

2.6.3. Ondo

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Ondo state is comprised of the following 18 LGAs: Akoko North-East, Akoko North-West, Akoko South-East, Akoko South-West, Akure North, Akure South, Ese Odo, Idanre, Ifedore, Ilaje, Ile Oluji/Okeigbo, Irele, Odigbo, Okitipupa, Ondo East, Ondo West, Ose, and Owo.1806 The capital city is Akure.1807

The main ethnic groups include the Akoko, Akure, Ikale, Ilaje, Ondo, and Owo – all sub-ethnic groups of the Yoruba - and minorities such as Ijaw and Apoi.1808

UNFPA and the US Census Bureau projected the population of Ondo state at 5 316 603 in 2022, based on figures from the 2006 census.1809 Ondo state is part of the Niger Delta region.1810

a) Conflict dynamics and main actors

For a general overview on actors in Nigeria, please see section 1.1 Main Actors.

Main security issues reported during the reference include communal conflict and criminal activities,1811 especially kidnapping for ransom.1812

The Nigerian civil society organisation Yiaga Africa recorded communal clashes in several LGAs ahead of the November 2024 gubernatorial elections, including clashes over a boundary between Ode-Irele (Irele LGA) and Igbobini (Ese-Ode LGA) communities, as well as between communities in Akoko South-West, Ifedore, Ondo East and Ose LGAs.1813 During the reference period, a surge in kidnappings was reported by the media,1814 with such incidents reportedly occurring regularly.1815 The Daily Trust similarly pointed to ‘frequent’ incidents of kidnapping by armed criminals (‘bandits’) and noted that there had been numerous incidents of kidnappings and killings since November 2024, including the killing of victims who were unable to secure the requested ransom.1816 In November 2024, Yiaga Africa observed that kidnapping for ransom had become ‘a trend’ in Ose LGA.1817 Nextier recorded 29 kidnapping victims in Ondo state in 2024. In contrast to other parts of Nigeria, in the South-West kidnapping mainly took the form of kidnapping for ransom and rituals.1818

Several sources reported about lethal attacks on farmers by suspected (Fulani) herders in the reference period,1819 and about an increase in violent farmer-herder conflicts as of early 2025. 1820 Attacks occurred in the context of conflicts over land and resources between local farmers and herders migrating from the north in search of grazing land and water for their cattle.1821

Some sources reported on incidents of cult-related violence in Ondo state.[1822] Cult groups explicitly mentioned were the Eiye,[1823] Black Axe and Ku Klux Klan confraternities.[1824]

In terms of election-related violence, the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) and Yiaga Africa pointed to some violent incidents in the context of the November 2024 Ondo state gubernatorial elections,[1825] including the killing of a campaign manager of state governor Aiyedatiwa in April 2024.[1826] However, the CDD noted that only 'a little' of the projected disruption eventually materialised and that the electoral process in general was peaceful.[1827]

b) Security incidents and impact on the population

In the period 1 January 2024 - 31 August 2025, ACLED recorded 89 security incidents in Ondo state, resulting in 72 fatalities. Of these security incidents, 15 were coded as battles, 16 as riots, and 58 incidents were coded as violence against civilians.[1828]

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Figure 23: Evolution of security events coded as battles, explosions/remote violence, riots, and violence against civilians in Ondo state, 1 January 2024 – 31 August 2025, based on ACLED data.[1829]

Security incidents were recorded by ACLED in 15 LGAs of the state, with the highest numbers recorded in Akure North LGA (18), followed by Akoko South-West (14), Akure South (12), Owo (11), and Akoko North-East LGAs (7 Incidents). No incidents were recorded in three LGAs. According to ACLED, unidentified armed groups and Fulani ethnic militia (coded as either 'Actor 1' or 'Actor 2') were involved in the majority of security incidents coded as violence against civilians, mainly in the context of abductions for ransom and killings.[1830]

PIND observed a sharp increase in lethal violence in early 2025 compared to the preceding quarter, mainly due to communal conflict and criminal activities, in particular abductions for ransom. In the period from January to March 2025, Akure North LGA recorded the highest number of conflict-related deaths.[1831] Lethal violence declined 'significantly' in the second quarter of 2025, according to PIND, with the highest number of fatalities recorded in Ondo West LGA during that period.[1832] In May 2025, the local chairman of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Ifon, Ose LGA, was reportedly kidnapped at his residence and later killed by the kidnappers despite receiving part of the demanded ransom.[1833] In March 2025, nine surveyors were abducted by armed gunmen while working on site in Akure North LGA. The kidnappers reportedly demanded a ransom of 100 million Naira [EUR 56 553[1834]] and later reduced it to 50 million Naira [EUR 28 277].[1835] The victims were released a week later after the payment of 20 million Naira [EUR 11 311].[1836]

On 8 March 2025, at least 14 people were killed in a nightly attack by suspected herders on four communities in Akure North LGA, reportedly in retaliation for the killing of more than 100 cows, which the attackers apparently attributed to the local communities.[1837] Attacks by suspected herders reportedly also included arson attacks,[1838] and the destruction of crops.[1839]

Conflict-related infrastructure damage - No further information, other than the aforementioned incidents, could be found during the reference period.

Road security - Daily Trust noted in May 2025 that the security situation was deteriorating particularly along highways and in rural communities. One resident particularly warned against using the Owo-Akoko road at night.1840 Castor Vali mentioned several 'hotspots', including the 'Lokoja–Makurdi–Lafia route, the Warri–Sagamu road, the Ondo–Benin City road, and the corridor between Ibadan and Oyo', as several incidents had been recorded along all of these routes in the first quarter of 2025.1841 THISDAY noted that kidnappers were operating in the area near Akure Airport.1842 Vanguard pointed to the Owo-Ose highway, a 'notorious' kidnapping route. 1843

Displacement, movement and return - Many farmers were reportedly abandoning their farms due to ongoing kidnappings,1844 and attacks by suspected herdsmen.1845 As of August 2025, no further information could be found on conflict-induced displacement and no information could be found on returns in Ondo state during the reference period.

c) State response in maintaining law and order

SBM Intelligence pointed to rising social unrest across the country with affected communities protesting against violent attacks by suspected Fulani herders, including in Ondo state,1846 where at least three protests with street blockades took place in early 2025.1847

National media noted in March 2025 that kidnapping cases were 'spiraling out of control',1848 and that Ondo state, a former 'haven of peace', had turned into a 'hotbed of fear' with perpetrators often acting 'with impunity', despite police efforts.1849 In response to the rising crime rates, the government reportedly created a security joint task force in March 2025 that included army, police, Nigeria Security & Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and Amotekun forces. 1850 Previously, a specialised Amotekun unit was reportedly created and deployed to newly established control points along the border,1851 following appeals by border communities to the authorities and security forces to increase surveillance especially in the border regions with Edo, Ekiti, and Kogo states.1852 Ondo state's Amotekun commander noted that other measures taken to tackle the farmer-herder conflict included talks to herders and farmers to inform about each group's limitations, as well as the implementation of the anti-open-grazing law.1853 The Amotekun commander and police officials pointed to uncontrolled immigration and the forces' insufficient equipment as major security challenges.1854

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