

**FACT-SHEET**



# ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy Tracker

March 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

The ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy is a strategy that has been developed by ECOWAS as a means of tackling the increasing levels of terrorist activities in West Africa as well as putting in place large-scale measures against terrorism.

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy Tracker is part of an on-going effort to catalogue and map violence based on a monthly survey of instances of violence in the West African region.

It is an open data platform that provides a practical analysis of the operational policy framework for the ECTS, and serves as a knowledge base that promotes a common regional approach for counter-terrorism by both state and non-state actors through the documentation and analysis of cases, activities, and incidences of extremist violence across the West African sub-region. The tracking is explicitly undertaken by looking at the location, trends, and patterns of incidences of violent extremism.

The ECTS-tracker also serves as a tool for monitoring the efforts of states in implementing the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CTS).

## OVERVIEW

In the month under review, there have been several sophisticated and coordinated assaults perpetrated by insurgent sects across the West African Lake Chad region as well as the Sahel region. This is evidence of the continued danger of insurgents to the security and stability of communities within the region.

A high profile example was the attack in Rann - a town in Borno state in the Northeast of Nigeria, which caused Médecins San Frontières (Doctors without Borders) to suspend its medical operations and evacuate 22 of its staff (national/international). Also, the government in Nigeria negotiated for the release of hostages, as well as for ceasefires. March also witnessed attacks on the Burkina Faso Military headquarters and French embassy respectively.

The Cameroon military has embarked on a sensitisation program informing its citizens on Boko Haram insurgents' new tactics: using women and children hiding under businesses to transport food and explosives to its neighbouring country Nigeria.

Canada has announced its intention to join the on-going Multinational Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). This will be the first time Canada has sent troops to West Africa.

# Key Developments

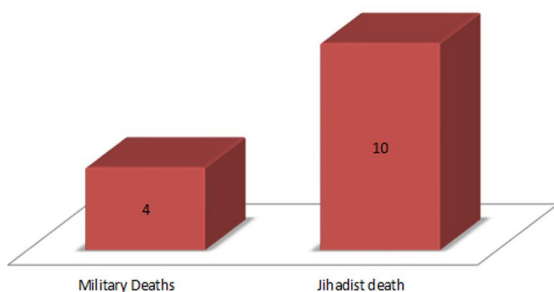


## MALI

French forces lead at least one raid in the region around the Algerian border near Tinzaouatene. At least ten deaths and the destruction of 2 vehicles were recorded.

This offensive operation was part of France's Operation Barkhane, which is part of an on-going anti-insurgent operation that spans the five countries that form the G5 Sahel group.

Fig 1: Death Rate in Mali March 2018



Source: CDD-ETCs March 2018

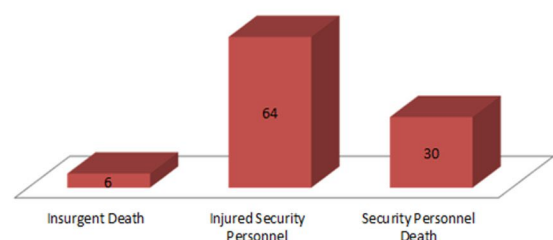


## BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso is a country that has been combating with cross-border assaults from Islamic insurgents since 2015 as a result of the presence of al-Qaeda and its affiliate al-Mourabitoun in the Islamic Maghreb.

Significant attacks from suspected Salafi jihadists were launched simultaneously, targeting the Burkinabe Army Headquarters and the French Embassy in Ouagadougou. Official government deaths tolls placed the figure at 8; however media reports count around 30 dead: a combination of military personnel and civilians, with over 65 injured. At least seven insurgents were confirmed dead after a shootout with the troops.

Fig 2: Injured/Death Rate in Burkina Faso March 2018



Source: CDD-ETCs March 2018



# Key Developments



## NIGERIA

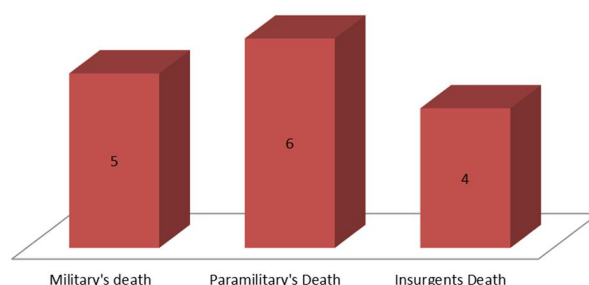
Counterterrorism measures under President Buhari have involved at times choosing 'negotiation' as an option: a statement by the Minister of Information Lai Mohammed has revealed that government is in talks with Boko Haram over a possible cease-fire.

The government was recently able to negotiate for the release of 105 out of 110 abducted girls from the Government Girls Science and Technical Secondary School in Dapchi, by the suspected Al-barnawi faction of Boko Haram insurgents. The government has also adopted "Towards a Secured Importation, Distribution, Storage and Use of Chemicals in Nigeria." As a strategy and means, in blocking Boko Haram insurgents, from gaining access to substances used for making explosive devices.

On the other hand, the country's military has intensified its on-going clearance operations at various locations in the North- East. These operations, according to CDD estimates, have resulted in the deaths of four Boko Haram insurgents in the village of Malumti, on the fringes of the Sambisa forest and the death of five insurgents at Tchikide and Chenene also in Sambisa forest, in the Lake Chad region.

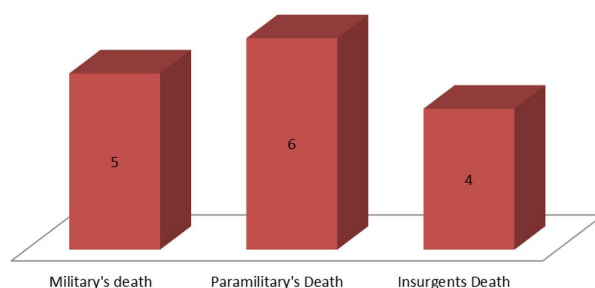
In addition, Ramat Alamin, a top commander and long lasting strongman of the Abubakar Shekau faction of Boko Haram, has surrendered to the military.

Fig 3: **Military/Insurgents Death Rate in Nigeria**  
March 2018



Source: CDD-ETCs March 2018

Fig 4: **Military/Insurgents Death Rate in Nigeria**  
March 2018



Source: CDD-ETCs March 2018

# Key Developments

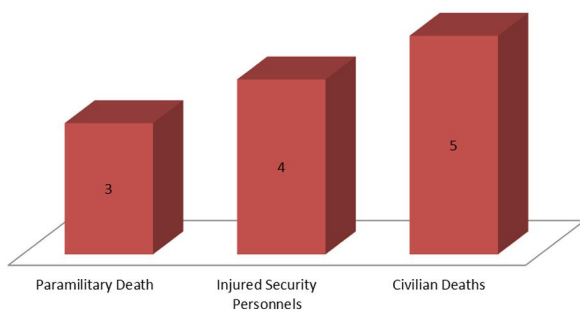


## NIGER

Niger has built a joint military force as part of the G5 Sahel group, to combat insurgents in the vast Saharan region. The western border region of the country has been subject to assaults from Islamist insurgents. In the village of Goube, three police officers lost their lives in an attack on the station.

The insurgents are believed to be operating from the neighbouring Sahel border region of Mali, and Nigeria respectively. The Nigerien government has assured its citizens "to be optimistic as 2018 will be a decisive year in the war against Boko Haram".

Fig 5: Death rate in Niger March 2018



Source: CDD-ETCs March 2018



## CAMEROON

Cameroon is part of a multi-national joint task force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The country has suffered from cross-border conflict from Boko Haram insurgents based in Nigeria and is hosting several hundred Nigerian refugees as well as internally displaced persons within its territory who were forced to flee their homes due to the persistent crises. In this period, Cameroon disclosed that its military (the Rapid Intervention Battalion), unit responsible for combating the Boko Haram insurgency in its border town intercepted and arrested 31 individuals.

They include 25 female Boko Haram fighters who were responsible for transporting ammunition, food and material to fabricate explosive devices, torches, drugs and medications to Nigeria in small quantities. The arrested female insurgents also helped the insurgents in recruiting suicide bombers, planting landmines on border zones with Nigeria, and served as informants for hostages taken between Cameroonian border towns and Nigeria.

The Rapid Intervention Battalion also revealed that they have embarked on a sensitisation program to educate the population on the reasons not to collaborate and do business with the insurgents who pretend to be farmers and business persons but end up terrorising villagers.

# Key Developments



## CHAD

The former United States, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during his visit to Chad, disclosed the country might be removed from the Trump administration's travel restriction list. According to him, "Chad has strengthened control over its passports processes and improve information sharing with other countries concerning various conflicts that engulf and exists along Chad's borders" later in March.

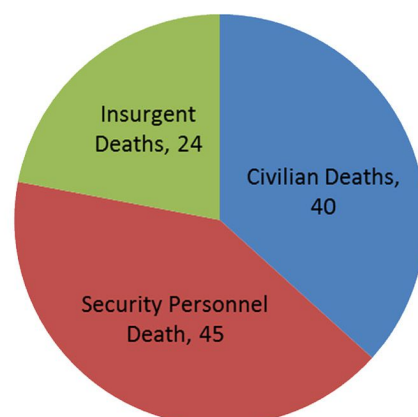
### PATTERNS OF ATTACK

In this period, Islamic Jihadist insurgents executed a high number of assaults in countries across the West African Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin region. The nature of the attacks indicates a clear pattern of high profile targets. Prominent among these assaults were the assaults on Burkina Faso's army headquarters and the French embassy in Ouagadougou by suspected Salafi jihadist insurgents. These resulted in the deaths of about 30 individuals; mostly military personnel and 64 persons sustained various degrees of injuries.

Another attack was the surprised assault on the Rann community, home to the 3rd Battalion military base, and humanitarian Aid workers in Nigeria responsible for the welfare of internally displaced person camps located in the neighbourhood. In total, various insurgents' assaults within Nigeria have been estimated by CDD to have led to the deaths of 32 civilians, which included three aid workers, with 26 sustaining various degrees of injuries.

Also, the military recorded the deaths of 5 soldiers, three members of the Nigerian Mobile police strike force and lastly three members of CJTFs. In line with these assaults in the region, four Malian soldiers lost their lives in battle; three police officers and five in Niger also were killed by an insurgent.

Fig 6: Death Tolls Across the West African Region

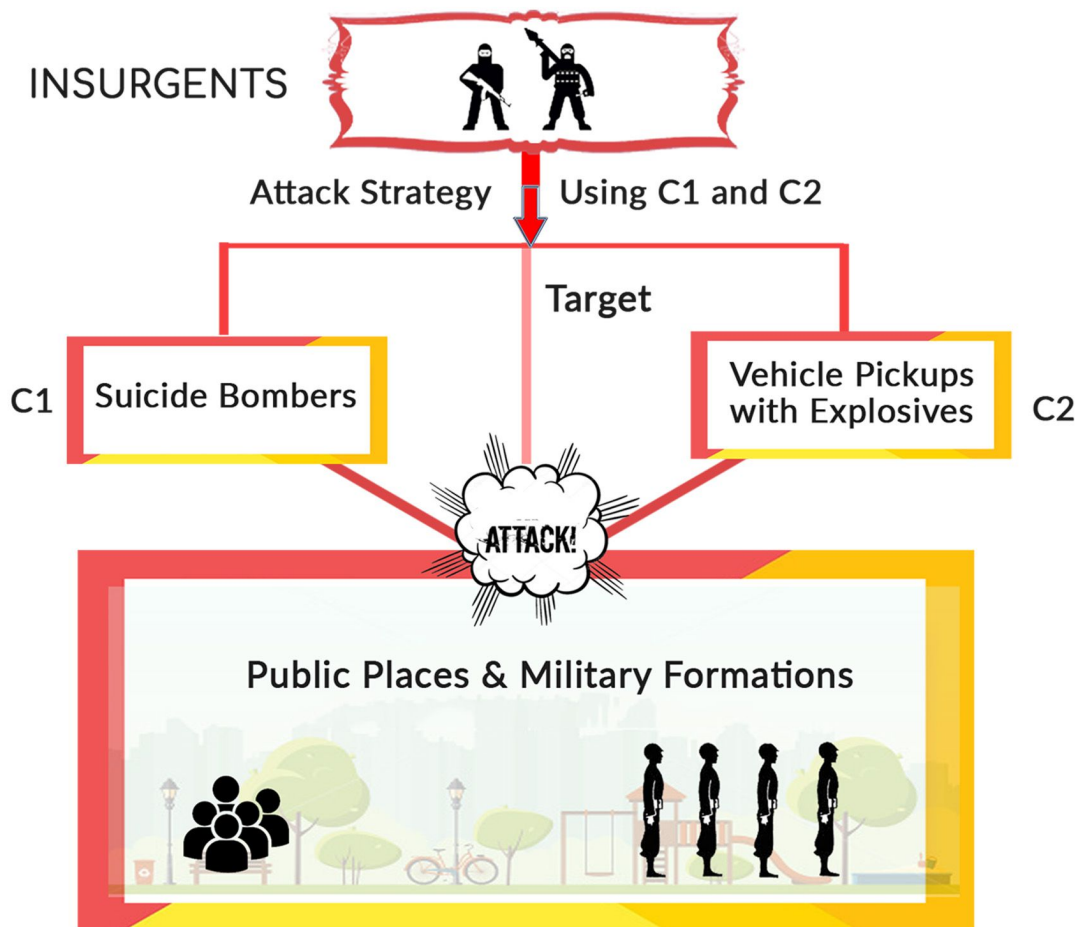


Source: CDD-ETCs March 2018



## MEANS OF ATTACKS

Insurgent attacks in this period made use of foot soldiers and also leveraged on “Soft Attacks” tactics in perpetrating assaults on security operatives and civilians. The insurgents made use of vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Devices deep inside the Sambisa forest; and pickup trucks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Other means have involved the use of Improvised Explosive Devices strapped to the bodies of suicide bombers, targeting strategic public spaces and military formations before detonation. Seven suicide-bombing cases were recorded during the period in review; six were Female and one Male.



Note: C1 = Case 1. C2 = Case 2



## HUMANITARIAN AID/CHALLENGES

In Mali, aid workers have come under attack: armed men kidnapped three aid workers on 22 March in Mopti. They were seized after the attackers stopped a public transport vehicle in which they were travelling. Separately in the central Segou region, a local NGO worker was killed in his house on 20 March. In Taoudénit, attackers on 19 March robbed two mobile health teams, forcing the NGO to suspend work in the region.

Seven civilians were killed in separate IED explosions in two localities in the central Mopti region. Three civilians transporting livestock and other goods died on 26 March when their vehicle hit an explosive device. Two days later four others were killed and one injured by a road-planted IED.

Separately in Gao, armed individuals on 25 March robbed two vehicles belonging to an NGO, bringing to nearly 50 the number of insecurity incidents against humanitarians in Mali since the beginning of 2018.

On 8 March, the Nigerien Government announced a three-month extension of the state of emergency in Diffa, Tillabery and Tahoua regions are starting 18 March. Diffa has suffered regular attacks by Boko Haram elements,

and the state of emergency has been in place since February 2015.

The UN and partners on 19 March resumed operations in Rann town in Borno state after they were suspended following the 1 March armed attack in which three aid workers were killed and three others abducted. Two of the deceased aid workers were contractors with the International Organization for Migration; the other was a medical doctor employed by UNICEF as a consultant.

**Around 80,000 people, including 55,000 internally displaced persons, currently reside in Rann and are supported with humanitarian assistance.** The aid operations were initially suspended following the attacks. On 6 March, a fire destroyed more than 200 IDP shelters in Mafa camp in Nigeria's northeast. The blaze spread from a firewood stove and destroyed food and household items belonging to around 1,000 IDPs.

The razed shelters were among 500 recently constructed homes by UNHCR. In a separate incident, at least five people, three women and two children, were killed on 26 March in a fire outbreak in a camp for the displaced in Rann town in Borno state. The fire, whose cause is yet to be established, also destroyed more than 200 shelters and killed livestock.

Other unique challenges posed have been attempts to thwart the delivery of donated items. The Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Core (NSCDC) Borno State Command intercepted a suspected individual who specialised in repackaging and diverting Books and Food items donated by The United Nations Children Fund 'UNICEF' and World Food Programme 'WFP'.

## PEACEKEEPING

In an attempt to build its peacebuilding efforts, Canada finally announced its intention to join the on-going United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) - a **peacekeeping mission in Mali**.

**The peace support is scheduled for 12 months and included the deployment of two Chinook helicopters for airlift operations, four armed Griffon helicopters for escort purposes and an undisclosed number of ground troops.**


## COMMUNICATIONS

Methods of communication from insurgent groups have taken the form of both written and video communication. The Islamic State, an insurgent sect that claimed responsibility for the November 2017 Niger assault which led to the death of four United State Special Forces, released nine-minute footage showing how the soldiers were ambushed.

**Shuibu Moni, one of the Boko Haram Commanders who was freed in exchange for 82 kidnapped Chibok girls in May 2017, has appeared in a new video accompanied by other members, displaying firepower in Sambisa forest and threatened to unleash more violence on Nigerian territory. Also, Boko Haram insurgents made use of Ms Hauwa Liman's mobile phone (a Red Cross staff), abducted during an assault on the Rann IDP centre.**

The message, written in Hausa, when interpreted read: "Oh you people of the world, fear God and stop following the heathen path. If not, God will place us above you all. And you all shall become mentally demented people."

Al-Barnawi Faction of Boko Haram insurgents alleged for the kidnapping of 110 girls from Government Girls Science and Technical Secondary School, in February, drove back into Dapchi community. After yielding to negotiations from the government, the insurgents in the process warned Dapchi parents and the



entire northeast not to endanger the lives of their children by enrolling them into schools for western education.

## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS/ REFUGES

The conflict has been the driver of increasingly high numbers of internally displaced persons. The humanitarian organisation, Social Welfare Network Initiative (SWNI) disclosed while reviewing its programmes in the North East for 2018 that over 164,715 Nigerians from the Northeast region are taking refuge in Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

Citizens of Burkina Faso have also experienced high amounts of displacement. According to the International Red Cross, an exodus of 5000 vulnerable individuals from the mostly rural communities in northern Burkina Faso due to the persistent cross-border jihadist attacks.

In line with the tripartite agreement reached with United Nations High commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Cameroonian Government, the Nigerian Government is preparing for the return of 91,000 Nigerian refugees from Cameroon. The repatriation is done under the agreement to accept voluntary repatriation of refugees back into Nigeria.

Displaced women residing in IDP centres in the northeast Nigerian state of Borno petitioned the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, accusing the military and Civilian Joint Task Force

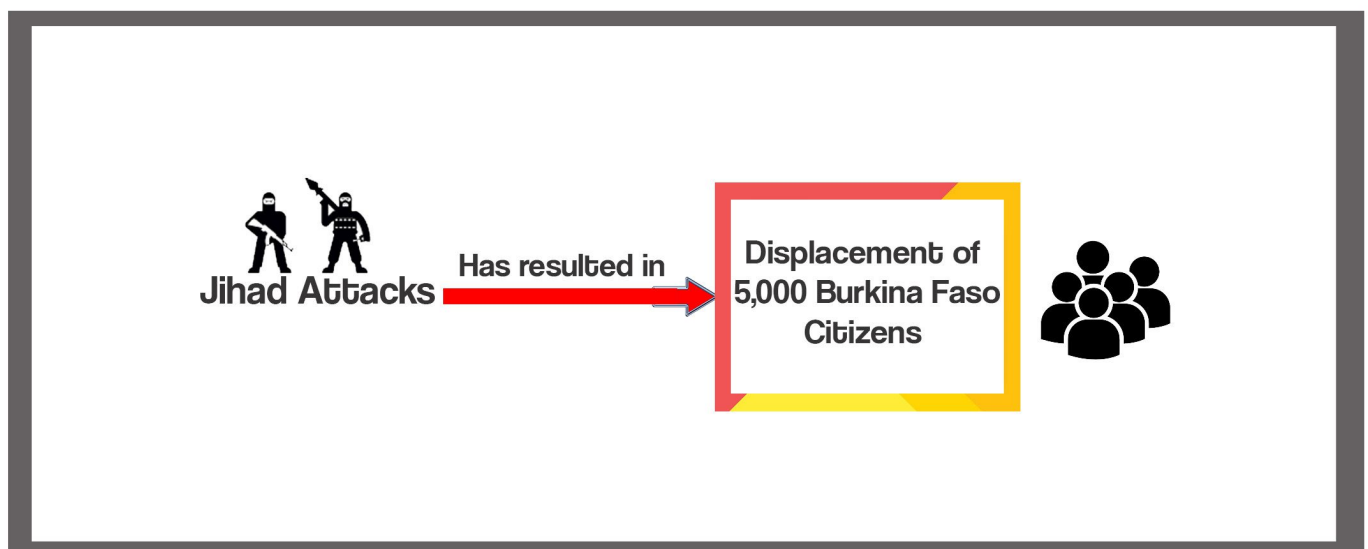
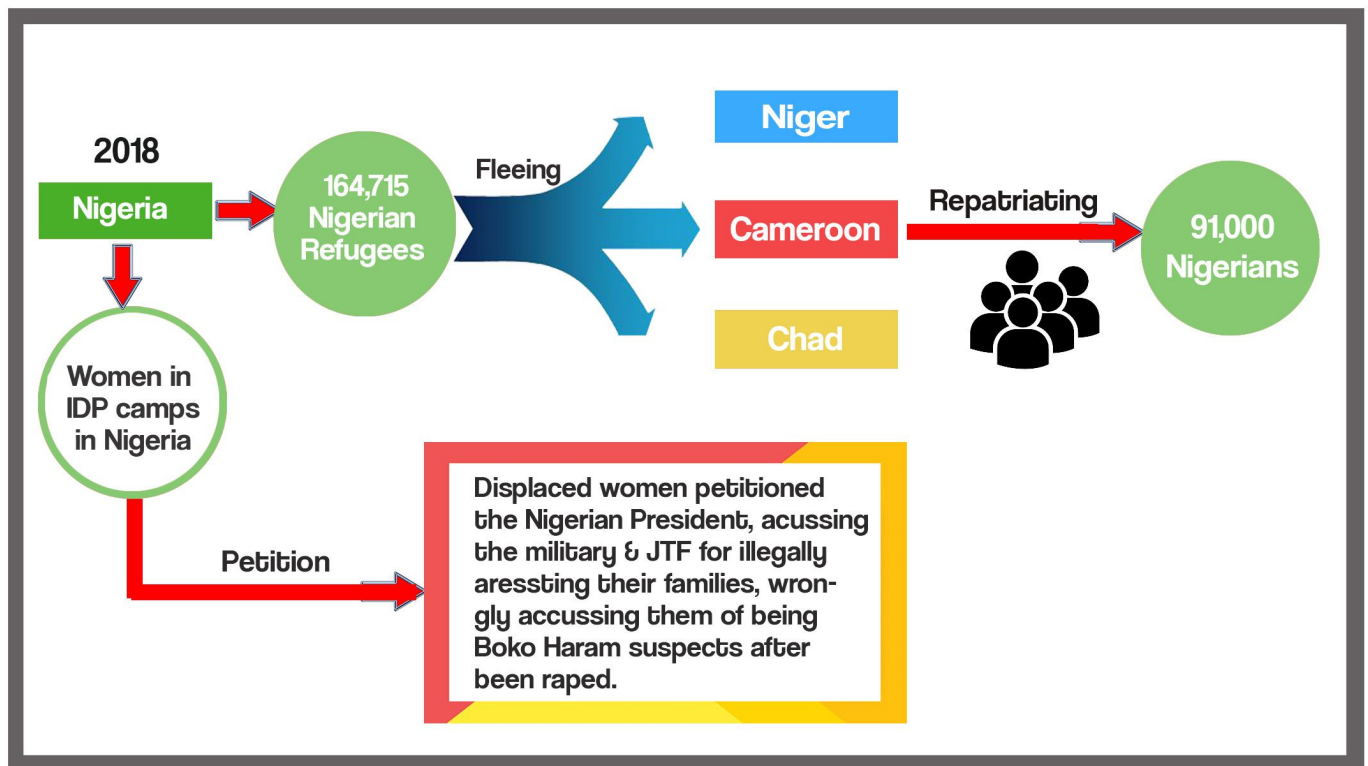
of illegally arresting their husbands and children, wrongly accusing them of being Boko Haram suspects, after which they were raped and made

## RELEASED /ABDUCTED

In this period, Boko Haram insurgent believed to be an Al-Banawi faction drove back into Dapchi Community, a town where 110 school-girls were abducted from Government Girls Science and Technical Secondary School last month. The insurgent released 105 from the kidnapped girls with five of the girls alleged to have died in captivity , while Liya Sharibu, the only Christian among the abducted girls was held back for refusing to denounce her faith . Also according to CDD estimates, Insurgents abducted six persons from various locations within Nigeria.



## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS/REFUGEES





## HEALTH CHALLENGES

In the period under the review, there was an outbreak of cholera in North-East, Nigeria. The incidents are recorded mostly in border towns, such as Kukawa (a community bordering Chad and Cameroon). For instance, three deaths were recorded with over 500 suspected cases detected by the ministry of health. The most affected were children under five years of age.

More than 50 cases, and one death, of acute watery diarrhoea, was also reported in Kukawa with children under ten years of age mostly affected. The first incident was reported in late January.

The Borno state ministry of health, with the support of partners including WHO, is leading the response. An outbreak is yet to be officially declared. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control also reported eighteen cases of Lassa fever and six deaths in the week of 25 March 2018.

## LOGISTICS

Insurgents utilised Pick-up trucks mounted with high calibre weapons, (Hilux), cars, armed personnel carriers, bicycles and motorcycles in perpetrating attacks across the Lake Chad and Sahel regions in the period under review.

## CONCLUSION

The re-emergence of highly sophisticated and coordinated attacks by insurgents in this period shows that insurgent sects still can stage major deadly assaults in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. It is important to point out that the insurgents are also improving their strategies of winning heart and minds, and broadly utilising faith-based approach in amassing followings.

For instance, the possibly al Barnawi release of the 105 Dapchi girls saw members of the affected communities jubilating and openly celebrating the insurgents. The insurgents had apologised for abducting Muslim girls. To further justify this, the only Christian girl Liya Sharibu is still held by the insurgents.

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