



INFORMATION/DATA BRIEF

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Profile of Insecurity in Nigeria, 2020: Considerations for the National Assembly

Kolapo Q. Abayomi, MSc and Leo O. Igbanoi, PhD

Summary

This brief adds to the discourse on insecurity in Nigeria by providing data on violent attacks and deaths across the nation for the year 2020. In its analyses, the brief shows that over 3,300 Nigerians lost their lives in 2020 to diverse forms of violent attacks, including through the activities of Boko Haram, bandits, sectarian and communal clashes, the farmer-herder crisis, among others.

Employing a month-on-month and State-by-State disaggregation, figures reveal at least two violent attacks and nine deaths per day across the country, reflecting an average of 60 violent attacks and over 270 deaths a month, and 720 attacks that lead to roughly 3,240 deaths for the year.

In light of the foregoing, the brief suggests the following:

- The National Assembly may wish to have a robust engagement with newly appointed service chiefs on novel approaches they hope to bring to dealing with the protracted problem of insecurity in Nigeria since they have been part of the system all along.
- The National Assembly may wish to commence a sustained national dialogue on social cohesion in Nigeria. This could address fundamental issues of inclusivity of individuals and groups in social, economic and political policymaking, and hopefully reduce distrust and intolerance among individuals and groups in the nation.
- Policymakers may wish to engage the Executive on alternative ways to deal with insecurity, including conversations about cross-border flows into the country, intelligence gathering mechanisms and early warning signs (EWS) that are suited to contemporary security realities.

Background



Insecurity remains one of the biggest problems faced by the Nigerian State today. Apart from the persistent violent attacks by armed groups such as Boko Haram, the farmer-herder crisis, and the new wave of banditry across the country, Nigeria is also plagued by sectarian and communal clashes, violent actions by state actors such as that experienced during the #EndSars protest in 2020, among others. In the year 2020, for instance, a report by the Cable showed that no less than 3,326 Nigerians lost their lives through one of the indicated factors above.¹ This figure is higher than another report by Global Rights Nigeria that in 2019, at least 3,188 Nigerians were maimed through similar means.²

The security situation in the country has remained intractable despite government's attempt to address the issue through committing resources to security. In the 2019 and 2020 budgets, for example, 1.76 trillion and 1.78 trillion naira respectively were earmarked for addressing insecurity in the country.³

This brief presents stylised facts on the frequency of violent attacks and associated casualties across Nigeria for the year 2020. It suggests that unless the fragile security architecture in the country is enhanced, at least to combat premeditated instances of violence and conflict, coupled with a renewed commitment by government to protect the lives and properties of Nigerians⁴, the country will continue to experience a progressive upsurge in violent attacks across the country, with serious implications for human security.

Stylised Facts on Violent Attacks and Deaths in Nigeria, 2020

Reports, based on data gathered between January and December, 2020, indicate that there was an average of two violent attacks and nine deaths daily across the nation. This amounts to at least 60 attacks a month and over 720 for the year, and in turn over 270 and 3,240 deaths monthly and the year respectively.

Figure 1 below shows a breakdown of frequency of attacks and number of deaths per month across the country in 2020.

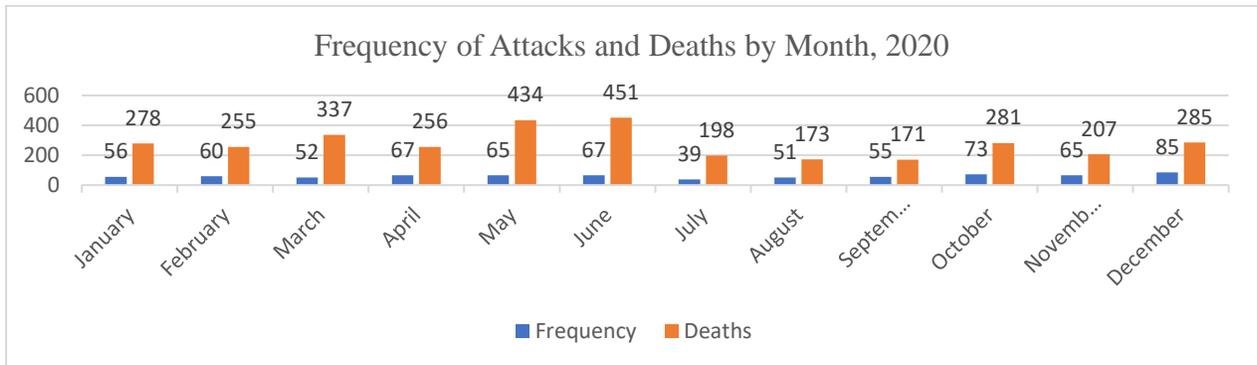
Figure 1: Number of Attacks and Casualties in Nigeria by Month, 2020

¹ This report is available on <https://www.thecable.ng/Insecurity-nine-nigerians-were-killed-everyday-in-2020>. Accessed on January 16th, 2021.

² Global Rights Nigeria. 2019 Report on Mass Atrocities Casualties Tracking.

³ Budget

⁴ Stein, S. E. (2011). State failure' in theory and practice: the idea of the state and the contradictions of state formation, *Review of International Studies* · Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.



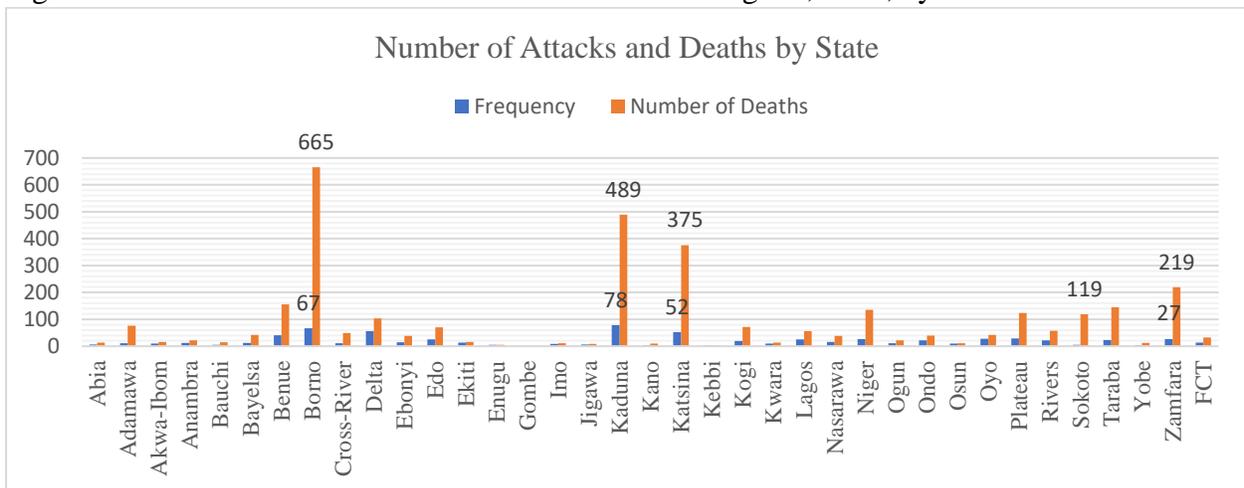
Source: Compiled by the authors from Nigerian Dailies, 2020, The Cable, and Global Rights Nigeria.

From the figure above, December had the highest number of attacks at 85, while July recorded the lowest at 39. In terms of casualties, however, June witnessed the highest number of deaths at 451 cases, closely followed by March and May with 337 and 434 deaths respectively.

violent attacks and recorded the highest number of casualties across all States at 665. It is closely followed by Kaduna State with 78 attacks and 489 deaths, and Katsina State with 52 attacks and 375 deaths. Taken together, these three States account for about 45% of the total number of deaths within the period. Figure 2 below gives a visual representation of these statistics.

When the data is disaggregated across the 36 States and the FCT, Borno State witnessed 67

Figure 2: Number of Violent Attacks and Casualties in Nigeria, 2020, by State



Source: Compiled by the authors from Nigerian Dailies, 2020, The Cable, and Global Rights Nigeria.

It is striking that while Sokoto State recorded only 5 violent attacks, these resulted in a very high casualty rate of 119. In other words, for every attack in the State, about 24 people lost their lives, making Sokoto State the highest in terms of number of casualties per attack.

Finally, when the data is interpreted through the lens of geopolitical zones, the North-West recorded the most attacks and deaths at 123 and 1224 incidences respectively, making it the most susceptible to violent attacks for the year. This is closely followed by the North-East with 121 violent attacks and 914 deaths. In terms of safety, the South-East had the lowest incidences, with 47 attacks and 89 deaths.

Going Forward: Comments and Recommendations

While the underlying causes of insecurity in Nigeria are myriad and complex in nature, the subject itself has been a subsisting one over the years. It is particularly important to underscore that the number of violent attacks, and casualties resulting from these, recorded for the year under review, are saddening for a country that is not at war. Still, it is encouraging that some individual States such as Gombe, Kano, Enugu, Jigawa, and Kebbi recorded attacks and casualties of less than 10, according to the available data that informed this brief.

Be that as it may, the real implications of the problem remain critical for how Nigerians perceive their sense of safety;

trust in the government to protect their lives, those of their families and properties, and the long-term consequences for human security. To be sure, over the years of existence of the Boko Haram insurgency group, no less than thirty-seven thousand five hundred (37,500) people have lost their lives⁵, with millions of refugees created in this process, while the terrorist group continues its attacks.

In the same vein, being kidnapped or maimed by bandits on highways or within communities remains one of the gravest fears of Nigerians across the country today. Farmers continue to dread going to plough their trade for fear of violent clashes with herdsmen, this having real implications not only for food security in the country, but also for human security.

In the light of the above, the National Assembly may wish to engage the Executive on the following recommendations to address the security situation in the country:

- i. The recent appointment of new service chiefs by the Federal Government is long overdue and a welcome move. However, because these officers have been part of the security architecture over the years, lawmakers may wish to engage them on what new approach (es) they plan to adopt to address insecurity in the country.
- ii. The North-East and North-West geopolitical zones continue to record the highest incidences of violent attacks across the country on a daily basis, with

⁵ Council on Foreign Relations (2021). Global Conflict Tracker. Available on <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict->

[tracker/conflict/boko-haram-nigeria](https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/boko-haram-nigeria). Accessed 3/22/2021.

Borno, the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency, recording more than 20 per cent of total casualties for the year. The National Assembly may wish to engage the Executive to amend its efforts in addressing this problem in the State, including addressing the issue of cross-border flows, with the hope that flows into adjoining States will be reduced over time. If the current trend continues, these regions of the country may continue to experience low economic and social development, while aggravating human security.

- iii. The Abuja-Kaduna road has become a haven for the unscrupulous activities of kidnapers and other criminal elements. Kaduna itself, as some other States in the North-Central region, has been subjected to ethno-religious/communal clashes, and the data shows it is the State with the second highest number of casualties. This presupposes that, like Borno State, special focus should be given to it to address security within its confines and environs. The National Assembly may wish to orchestrate a national discourse on social cohesion in the country and the socioeconomic and sociopolitical realities of individuals and groups, this hopefully leading to improved trust and tolerance among groups and communities.
- iv. Lawmakers may wish to engage the Executive to ensure modern policing and intelligence gathering to give early warning signs before violent attacks take place, while communal crises solving mechanisms should be explored for better and peaceful livelihoods for communities in affected regions.
- v. In terms of the farmer-herder crisis in the country, lawmakers may wish to engage further with the Executive that strategic ranching remains the best practice approach across the globe. State governors may also be engaged for a comprehensive mapping of such a solution.
- vi. Lawmakers may engage the Executive on addressing the continued waste of resources earmarked for security in the country. The poor conditions of service men and women who give up their lives and families to protect the country need to be treated as an emergency.

Conclusion

There exists a possible relationship between security and development of a country. It also has implications for the human security and socioeconomic development of its citizens. As Nigeria continues to increase its budget on security, with no visible impacts on the security of its people and their properties, the government, together with relevant stakeholders, is enjoined to engage better on the strategic management of resources dedicated to security, while adopting a multidimensional approach to solving the protracted problem of insecurity in the country. It is hoped that a renewed commitment by the government and relevant security officials will result in a safer Nigeria for all of its inhabitants.



Contact

National Institute for Legislative and
Democratic Studies
National Assembly
14/18 Danube Street
Off IBB Way
Maitama
Abuja, Nigeria
E-mail: info@nils.gov.ng
Website: <http://nils.gov.ng>

NILDS Liaison Office

Suite 214 Senate Wing
National Assembly Complex
Mobile: +234 807 364 4822