Please cite as: EUAA, '2.1. Individuals targeted by Boko Haram' in *Country Guidance Afghanistan*, janvier 2022.

2.1. Individuals targeted by Boko Haram

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last updated: February 2019

This section looks into the situation of the following sub-profiles in the areas where Boko Haram operates:

- persons perceived as government supporters
- persons considered as 'infidels', including those rejecting the insurgents' strict interpretation of Sharia
- Christians
- journalists
- teachers and others working in education
- health workers
- IDPs

For the targeting of women and girls by Boko Haram, see under Women and girls.

COI summary

[*Targeting*, 2.1, 3.1]

The activities of Boko Haram concentrate in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, although incidents are also reported in other places in the country.

Boko Haram, especially the faction of JAS, uses violence indiscriminately against civilians in the areas where it operates. However, some profiles are particularly targeted by the group. These include:

- **Perceived government supporters:** Both JAS and ISIS-WA are known to target those associated with the government, including government officials and civil servants, politicians, traditional leaders, CJTF members, etc. For example, Boko Haram fighters have attacked communities where CJTF militia were formed and killed anyone they suspected to be a member of the CJTF, and in some cases all young men and boys in these communities [*Targeting*, 2.5.4.6, 3.1.2].

- **Christians:** There are numerous reports of destruction of churches and killing of Christians, including reports of beheading of Christians who refuse to convert to Islam. In an incident in 2014, Boko Haram reportedly beheaded those Christian men who refused to

convert and married off the women to Boko Haram fighters [*Targeting*, 3.1.4].

- **Persons considered 'infidels', including those rejecting the insurgents' strict interpretation of Sharia:** Muslims opposing Boko Haram are considered 'infidels'. For Boko Haram, and especially JAS, Muslim religious leaders expressing disagreement with the group's methods, are a priority target. There are reports of attacks and destruction of mosques, and the killing of Muslim worshippers. There are indications that since 2015, the group has attacked more mosques than churches; there is no clarity on the reasoning behind that change [*Targeting*, 3.1.3].

- **Journalists:** Nigerian media outlets reporting on Boko Haram have been attacked and threatened by Boko Haram. In practice, media outlets do not send reporters in the areas controlled by Boko Haram unless they volunteer; this is due to the lack of protection by the Nigerian security forces. A number of attacks and killings of media workers have also been reported in Kano and in Abuja [*Targeting*, 3.1.9].

- **Teachers and others working in education and children attending school:** Targeting of teachers and students is due to the group's opposition to western education. Since 2009 and until September 2017, Boko Haram is reported to have killed 2 259 teachers, and to have led to the displacement of 19 000, leaving almost 1 400 schools destroyed in the North East of Nigeria. It has also attacked universities, including the Maiduguri University. School children are also particularly targeted. In February 2018, Boko Haram abducted 110 children, 104 of them were school girls. In March 2018, most of the children were released, however, five girls died and one Christian girl who refused to convert to Islam remained in captivity [*Targeting*, 3.1.5, 3.1.7].

- **Health workers:** Boko Haram has openly condemned the use of western medicine, including vaccinations. A large number of healthcare facilities have been destroyed, in particular in Yobe and Borno. Health workers, especially those involved in immunisation campaigns, have been targeted and killed. Many health workers have fled the region [*Targeting*, 3.1.6].

- **IDPs:** Attacks are also perpetrated on IDP camps, including by suicide bombings. There are indications that IDP or refugee sites are a direct target. This jeopardises the safety of displaced people, aid workers and military staff [*Targeting*, 3.1.8].

For the targeting of women and girls by Boko Haram, see under Women and girls.

Risk analysis

The acts to which individuals under these sub-profiles could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution (e.g. killing, abduction).

Individuals targeted by Boko Haram would in general have a well-founded fear of persecution. It should, however, be noted that the activities of JAS and ISIS-WA concentrate in the North East of the country.

Nexus to a reason for persecution

Available information indicates that the persecution of this profile may be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion (e.g. those perceived as supporting the government or opposing Boko Haram, journalists, teachers, children, and especially girls, attending school, health workers) and/or religion (e.g. Christians, those seen as 'infidels').

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu