

Terminology and classification of actors

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In examining matters concerning Boko Haram, it is important to note that the term serves as an umbrella definition for an armed group comprising internal factions. Some sources do not explicitly differentiate between the two main factions: Jamaatu Ahlis-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wal-Jihad (JAS) and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which may affect the specificity of information related to their activities, structures, and areas of control. In this report, the terms JAS and Boko Haram are used interchangeably, in contrast to ISWAP and other Boko Haram factions.

When reporting on issues involving especially cult groups, herder-farmer conflicts, banditry (and in some instances, vigilante groups, separatist armed groups, Islamist groups), sources often use broad labels such as 'criminals', 'gunmen', 'bandits', 'terrorists' to describe perpetrators. Such terminology, at times, creates challenges in distinguishing between different groups and incidents, particularly as some actors overlap. Given the complex nature of these phenomena in Nigeria, it is not always possible to provide precise or clear-cut information about the actors involved.

Further, some sources use the terms 'hunters' and 'vigilantes' interchangeably to describe community-based security groups in Nigeria. However, the term 'vigilante' is more commonly used as the broader label for these non-state security actors.14

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  UNUCPR, MEAC Findings Report 5, Volunteer Security Outfits in North East Nigeria, April 2021, url, p. 5

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