banditry and extrajudicial killings moved at an incremental pace westward, affecting communities in Niger and Kogi states.

We noted the correlation between the Federal Government’s announcement of RUGA settlement programs, and the sudden upsurge of violence in Benue state that had hitherto assumed relative quiet, especially with the deployment of “Operation Whirlstroke” in the Benue Valley. However



10 MOST IMPACTED STATES

on a positive note for Benue state, we note that the *Gyenu killings* and the clash which occurred between farmers and herders in Agatu were the only incidents of mass violence on record for the period, which suggests that the federal military operation in Benue was relatively effective in suppressing killings.

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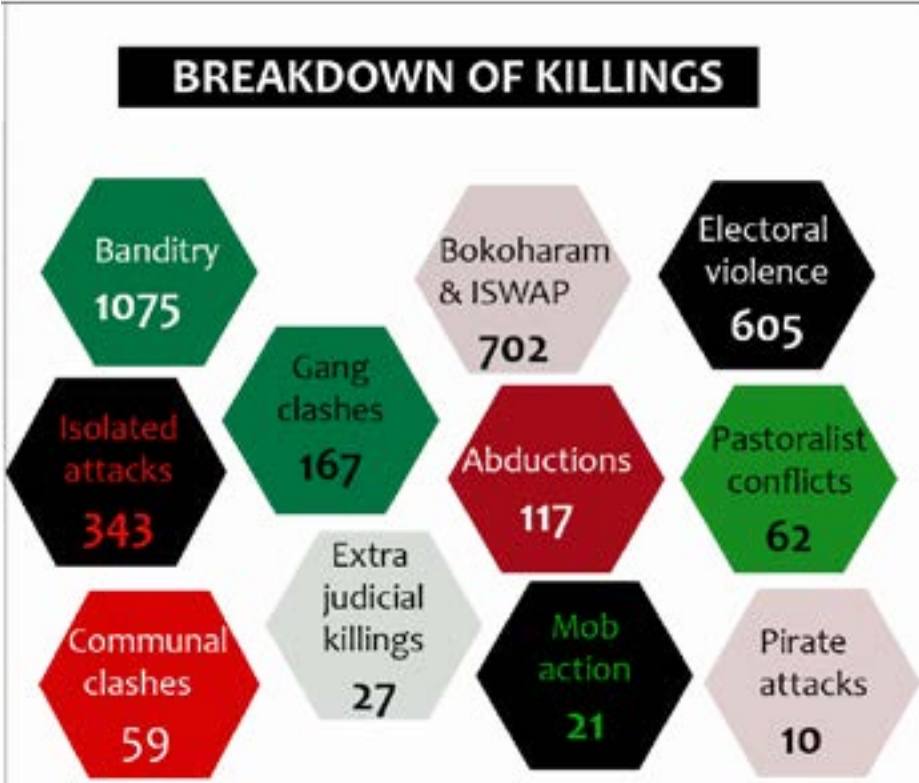
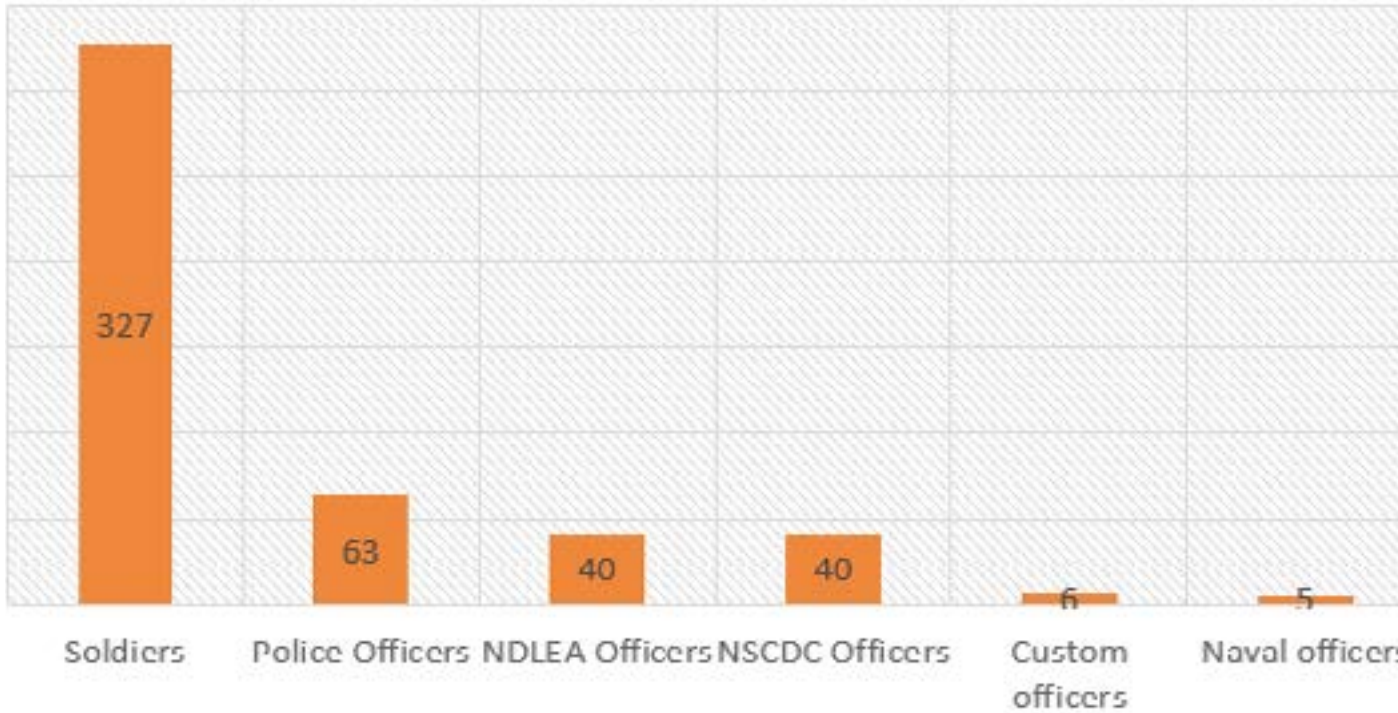
In **July**, there were at least **251** deaths from violent clashes. While ethnoreligious violence wreaked havoc on the Benue Valley region (Benue, Plateau, Taraba), some states in the southern region of the country struggled with rival gang clashes (Rivers, Lagos, Delta, and Bayelsa States). There was also a recognition of the spread of the ‘banditry’ phenomenon beyond

Zamfara, Katsina and Kaduna states, to other parts of the North-West region, particularly Kebbi and Sokoto states.

In **August** there were at least **312** casualties from mass atrocities across the country. The casualties recorded were from extrajudicial killings perpetrated by security personnel, banditry, and terrorism. Of particularly tragic note was the extrajudicial killing by officers of the Nigerian Army of three Police officers in Taraba State on a covert mission to arrest a notorious kidnapper.

In **August**, Given the exponential rise in kidnap cases across the country, we considered it important to also begin to track

481 Security agents killed



this phenomenon as well. Kidnappings in 2019 became more commercial in nature. Victims were targeted or randomly kidnapped in both urban and rural settings, and on highways. The infamous Kaduna-Abuja highway constituted a hotspot for abductions, in spite of several security checkpoints along the length of the road. The North-West has also suffered from this phenomenon for close to a year, particularly in Katsina and Zamfara states.

There were also elements of political kidnappings earlier in year around election season. Most troubling however, was the seeming helplessness of security forces to stem the tide. We found it difficult to track records about victims with no follow up news on their status, except in cases which involved public figures. Some were released, a few escaped, and some were killed even after the ransom had been paid.

In **September** at least **260** persons across 26 states died in incidents of violence including: serial killings, banditry, herders’ attacks; gang clashes, extrajudicial killings,

Boko Haram attacks etc. A highlight for September was the arrest of a serial killer identified as Gracious David West who had left a trail of 15 female victims in hotel rooms across Port Harcourt.

In **October** at least **179** persons were killed. We noted that the number of incidents related to isolated killings and random abduction in highways, urban and rural areas decreased by a considerable margin, compared to the month of September; however, the regular pattern of banditry and terrorism within Zamfara State, Northwest Nigeria persisted.

In **November**, there were at least **112** deaths, some of which were related to electoral violence occasioned in the run-up to, during, and after the Kogi and Bayelsa rerun elections. There were at least **126** casualties in **December**, from an assortment of the reasons listed in previous months. 117 abduction incidents were also recorded.

A Note on Methodology

Nigeria's violence is metastatic – both in terms of geography and causes. In this state of affairs, with nebulous baselines in terms of human assets and violence markers, it is difficult to ascribe certainty to numbers and intensities. For this report:

- We have only included killings verified by at least two or more sources;
- We are aware of a general tendency to under-report military casualties in theatres of operation in the conflict with Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria.
- We recognise that the actual figures for uniformed casualties are likely to be significantly higher.
- Our methodology errs on the side of the conservative pointing to only verifiable incidents and locations.

The figures provided here, therefore represent **the least** possible numbers of casualties. Actual casualty figures are likely to be much higher but we are confident that the trends evident from these figures will hold up to scrutiny.

Conclusion



The numbers were slightly lower compared to 2018 in which period we recorded 3,428 deaths (A difference of 240 killings). Disaggregated, there were at least: **481** security personnel and **2707** civilians killed.

It is instructive that near one in every six casualties was a security agent and this is an alarming trend. Equally alarming is the implication that the service weapons of the killed officers are rarely recovered and are taken away by their assailants.

There is a rise in kidnappings that suggests that ransoms have become a major source of funding for both the insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria and for banditry in the North-West. Additionally, the pattern of attacks on security personnel and formations is consistent with the conclusion that the attackers rearm themselves with weapons stolen from overrunning security outposts or killing security personnel.

We only began to document kidnappings in August, and therefore cannot provide an aggregate for 2019. As in previous years, we were unable to track numbers for the wounded, persons who became disabled, the numbers of persons displaced, cost of properties lost, as a result of these

atrocities. Because of the tendency to report only aggregated numbers, we were also unable to disaggregate based on age or gender.

From the foregoing figures, it is apparent that Nigeria's threshold for violence is very high. Its hard core impact on the security and social wellbeing of both civilian and security populations can only be imagined. It brings to mind Section 14(2)(b) of the Constitution which provides that "*the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government*".

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons across Nigeria is worrisome

The challenge of mitigating violence in Nigeria, and the protection of its people clearly falls on government and its agencies. It, therefore, follows that the country's security architecture is in need of an urgent overhaul.

And by 'security architecture' we refer not just to its security agencies and hardware, **but the entire governance structure** - all institutions charged with dealing with the triggers that perpetuate these forms of violence, which are multidimensional. While there are myriads of triggers to talk about, we will only mention a few:

Arms and light weapons: The proliferation of small arms and light weapons across Nigeria is worrisome

Elections are getting more violent: Politics in Nigeria is still a game of “win at all cost, or lose at your peril – no retreat, no surrender”, incentivising violence. This was evident in the 2019 general elections, in which security agents freely took sides in violence. In the Kogi and Bayelsa Governorship elections at the end of the year, small arms and light weapons were freely deployed. Revisiting incentives for public office and citizens’ participation in governance is therefore imperative. Communities’ distrust of government’s willingness, and more recently – power, to protect them from aggression has also contributed to Nigeria’s underground arms market. Finally, its porous borders facilitate their easy import.

Number of out of school children: Nigeria has the highest number of out of school children in the world. A pointer for unskilled human resources and a future of low productivity and unemployment – drivers for poverty and crime.

Impunity: While corruption is rife in Nigeria, its greatest problem is impunity. There has been very little accountability for the various crimes perpetuated against individuals and communities in the past. The misapplied quest for justice, often results in self-help reprisal attacks, which morph and snowball into bigger crimes and conflicts.

Poverty: Endemic poverty drives violence. Period. When people have nothing to lose, they help everyone else lose everything. The failure to provide social welfare and palliatives to suffering communities drive crimes and conflicts.

Resource governance: Nigeria’s poor governance of its natural and material

resources trigger violence. And by natural resources, we mean not just minerals, but also land and potable water bodies. Poorly maintained capital infrastructure, lack of fiscal justice, and judicious disbursement of state and national assets have also led to citizens’ frustrations.

Can Nigeria surmount its challenges and become a safe haven for development? We believe so, but we also know that it will take a great deal of political will, trust building across ethnic, religious, class and other interest groups. It will also take addressing historical violence and injustices, and making clear attempts at remedying them. God bless Nigeria.



Save the Date

National Day of Mourning May 28 2020

#NDOM2020

contact@globalrights.org
www.globalrights.org or www.
nigeriamourns.org



@globalrightsng or @nigeriamourns