

3.10. Individuals accused of witchcraft

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: March 2026

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2025, 2.17.; Targeting 2018, 3.9.2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Belief in witchcraft (or juju) is widespread in Nigeria. Nigeria's Criminal Code and Penal Code prohibit witchcraft-related acts, including self-identification as a witch, accusations of witchcraft and use of charms or juju.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which individuals accused of witchcraft could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, killings, mob violence, torture and physical assault by community members have been reported. Although Nigerian law prohibits accusing someone of witchcraft, prosecutions and convictions are rare.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that individuals accused of witchcraft could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be considered. More specifically, these individuals have been subjected to public humiliation and forced confessions. They are also often denied education, employment and health care.

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

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for individuals accused of witchcraft to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Age, gender and family status**: Children and especially elderly women and widows, would have a higher risk of being accused of witchcraft and therefore be subjected to persecution. A report of 2010 indicated that orphan children would also have a higher risk of being accused of witchcraft.

- **Relevant events**: A report of 2010 and of 2012 indicated that misfortune, whether illness, death or other misfortunate events, is rarely considered to have occurred completely naturally. Therefore, relevant events in the local community (e.g. death of a child, miscarriage of a pregnant woman) may increase the risk of witch-hunting.

- **Nature and visibility of a mental or physical disability:** People with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, epilepsy or widows struggling with their mental health are particularly vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft and therefore persecution. Signs of confusion or silence may be misinterpreted as evidence of witchcraft. A report of 2016 also indicated persons with kyphosis (hunchback) being potential targets. See also 3.16. Individuals with disabilities, including mental health issues.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this may be for reasons of **religion**, as witchcraft can be viewed as having a spiritual dimension. Persecution may also be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**. For example, persons accused of witchcraft on the basis of a physical or mental disabilities, share an innate characteristic (the disability) and have a distinct identity in Nigeria as indicated by the severe social stigma.

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