

Nigeria: At Least 1,000 Civilians Dead Since January

Human Rights Watch 26 March 2015 (Abuja) – Attacks by the Islamist armed group Boko Haram killed more than 1,000 civilians in 2015, based on witness accounts and an analysis of media reports. Boko Haram fighters have deliberately attacked villages and committed mass killings and abductions as their attacks have spread from northeast [Nigeria](#) into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger since February.

Human Rights Watch interviews in late January with people who fled Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno states in northeastern Nigeria revealed horrific levels of brutality. Since mid-2014, Boko Haram fighters have seized control of scores of towns and villages covering 17 local government areas in these northeastern states, some of which were recaptured by Nigerian and Chadian forces in March 2015.

“Each week that passes we learn of more brutal Boko Haram abuses against civilians,” said [Mausi Segun](#), Nigeria researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The Nigerian government needs to make protecting civilians a priority in military operations against Boko Haram.”

The findings underscore the human toll of the conflict between Boko Haram and forces from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Nigeria’s National Emergency Management Agency says that nearly one million people have been forced to flee since the Islamist rebel group began its violent uprising in July 2009. During 2014, Human Rights Watch estimates that at least 3,750 civilians died during Boko Haram attacks in these areas. Attacks in the first quarter of 2015 have increased compared to the same period in 2014, including seven suicide bombings allegedly using women and children.

The group also abducted hundreds of women and girls many of whom were subjected to forced conversion, forced marriage, rape, and other abuse. Scores of young men and boys were forced to join Boko Haram’s ranks or face death, according to Human Rights Watch research. Hundreds of thousands of residents were forced to flee the area, either because Boko Haram fighters ordered them to leave or out of fear for their lives.

Displaced people told Human Rights Watch they had fled with only the clothes on their backs after witnessing killings and the burning of their homes and communities by Boko Haram, and in one case by Nigerian security forces. (...) Read the full article [here](#) .