

Holding Boko Haram and Security Services Accountable in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin

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1. Introduction: Historical Context and Evolution of Boko Haram

The emergence of Boko Haram in 2009 must be situated within the broader historical context of religion-driven conflicts in Northern Nigeria. A long history that includes the nineteenth-century jihādīst revolution of Usman dan Fodio¹ and the violent Maitatsine uprisings of the 1980s.² These historical events reflect a persistent struggle by radical religious groups to define the role of religion in public life in the region. The group *Jama'atu Ahl al-Sunnah Li-dda'wati wal-Jihad* ('JAS'), translated as 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'—more commonly known as 'Boko Haram'—emerged within this peculiar historical milieu. The precise etymology of Boko Haram remains contested, but it is generally translated from Hausa as 'Western education is sinful'.³

The group was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri as a puritanical Islamic movement seeking to impose their Salafist interpretation of *Shari'ah* Law as the *Grundnorm* in Northern Nigeria.⁴ Violent confrontation with the Nigerian security services resulted in the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009 and shifted the group's strategy towards extreme violence under his successor, Abubakar Shekau.⁵ In the over two decades of its existence, the group has undergone significant evolution, including ideological shifts, territorial expansions and internal fractures.

While the group's ideological frame is complex and largely unnameable to any hermitic classification,⁶ Boko Haram is the most 'successful' extremist group in the West African Sahel and in a decade of active insurgency against the Nigerian state (2009–2019) has caused more than 35,000 deaths and displaced more than 2 million people.⁷

Intragroup conflicts due to unmanageable differences in operational tactics, ideology and leadership selection resulted in the splintering of the group into three main factions: (1) Islamic State West Africa Province ('ISWAP'), formed in 2016 after a split from Shekau's lead-

ership and aligning itself with the Islamic State ('ISIS'). It adopted a different strategy, focusing on winning local support by providing services and targeting primarily military and government entities; (2) JAS, which was led by Abubakar Shekau until his death in 2021; this faction deployed extreme and indiscriminate violence, targeting civilians and opposing any form of Western influence; and (3) *Anşaru*, an al-Qaeda-aligned faction, that has weaponized kidnapping for ransom and attacks on foreign nationals.⁸

Territorial disputes and leadership conflicts among these Boko Haram factions have seen perennial intergroup conflicts around the Lake Chad Basin and have complicated the conflict dynamics in the region.⁹ Despite a factual decline in the group's influence, it has continued to pose significant threats to local communities and security services in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, the Lake Chad Basin, Boko Haram's primary theatre of operation in the last decade, is a fragile governance space where historical religious fundamentalism, poor socio-economic outcomes, and near total absence of state presence has driven cycles of violence and state repression. This fragility is compounded by the ineffectiveness of legal institutions and ability of the state to hold both non-state actors and security agents accountable. Reinforcing legal accountability in such poorly governed spaces, both for state and non-state actors, is crucial to disrupting the perpetual cycle of extremist violence, restoring legitimacy, and preventing future radicalization.

2. Boko Haram's Crimes and Operational Patterns

Boko Haram's global notoriety is of such hue that in the last decade, the group has consistently been ranked among the top four deadliest terrorist groups, forming a sinister quartet with al-Qaeda, the Taliban and ISIS. The group perfected a range of brutal violent tactics to achieve its ideological, political and strategic objectives. These tactics can be aggregated into several clusters.

Mass killings and civilian targeting: The group, as part of its operational strategy, conducts large-scale attacks on civilians, often targeting villages, markets and places of worship to terrorize local communities. Examples of this include the 2015 Baga Massacre, where the group killed an estimated 2,000 civilians in Baga, burning homes and destroying public infrastructure;¹¹ the 2016 Dalori Massacre, where

¹ Alasia Ibifuro Joy, "Demystifying Extremism in Nigeria: Understanding the Dynamics of Boko Haram", in *ACCORD Conflict Trends*, 23 October 2015.

² Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria", in *African Spectrum*, 2010, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 34.

³ I. Sanni, "The Etymology of 'Boko Haram' and Its Link to Jihadism", in *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 2020, vol. 12, no. 3, p. 56.

⁴ Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*, Princeton University Press, 2018, p. 16.

⁵ Jason Warner, Ryan O'Farrell, Héni Nsaibia and Ryan Cummings, *The Islamic State in Africa: The Emergence, Evolution, and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefield*, Hurst & Company, London, 2018, p. 46.

⁶ Funmi Abioye, "Terrorist Groups in Africa: Quo Vadis?", in *African Development*, 2019, vol. 40, no. 3, p. 7.

⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Nigeria", 14 March 2025 (available on its web site).

⁸ International Crisis Group, "Fighting Among Boko Haram Splinters Rages On", 30 May 2023 (available on its web site).

⁹ Malik Samuel, "Boko Haram Factional Violence Worries Islamic State", *ISS Today*, 25 April 2024.

¹⁰ Olajumoke Ayandele and Chika Charles Aniekwe, "A Decade after Chibok: Assessing Nigeria's Regional Response to Boko Haram", *ACLEDA*, 16 April 2024.

¹¹ Monica Mark, "Boko Haram's 'Deadliest Massacre': 2,000 Feared Dead in Nigeria", *The Guardian*, 10 January 2015.

more than 50 citizens were killed;¹² and the 2014 Gaboru Ngala attack, where hundreds of residents were killed.¹³ Other notable attacks include the 2014 Waza Attack and the 2015 Fotokol Massacre in Cameroon, the 2015 Baga Sola Attack in Chad, and the Diffa attacks in Niger.¹⁴

Feminization of terror: Boko Haram has deployed more female suicide bombers than any other terrorist group in history.¹⁵ A study found that the group carried out 238 suicide bombing attacks with 434 bombers targeting 247 locations between 2011 and 2017. Over 56 per cent of these bombers were women, and at least 81 were identified as children or teenagers.¹⁶

Sexual violence as a tactic: Boko Haram is notorious for its strategic use of targeted abduction of women and girls for forced marriage and sexual slavery; forced impregnation to raise offspring to continuously replenish regional jihadist human resource pool; to generate revenue through sale of kidnapped victims and ransom payments and luring security services into ambush; and using kidnapped women to bargain for prisoner exchanges for their detained members.¹⁷

Destruction of civilian infrastructure and public services: Boko Haram destroys schools, hospitals and government buildings to undermine state authority. Over 2,295 teachers have been killed by the group and 1,400 schools destroyed in Northeastern Nigeria.¹⁸ More than 788 health facilities were destroyed in the region.¹⁹

Displacement crisis: More than 3.9 million people have been displaced in Nigeria as a result of the decade-plus-long Boko Haram insurgency and about 2.1 million of this population are internally displaced within the country.²⁰

Year	GTI Ranking	Comments
2013	2nd (after ISIL)	High lethality in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon.
2014	1st (most deadly)	Surpassed ISIL due to mass kidnappings (Chibok girls) and increased attacks.
2015	2nd (after ISIL)	ISIL became more dominant globally, but Boko Haram remained highly active.
2016	2nd (after ISIL)	Continued attacks in West Africa; split into factions (Shekau versus ISWAP).
2017	3rd (after ISIL and Taliban)	Decline due to military pressure, but still deadly.
2018	4th (after ISIL, Taliban and Al-Shabaab)	Further decline, but still a major threat in the Lake Chad region.
2019	5th	Continued fractionalization.

¹² “At Least 50 Killed in Boko Haram Attack in Northeastern Nigeria”, *VOA News*, 31 January 2016.

¹³ “Hundreds killed in Boko Haram raid on Unguarded Nigerian town”, *The Guardian*, 8 May 2014.

¹⁴ Andy Campbell, “Timeline of Violent Boko Haram Attacks in 2015”, *Huff-Post*, 19 November 2015.

¹⁵ “Why Boko Haram uses Female Suicide-Bombers”, *The Economist*, 23 October 2017.

¹⁶ Jason Warner and Hilary Matfess, *Exploding Stereotypes: The Unexpected Operational and Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram’s Suicide Bombers*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2017, p. 4.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Pearson and Jacob Zenn, “Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Surge in Female Abductions in Southeastern Niger”, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) Research Paper, 2021, p. 4; Adejoké Babington-Ashaye, Tanya Mehra and Matthew Odu Una, “The Tide Turns: The Prosecution of SGBV Crimes as a Terrorist Offence in Nigeria”, in *ICCT*, 12 July 2024.

¹⁸ UNICEF, “More than Half of All Schools Remain Closed in Borno State, Epicentre of the Boko Haram Crisis in Northeast Nigeria”, 29 September 2017 (available on its web site).

¹⁹ Felix Abrahams Obi and Ejemai Eboeime, “How Boko Haram is Devastating Health Services in North-East Nigeria”, *The Conversation*, 3 May 2017.

²⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Nigeria Emergency”, 2021 (available on its web site).

2020	6th	ISWAP (Boko Haram splinter) became more dominant.
2021	7th	Further decline; ISWAP more active than original Boko Haram.
2022	8th	Shekau’s death weakened the group; ISWAP remained stronger.
2023	Outside Top 10	Continued decline, though ISWAP remains active.

Table 1: Boko Haram on the Global Terrorism Index (‘GTI’).

3. Challenges of Accountability in Nigeria

The Nigerian government adopted a three-dimensional strategy for addressing the Boko Haram insurgency. The first pillar focuses on strengthening the legal and policy frameworks needed for effective counter-terrorism governance. The second strategy which is the most prominent of government response is the extreme securitization of the crisis, with the establishment of new counter-terrorism focal security units and investments in kinetic assets. The third component of the Nigerian government response is engaging with international and regional stakeholders to create a Multinational Joint Task Force, which is a loose coalition of troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

While the strategy has been instrumental in degrading the capacity of the group, it has failed to address one of the fundamental root causes of the crisis – the impunity of security services in Nigeria and the failures of the Nigerian criminal justice system – thus raising fundamental questions about the sustainability of current efforts. The failure of the criminal justice system in Nigeria is cross-cutting and multi-dimensional, represented at almost all processing points and components. There is a connection between Nigeria’s security woes and the documented inability of the Nigerian criminal justice actors to meet the demands of the modern system and prevent the festering of basic law and order concerns to a security crisis.²¹

Evidently, this glaring failure of the criminal justice system has negatively impacted the ability of the Nigerian state to hold human rights violators in the conflict accountable. The legal and institutional framework for addressing crimes committed by Boko Haram has been largely inefficient. There are several systemic inefficiencies.

Mass arrests and prolonged detention: Nigerian security agents from 2009 started mass arrests across locations in Northern Nigeria and it took criminal justice institutions nine years to commence criminal trials of these arrested defendants in 2017.²² The exact number of suspected Boko Haram inmates in custody is currently unknown, but a study suggests that there are not less than 5,000.

Questionable trial system: Concerns have been raised about the fairness of the Boko Haram trial process, putting in perspective the adoption of the mass-trial system by the Nigerian authorities coupled with a limited number of judicial officers involved, lack of adequate legal representation for defendants, and the speed of adjudication. Nigeria has had four rounds of trial for Boko Haram suspects. In the first round, held in October 2017, 575 defendants were tried in secret at the Wawa Military Cantonment in Kainji, Niger.²³ The second round, in February 2018, involved an unknown number of defendants and was partially open to a limited number of observers from non-governmental organizations and select media.²⁴ The third round, conducted in July 2018, tried over 200 defendants.²⁵ The fourth round occurred at Wawa in July 2024, involving 300 defendants.²⁶ To what extent does

²¹ Tosin T. Osasona, “Time to Reform Nigeria’s Criminal Justice System”, in *Journal of Law and Criminal Justice*, 2015, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 73.

²² Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria: Flawed Trials of Boko Haram Suspects”, 17 September 2018.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Adam Abu-Bashal, “300 Members of Boko Haram on Trial in Nigeria”, *AA News*, 25 July 2024; Camillus Eboh, “Nigeria Courts Convict 125 Boko Haram Islamist Insurgents in Mass Trial”, *Reuters*, 27 July 2024.

this trial system meet the fundamental constitutional requirements of the presumption of innocence and procedural fairness? Are these merely show trials to dispose of the burden of thousands of inmates in military custody? According to a study that reviewed the trials, not “enough time was given to the three phases of mass trials for thousands of suspects to ensure thorough investigation. This was compounded by the challenge of having to review thousands of files linked to each terror suspect and procedural handicaps related to arrest and detention procedures [...]. Nearly all cases reflected a weak evidence base, with mostly confessional statements”.²⁷

Human rights violations by security forces: Human rights violations by Nigeria’s security services are said to have exacerbated the conflict, as the military’s counter-insurgency campaigns have been linked to unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and torture, weakening judicial oversight. A report accused the Nigerian military of the extrajudicial killing of 640 men and boys in custody at the Giwa barracks following an attack by Boko Haram on the military detention centre in 2014.²⁸ There are also reports that the Nigerian military currently holds thousands of children in degrading and inhuman conditions for suspected involvement with Boko Haram.²⁹ Regrettably, the Nigerian authorities have shown little commitment to holding the security services accountable for these grave violations.

Forensic and investigative deficits: Due to critical deficiencies in forensic and investigative capacities – caused by structural weaknesses in law enforcement – Nigeria has struggled with forensic documentation of Boko Haram’s crimes. Its criminal justice system depends heavily on witness testimony and forced confessions rather than forensic proof. This is evident in the Boko Haram trials.³⁰

Ineffective witness protection system: Nigeria recently passed a Witness Protection Law that, among other things, protects the right of witnesses to terror crimes. However, more than two years later, the programme remains underfunded and poorly operationalized, particularly in high-risk regions like the Northeast. Also, the law lacks specialized protocols for insurgency-related witnesses, thus leaving citizens in displacement camps and rural communities across Northwestern Nigeria vulnerable. This is particularly important in view of Boko Haram’s history of targeting informants.³¹

Security and logistical barriers: Holding Boko Haram members accountable requires a secure environment for investigations, trials and witness testimony. However, several security-related challenges continue to impede this process. While the group has been degraded as a force capable of effectively holding territories, Boko Haram and its sprawls have continued to operate in the Lake Chad Basin, making it dangerous for legal and humanitarian actors to collect evidence. Also, repeated episodes of jail breaks across Nigeria have allowed arrested insurgents to re-join terror groups.³²

Nigeria’s peculiar socio-political realities: Nigeria’s political-economy dynamics have complicated accountability for Boko Haram’s crimes. The conflict’s early politicization fractured governance response and whittled the state’s ability to contain the group.³³ Cor-

²⁷ Allan Ngari and Akinola Olojo, “Besieged but Not Relenting – Ensuring Fair Trials for Nigeria’s Terrorism Suspects, Institute of Security Studies”, West Africa Report No. 29, 2020, p. 2.

²⁸ Amnesty International, “Nigeria: No Justice for the 640 Men and Boys Slain by Military Following Giwa Barracks Attack Two Years Ago”, 14 March 2016.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria: Military Holding Children as Boko Haram Suspects – Thousands Have Been Held in Deplorable Conditions”, 10 September 2019.

³⁰ Ibrahim Bello and Aminu M. Dukku, “Developing Forensic Science Capabilities in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects”, in *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2021, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 377.

³¹ “Nigeria’s Boko Haram ‘Targets Village Vigilantes’”, *BBC News*, 23 May 2014.

³² Malik Samuel, “Growing Danger of Terrorist Jailbreaks in West Africa”, *ISS Today*, 3 September 2024.

³³ Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, “Boko Haram and Politics: From Insur-

ruption and blatant pilfering of funds intended for counter-terrorism efforts slowed down the state’s response and allowed the crisis to fester.³⁴ Unfortunately, local communities across Northeastern Nigeria suffered increased poverty due to the destruction of agricultural and trade networks, aggravating state fragility.

4. Regional and International Accountability Efforts

4.1. Efforts by Chad, Niger and Cameroon to Prosecute Boko Haram Members

Chad, Niger and Cameroon have each deployed unique strategies to prosecute persons associated with Boko Haram in their territories, with each strategy reflecting their contextual legal frameworks and their understanding of the challenges posed by the group.

Chad has played a significant role in the regional fight against Boko Haram, both militarily and through judicial efforts to prosecute insurgents.³⁵ The country has strict counter-terrorism legislation and utilizes military tribunals to try arrested defendants, ensuring expedited trials. It has employed a mass-trial system for prosecution of terror crimes. A court in the country sentenced 10 alleged Boko Haram members to death in 2015 for an attack on the country’s capital.³⁶ Beyond that, the country has launched special military operations against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin.³⁷

Niger has strict counter-terrorism legislation which criminalizes acts of terrorism, including recruitment, financing and participation in terrorist activities. However, the country’s weak criminal justice system has negatively impacted its counter-terrorism efforts.³⁸

Cameroon has broadly-scoped anti-terrorism legislation that widely accommodates convictions with limited evidence. The country’s criminal justice system has conducted mass trials of Boko Haram suspects mostly in military courts. In 2018, the government sentenced 89 individuals to death for alleged links to Boko Haram, though executions have not been carried out. The lack of transparency in these trials has raised concerns about human rights violations.³⁹

The justice systems in Chad Basin countries impacted by Boko Haram’s violence share common challenges with institutional incapacity, leaving victims with inadequate redress. This is a multi-dimensional systemic failure, compounded by rights violations committed by security services, raising questions about the ability of these states to deliver justice and uphold accountability.

4.2. The International Criminal Court’s Interventions

Nigeria ratified the Statute of the International Criminal Court (‘ICC’) in 2001, as the thirty-ninth State Party.⁴⁰ The country has, however, failed to domesticate key provisions of the Statute into its criminal law.⁴¹ Boko Haram atrocities attract global attention so it is not surprising that the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC opened a preliminary investigation into the conflict. It concluded in 2013 that crimes against humanity had been committed by Boko Haram in Nigeria.⁴² The Office

gency to Terrorism”, in Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (ed.), *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, IFRA-Nigeria, 2014, p. 119.

³⁴ John Sunday Ojo *et al.*, “Boko Haram Insurgency and Defense Corruption”, in Ali Farazmand (ed.), *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*, Springer, Cham, 2020, p. 89.

³⁵ “Chad’s Army Says 52 Soldiers, 1,000 Boko Haram Fighters Killed in Operation”, *Reuters*, 10 April 2020.

³⁶ “Chad Sentences 10 Boko Haram Members to Death”, *BBC News*, 28 August 2015.

³⁷ “Chadian Troops ‘Kill 1,000 Boko Haram Fighters’ in Lake Chad”, *Al Jazeera*, 9 April 2020.

³⁸ International Crisis Group, “Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency”, Africa Report No. 245, 27 February 2017, p. 23.

³⁹ Amnesty International, “Cameroon: More than 1,000 People Accused of Supporting Boko Haram Held in Horrific Conditions”, 14 July 2016.

⁴⁰ ICC, “Nigeria”, 11 March 2003 (available on its web site).

⁴¹ “Nigeria attacks by Boko Haram could be crimes against humanity, says ICC Prosecutor”, *UN News*, 6 August 2013.

⁴² ICC, “Situation in Nigeria Article 5 Report”, 5 August 2013 (<https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/508bd0/>).

of the Prosecutor also observed in 2020 that both Boko Haram and the Nigerian military have committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, and that the Nigerian government has failed in its obligations to hold those responsible to account.⁴³

The ICC's foundational principle of complementarity makes the Court's intervention appropriate only if Nigerian domestic accountability measures or political will are insufficient. Has Nigeria taken sufficient action since 2020 to hold perpetrators of Boko Haram atrocities accountable? It is not easy to answer this question as international criminal justice operates in a charged space where competing forces of culture, religion, law, politics and diplomacy seek to shape the outcome of events. The answer to the question therefore depends on your ideological worldview.

The Nigerian government alongside other Chad Basin countries have indeed arrested hundreds of Boko Haram members and put them on trial, although the criminal trials are of debatable quality. Nothing notable has been done to investigate and prosecute criminal violations by security forces in Nigeria, leaving a window of opportunity for ICC intervention. The principle of complementarity currently places the burden of prosecution on Nigeria, but it remains unclear whether the country will hold its security services accountable.

4.3. Neglect of Victims and Revictimization

Across the region, the primary response of governments to the scourge of violence by Islámist terror groups has largely excluded provision of psycho-social care to victims of terror, in particular for victims of sexual violence, which is one of Boko Haram's preferred warfare tactics. For many states across the region overwhelmed by indiscriminate Boko Haram violence, providing psycho-social care for victims is considered secondary to the more pressing military urgency of degrading the capacities of the group.

Victims of Boko Haram violence in displacement camps are often subjected to abuse by authorities of these camps, leaving their cycle of victimization more complicated. A study found that:

[M]uch of the exploitation of women and girls in the camps is carried out by those in authority who should be protecting them. Women, especially those with children, are regularly put in the position of being forced to make terrible choices, such as trading sexual favours in return for food, water, and other necessities. There are increased levels of child marriage among displaced children, and women and girls in the camps say they are routinely subjected to forced sex.⁴⁴

This neglect has devastating psychological effects on Boko Haram survivors, leaving many with post-traumatic stress disorder ('PTSD'), depression or anxiety. A study in one of the Nigerian states affected by the violence indicates an alarmingly high psychiatric morbidity in displaced populations, with 94 per cent exhibiting PTSD symptoms and 98 per cent showing signs of depression, some of the highest rates ever recorded in conflict zones anywhere in the world.⁴⁵

⁴³ ICC, "Statement of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the Conclusion of the Preliminary Examination of the Situation in Nigeria", Press Release, 11 December 2020 (<https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/qgeosj/>).

⁴⁴ Center for Reproductive Rights, "Accounting for Resiliency and Abuse in Nigeria", 2021, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Usman Umar Ibrahim *et al.*, "Prevalence of Boko Haram Crisis Related Depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptomatology among Internally Displaced Persons in Yobe State, North East, Nigeria", in *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*, 2023, vol. 13, p. 4.

5. Conclusion: Pathways to Sustainable Justice

A decade of continuous military engagement, prioritization of defense spending over other public services, rising civilian casualties, mass displacement, and a resilient terror franchise have cast doubt on the future of communities in Northwestern Nigeria, whose lives and livelihoods have been ruined by both Islámist militants and the government's counter-insurgency action.

Achieving sustainable peace and security in the Lake Chad Basin would require a shift from the current securitization strategy, to a justice-oriented approach that demands accountability for both responsible insurgents and state actors, while empowering victims. States in the region must prioritize holistic reform of their criminal justice systems, create frameworks for effective regional co-operation, and put victims of Boko Haram's mindless violence at the centre of their strategy. This is the only way Nigeria and her neighbours can disrupt the cycle of impunity fuelling extremism and prepare the ground for long-term stability. Several steps should be taken to this end.

The compelling need for a regional Boko Haram specialized court: Experiences from across the four Boko Haram-impacted Chad Basin countries indicate inadequacy of their trial systems, highlighting the need to set up a central Boko Haram accountability mechanism which could help standardize expertise and prosecutions, and mitigate domestic judicial weaknesses.

Need for urgent investment in forensic and investigative capacities: Excessive reliance across the four countries on confessional statements highlight glaring deficiencies in forensic technology, crime scene documentation and evidence preservation. This is a key area where international stakeholders should as a matter of priority support the criminal justice institutions of the four countries.

Accountability for security forces and state actors: There are cross-cutting reports of abuse by security services across the region, highlighting the need for oversight and accountability in counter-terrorism operations. There is a need for panels of enquiry to investigate actions of security services in counter-terrorism operations and create platforms to investigate and prosecute human rights abuses by state agents.

Victim-centred counter-terrorism frameworks: The current system prioritizes securitization over the rights and care of victims of the violence, thus increasing the jeopardy they face. Regional countries must introduce and expand psycho-social care, particularly for survivors of sexual violence, abducted children and displaced populations.

International engagement and the ICC: The ICC should continue monitoring Nigeria's compliance with complementarity, urging credible investigations into military abuse and Boko Haram atrocities. If domestic efforts remain inadequate, the ICC should pursue targeted prosecutions.

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