# 3.1. Individuals within the reach of Boko Haram

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: March 2026

This profile refers to individuals who have been or may be targeted in areas where Boko Haram operates. For the areas of operation of Boko Haram see 2.2.1. Boko Haram and other Islamist armed groups.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: Country Focus 2025, 2.10; Security 2025, 1.2.1.; COI Update 2026, 2.1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

**Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?**

Acts to which individuals within the reach of Boko Haram could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, civilians who are considered apostates by JAS, including members of the Muslim population, are often targeted through suicide attacks, massacres, enslavement, raids and abductions. Women victims of kidnapping are often forced to marry JAS fighters and are subjected to sexual violence and other abuses. Enslavement by JAS of those it labels ‘infidels’ or ‘apostates’ and by ISWAP of non-Muslims is permissible. While ISWAP limits violence against Muslim civilians, non-Muslims remain unprotected under its rule. ISWAP has mainly targeted the military forces and Christian communities. It has also carried out massacres of civilians accused of breaching its rules and those perceived as government collaborators, attacking towns and killing inhabitants, including Muslims, because of unpaid ‘taxes’. Children have also been recruited by Boko Haram into armed conflict, including as soldiers.

**Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?**

**For Christians in areas where Boko Haram operates, a well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated**, as they have been widely targeted by the group.

For **other individuals in areas where Boko Haram operates**, the individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood to face persecution should take into account

**risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Compliance with Boko Haram rules/values:** JAS considers non-abiding Muslims to be apostates and targets them accordingly. ISWAP has carried out massacres of civilians accused of breaching its rules, including against Muslims. Justifications include refusal to pay 'taxes', active support or suspected cooperation with government forces, or defiance of its authority.

- **Occupation:** Persons with certain professions may be accused of spying or not complying with Boko Haram rules/values and in such cases, they would have a higher risk of persecution. For example, ISWAP has increasingly targeted farmers, fishermen, loggers, herders, and metal scrap collectors, accusing them of spying and relaying information to the military and local militias opposing them. Humanitarian workers have been also targeted. Members of civil society organisations have also faced threats and physical violence for speaking out against Boko Haram.

- **Gender and age**: Children and women are particularly targeted for abductions and sexual violence, especially in IDP camps. See also 3.14. Women and girls. Schoolchildren have been significantly impacted by Boko Haram's campaign against secular education. Attacks on schools and widespread abductions by Boko Haram have led to the closure or destruction of thousands of educational institutions at all levels. Furthermore, children from North-East face a higher risk of recruitment, abduction, or exploitation by Boko Haram.

**Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?**

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for non-abiding Muslims and non-Muslims (including Christians), persecution is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** as they are viewed as infidels or apostates. For those persecuted for not complying with Boko Haram rules, persecution is highly likely to be for reasons of **religion** and/or **(imputed) political opinion** as they are often perceived as Nigerian authorities' sympathisers or collaborators. For the potential nexus regarding persecution of women and girls, see also 3.14. Women and girls.

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