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2.6. Individuals involved in and affected by conflicts between herders and farmers

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: February 2019
*Minor updates added October 2021

This profile refers to members of armed groups of herders and farmers, as well as to (unarmed) individuals in the herders' and farmers' communities affected by the conflict between those armed groups.

COI summary

The conflict between herders and farmers is related to the increasing shortage of land and water, propelled by desertification, insecurity and the loss of grazing land to expanding settlements. The above-mentioned factors have lead to increased migration of herders from northern and middle Nigeria southwards. These herder communities are mostly Fulani, but other ethnicities are also represented. The conflict has acquired three dimensions: ethnic (Fulani vs other Nigerian ethnicities), religious (Muslim herders vs Christian southerners), and cultural (nomadic vs sedentary). It also has an increasing political dimension as President Buhari, a Fulani himself, has been accused of tribalism and of looking away from the conflict. In the background of the herders-farmers conflict there are also the nation-wide legal and social differences between the 'indigenes' or 'natives' (those whose fathers were born in the area and who are granted preferential land rights over settlers) and the 'settlers' (those who settled in the area later). [Targeting, 3.7; Security situation 2018, 3.2]

The farmer-herder conflicts concentrate mainly in the Middle Belt zone, encompassing states in the North-West, North-East, and North-Central regions, and increasingly in southern Nigeria [Security situation 2021, 1.4.1.1]. The conflicts have affected more than 20 states across the country, but in particular the states of Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa, Kaduna, Kwara, Borno and Zamfara [Security situation 2021, 1.4.1.1., 2]. Several farmer and herder communities in the South and in the Middle Belt have formed armed groups or militias, allegedly in response to the lack of protection from the government. The conflict has escalated in the recent years and has led to killings on both sides, as well as to significant displacement. It was estimated that at least 3 641 people have been killed and thousands more have been displaced as a result of the conflicts between 2015 and 2018 [Security situation 2021, 1.3.2.2]. The conflicts have also led to rape, abduction, maiming, burning down of villages, robbery, evictions, pillaging, destruction

of houses, crops, and cattle, etc. [Security situation 2021, 1.3.2.2; Security situation 2018, 3.2]

Several states have passed anti-grazing law in order to avoid clashes between herders and farmers. Some state governments have entered into peace talks, for example offering amnesties, with herder allied groups and have reached agreements [Security situation 2021, 1.3.2.2].

Risk analysis

Individuals under this profile, including armed and unarmed farmers and herders in the regions where the clashes take place, could be exposed to acts of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. killing, rape, abduction).

Not all individuals under this profile would face the level of risk required to establish well-founded fear of persecution. The individual assessment of whether or not there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for the applicant to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as: area of origin of the applicant, level of involvement with armed groups, ownership of land or cattle, etc.

Nexus to a reason for persecution

Available information indicates that persecution of this profile may be for reasons of race (ethnicity, descent) and/or religion.

Exclusion considerations could be relevant to this profile (see the chapter on Exclusion).

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