

# Super 0. AFENO

<http://www.ifra-nigeria.org/IMG/pdf/killing-by-security-forces-nigeria.pdf>

**Killings by the security forces  
in Nigeria:  
mapping and trend analysis  
(2006 - 2014)**



## **Killings by the security forces in Nigeria : mapping and trend analysis (2006-2014)**

### *Summary*

Over the years, the Nigerian army have been regularly deployed to assist the police in law enforcement and internal security operations. This practice results largely from the belief that the presence of the security forces is sufficient to guarantee internal security. Data from the Nigeria Watch database, however, indicates that the intervention of the security forces in violent incidents often exacerbates the situation. This study shows that between June 2006 and May 2014 the security forces caused fatalities in 59% of the lethal incidents where they intervened. Secondly, the more the security forces intervene, the more people are killed. This explains why from an annual average of 59% between June 2006 and May 2007, killings by the security forces peaked at 80% between June 2013 and May 2014. Thirdly, 58% of police interventions cause fatalities compared with 60% in the case of the army, an indication that killings by the police are more prevalent, while the army cause more fatalities per incident. Lastly, killings by the security forces are more prevalent in the southern region, but cause more fatalities in the northern part of the country.

---

\* Super Odomovo Afeno is the Project Assistant Coordinator of Nigeria Watch and an IFRA-Nigeria Research Fellow. He has an MSc in Political Science from the University of Ibadan. Any errors that remain are the sole responsibility of the author. Contact: [afeno.nwifra@gmail.com](mailto:afeno.nwifra@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses the evolution and patterns of killings by the security forces in Nigeria between 1 June 2006 and 31 May 2014. This nationwide mapping focuses on the dynamics of security forces killings, including the political dimensions of violent incidents involving the security forces. The study also considers the intervention of the security forces in violent incidents involving religious groups and criminal gangs. The interactions between the security forces and these groups is often characterised by violence and in most cases result in deaths. In fact, the intervention of the security forces in violent incidents often exacerbates the situation and cause more deaths than the earlier stages of the incidents.<sup>1</sup> However, deaths resulting from security forces are sometimes overstated in both media and individual reports, while the security forces rarely admit causing deaths in their operations.

This study, however, discovered that while media reports and victims accounts cannot be entirely disregarded, there are many inconsistencies in the reported number of fatalities caused by the security forces. While it is very likely that media and victims' accounts overstate the number of fatalities, the security forces are notorious for either overstating or underreporting the number of fatalities, depending on the context. The security forces usually give lower fatality figures while reporting to the international media and presents higher fatality figures at home to create the impression that they are living up to their mandates. Hence, reports by the security forces rarely give accurate figures and reveal many discrepancies when compared with media reports and individual accounts. This makes it

---

<sup>1</sup> Ebohon, Sylvanus and Emanuel Ifeadi (2012) Managing the Problems of Public Order and Internal security in Nigeria, *African Security*, Vol.5, Issue 1, p.1-23. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2012.653304>

difficult to reliably analyse trends and patterns of police killings nationwide.

In view of the difficulty in arriving at reliable fatality figures, and considering the fact that one needs a reliable dataset in order to map and analyse trends nationwide, this study explores the patterns and dimensions of killings by the security forces using graphs and maps generated from data collated from the Nigeria Watch database. The focus is on the dynamics of killings by the security forces, and this raises several important questions for this study. These questions are as follows: First, what are the main features of security forces killings in Nigeria? This question also relates to the timing of major national incidents such as elections, where the security forces usually cause fatalities. Second, in terms of perpetrators, which institution is more involved in security forces killings? Third, are security forces killings more prevalent in the North or the South, and why? These questions are examined in the three main sections of this paper.

Following an outline of the paper, a description of the general context of security forces killings in Nigeria is provided. Thereafter, we proceed to the second section of this paper and categorise the distribution of data relating to fatalities caused by the security forces between 1 June 2006 and 31 May 2014, in order to address the second question of the study. The objective here is to present statistical data in order to determine the major institutions involved in security forces killings. In order to address the third question of the study, the statistical data were disaggregated according to states and supplemented with a security map in order to determine regional differences in the prevalence of security forces killings in relation to the North and the South. The statistical data was further disaggregated and classified periodically in order to analyse patterns of security forces killings during general elections. The concluding section highlights the major

findings based on the overall statistical and empirical content of the information and data analysed in the study.

## THE SECURITY FORCES AND INCIDENTS OF VIOLENT DEATHS

Killings of criminal suspects and innocents citizens by the security forces in Nigeria are reported in the media almost on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup> Historically, law enforcement in the country has been characterised by violence and extra-judicial killings. Since its origin as a ‘consular guard’ whose primary function was to protect the economic and political interests of the colonial authority, the security forces have continued to use excessive force, including arbitrary killings, in their engagement with the civilian population.<sup>3</sup> In the immediate post-colonial period the repressive character of the security forces was heightened as a result of the militarisation of internal security during military rule, when the army, police, and para-military forces were used to repress and kill people arbitrarily.<sup>4</sup> Since the end of military rule in 1999, successive civilian governments have militarised law enforcement by routinely deploying the army for internal security operations.

Over the years, various Joint Security Task Forces (JTFs) have been created and deployed for internal security duties as a result of the inability of the police to effectively combat the rising wave of organised crime, militancy, and insurgency in the country.<sup>5</sup> Members of

---

<sup>2</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2014) Nigeria Watch: Fourth Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2014), p.6. Available at <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report14.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Alemika, Etannibi (1993) Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria, *Law and Social Change*, Vol.20, Issue 3, pp187-219.

<sup>4</sup> Alao, Abiodun (2010) Security Reform in Democratic Nigeria, *Conflict, Security and Development*, Working Paper, No.2, pp1-52. Available at <http://www.securityanddevelopment.org/pdf/work2.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Francis, P., LaPin, D. & Rossiasco, P. (2011) *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and conflict Analysis for*

these task forces, who are usually drawn from the Nigerian army, navy, air force, police, state security services (SSS), Department of State Security (DSS), and immigration and customs officials, often act like occupying forces against the civilian population, killing people arbitrarily. The security forces rarely adhere to legally mandated rules of engagement, and they are known to use excessive force to arrest, detain, and kill anyone who happens to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.<sup>6</sup>

Although some of the victims are criminal suspects, others are innocent individuals who are killed either because of politics, extortion of bribes, or other pecuniary reasons. The security forces, notably the police and army, routinely mount roadblocks and checkpoints on major highways in order to forcefully extort bribes from commuters. Forceful extortion of bribes on the highways often results in incidents of intentional and accidental killings. Moreover, security forces often respond to civil unrest, including protests and riots, with excessive force, which often results in casualties. It is remarkable that killings by the security forces are often counted as evidence of effective counter-insurgency and policing,<sup>7</sup> as is evidenced in the public display of criminal suspects killed by the security forces. Perhaps the violent character of law enforcement in the country is a reflection of the history and social environment of the security forces. Certainly, the political influence, economic background, and ‘self-esteem’ of the security forces determine their actual behaviour and the level of security they provide for

---

*Change*, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC.

<sup>6</sup> Afeno, S. Odomovo (2012) The Boko Haram Uprising and Insecurity in Nigeria: Intelligence Failure or Bad Governance? *Conflict Trend*, Issue 1, pp.35-41. Available at <http://www.accord.org.za/downloads/ct/ACCORD-conflict-trends-2012-1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> NOPRIN (2007) *Criminal Force?: An Interim Report on the Nigeria Police Force*, Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN), Lagos.

‘the ordinary people’.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the dynamics of killings by the security forces may be better understood when examined within their changing political, legal, economic, and social contexts.

### Political context

In Nigeria, ‘national security’ is equated with ‘state security’ and ‘state security’ is viewed as the security of political office holders.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the security forces are organised and managed to protect the politically influential and the rich by using state violence against other sections of the population.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, certain political values are attached to state violence,<sup>11</sup> especially during elections to public offices. Political patronage and the use of political power to gain access to wealth promote political violence. Competition for political power is closely associated with the buying and selling of votes and politically motivated killings during elections.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the so-called ‘security votes’—a security fund reserved for the political executive—is often appropriated simply by “evoking national security”.<sup>13</sup> The

---

<sup>8</sup> Mehler, Andreas (2009) *The Production of Insecurity by African Security Forces: Insights from Liberia and the Central African Republic*, German Institute of Global and Area Studies. Available at [http://repec.giga-hamburg.de/pdf/giga\\_09\\_wp114\\_mehler.pdf](http://repec.giga-hamburg.de/pdf/giga_09_wp114_mehler.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ibeanu, Okechukwu and Momoh, Abubakar (2008) ‘State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs’, Nigeria Country Case Study produced for the project on *The Politics of Security Decision-Making*. Available at

[https://www.academia.edu/1944700/State\\_Responsiveness\\_to\\_Public\\_Security\\_Needs\\_The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Public\\_Security\\_Decision-Making\\_-\\_Nigeria\\_Country\\_Study](https://www.academia.edu/1944700/State_Responsiveness_to_Public_Security_Needs_The_Politics_of_Public_Security_Decision-Making_-_Nigeria_Country_Study)

<sup>10</sup> Pearce, Jenny, McGee, Rosemary and Wheeler Joanna (2011) ‘Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South’, IDS Working Paper, No.357.

<sup>11</sup> Hills, Alice (2012) *Lost in Translation: Why Nigeria’s Police Don’t Implement Democratic Reforms*, *International Affairs*, Vol.88, No.4, pp.739-755.

<sup>12</sup> Hill, J.C.N. (2012) *Nigeria since Independence: Forever Fragile?* Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>13</sup> Uwimana, Chantal and Wawro, Leah (2014) *Corruption in Nigeria Military and Security Forces: A Weapon in Boko Haram’s Hands*. Available at <http://saharareporters.com/report/corruption-nigerias->

idea of ‘security votes’ implicitly promotes state violence, mostly through the security forces, because it often results in the allocation of more funds to the political executives and the security forces. As Herbert Howe observed, the character and behaviour of the security forces is largely a reflection of the “national political structures and values”.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the increasing concern of the political leadership with regime and political survival has resulted in widespread killings by the security forces, with near impunity.

### **Legal context**

In law enforcement, security forces use a form of authorised state coercion, but they do so under “tensed and often emotionally charged interpersonal encounters” with members of the public.<sup>15</sup> Hence, to avoid abuse of their mandates, security forces are regulated through institutional laws and codes of conduct including ‘rules of engagement’ while discharging their duties. In Nigeria, however, the law grants the security forces wide discretionary powers. For instance, the Criminal Code Act permits the security forces, notably the police, to use force in the suppression of civil unrest and the arrest of suspects, and to use ‘any reasonable force’ to prevent the ‘escape of an arrested person’; and in the case of serious crime, it permits them to kill the suspect if he/she cannot be arrested by any means.<sup>16</sup> Police Order 237 also permits

---

military-and-security-forces-weapon-boko-haram%E2%80%99s-hands-transparency-inter

<sup>14</sup> Howe, M. Herbert (2001) *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>15</sup> Harmon, A. Rachel (2008) When is Police Violence Justified? *Northwestern University Law Review*, Vol.102, No.3, p.1120.

<sup>16</sup> Criminal Code Act (1990) Laws of the Federation of Nigeria. Available at <http://nigerianlawguru.com/legislations/STATUTES/CRIMINAL%20CODE.pdf>



police officers to shoot detainees and suspects who try to escape or evade arrest.<sup>17</sup>

Police officers are never held responsible for their excesses even though the Criminal Procedure Act stipulates that “[a]ny person authorized by law to use force is criminally responsible for any excess, according to the nature and the quality of the act which constitutes the excess”.<sup>18</sup> Weak institutional accountability measures make oversight of the security forces ineffective. Judicial oversight of security forces is weak largely because the leadership of the security forces prefer internal accountability measures to external oversight bodies.<sup>19</sup> For instance, the police and the military forces prefer an ‘Orderly Room Trial’ and a ‘Court Martial’, respectively, in trying their erring officers.<sup>20</sup> Thus, lack of cooperation from the security forces often frustrates the oversight functions of the courts and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). In consequence, the repressive laws and weak accountability measures reinforce the ability of the security forces to engage with impunity in arbitrary killings.

### **Economic context**

Economic factors play a significant role in killings by the security forces in Nigeria. Most security forces violence and killings are driven by vested economic interests. For instance, the security forces have been accused of influencing the continuation of violent instability in the Niger Delta because of their alleged

---

<sup>17</sup> Force Order No. 237, Rules for Guidance in the Use of Firearms by the Police.

<sup>18</sup> Criminal Code Act (1990), 25 (298).

<sup>19</sup> Chukwuma, Innocent (1997) ‘The Legal Structure of the Police and Human Rights in Nigeria’. *Third World Legal Studies*, Vol. 14, Article 4, pp.40-70. Available at:

<http://scholar.valpo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=twls>

<sup>20</sup> NOPRIN (2007) *Criminal Force?: An Interim Report on the Nigeria Police Force*, Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN), Lagos

involved in the oil bunkering business in the area.<sup>21</sup> Corruption is widespread in Nigeria and the security forces, and the police in particular is one of the most corrupt public institutions in the country.<sup>22</sup> Funds meant for funding the security forces are often misappropriated by its leadership and the political executives, leaving the forces ill-equipped and demoralised.<sup>23</sup> Hence, faced with lack of equipment and very low wages, the security forces indulge in corrupt practices including forceful extortion of bribes, which often results in human rights abuses and extra-judicial killings. Most security operatives see extortion of bribes as “a way to earn a living”, and ordinary citizens are obliged to pay for every service rendered by the security forces.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the police usually solicit bribes to investigate or discontinue investigation of suspects, and they sometimes kill on behalf of influential individuals.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Katsouris, Christina and Aaron, Sayne (2013) Nigeria’s Criminal Crude: International Options to Combat the Export of Stolen Oil, *Chatham House*. Available at [http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/0913pr\\_nigeriaoil.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/0913pr_nigeriaoil.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Persson, Henrik (2014) Nigeria – An Overview of Challenges to Peace and Security. Available at <http://www.foi.se/Documents/Persson,%20Nigeria%20-%20An%20Overview%20of%20Challenges%20to%20Peace%20and%20Security,%202014.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Uwimana, Chantal and Wawro, Leah (2014) Corruption in Nigeria Military and Security Forces: A Weapon in Boko Haram’s Hands. Available at <http://saharareporters.com/report/corruption-nigerias-military-and-security-forces-weapon-boko-haram%E2%80%99s-hands-transparency-inter>

<sup>24</sup> Persson, Henrik (2014) Nigeria – An Overview of Challenges to Peace and Security. Available at <http://www.foi.se/Documents/Persson,%20Nigeria%20-%20An%20Overview%20of%20Challenges%20to%20Peace%20and%20Security,%202014.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch (2014) World Report – Nigeria. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/nigeria>

### Social context

Nigeria is bedevilled by many social challenges that promote widespread killings by the security forces. Poverty and social inequalities can cause ethno-religious conflicts, criminality, and insurgency, all of which result in violent responses by the state.<sup>26</sup> 'To restore order', the security forces often kill more people than are killed at the initial stage of a conflict.<sup>27</sup> Hence, killings by the security forces are very common in areas most affected by ethno-religious violence, criminality, militancy, and insurgency. For instance, arbitrary killings by the security forces were very common in the pre-amnesty Niger Delta because of militant activities, while the imposition of emergency rule in the North-East following the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in widespread killings by the security forces.

### MAPPING OF KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY FORCES

There is hardly any reliable statistical analysis of trends and patterns of security forces killings across Nigeria. This is partly a result of inconsistencies in official data and media reports on security forces killings. Reports by the police and other security agencies rarely give accurate figures and reveal many discrepancies when compared with media reports and individual accounts.<sup>28</sup> These discrepancies make it very difficult to get the

---

<sup>26</sup> Persson, Henrik (2014), *Ibid*; Ebohon, Sylvanus and Emanuel Ifeadi (2012) Managing the Problems of Public Order and Internal security in Nigeria, *African Security*, Vol.5, Issue 1, p.1-23. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2012.653304>

<sup>27</sup> Hill, J.C.N. (2012) *Nigeria since Independence: Forever Fragile?* Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>28</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2011) *Nigeria Watch: Third Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2011)*, p.7. Available at [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11\(1\).pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11(1).pdf)

“actual number of people killed by the police and other security forces”.<sup>29</sup> As a result of the unsystematic recording of crime data, deaths resulting from security forces violence are either underreported or overstated.<sup>30</sup> This inconsistency in body count makes it very difficult to reliably analyse trends and patterns of killings by the security forces nationwide. Statistics about security forces killings in Nigeria simply do not provide reliable information for nationwide mapping and analysis. Consequently, it has become difficult to identify major categories of security forces killings, where and when such killings are likely to occur, and whether such killings are decreasing or increasing

### **Data and methods**

This study is based on data extracted from the Nigeria Watch database between 1 June 2006 and 31 May 2014.<sup>31</sup> This time frame was chosen because the database started in June 2006 and this study seeks to map and analyse trends of killings by the security forces over an 8-year period. It should therefore be noted that with the exception of the years 2007 to 2013, data for 2006 and 2014 should be considered in the light of the stated period when data collation and analysis started and ended. The choice of the Nigeria Watch database is based on the understanding that official data, media reports, and individual accounts are largely inconsistent and therefore unreliable. The security forces, especially the police, either underreport or overstate the number of deaths,

---

<sup>29</sup> Ojo, O. Emmanuel (2010) Boko Haram: Nigeria’s Extra-Judicial State, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol.12, No.2, p.55. Available at [http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/V12No2\\_Spring2010\\_B/PDF/Boko%20Haram%20Nigeria's%20Extra-Judicial%20State%20\(Ojo\).pdf](http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/V12No2_Spring2010_B/PDF/Boko%20Haram%20Nigeria's%20Extra-Judicial%20State%20(Ojo).pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2011) Nigeria Watch: Third Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2011), p.8. Available at [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11\(1\).pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11(1).pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Nigeria Watch, Available at: [www.nigeriawatch.org](http://www.nigeriawatch.org)

depending on the occasion,<sup>32</sup> the press have a tendency to overestimate casualties of security forces violence; and individuals tend to overstate the number of people killed by the security forces. However, discrepancies in body counts and methodological biases inherent in official data, media reports, and individual accounts are largely mitigated in the Nigeria Watch database, which monitors, compiles, and cross-checks data on violent death from several sources for reliability.

The search method employed the use of key words in generating data from the database. The key words 'security forces', 'army', 'police', and 'other security forces' were used to search the database to generate data on killings by the security forces. In the Nigeria Watch database, 'other security forces' includes all Federal and state governmental security and paramilitary forces, excluding the police, army, and JTFs. The database was also searched using the indicator 'security forces implication', which was used to generate data on all violent incidents where the involvement of the security forces resulted in at least one death. The data generated was categorised into main protagonists (army, police, and other security forces), causes (crime, political issues, religious issues, etc.), and relations (security forces versus religious groups, political groups, communities, and trade unions). Data collated from the database were used to produce charts, security maps, and generate statistics for trend analysis of killings by the security forces nationwide.

---

<sup>32</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2011) Nigeria Watch: Third Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2011). Available at [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11\(1\).pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11(1).pdf)

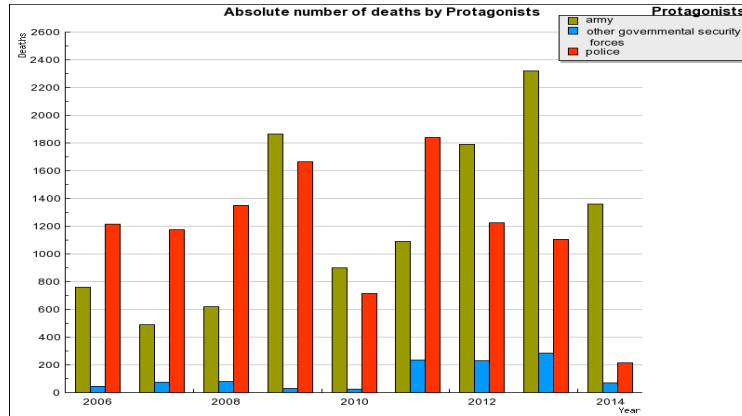
### **The main security institutions involved in killings**

In general, the Nigerian security forces—including the army, navy, air force, police, SSS, customs, immigration, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)—exhibit a culture of violence and kill with impunity. They are often responsible for violent deaths whenever they intervene in any violent incident.<sup>33</sup> They are unable to maintain law and order in violent conflicts; and the more they intervene, the more people are killed.<sup>34</sup> In the majority of conflicts where the security forces intervened, they were responsible for causing many deaths. This is worrisome because the interventions of the security forces result in more rather than fewer fatalities. Figure 1 shows the trend in the number of deaths caused by the security forces between June 2006 and May 2014.

---

<sup>33</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2014) Nigeria Watch: Fourth Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2014). Available at <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report14.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Hill, J.C.N. (2012) Nigeria since Independence: Forever Fragile? Palgrave Macmillan; Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2014) Nigeria Watch: Fourth Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2014), p.6. Available at <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report14.pdf>



**Figure 1** - Number of fatalities resulting from incidents where the security forces intervened, per year (June 2006 to May 2014)

The results show that most of the killings were perpetrated by the police and army. Between 2006 and 2014, the police caused deaths in 1,560 out of 2,694 violent incidents they were involved in, which represents an average of 58% of their interventions causing deaths. The majority of the fatalities caused by the police resulted from extra-judicial killings. The Legal Defence and Assistance Project of Nigeria recorded 997 and 2,987 extra-judicial killings by the police in 2003 and 2004, respectively.<sup>35</sup> The proportion is quite similar (60%) in the case of the army, which killed in 529 out of 880 incidents in which they intervened within the same period. While it is reasonable to argue that most of the killings were caused by the police and army, other governmental security forces also caused many deaths in their operations. For instance, the ‘other security forces’ have killed in 119 out of 265 (45%) incidents in which they were involved. From an annual average of 59% between June 2006 and May 2007, security forces interventions that resulted in deaths peaked at 80%

<sup>35</sup> Alston, Philip (2006) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions: Mission to Nigeria*, Geneva, United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commissioning on Human Rights, 38p.

between June 2013 and May 2014. This is not unexpected because the pattern of killings by the security forces has changed since 2013, following the imposition of emergency rule in the North-East because of the Boko Haram insurgency. However, the pattern is quite systemic, and one can safely argue that these killings “ha[ve] much to do with a general culture of violence and impunity within the security forces” rather than ‘collateral damage’.<sup>36</sup>

Many security personnel have also been killed in the course of discharging their duties. Among the security agencies the police and the army arguably suffered the highest casualty figures. According to Nigeria Police Watch, for instance, a total of 263 police officers were killed on active service in 2009.<sup>37</sup> The majority of the deaths were caused by armed robbers, while others were killed in violent encounters with Boko Haram insurgents. The year 2013 was particularly deadly for the police, as it recorded very high casualty figures among its officers. According to the Police Officers Wives Association (POWA), “in the year 2013 alone, 1,585 policemen were killed in the line of duty”.<sup>38</sup> Although the army does not publicize casualty figures among its officers and the rank and file, the Boko Haram crisis shows that many soldiers have been killed in the fight against insurgents. Thus, in August 2014 some soldiers who were angry about the high death toll in the army rebelled against their commanding officer.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2014) *Nigeria Watch: Fourth Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2014)*, p.7. Available at <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report14.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Nigeria Police Watch (2011) ‘263 police officers gunned down in 2009, official says’ accessed 30 September 2014, <http://www.nigeriapolicewatch.com/2011/05/263-police-officers-gunned-down-in-2009-official-says/>

<sup>38</sup> Otuchikere, Chika (2014) *Keeping Alive Dreams of Fallen Police Officers’ Children*, *Leadership*, accessed 29 September 2014, <http://leadership.ng/features/372674/keeping-alive-dreams-fallen-police-officers-children>

<sup>39</sup> Sahara Reporters (2014) ‘Near Mutiny At Army Barracks In Maiduguri Over High Number Of Casualty In Gwoza’ accessed 30



## THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE ARMY AND POLICE IN SECURITY FORCES KILLINGS

The security forces are usually the major protagonists in all incidents where they cause violent deaths. The majority of incidents where the security forces have killed often involve criminal groups, oil companies, and religious, political, and ethnic groups. A closer analysis shows that more people are killed where the security forces are the major actors. Between 2006 and 2014, for instance, the security forces killed in 2,043 incidents, resulting in 12,078 fatalities. However, it would be too simplistic to assume that the magnitude of killings by the security forces is the same in all violent incidents where they intervene. Ethno-political and religious conflicts are very common, and the intervention of the security forces in these conflicts causes more deaths.<sup>40</sup> In law enforcement the police and other security agencies have a tendency to kill rather than arrest and prosecute criminal suspects.<sup>41</sup> Although the police are the primary institution responsible for law enforcement and internal security, routine deployment of the army for internal security duties has resulted in cases where their encounters with criminals have caused many deaths. In terms of relationship, more people have been killed in violent incidents where the army is involved.

The internal security operations of the army are usually characterised by high fatalities, resulting from

---

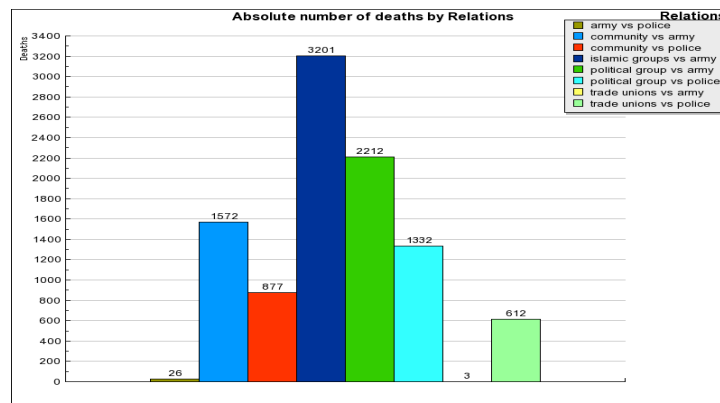
September 2014, <http://saharareporters.com/2014/08/07/near-mutiny-army-barracks-maiduguri-over-high-number-nigerian-troops-casualty-gwoza>

<sup>40</sup> Hill, J.C.N. (2012) *Nigeria Since Independence: Forever Fragile?* Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>41</sup> Serrano, Rafael and Zacharias, Pieri (2014) "By the Numbers: The Nigerian state's efforts to counter Boko Haram." In *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, Leiden: African Studies Centre, p.207.

SUPER OMODOVO AFENO – KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY 17  
 FORCES IN NIGERIA: MAPPING AND TREND ANALYSIS  
 (2006 - 2014)

excessive use of force. Figure 2 represents the major protagonists in incidents where the army intervened and their corresponding number of deaths. The results show that most fatalities caused by the army or its adversaries are recorded in violent conflicts involving religious and political groups. Of course, the army has killed more insurgents and civilians since its engagement with the Boko Haram Islamic group in the North-East. The ideology of the Boko Haram group makes them both an Islamic and political group; but if it is possible to differentiate between the two groups, the army appears to cause more deaths in violent incidents involving religious groups. Besides political and religious groups, the intervention of the army in violent conflicts involving communities within the same period resulted in 1,572 fatalities. This implies that the army is more violent in its engagement with the public and that its intervention in violent conflict often results in more deaths.



**Figure 2** - Number of fatalities resulting from incidents where the security forces intervened, per types of relationship (June 2006 to May 2014)

Compared with the army, the relationships between the police and political groups, religious associations, trade unions, and host communities appear less violent. However, the involvement of the police in conflicts involving political groups causes more fatalities. Figure 2 shows that between June 2006 and May 2014,

fatal incidents where the police intervened resulted in 1,332 fatalities when they involved political groups, 877 fatalities when they involved communities, and 612 fatalities when they involved trade unions. Perhaps the politicisation of the engagement of the security forces with civilians is responsible for this pattern.

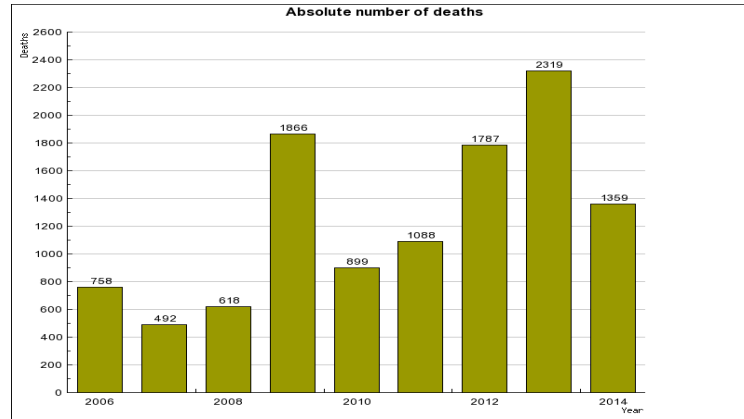
### **Main protagonists in incidents where the army have caused fatalities**

Since 1999, successive civilian governments have established various military-dominated JTFs, under whose auspices the army is routinely deployed for law enforcement and internal security operations.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, the internal security operations of the army are usually characterised by the use of disproportionate force, causing high civilian fatalities. Since 2006, the intervention of the army in violent conflict involving the police, communities, trade unions, political groups, and religious associations has caused many deaths. A total of 7,648 fatalities were recorded in 529 out of a total of 880 lethal incidents where the army was involved. This translates to an average of 60% of all army interventions causing fatalities. Figure 3 presents the distribution of these incidents on a yearly basis.

---

<sup>42</sup> Francis, P., LaPin, D. & Rossiasco, P. (2011) *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and conflict Analysis for Change*, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC.

SUPER OMODOVO AFENO – KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY 19  
FORCES IN NIGERIA: MAPPING AND TREND ANALYSIS  
(2006 - 2014)

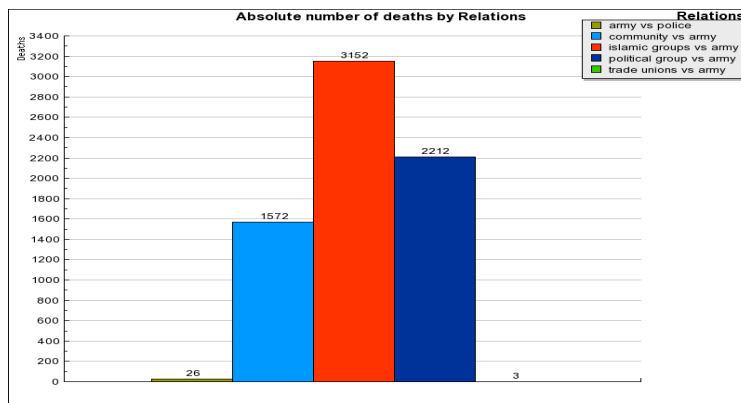


**Figure 3** - Number of fatalities resulting from incidents where the army intervened, per year (June 2006 to May 2014)

The graph shows a noticeable increase in the number of fatalities caused by the army in 2009, 2012, and 2013. The high fatality figures in 2009 can be explained by the deployment of military forces to combat Boko Haram in the North-East and militant groups in the Niger Delta. (In May 2009 a combined force of army, air force, and navy personnel bombarded seven communities suspected of harbouring militant camps in Delta State, killing over 500 people.)<sup>43</sup> However, there was a downward trend in killings by the army in 2010, with a steady increase in the following years and a peak when emergency rule was established in the North-East in 2013. In April 2013, for instance, approximately 185 civilians were killed in a military operation against Boko Haram insurgents in Borno. Although it appears the army caused more fatalities in 2013, a critical look at 2014 reveals a sharp increase in fatalities within the first five months. The fatalities figure for 2014 is alarming because there is the possibility that the figure will increase as the year progresses.

<sup>43</sup> Francis, P., LaPin, D. & Rossiasco, P. (2011) *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and conflict Analysis for Change*, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC, p.200.

These results do not provide information about the major actors involved in incidents where the army caused fatalities. Figure 4 takes a closer look at the relational factors in incidents where the intervention of the army has caused fatalities. With the information presented we are able to understand killings by the army in relation to other actors involved.



**Figure 4** - Number of fatalities resulting from incidents where the army intervened, per types of relationship (June 2006 to May 2014)

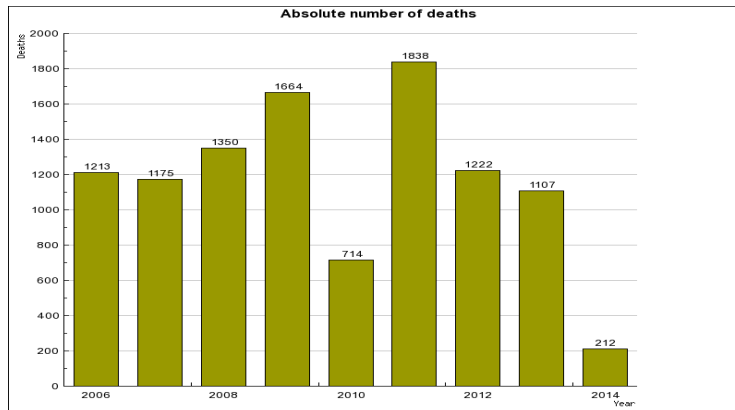
Within the period examined in this study, the army has caused significant number of fatalities in its intervention in incidents involving Islamic groups, political groups, and communities, as well as in inter-agency conflicts with the police. From the graph it is obvious that the relationship between the army and Islamic groups is deadly. Between June 2006 and May 2014, violent conflicts involving the army and Islamic groups, especially the Boko Haram sect, have caused 3,152 fatalities. The relations between the army and political groups are equally very violent, causing 2,212 fatalities within the same period. Moreover, incidents involving communities when the army intervened caused 1,572 fatalities.

While it appears that the relation between the army and Islamic groups is more deadly, it would be too simplistic to assume that the relation between the army and political groups is less violent, because it is often difficult to differentiate between the two groups. For instance, the ideology of the Boko Haram Islamic sect presents them as both a religious and political group. Although inter-agency conflict among the various security agencies is not unexpected, it is rather surprising that the clashes between the army and police caused 26 fatalities within 8 years. This is worrisome because the involvement of the army in internal security is supposed to supplement the efforts of the police in maintaining public order and not to create unnecessary rivalry to the extent of causing fatalities.

The next section examines the protagonists in incidents where the police have caused fatalities.

#### **Main protagonists in incidents where the police have caused fatalities**

As the primary institution responsible for law enforcement and internal security, the police often intervene in violent conflicts involving diverse groups. Most of these interventions cause fatalities. In 1,560 of 2,704 lethal incidents where it intervened, the police was responsible for killings resulting in a total of 5,851 deaths between June 2006 and May 2014.



**Figure 5** - Number of fatalities resulting from incidents where the police intervened, per year (June 2006 to May 2014)

Figure 5 indicates an increasing trend of killings by the police between 2006 and 2009 and a significant decrease in fatalities in 2010. The active involvement of the army in internal security, as a result of the inability of the police to effectively combat the menace of insurgency, is the most likely explanation for the observable decrease in fatalities caused by the police in 2010. A critical look at Figure 3 above shows that the sharp decrease in police killings in 2010 was followed by a corresponding increase in fatalities caused by the army in the same year. The army caused 899 fatalities compared with 714 fatalities caused by the police the same year. To recall, after the leader of the Boko Haram sect, Mohammed Yusuf, was extra-judicially executed by the police in July 2009, the sect regrouped under a more radical leader, Abubakar Shekau, under whose leadership the group began to carry out more violent attacks, including targeted killings and suicide bombings.<sup>44</sup> This development compelled the Federal Government to deploy special military task forces to combat the insurgents, and this significantly reduced the involvement

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) News, 2013, 'Updated timeline of Boko Haram attacks and related violence'. Available at <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=99319>

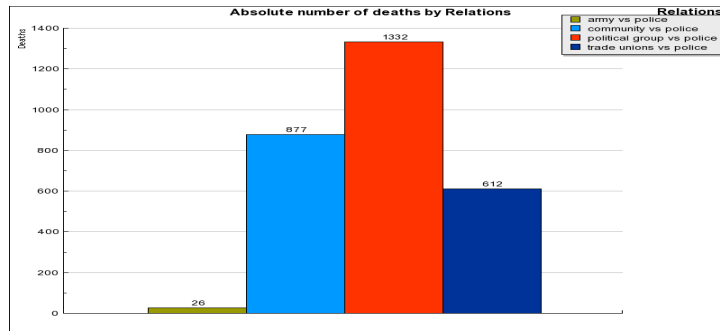
of the police in the counter-insurgency operations in the affected states.

However, killings by the police peaked in 2011, during violent incidents that caused 1,838 fatalities. This translates to a 38% increase from the 714 fatalities in the previous year. Perhaps the significant increase in killings by the police in 2011 may be explained by the fact that it was an election year, and the 2011 general election was adjudged one of the most violent in the history of the country.<sup>45</sup> The presidential election, in particular, was followed by post-election protests and riots that degenerated into sectarian and ethnic clashes in which the police intervened. It will not be necessary to go into the details of killings by the security forces during the 2011 general elections since it is examined in a later section of the study. Furthermore, since 2012 there has been a steady decrease in the number of fatalities caused by the police. Again, a close look at Figures 3 and 5 shows that reduction in the number of fatalities caused by the police since 2012 is followed by a corresponding increase in the number of fatalities caused by the army in the same period. Between 2012 and the first five months of 2014, the army caused a cumulative fatality figure of 5,465 compared with 2,541 fatalities caused by the police within the same period. However, this result does not provide detailed information about the major groups involved in incidents where the police caused fatalities. Figure 6 examines the relational factors in incidents where the police have caused fatalities.

---

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch (2011) Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800>





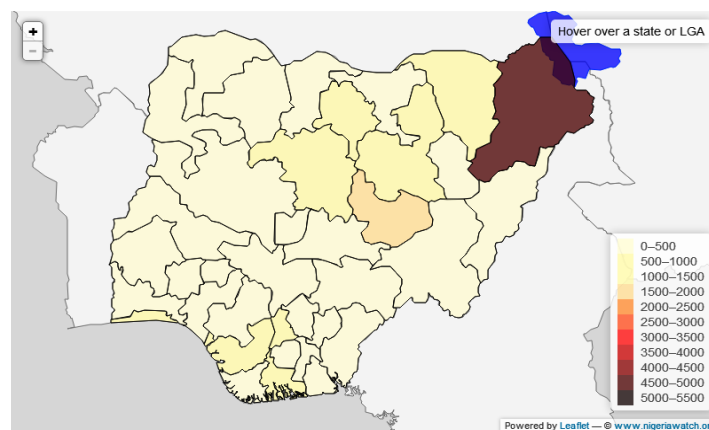
**Figure 6** - Number of fatalities resulting from incidents where the police intervened, per types of relations (June 2006 to May 2014)

In terms of fatalities, the relation between the police and political groups when compared with other groups appears to be the most deadly. Figure 6 indicates that between June 2006 and May 2014, incidents involving the police and political groups caused 1,332 fatalities compared with 877 and 612 fatalities in incidents where the police confronted communities and trade unions, respectively. Important information in this graph is that the police cause more fatalities in incidents involving political issues than in routine law enforcement. If we assume that one can use the number of fatalities to determine the level of encounter between the police and a particular group, then it can be argued that the police intervene more in violent incidents involving political groups than with communities and criminal groups. The impression is that the police are largely organised and managed to protect the politically influential by using state violence against other sections of the population.<sup>46</sup> It may be the case, however, that the police do not intervene more in political violence, only that their intervention in incidents involving political groups is more deadly.

<sup>46</sup> Pearce, Jenny, McGee, Rosemary and Wheeler Joanna (2011) 'Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South', IDS Working Paper, No 357

### Regional differences in security forces killings

The causal and relational explanations of killings by the security forces provided in previous sections of this study indicate that the majority of the fatalities resulted from attempts by security operatives to restore public order during crises. Hence, such killings are likely to be more prevalent in regions that are prone to violent conflicts. However, it is important that we analyse the fatalities figures across all the states in order to determine the states where the security forces cause more fatalities. A state-by-state analysis of the fatality figures will also enable us determine regional differences in killings by the security forces. A mapping of the number of fatalities caused by the security forces based on data collated from the Nigeria Watch database from June 2006 to May 2014 is presented in Figure 7. The map shows that the security forces caused more fatalities in the Northern region. During the period under review, however, incidents involving the security forces, causing a total of more than a thousand fatalities, were recorded in six states nationwide: Borno, Plateau, Lagos, Delta, Rivers, and Anambra. Furthermore, the majority of these states are located in the South (Lagos, Delta, Rivers, and Anambra).



**Figure 7** - Fatalities resulting from incidents where the security forces intervened, per state (June 2006 to May 2014)

At the state level, Figure 7 shows that incidents involving the security forces have caused more fatalities in Borno than in any other state. The alarming fatality figures (4,569 deaths) recorded in the state was largely the result of the intervention of the security forces, notably the army, in the deadly Boko Haram insurgency in the state. The counter-insurgency operations of the army took a very violent dimension after the imposition of emergency rule in the North-East in May 2013. However, the security forces, notably the army, caused hundreds of fatalities in a series of violent encounters with the Islamic sect before the imposition of the emergency rule. In a widely condemned operation against members of the sect in Baga in April 2013, the army under the auspices of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) killed 185 people, many of them civilians.<sup>47</sup> Since the declaration of emergency rule the spate of killings by the security forces has assumed a worrisome dimension in the state, as the army often gives accounts of scores of insurgents killed almost on a daily basis.<sup>48</sup>

In the North-Central region, the intervention of the security forces in the lingering sectarian and ethnic conflicts in Plateau State has caused many fatalities. The Nigeria Watch database recorded 1,784 fatalities in incidents involving the security forces in the state between June 2006 and May 2014. The intervention of the security forces in the mainly ethno-sectarian crises that have occurred in the state has usually been very violent. In November 2008, for instance, the army and police caused more than 130 fatalities while repressing ethno-sectarian and political violence in Jos.<sup>49</sup> In a similar

---

<sup>47</sup> Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) News, 2013, 'Updated timeline of Boko Haram attacks and related violence', accessed 16 December 2013, <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=99319>

<sup>48</sup> Monguno, H. (2013) 'Terrorism, Security and Fifth Columnists', *Leadership* (Nigeria), 29 October 2013, p.34

<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Watch (2009) Arbitrary killings by the Security Forces, Submission to the Investigative Bodies on the November 28-

development in July 2012, the security forces killed more than 20 Fulani militiamen who had earlier attacked some communities and killed many people including Senator Gyang Dantong and Assemblyman Gyang Fulani. The Plateau experience aptly exemplifies situations where the involvement of the security forces in violent conflicts results in more fatalities.

In the South-West, the security forces cause most fatalities in Lagos State. Between June 2006 and May 2014, incidents involving the security forces caused 1,195 fatalities in the state. As the commercial hub and one of the most populous states in the country, Lagos is a haven for social miscreants, including armed robbers whose engagement with the security forces often results in violent deaths. Clashes between smugglers and customs officers, as well as violent confrontations among personnel of the various security agencies, often result in high fatality figures. In May 2011, for instance, soldiers killed four police officers, including a Divisional Police Officer (DPO) and a Divisional Crime Officer (DCO), to avenge the death of their colleague who was killed by policemen at a checkpoint while he was escorting a vehicle conveying goods across the Nigerian border with the Republic of Benin.<sup>50</sup> Although most security forces killings in the state are related to criminals, there are instances where innocent people have been killed either intentionally or accidentally. Many fatalities have resulted from stray bullets fired by security personnel, mostly during encounters with criminal gangs in the state.

In the South-East the majority of the killings by the security forces are related to political and criminal issues, and a greater proportion of this violence occurred

---

29, 2008 Violence in Jos, Plateau state, Nigeria, accessed 9 September 2014,

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria0709web.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> 'DPO's Murder: Policemen Desert Badagry Checkpoints, *This day*, accessed 9 September 2014, <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/dpo-s-murder-policemen-desert-badagry-checkpoints/92072/>

in Anambra State. From June 2006 to May 2014, incidents involving the security forces caused 1,150 fatalities in the state. The majority of these deaths occurred in violent incidents involving criminal gangs and political groups in the commercial city of Onitsha. The city is notorious for violent incidents involving the security forces, trade unions, criminal gangs, and political groups.

Apart from criminal groups, the relationship between the security forces and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) has been very violent. From June 2006 to December 2013, clashes between the security forces and supporters of MASSOB caused over 800 fatalities. In June 2006, for instance, 16 people were shot dead when security forces raided MASSOB offices in the state.<sup>51</sup> In a related incident, the intervention of the security forces in clashes between supporters of MASSOB and members of the National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) between June and July 2006 caused over 700 fatalities in Onitsha.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the status of Onitsha as an important trading centre and gateway to the South-East makes it susceptible to violent incidents that often involve the security forces.

In the Niger Delta region, the involvement of the security forces in violent incidents was remarkably deadly in Delta and Rivers states. The operations of the various security task forces which are mandated to combat militancy, illegal oil bunkering, and piracy in the Niger Delta area have always been very violent. In May 2009 over 500 people were killed in a coordinated attack by a combined team of army, navy, and air force personnel in

---

<sup>51</sup> Onuchukwu, Beatrice (2012) Security personnel raided MASSOB offices, kill 16, *Daily Trust*, accessed 9 September 2014, [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc\\_acc/DT2012-06-06p12.pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc_acc/DT2012-06-06p12.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> see Nigeria Watch Database, accessed 9 September 2014, [http://ngw-opsis//index.php?urlaction=evtView&id\\_evt=16&rang=74](http://ngw-opsis//index.php?urlaction=evtView&id_evt=16&rang=74)

Gbaramatu kingdom of Delta State.<sup>53</sup> In Rivers State, killings by the security forces are largely related to political issues and criminal activities including oil wars. In September 2008, for instance, JTF operatives invaded approximately seven communities in search of Farah Dagogo, a factional leader of MEND, and killed more than 70 people, including innocent residents.<sup>54</sup>

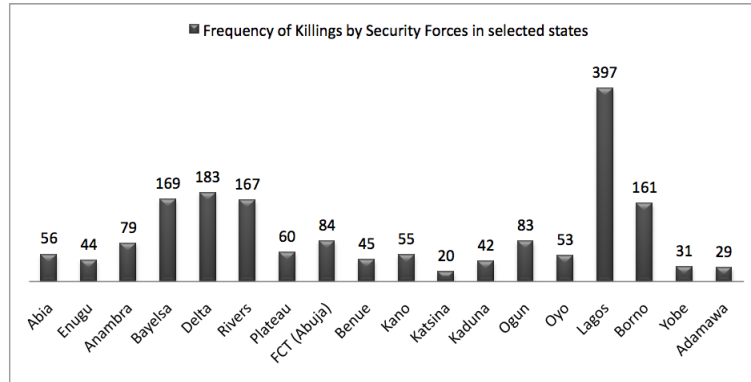
Geopolitically, the security map in Figure 7 shows that the security forces were most violent in the North-East, followed by the North-Central, South-South, South-West, and South-East, based on cumulative fatality figures. However, Figure 7 did not provide us with enough information to determine which place security forces violence is more frequent. Figure 8 presents the frequency of incidents where the security forces have caused fatalities in selected states from the six geopolitical regions of the country. The graph shows that cases where the security forces cause fatalities are more frequent in Lagos than in any other state. However, based on information shown in Figure 8, it appears that the security forces record fewer fatalities from each violent incident they intervened in in the state. This implies that although the security forces are usually involved in many violent incidents, their intervention results in fewer fatalities when compared with states such as Borno and Delta, where the security forces have caused more fatalities. This may be explained by the fact that the security forces in Lagos avoid extra-judicial killings because they are more scrutinized by human rights organizations. Moreover, violent incidents in Lagos are largely related to criminal gangs where the police usually

---

<sup>53</sup> Francis, P., LaPin, D. & Rossiasco, P. (2011) *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and conflict Analysis for Change*, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC, p.200.

<sup>54</sup> Ibanga, Isine et al (2008) 100 people feared killed as oil war enters second day, *Punch*, accessed 8 September 2014, [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc\\_acc/P2008-09-16b.pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/doc_acc/P2008-09-16b.pdf)

intervenes, causing fewer fatalities than cases involving the army.

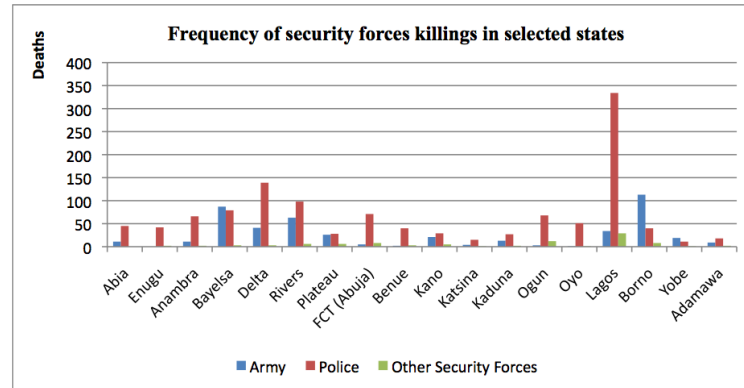


**Figure 8** - Frequencies of security forces killings in selected states, June 2006 to May 2014

A critical look at Figure 8 also shows that killings by the security forces are more frequent in the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers than in the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe, where the security forces are currently involved in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents. The pervasiveness of security forces killings in the Niger Delta may not be unconnected with gang wars, oil bunkering, political violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, and the now abated militancy. The involvement of the security forces in organised criminal and political violence in most states in the Niger Delta often causes more fatalities per incident because the army are usually involved, and they are known for using excessive force.

Although Figure 8 indicates the frequency of violent incidents per state where the security forces cause fatalities, it does not provide enough information to help determine the specific security agency that causes more deaths in each state. Figure 9 therefore presents the frequency of the involvement of each of the major security agencies in incidents that result in fatalities.

SUPER OMODOVO AFENO – KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY 31  
 FORCES IN NIGERIA: MAPPING AND TREND ANALYSIS  
 (2006 - 2014)



**Figure 9** - Frequencies of security forces killings per perpetrators in selected states, June 2006 to May 2014

Figure 9 shows that killings by the police are by far the most frequent nationwide. With the exception of Bayelsa, Borno, and Yobe states, where there is the strong presence of the army-dominated JTFs, killings by the police are most frequent in every other state where killings by the security forces are widespread. However, there appears no observable difference in the frequency of killings by the police and army in Plateau. This may be explained by the fact that the main security outfit in the state, the Special Task Force (STF), comprises personnel from both the army and the police force. There are, however, a significant number of killings involving the ‘other security forces’ in Lagos State.

The next section of the study examines some *ad hoc* case studies to illustrate the trend and patterns of killings by the security forces.

***Ad hoc* cases of killings by the security forces**

Relevant *ad hoc* case studies will be helpful in illustrating the “growing preference amongst the Nigerian security forces to kill”.<sup>55</sup> Two cases are presented to

<sup>55</sup> Serrano, Rafael and Zacharias, Pieri (2014) “By the Numbers: The Nigerian state’s efforts to counter Boko Haram.” In *Boko Haram:*



illustrate how the intervention of the security forces in violent incidents often results in more deaths. Case 1 looks at how the intervention by a team of army and police personnel in a violent conflict between supporters of MASSOB and members of NARTO caused many more fatalities than were recorded at the initial state of the conflict. In Case 2 the study uses two deadly military operations in Baga town and Giwa barracks, both in Borno State, to illustrate how the security forces use human fatalities to determine the success or failure of their internal security operations.

*Case 1: A deadly intervention*

In March 2006, dozens of MASSOB activists were killed by the police in Anambra State following a campaign by the group to boycott the 2006 population census. MASSOB was formed in 1999 by a lawyer-cum-secessionist activist, Ralph Uwazurike, to actualise the dream of an independent state of Biafra after the civil war of 1967–1970. However, the anti-government stance of the group often pitched it against the security forces. Clashes between supporters of the movement and the security forces have always been deadly. In one of the most violent encounters between MASSOB and the security forces, many supporters of the group were killed. The crisis started after two weeks of violent clashes between MASSOB activists and NARTO members, which resulted in the burning of two police stations and a major prison in the state. Approximately 200 prisoners were allegedly set free, and scores of people were killed.<sup>56</sup> Both groups accused the other of destroying the prison and releasing the prisoners, and thereafter engaged one another in a proxy war.

---

*Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, Leiden: African Studies Centre, p.207.

<sup>56</sup> IRIN News, (2006) 'Nigeria: Government cracks down on Biafra separatist resurgence', 4 September 2006, accessed 10 September 2014, <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?ReportId=60795>

Following a series of street battles between the two groups, the police intervened by raiding MASSOB offices in Onitsha and caused many fatalities among members of the group. Subsequently, the Federal Government deployed soldiers to help the police restore law and order in the state. This was followed by a declaration of a dusk-to-dawn curfew by the state government. During the ensuing violent confrontation between the security forces and supporters of the group, “[m]any people found with guns or MASSOB identity cards” were summarily executed during cordon-and-search operations in Onitsha.<sup>57</sup> The involvement of the security forces in that violent incident resulted in more deaths by far than were recorded in the initial clashes between MASSOB and NARTO members. At the last count, the intervention of the security forces caused over 700 deaths in the conflict, mainly through summary executions.<sup>58</sup>

*Case 2: Killings as yardstick*

Fatality figures have become a key yardstick used by the security forces to measure the effectiveness of their operations. The police are known to publicly display the corpses of armed robbery suspects as evidence of effective policing. More recently, the JTFs have formed the habit of claiming success in the fight against insurgency based on the number of insurgents they kill in each operation.<sup>59</sup> Almost everyone killed by the security forces is now classified either as a criminal or an insurgent. In a widely condemned military operation against Boko Haram insurgents in April 2013, soldiers under the auspices of the MNJTF caused an estimated 185 fatalities and devastated the entire town of Baga in Borno

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> see Nigeria Watch Database, accessed 9 September 2014, [http://ngw-opsis//index.php?urlaction=evtView&id\\_evt=16&rang=74](http://ngw-opsis//index.php?urlaction=evtView&id_evt=16&rang=74)

<sup>59</sup> Monguno, H. (2013) ‘Terrorism, Security and Fifth Columnists’, *Leadership* (Nigeria), 29 October 2013, p.34

State.<sup>60</sup> The leadership of the MNJTF later claimed that those killed were either Boko Haram members or those associated with the sect.

In a similar incident in March 2014, the JTF killed over 200 people when suspected Boko Haram insurgents attempted to release a number of their members from a detention centre in the Giwa military barracks in Borno State. Notwithstanding the high number of avoidable deaths that were caused by the army, the defence headquarters claimed the operation was a success. While commenting on the military operation, the Director of Defence Information, Major General Chris Olukolade, stated that the attack by the insurgents “ha[d] been successfully repelled with heavy human casualties on the terrorists”.<sup>61</sup> As the comment indicates, military operations that devastate entire communities and results in high civilian fatalities are celebrated as accomplished missions. It is worth noting, however, that both the attackers and the detainees were killed, so even if the attackers were assumed to be insurgents, it is very likely that some of the detainees were innocent civilians. The military authority later admitted that over 1,400 suspected insurgents were held in that same detention centre for many months without trial.<sup>62</sup>

The next section of the study examines periodic incidents in which the security forces usually cause fatalities.

---

<sup>60</sup> Wisdom, Patrick (2013) ‘185 Feared Killed in JTF, Boko Haram Clash in Borno’, *Daily Independent* (Nigeria), accessed 9 July 2013, <http://www.dailyindependentnig.com/2013/04/185-feared-killed-in-jtf-boko-haram-clash-in-borno/>

<sup>61</sup> Mamah, E., Omonobi, K., Marama, N. and Agande, B. (2014) ‘207 Suspected Terrorists Killed as Boko Haram Battle Military in Maiduguri’, *The Vanguard* (Nigeria), accessed 21 May 2014, <http://vanguardngr.com/2014/03/207-suspected-terrorists-killed-boko-haram-battle-military-maiduguri/>

<sup>62</sup> Mutum, Ronald, (2013) ‘Insurgency... military admits 1,400 detained without trial’, *Daily Trust* (Nigeria), accessed 20 May 2014, <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/daily/top-stories/11657-i-n-s-u-r-g-e-n-c-y-military-admits-1-400-detained-without-trial>

### **Security forces killings during elections**

The involvement of the security forces in the conduct of elections is usually characterised by violence, and killings by the security forces are common. In particular, the police have been alleged to collude with politicians to intimidate political opponents and the electorate in order to influence the outcome of elections.<sup>63</sup> The fact that general elections are conducted periodically also means that killings by the security forces during elections are cyclical. Moreover, the political significance of elections also means that such killing will most likely assume a political dimension. In this regard, this section of the study analyses the 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria in order to determine the pattern of killings by the security forces.

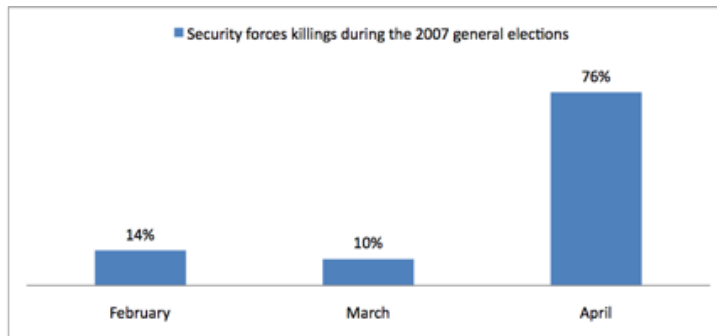
#### *The 2007 general elections*

The 2007 elections were no doubt among the most violent in the electoral history of the country. Many people were killed in a series of violent incidents before, during, and after the elections. During the electioneering period that preceded the general elections in April of that year, supporters of the major political parties as well as rival factions of the various parties engaged one another in violent clashes that often involved the security forces. The security forces actively intervened in several pre-election, election day, and post-election violent incidences that occurred between the end of 2006 and April 2007. Within this period, the Nigeria Watch database recorded 29 fatalities caused by the security forces. These fatalities were recorded from 13 violent incidents in which the security forces intervened during the elections. The majority of these deaths occurred during the Gubernatorial/State Houses of Assembly and

---

<sup>63</sup> CLEEN (2010) Policing Elections in Nigeria: Assessment of the Role of the Nigeria Police Force in Elections in Nigeria, accessed 12 September 2014

the Presidential/National Assembly elections which took place on 14 April and 21 April 2007, respectively. Figure 10 presents the percentages of fatalities caused by the security forces before and during the 2007 general elections.



**Figure 10** - Percentages per month of the total of fatalities caused by the security forces during the 2007 general elections

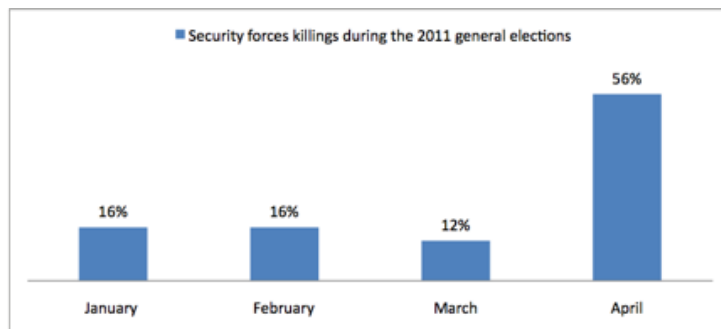
Figure 10 shows that 76% of the fatalities occurred around the election day, while 24% occurred in the pre-election period. It is worth noting, however, that most of the incidents where the security forces caused deaths involved inter-party violence. As soon as the deadline for the return of nomination forms by political parties elapsed on 29 January 2007, the various political parties became enmeshed in violence. The security forces were actively involved in these violent incidents either through official intervention or as personal guards to party stalwarts and candidates during the campaign and elections periods. Hence, killings by the security forces occurred mostly before and during the elections. According to the National Democratic Institute (NDI), more than 280 election-related deaths were recorded shortly before the 2007 elections.<sup>64</sup> However, more fatalities were caused by the security forces during and immediately after the elections than in the period before

<sup>64</sup> National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2007) Final NDI Report on the Nigeria's 2007 Elections, accessed 15 September 2014, [https://www.ndi.org/files/2313\\_ng\\_report\\_election07\\_043008.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/files/2313_ng_report_election07_043008.pdf)

the elections. This was as a result of the massive deployment of the security forces on the election day.

*The 2011 general elections*

Unlike the 2007 elections, the involvement of the security forces in the 2011 elections was well coordinated. The security forces participated in the 2011 general elections under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). Through the ICCES the various security agencies were integrated into the security and logistics committees of all the states and local government areas to ensure law and order during the elections. However, their intervention in violent incidents before, during, and after the elections resulted in many deaths. The majority of these killings occurred immediately after the presidential elections. The elections, in which the major presidential candidates came from the predominantly Christian South and Muslim North, led many politicians to leverage their ethnic and religious identities for political advantage, a situation that resulted in widespread post-election violence in parts of the country. Figure 11 presents the percentages of fatalities caused by the security forces during the elections in April 2011 and in each of the three months that preceded the elections that year.



**Figure 11** - Percentages per month of the total of fatalities caused by the security forces during the 2011 general elections

Between January 2011, when the electioneering process climaxed, and April 2011 when the elections took place, the security forces killed 25 people in 9 violent incidents where they intervened. Most of the killings took place immediately after the presidential election on 16 April. Figure 11 shows that the majority (56%) of fatalities caused by the security forces occurred during and immediately after presidential elections, compared with 44% of the fatalities recorded in the three months that preceded the elections. Inciting utterances by some aspirants that lost the elections resulted in post-election riots, which degenerated into violent assaults, arsons, and killings.<sup>65</sup> In parts of the North, the outcome of the elections, particularly the presidential election, resulted in violent protests, which later degenerated into sectarian and ethnic violence. The intervention of the security forces in the more than three days of post-election violence, especially in the northern cities of Kano and Kaduna, resulted in many fatalities. The pattern of killings by the security forces during the 2011 elections indicates that the post-election violence was more deadly by far than the election day and pre-election violence. However, in terms of cumulative fatality figures, the involvement of the security forces in the 2007 general elections was more deadly than the 2011 elections.

## CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the dynamics of security forces killings in Nigeria requires not only an understanding of the role of the security forces as the primary apparatus of state-sanctioned violence; it also requires a knowledge of the general context within which the security establishment operates. Scholarly analysis must recognise

---

<sup>65</sup> INEC (2013) Report on the 2011 General Elections, accessed 12 September 2014, <http://www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/REPORT-ON-THE-2011-GENERAL-ELECTIONS.pdf>

SUPER OMODOVO AFENO – KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY 39  
FORCES IN NIGERIA: MAPPING AND TREND ANALYSIS  
(2006 - 2014)

the general context, as well as the relational and causal factors that increase security forces killings. This study has established that security forces killings have much to do with a general culture of violence, rather than with the result of accidental deaths or collateral damage. The statistics presented in the paper demonstrate that the majority of incidents where the security forces intervene result in fatalities; and the more they intervene, the more people are killed. The statistics further illustrated that the involvement of the army causes more fatalities, even though killings by the police are more prevalent. Further mapping in the paper illustrates that the intervention of the security forces in incidents involving political groups causes more fatalities, but the Boko Haram crisis and the relationship between the army and Islamic groups is the most deadly, causing more fatalities per incident. Lastly, the paper discovered that incidents of killings by the security forces are more prevalent in the southern region but cause more fatalities in the northern region of the country.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Afeno, S. Odomovo (2012) 'The Boko Haram Uprising and Insecurity in Nigeria: Intelligence Failure or Bad Governance?', *Conflict Trends*, Issue 1, pp. 35-41.

Alao, Abiodun (2000) 'Security Reform in Democratic Nigeria', *Conflict, Security and Development*, Working Paper, No. 2, pp. 1-52.

Alemika, O. Etannibi (1993) 'Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 20, Issue 3, pp. 187-219.

Alston, Philip (2006) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions: Mission to Nigeria*, Geneva, United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Commissioning on Human Rights, 38p.

Chiluwa, Innocent, (2011) 'Media Representation of Nigeria's Joint Military Task Forces in the Niger Delta Crisis', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1 (9), 197-208.

Chukwuma, Innocent (1997) 'The Legal Structure of the Police and Human Rights in Nigeria', *Third World Legal Studies*, Vol. 14, Article 4, pp. 40-70.

Criminal Code Act (1990) Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, accessed August 8, 2014 <http://nigerianlawguru.com/legislations/STATUTES/CRIMINAL%20CODE.pdf>

Ebohon, Sylvanus and Emanuel Ifeadi (2012) 'Managing the Problems of Public Order and Internal

SUPER OMODOVO AFENO – KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY 41  
FORCES IN NIGERIA: MAPPING AND TREND ANALYSIS  
(2006 - 2014)

security in Nigeria’, *African Security*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, pp. 1-23.

Francis, P., LaPin, D. & Rossiasco, P. (2011) ‘Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change’, *Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars*, Washington DC.

Harmon, A. Rachel (2008) ‘When is Police Violence Justified?’, *Northwestern University Law Review*, Vol. 102, No. 3, pp. 1119-1188.

Hill, J.C.N. (2012) *Nigeria since Independence: Forever Fragile?* Palgrave Macmillan.

Hills, Alice (2012) ‘Lost in Translation: Why Nigeria’s Police Don’t Implement Democratic Reforms’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 4, pp. 739-755.

Howe, M. Herbert (2001) *Ambiguous Order: Military Forces in African States*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Human Rights Watch (2005) “‘Rest in Pieces’—Police Torture and Deaths in Custody in Nigeria, Human Rights Watch report’, Vol. 17, No.11 (A), accessed July 28, 2013 [www.hrw.org/reports/2005/nigeria0705.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/nigeria0705.pdf)

Human Rights Watch (2010) ‘Everyone’s on the Game: Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigerian Police Force’, accessed August 6, 2014 <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria0810webwcover.pdf>

Human Rights Watch (2011) ‘Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800’, accessed August 14, 2014 <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800>

Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2014—Nigeria', accessed August 6, 2014  
<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/nigeria>

Ibeanu, Okechukwu and Momoh, Abubakar (2008) 'State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs', Nigeria Country Case study produced for the project on The Politics of Security Decision-Making, accessed August 7, 2014  
[https://www.academia.edu/1944700/State\\_Responsiveness\\_to\\_Public\\_Security\\_Needs\\_The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Public\\_Security\\_Decision-Making\\_-\\_Nigeria\\_Country\\_Study](https://www.academia.edu/1944700/State_Responsiveness_to_Public_Security_Needs_The_Politics_of_Public_Security_Decision-Making_-_Nigeria_Country_Study)

Katsouris, Christina and Aaron Sayne (2013) 'Nigeria's Criminal crude: International Options to Combat the Export of Stolen Oil', Chatham House, accessed August 6, 2014  
[http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/0913pr\\_nigeriaoil.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/0913pr_nigeriaoil.pdf)

Malina, Tomas, n.d., *Militancy in the Niger Delta*, Mathew B. Ridgway Center for International Security Studies, University of Pittsburgh, accessed May 22, 2014  
<http://www.ridgway.pitt.edu/RidgwayResearch/Issues/InternationalPeaceSecurity/BackgroundersIPS/tabid/552/smid/1686/ArticleID/646/reftab/497/t/Militancy-in-the-Niger-Delta/Default.aspx>

Mehler, Andreas (2009) 'The Production of Insecurity by African Security Forces: Insights from Liberia and the Central African Republic', German Institute of Global and Area Studies, accessed August 2, 2014  
[http://repec.giga-hamburg.de/pdf/giga\\_09\\_wp114\\_mehler.pdf](http://repec.giga-hamburg.de/pdf/giga_09_wp114_mehler.pdf)

SUPER OMODOVO AFENO – KILLINGS BY THE SECURITY 43  
FORCES IN NIGERIA: MAPPING AND TREND ANALYSIS  
(2006 - 2014)

NOPRIN (2007) ‘Criminal Forces?: An Interim Report on the Nigeria Police Force’, Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN), Lagos.

Ojo, O. Emmanuel (2010) ‘Boko Haram: Nigeria’s Extra-Judicial State’, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 45-62.

Pearce Jenny, McGee Rosemary and Wheeler Joanna (2011) ‘Violence, Security and Democracy: Perverse Interfaces and their Implications for States and Citizens in the Global South’, IDS Working Paper, No. 357.

Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2011) ‘Nigeria Watch: Third Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006–2011)’, accessed August 11, 2014 [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11\(1\).pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11(1).pdf)

Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine (2014) ‘Nigeria Watch: Fourth Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006–2014)’, accessed July 24, 2014 <http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report14.pdf>

Persson, Henrik (2014) ‘Nigeria—An Overview of Challenges to Peace and Security’, accessed August 5, 2014 <http://www.foi.se/Documents/Persson,%20Nigeria%20-%20An%20Overview%20of%20Challenges%20to%20Peace%20and%20Security,%202014.pdf>

Serrano, Rafael and Zacharias, Pieri (2014) ‘By the Numbers: The Nigerian state’s efforts to counter Boko Haram’. In: *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, 192-212. Leiden: African Studies Centre.

Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, accessed August 4, 2014  
[https://www.unodc.org/tldb/pdf/Nigeria/NIR\\_Terror\\_Prevent\\_2011.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/tldb/pdf/Nigeria/NIR_Terror_Prevent_2011.pdf)

Uwimana, Chantal and Wawro, Leah (2014) 'Corruption in Nigeria Military and Security Forces: A Weapon in Boko Haram's Hands', accessed June 22, 2014: <http://saharareporters.com/report/corruption-nigerias-military-and-security-forces-weapon-boko-haram%E2%80%99s-hands-transparency-inter>