

1.2. Conflict drivers and security trends

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1.2.1. Attacks by Islamist groups and counter-insurgency operations

Northern Nigeria was described as a one of the main hotbeds of violence as it continued to be affected by armed attacks, abductions and banditry.169 During the first half of 2024, the UN observed a deterioration of security conditions across the Lake Chad basin as operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) 170 faced disruptions after the military coup in Niger171 in July 2023,172 prompting a rise in militant and extremist activity in the North-East.173

Following a period of relative lull in insurgent activity,174 ISWAP, a splinter faction of Boko Haram,175 attacked Nigerian troops in Borno state in January 2025176 and then launched a large-scale offensive across its zone of operation in the North-East, overrunning positions of government forces at multiple instances.177 Amongst others, the group attacked army positions in Yamtage town178 and carried out coordinated attacks on Marte, Dikwa and Rann towns179 (all located in Borno state).180 It also extended its attacks into Yobe and Adamawa states.181 Between February and late June 2025, ISWAP conducted 22 attacks on heavily fortified ‘super camps’ of the Nigerian armed forces, as recorded by the Jamestown Foundation.182 Dozens of soldiers were killed in these attacks.183 Some of the attacks were repelled by the army184 or followed by counter-offensives that retook at least one base seized by the militants.185

Besides conducting attacks on military forces, ISWAP perpetrated deadly assaults against communities of Shiites (August 2024)186 and Christians (April187 and May 2025188). The Boko Haram faction, JAS, likewise intensified its attacks on civilians and perceived government collaborators.189 The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) identified 214 attacks on civilians by armed groups over the year 2024, resulting in more than 300 deaths.190 Dozens of civilians were killed in attacks by Boko Haram factions in the region in September 2024191 and January 192 and April 2025.193 A key Boko Haram (JAS) commander and two of his deputies were killed in a targeted security operation in May 2025.194

In remote areas of the North-West, Lakurawa - a militant group with suspected195 links to ISSP 196 and whose existence was only first acknowledged by the Nigerian government in November 2024 - launched attacks on local villages in late 2024/early 2025, killing dozens of residents. In response, armed forces launched air and ground operations against Lakurawa in late 2024197 and arrested 174 suspected members of the group at the Nigeria-Niger border in January 2025. 198 According to Nigeria Watch, Lakurawa’s raids on local communities and government operations against the group in 2024 resulted in 48 fatalities in Zamfara, Kebbi and Sokoto

states.199

Military and security campaigns against insurgents further intensified in mid-2025, involving clearance operations, airstrikes and ambushes mainly in Borno, Adamawa, Kebbi and Zamfara states, resulting in the killing of dozens of armed militants.200

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