



2.12. Muslims in areas where they are a minority

2.12. Muslims in areas where they are a minority

Nigeria's Muslim population accounts for 56.1 %, predominantly residing in the northern regions of the country, whereas Christians are primarily concentrated in the south⁶⁹⁹ (see [Christians in areas where they are a minority](#)).

Within the context of intercommunal violence,⁷⁰⁰ various incidents targeting Fulani Muslims have been reported during the reference period, including killings.⁷⁰¹

1. In 2024, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) launched a campaign against Fulani and criminal groups in South-East forests, reportedly dislodging more than 70 settlements. While many Igbos hailed the operation, it has faced criticism for targeting Muslim Fulani communities indiscriminately.⁷⁰² See for more information the [EUAA COI Report - Nigeria Security Situation November 2025](#). A Nigerian senior security advisor told the EUAA that many Igbos view the cultural and religious differences between the predominantly Christian South-East and the largely Muslim north as irreconcilable, and that a 'united Nigeria is unachievable.' The same source noted that Igbos also view increasing southward migration of Fulani herders, driven by climate change and conflicts in the North, and 'their deadly attacks on farming communities, as an existential threat.'⁷⁰³

In January 2025, sources reported that intentions to establish 'Sharia panels'⁷⁰⁴ in Ekiti and Oyo, South-West,⁷⁰⁵ were met with resistance.⁷⁰⁶ Vanguard reported that, according to Muslim leaders, these panels are part of their 'right to self-determination', while non-Muslim groups have expressed concerns about the 'potential implications'.⁷⁰⁷ The governor of Oyo, for example, indicated that the state will 'uphold the laws and the Constitution of Nigeria' and that the establishment of a sharia court in Oyo would require a bill by the House of the Assembly.⁷⁰⁸ The Ekiti state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice indicated that the state did not recognise sharia law and that the current legal system based on customary law already handles legal issues in the state, including Islamic, Christian, and customary marriages.⁷⁰⁹

Punch reported that, according to the chief imam of Imo state, 'activities of bandits and Boko Haram insurgents in the north are influencing various misconceptions held by the Igbo about Muslims' in the South-East and that instances of discrimination in employment with state institutions reportedly occur.⁷¹⁰ The chief imam also indicated, without providing further

details, that “[t]he Igbo don’t like marrying Muslims and they discourage anyone who wants to marry Muslims”.⁷¹¹ The chief imam, however, ‘praised’ the governor of Imo state for sponsoring the trip to Mecca for 200 people for the 2023 *Hajj* pilgrimage.⁷¹²

- [699](#)

Pew Research Center, How the Global Religious Landscape Changed from 2010 to 2020, 9 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 49, 56, 113, 193

- [700](#)

Amnesty International, The State of the World's Human Rights, Nigeria 2024, 29 April 2025, [url](#); FT, Nigeria’s spiralling rural violence heaps pressure on president, 27 April 2025, [url](#)

- [701](#)

This Day, Bauchi Gov Pays Condolence Visit To Victims of Bandits’ Attack, Donates N100m, 17 May 2025, [url](#) ; SBM Intelligence, A threat to national stability, 27 March 2025, [url](#), pp. 18-19, 32

- [702](#)

Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

- [703](#)

Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

- [704](#)

A ‘Sharia panel’ is not a court but an ‘arbitration committee’ that handles civil matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and disputes over contractual agreements between Muslims. Vanguard, Sharia row rages in South-West as supporters expand scope of demand from panel to court, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

- [705](#)

The Guardian, Sultan backs Sharia law in Oyo, Ekiti, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

- [706](#)

West Africa Weekly, Explainer: Sharia Expansion in South-West Nigeria – Should Citizens be Concerned?, 27 January 2025, [url](#); Daily Trust, Why Sharia panels are generating controversy in South-West, 27 January 2025, [url](#)

- [707](#)

Vanguard, Sharia row rages in South-West as supporters expand scope of demand from panel to court, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

- [708](#)

Vanguard, Sharia row rages in South-West as supporters expand scope of demand from panel to court, 12 January 2025, [url](#); Nigerian Tribune, EXPLAINER: 'No religious group can create Sharia Court in South-West', 30 December 2024, [url](#)

- [709](#)

Daily Trust, Sharia panels: Discrimination against southern Muslims worries NSCIA, 30 January 2025, [url](#)

- [710](#)

Punch, Imo chief imam: Igbo Muslims battling discrimination in south-east — nobody wants to marry us, 23 March 2024, [url](#)

- [711](#)

Punch, Imo chief imam: Igbo Muslims battling discrimination in south-east — nobody wants to marry us, 23 March 2024, [url](#)

- [712](#)

Punch, Imo chief imam: Igbo Muslims battling discrimination in south-east — nobody wants to marry us, 23 March 2024, [url](#)