

2.3.7. Zamfara

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Zamfara state is comprised of the following 14 LGAs: Anka, Bakura, Birin Magaji (or Birnin Magaji/Kiyaw), Bukkuyum, Bungudu, Chafe, Gummi, Gusau, Kaura Namoda, Maradun, Maru, Shinkafi, Talata Mafara, Zurmi. The capital city is Gusau.[1190](#)

The two main ethnic groups are the Hausa and the Fulani. Other ethnic groups in Zamfara State include the Gwari, Kamuku, Kambari, Dukawa, Bussawa, Zabarma, Igbo, Yoruba, Kanuri, Nupe, and the Tiv. While Islam is the predominant religion in the state, there are also Christians and followers of indigenous religions.[1191](#)

UNFPA and the US Census Bureau projected the population at 5 833 500 in 2022, based on figures from the 2006 census.[1192](#)

a) Conflict dynamics and main actors

For a general overview on actors in Nigeria, please see section [1.1 Main Actors](#).

In June 2025, IOM reported a multi-dimensional crisis in Nigeria's North-West, with long-standing tensions between ethnic and religious groups leading to attacks and banditry.[1193](#) As of July 2024, one third of the North-West's 20 000 to 30 000 armed bandits were reported to be in Zamfara state.[1194](#) Between 2019 and October 2024, Zamfara was among the five states most affected by inter-group clashes between bandit groups.[1195](#) Amnesty International reported that between May 2023 and May 2025, over 273 people were killed by bandits in the state. 725 villages across 13 LGAs were controlled by bandit/criminal groups,[1196](#) who have reportedly established bases in remote parts of various north-western states, including Zamfara.[1197](#) Armed groups reportedly pressured individuals into paying taxes by threatening to kill,[1198](#) abduct, forcibly evict or hurt them,[1199](#) with some civilians killed for refusing to pay.[1200](#)

During the reference period, abductions of civilians,[1201](#) including mass abductions[1202](#) and abductions leading to civilian deaths were reported in Zamfara state.[1203](#)

In early 2024, the vigilante force Zamfara state community protection guards,[1204](#) also known as Askarawa, was formed.[1205](#) Previously banned due to violence concerns, the new vigilante force has undergone training to prevent such issues.[1206](#) Some government airstrikes against bandits resulted in civilian deaths.[1207](#) Revenge attacks by bandits and armed groups were also reported.[1208](#)

The jihadist group Lakurawa was active[1209](#) and present in Zamfara state,[1210](#) specifically in Gummi-Gusau.[1211](#)

Sources also reported IED explosions in Zamfara state during the reference period.[1212](#)

b) Security incidents and impact on the population

For the period between 1 January 2024 and 31 August 2025, ACLED recorded 760 security incidents (defined as battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, and riots) in Zamfara state, which resulted in 2 806 fatalities. Of these incidents, 439 were coded as incidents of violence against civilians, 277 were coded as battles, 31 as explosions/remote violence, and 13 as riots.[1213](#)

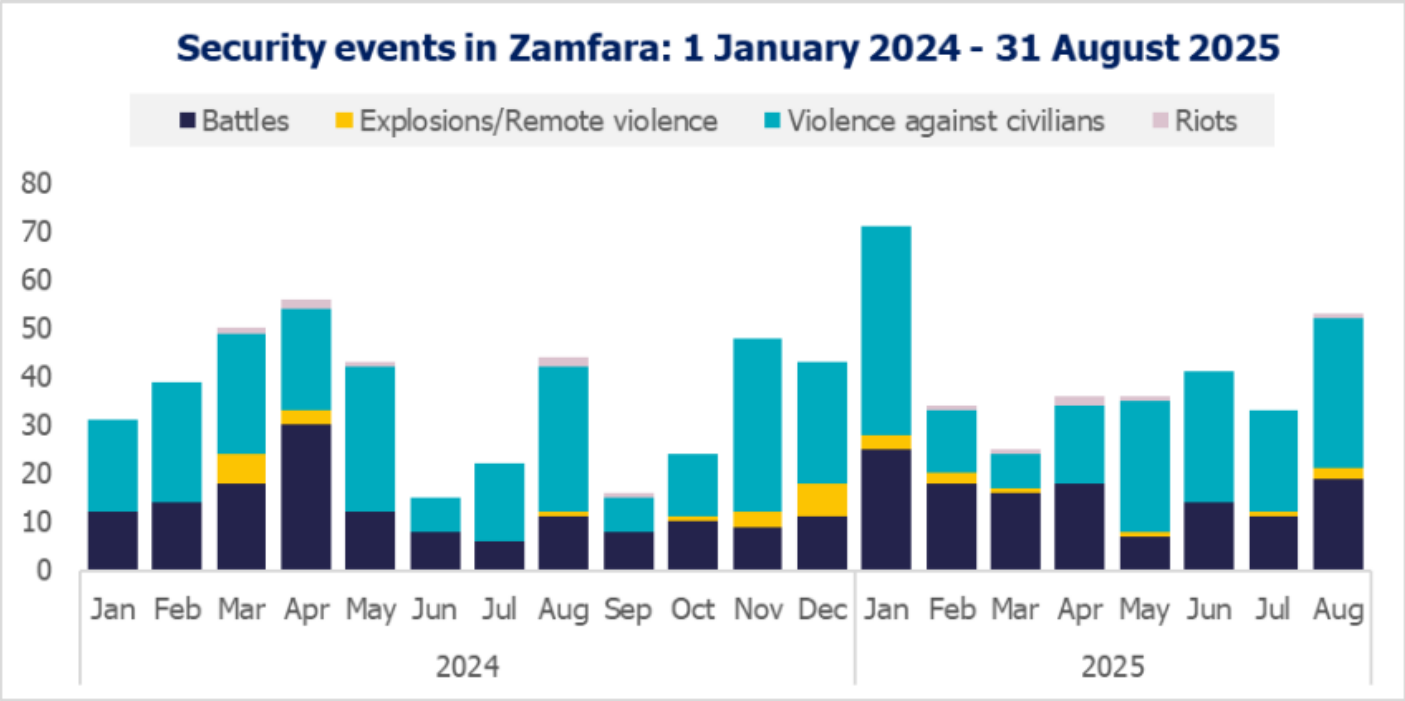


Figure 11: Evolution of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence, riots, and violence against civilians in Zamfara state, 1 January 2024 – 31 August 2025, based on ACLED data.[1214](#)

Security incidents were recorded by ACLED in all 14 LGAs of the state, with the highest number documented in Tsafe (145), followed by Gusau (91), Maru (82), Zurmi (68) and Kaura Namoda (66). According to ACLED, Zamfara communal militia (coded as either ‘Actor 1’ or ‘Actor 2’) were involved in the majority of incidents coded as violence against civilians.[1215](#)

Zamfara state was the most dangerous state in Nigeria in 2024, according to Nigeria Watch, with 19.52 fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants, primarily due to banditry.[1216](#) Nigeria Watch also noted an increase in fatalities resulting from rural banditry, cattle rustling and government counter-operations across the country in 2024, with Zamfara state accounting for 394 of the about 1 452 deaths, including of civilians, recorded in nine states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).[1217](#) ACLED ranked Zamfara as the second state with the highest number of security incidents (defined as battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, and riots) during the reference period, after Borno state ranking first.[1218](#)

Between July 2023 and June 2024, the state experienced 132 of the country's 1 130 abduction incidents and accounted for 1 639 of the 7 568 victims, including 146 civilian fatalities, making it

the Nigerian state most affected by abductions in that period.[1219](#) In 2024, Zamfara was the state with the second-highest number of abduction victims (421)[1220](#) and abductions in the state reportedly increased by 156 % compared to the foregoing 4-year average.[1221](#) Amnesty International reported that over 467 individuals were abducted in Zamfara between May 2023 and May 2025.[1222](#)

In May 2024, armed men attacked Bilbis in Tsafe LGA and three villages in Birin Magaji LGA, resulting in 20 deaths and seven injuries. Over 100 people were abducted for ransom.[1223](#) In December 2024, unidentified men raided Kakin Dawa village in the Maradun LGA, abducting over 50 women and children.[1224](#) In May 2025, an armed group killed four women and abducted 20 residents in the Kaura Namoda LGA.[1225](#) In April 2024,[1226](#) as well as in January [1227](#) and June 2025, government attacks from the air targeting bandits were reported to have accidentally killed civilians.[1228](#)

Conflict-related infrastructure damage - An October 2024 Africa Center for Strategic Studies report noted that attacks by criminal groups have resulted in looting of medical supplies and the razing or occupying of medical facilities in some north-western states, including Zamfara. Some facilities reportedly shut down as a result of insecurity. The source noted that healthcare access in Zurmi, Maru, Bungudu, Tsafe, Birnin Magaji, Gusau East, and Shinkafi LGAs had disappeared for almost two years as a result, forcing people to receive healthcare in other places inside or outside the country. Activities of bandits and a related worsening of the security situation also forced the mentioned LGAs to shut schools for over two years, with 168 schools remaining shut in Zamfara state as of October 2024. Also, large areas of 'farmlands have become inaccessible or deserted due to displacements, producing very little output. Where people can farm, a substantial portion of their harvests go to the criminal groups'.[1229](#)

Road security - Criminal groups in Zamfara state were reportedly engaging in grand larceny along major highways,[1230](#) with bandits planting landmines on roads to block government forces' accessing during attacks.[1231](#) In May 2025, Amnesty International reported that bandit groups were preventing farmers in the Dangulbi district of the Maru LGA from accessing the nearest markets to sell their harvest.[1232](#) Blocked by bandits, residents in Anka LGA's Bagega and Kawaye districts were cut off from the outside world for weeks in late April and early May 2025.[1233](#)

Displacement, movement and return - According to IOM, the conflict in the north-western states of Nigeria has worsened, leading to widespread displacement throughout the region.[1234](#) According to the October 2024 Africa Center for Strategic Studies report, criminal groups' establishment of bases in remote parts of Zamfara and other north-western states has led to civilian displacement.[1235](#) As of February 2025, IOM estimated the number of IDPs in Zamfara state at 216 885 compared to 191 055 as of November 2024.[1236](#) UNHCR, as of August 2025, estimated the number of IDPs in Zamfara state at 216 968.[1237](#) IOM lists armed banditry/kidnapping (79 %), insurgency (12 %) and communal clashes (9 %) as the main reasons for displacement in the state.[1238](#) The IMDC reported 295 000 cases of internal displacements resulting from conflict and violence in Nigeria in 2024, of which almost 123 000 occurred in three north-western states, including Zamfara.[1239](#) The Africa Center for Strategic Studies in October 2024 attributed 100 % of displacements in Zamfara state to criminal group activity.

[1240](#) In an attack by armed bandits on 24 June 2025 on six locations in Bukkuyum and Gummi LGAs in Zamfara state, 6 245 individuals, including a high number of children, were displaced. [1241](#) According to a May 2025 Nigerian Tribune article, there were no camps for the IDPs in Zamfara state.[1242](#)

No information could be found on returns in Zamfara state during the reference period.

c) State response in maintaining law and order

Offensives against bandits were carried out by vigilantes[1243](#) and the government during the reference period,[1244](#) including government airstrikes.[1245](#) Regarding Lakurawa activity, the government also reportedly carried out raids on communities and counter-operations in 2024. [1246](#) Sources also reported security operation during the reference period, which resulted in abduction victims being released.[1247](#) Non-military government efforts in late August 2025 reportedly led to the release of over 142 abduction victims.[1248](#)

The Zamfara State parallel House of Assembly criticised state's governor Dauda Lawal in May 2025 for failing to fulfil electoral campaign promises to end armed banditry and allow insecurity to grow and leaving IDPs with nowhere to go.[1249](#) The same month, communities in Bagega and Kawaye districts of Anka LGA, expressing desperation due to ineffective government intervention, initiated direct negotiations with bandits.[1250](#) On a similar note, the Africa Center for Strategic Studie reported in October 2024 that some villages in Zamfara 'having lost confidence in the government's ability to come to their aid', were paying criminal groups protection money, noting that those who cannot pay are subjected to attacks.[1251](#) In contrast to this, some sources cited Zamfara state governor Dauda Lawal as saying security has improved. [1252](#) In early September 2025, he reportedly stated that his main problem in tackling banditry in Zamfara state was that he did not have direct control over the security agencies, which received their orders from the federal government. A Daily Trust article cited unspecified sources as saying that poor road conditions were helping the bandits and seriously hindering the security forces' ability to access affected areas promptly.[1253](#)

In January 2025, at least 16 civilians were killed in Zamfara state in a military air strike, apparently after being mistaken for criminal gangs; the Nigerian Air Force indicated that it "'views with grave concern reports of the loss of civilian lives in the course of the operation" and that a "'comprehensive investigation"' would be carried out and it would be "'communicated to inform and reassure the public"'.[1254](#) Human Rights Watch indicated that investigations into airstrikes by the Nigerian military have yet to produce results and that the military continue facing accusations of further erroneous strikes.[1255](#)

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