5. Actors of protection

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: March 2026

For general guidance on the country guidance approach to this section, see 'EUAA, Actors of protection in *Country Guidance: explained*, February 2026'.

5.1. The Nigerian State

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: Country Focus 2025, 2.2., 2.18.; Security 2025, 1.1.; COI Update 2026, 2.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Nigeria's legal system is a mix of English common law, *sharia* law in northern states, and traditional law. *Sharia* courts are only located in the 12 northern states where *sharia* law is applied (Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara). In these 12 northern states the *Sharia* Penal Code is applied. Most southern states use the Criminal Code Act as their state law. The judiciary is formally independent, however political interference, corruption and lack of equipment and training remain key problems. Especially corruption is a serious problem in Nigeria's justice system.

Federal state authorities are accused of disregarding due process. In some cases, people are detained without being informed of the charges against them or allowing them access to counsel. Those detained by the military under terrorism charges are not accorded the right to legal representation, due process, or to be heard by a judicial authority. Prolonged pretrial detention of suspects sometimes continues even after courts have ordered their release on bail. Additionally, some individuals whose cases are dismissed by the courts reportedly remain in detention without clear legal justification.

Sharia courts accord less weight to the testimony of women and non-Muslims. Gender inequality under *sharia* law impacts women's rights and social status adversely.

The capacity of security forces—including the NPF, Department of State Services**,** NAF, and several other federal and state-level agencies—is significantly constrained. The police and military are overstretched by concurrent threats, such as insurgency in the North-East, banditry in the North-West and North-Central, secessionist violence in the South-East, and criminality in the Niger Delta. Security forces struggle with resource shortages, corruption, insufficient training, and limited operational reach. In many areas, gaps in state protection have led to the proliferation of vigilante groups and community-based defence organisations, which operate with varying degrees of state supervision. Their involvement sometimes contributes to human rights abuses, arbitrary detention, and excessive use of force. In November 2025, President Tinubu ordered the recruitment of 20 000 additional police officers to target armed groups.

Nigeria has established specialised institutions to address specific forms of crime, including the NAPTIP, which investigates human trafficking, child labour, and sexual exploitation. The national agency has taken many actions to improve the response to modern slavery in the past few years, but tends to operate more reactively than proactively, often waiting for complaints before acting. NAPTIP conducts investigations, rescues victims, and coordinates with law enforcement. However, its overall effectiveness is hampered by limited funding, insufficient staffing and capacity constraints, especially outside major urban centres. Fragmentation of efforts across stakeholders and corruption has hindered investigations and prosecutions of traffickers. These issues are further exacerbated by the reluctance of victims and their families to provide information about traffickers and their networks.

In the North-East states where Boko Haram has long-standing and widespread presence, state protection would in general be considered unavailable.

In other areas affected by criminality or other types of violence (e.g. herders and farmers or communal conflicts, Islamist groups), the capacity of the Nigerian state is generally limited, but may in individual cases be available. Age, gender, home area, religion and socio-economic status are among the factors that affect the accessibility of protection. For the areas affected by these groups or conflicts, see 2.1.1. Boko Haram and other Islamist armed groups, 4.2.2. Criminal violence and 4.3.3. Indiscriminate violence.

The protection of the Nigerian state is also generally not available for certain categories of individuals, such as for women and children victims of violence, FGM/C and forced marriage.

The Nigerian state and its institutions, including NAPTIP and in collaboration with local organisations, have made progress in combatting trafficking in human beings. However, the protection may be proven inaccessible or ineffective for victims of trafficking in human beings, especially for those outside major urban centres and those not returning with an assisted program.

Moreover, the Nigerian State may be an actor of persecution, for example in cases of persons with diverse SOGIESC, members and perceived supporters of pro-Biafra separatist movements, therefore, in such cases state protection would be unavailable.

☐ 5.2. Parties or organisations, including international organisations

No parties or organisations that control the country or a substantial part of its territory and are able to provide protection were identified in Nigeria.

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu