

# CRISIS, INSECURITY AND BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA: EFFECTS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

*It is believed globally that chaos, conflicts, crises and anarchy are inimical to political stability, economic development and social cohesion. The Boko Haram group since raising its ugly head at around 2009 in the North-eastern Nigeria has not only crippled the economy of the region, but has also affected the socio-political and well-being of all Nigerians in general. Nigerians now live in fear and uncertainty as no one is sure if he/she will probably not be the next victim of this deadly group. Nigerians particularly in the northern part of the country now sleep with one eye close and one eye open, the fear of Boko Haram is the beginning of wisdom. The aim of this paper therefore is to look at the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram in relationship with its effects on the socio-political-economy of the country, with a view of finding lasting solutions to this hydra-headed malaise.*

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Insurgency, Nigeria, Terrorism, National development

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## Introduction

According Walker (2012), to Members of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad (*Jama'atu Ahlu Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*), known by its Hausa name Boko Harām (pronounced [bō:kò: hārām]; figuratively meaning "Western education is sin", is a terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria, north Cameroon and Niger. Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the organization seeks to establish a "pure" Islamic state ruled by sharia, putting an end to what it deems Westernization. Campbell (2013), affirmed that the group exerts influence in the Northeastern Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano. However their influences are more felt in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, where a state of emergency has been declared. The group does not have a clear structure or evident chain of command and has been called "diffuse" with a "cell-like structure" facilitating factions and splits. It is reportedly divided into three factions with a splinter group known as Ansaru. The group's main leader is Abubakar Shekau. Its

weapons expert, second-in-command and arms manufacturer was Momodu Bama.

In view of the above, it is clear that political stability, economic development and social cohesion cannot thrive in the regions mentioned above. The Boko Haram insurgency has robbed the northeast in particular and Nigeria in general of the peaceful atmosphere that is needed for development. It is on these bases that the paper sets out to examine the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, with focus on the effects of this insurgency on socio-political economic development in the country.

## Historical Background

Chothia (2012), before colonization and subsequent annexation into the British Empire, the Bornu Empire ruled the territory where Boko Harām is currently active. It was a sovereign sultanate run according to the principles of the Constitution of Medina, with a majority Kanuri Muslim population. The Bornu Sultanate emerged after the overthrow of the Kanem-Bornu Empire ruled by the Sayfawa dynasty for over 2000 years.

Martin (2011), the Bornu Sultanate of the Kanuri is distinct from the Sokoto Caliphate of the Hausa/Fulani established in 1802 by the military conquest of Usman dan Fodio. Both the Bornu Sultanate and Sokoto Caliphate came under control of the British in 1903. During this period Christian missionaries used western education as a tool for evangelism, which has led to secular education to being viewed with suspicion by many in the local population.

According to Johnson (2011), increased dissatisfaction gave rise to many fundamentalists among the Kanuri and other peoples of northeast Nigeria. One of the most famous such fundamentalist was Mohammed Marwa, also known as Maitatsine, who was at the height of his notoriety during the 1970s and 1980s. He was sent into exile by the Nigerian authorities, refused to believe Muhammad was the Prophet and instigated riots in the country, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Some analysts view Boko Harām actions as an extension of the Maitatsine riots.

Iwuchuckwu (2013), in 1995 the group was said to be operating under the name Shahab, Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as the leader. When Lawal left to continue his education, Mohammed Yusuf took over leadership of the group. Yusuf's leadership allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity. The group was originally established at Ibn Taymiyyah mosque, which was named after Boko Harams' spiritual head. Grill & Selander (2014), revealed that, Yusuf officially founded the group in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing a Sharia government in Borno State under then-Senator Ali Modu Sheriff. He established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school where many poor families from across Nigeria and from neighbouring countries enrolled their children.

Borzello (2004), insisted that, the centre had ulterior political goals and soon it was also working as a recruiting ground for future jihadists to fight the state. The group includes members who come from neighbouring Chad

and Niger and speak only Arabic language. In 2004 the complex was relocated to Yusuf's home state of Yobe in the village Kanamma near the Niger border Human Rights Watch researcher Eric Guttschuss told IRIN News that Yusuf successfully attracted followers from unemployed youth "by speaking out against police and political corruption". Abdul Karim Mohammed, a researcher on Boko Harām, added that violent uprisings in Nigeria are ultimately due to "the fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty and unemployment". Ayaan Hirsi Ali of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, while pointing out that "where governments are weak, corrupt or non-existent, the message of Boko Harām and its counterparts is especially compelling," argues that this is a dynamic common to Islamic societies worldwide and reflects the darker side of the religious message (IRIN, 2012).

Kwaja (2011), asserts that "religious dimensions of the conflict have been misconstrued as the primary driver of violence when, in fact, disenfranchisement and inequality are the root causes". Nigeria, he points out, has laws giving regional political leaders the power to qualify people as 'indigenes' (original inhabitants) or not. It determines whether citizens can participate in politics, own land, obtain a job, or attend school. The system is abused widely to ensure political support and to exclude others. According to the Voice of America-VOA (2012), Nigerian opposition leader Buba Galadima says: "What is really a group engaged in class warfare is being portrayed in government propaganda as terrorists in order to win counter-terrorism assistance from the West

### **The Genesis of Boko Haram Insurgency**

The Guardian (2009), disclosed that the group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence (with an exception of some skirmishes in Kannama in 2004). That changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group's activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that, the government reportedly repeatedly ignored

warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organization, including that of a military officer. According to Bavier (2012), in the wake of the 2009 crackdown on its members and its subsequent re-emergence, the growing frequency and geographical range of attacks attributed to Boko Harām have led some political and religious leaders in the north to the conclusion that the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants, but criminal elements and disgruntled politicians as well. For instance Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima said of Boko Harām: “[they have] become a franchise that anyone can buy into. It's something like a Bermuda Triangle.”

Bartoleta (2012), declared that, when the government came into action, several members of the group were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with Nigerian security forces which led to the deaths of an estimated 700 people. During the fighting with the security forces Boko Harām fighters reportedly "used fuel-laden motorcycles" and "bows with poison arrows" to attack a police station. The group's founder and then leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed during this time while in police custody. According to Mc Coy (2014), after Yusuf's killing, a new leader emerged whose identity was not known at the time. After the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, the group carried out its first attack in Borno in January 2011. It resulted in the killing of four people. Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf, took control of the group after Yusuf's death in 2009. Shekau has been described as "an intensely private bookish theologian and ruthless killer, and rules a fractured organization". Since Shekau's rise, the violence has only escalated in terms of both frequency and intensity.

According to Al Jazeera (2013), during the period between 2009 and beginning of 2012, Boko Harām was responsible for over 900 deaths. On 14 May 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa in a bid to fight the activities of Boko Harām. He ordered

the Nigerian Armed Forces to the three areas around Lake Chad. As of 17 May, Nigerian armed forces' shelling in Borno resulted in at least 21 deaths. A curfew was imposed in Maiduguri as the military used air strikes and shelling to target Boko Harām strongholds. Al Jazeera (2013), disclosed that, the Nigerian state imposed a blockade on the group's traditional base of Maiduguri in Borno in order to re-establish Nigeria's "territorial integrity". On 21 May, the Defence Ministry issued a statement that read it had "secured the environs of New Marte, Hausari, Krenoa, Wulgo and Chikun Ngulalo after destroying all the terrorists' camps". Armed Forces Spokesman in Borno Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa said that the curfew that had been imposed was not relaxed with the curfew timings being 18:00 to 7:00; however there was minimal traffic in Maiduguri. On 29 May, Boko haram's leader Abubakar Shekau, following military claims that the group had been halted, released a video in which he said the group had not lost to the Nigerian armed forces. In the video he showed charred military vehicles and bodies dressed in military fatigues. While he called on Muslims from Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria to join his jihad, he said in Arabic and Hausa (Abrak, 2013). "My fellow brethren from all over the world, I assure you that we are strong, hale and hearty since they launched this assault on us following the state of emergency declaration. When they launch any attack on us you see soldiers fleeing and throwing away their weapons like a rabbit that is been hunted down". On the same day, Nigeria's Director of Defence Information Brigadier-General Chris Olukolade said that Shekau's unnamed deputy was found dead near Lake Chad and that two others from Boko Harām were arrested in the area. However, the military's claims were not verified (The Nation, 2013).

According to Lanre (2014), satellite photos raise questions about the government's retaliatory attack on Boko Harām on April 16–17, 2013. Over 180 died, mostly from fires that appeared to be deliberately set during the government attack. Boko Harām fighters and civilians died in

the attack. The people of Maiduguri were unhappy with the declaration of war on the group and instead said the issues of poverty and inequality needed to be tackled first. It was reported in August 2013 that Shekau had been shot and deposed by members of his sect, but he survived. He had been described as “the most dreaded and wanted” Boko Harām leader and the United States had recently offered a US\$7m bounty for information leading to his arrest. Futhermore, Lanre (2014), revealed that Shekau, took responsibility for the April 2014 kidnapping of over 200 school girls. On 6 May 2014, eight more girls were kidnapped by suspected Boko Harām gunmen. In a videotape, Shekau threatened to sell the kidnapped girls into slavery. On May 12, 2014 Boko Harām released a video which shows the kidnapped girls and alleging that the girls had converted to Islam and would not be released until all militant prisoners were freed.

#### **Root Causes of Insurgency of Boko Haram**

The following represents, but not the limited root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency;

**Unemployment/poverty:** this among others served as one of the basis for the insurgency of the dreaded Boko-Haram, this is because larger part of Nigerian youths are unemployed and the employer of some of the available jobs are stressing importance on working experience as criteria for securing the job thereby resulted to poverty which as a matter of fact makes them vulnerable and available for easy inducement for crisis, militancy and other social vices like political thugs among others (Leadership, 2013). “The key root cause of most conflict is the failure of economic development such that many of the world’s poorest countries are locked in a tragic vicious cycle where poverty causes conflict and conflict causes poverty” (The Punch, 2007). It is the resultant effect of poverty and unemployment that makes angry people particularly youth available in all parts of the federation for easy inducement for militancy and other social vices as well as increased people’s apathy towards aiding security agent in

combating militancy and other social vices in Nigeria (The Punch, 2012).

Aderibigbe (2015) opined that, though a global phenomenon, the high intensity of poverty in Nigeria is obviously a great challenge for government. There is widespread poverty in Nigeria, despite its great endowments. This is inspite of the efforts by successive regimes in Nigeria to introduce different programmes to alleviate poverty. Hence, there is an established a link between poverty alleviation programmes (strategies) and governance/politics, and Aderibigbe blamed the failure of such programmes on absence of good governance. Poverty has made Nigeria to attain an unenviable status as one of the poorest countries in the world, such that no government (no matter the level), organization, community, clan or family can survive effectively without introducing one kind of poverty reduction strategy or the other. This problem is essentially not that of programmes and strategies so adopted in poverty reduction efforts. Nigeria has not been known for lack in such efforts; yet according to Global Finance Magazine (2025), economic data, she is still ranked among the world’s 12 poorest nations. Consequently, the incidence of poverty is having adverse effects on the socioeconomic development of most families and communities, hence they have to battle with extreme poverty they face on a day-to-day basis, making them a easy tool to manipulate in the hands of unscrupulous politicians and radical religious bigots.

**Weak security apparatus:** Hazen (2007), suggested that, the proliferation of small arms has also characterized Nigeria’s socio-political economy; small arms and light weapons such as handguns, rifles, grenades, machine guns, mortars and other portable devices. Small arms are cheap, portable, readily available, easy to maintain and even easier to use. More disturbing is the fact that these arms have found their way into the hands of trigger-happy and gun-totting Nigerian youths who have no prior training or orientation on weapons handling. Moreover, varoius porous borders in Nigeria and the

widespread corruption among the security agents have added greatly to this security challenge. World Border Congress (2024), revealed that, Nigeria has many porous borders, with over 1,400 illegal routes, combined with entrenched corruption among security personnel, have severely worsened Nigeria's security, enabling the influx of illegal weapons, drugs, and militants. This corruption allows criminals to bypass official checkpoints, significantly facilitating terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping for ransom across the country.

**Corruption:** Idoko et al. (2015) are of the opinion that, corruption has been seen as one of the social problems confronting the developmental efforts of this nation. This is because money and other resources meant for development are often diverted to private pockets by privileged few individuals at the expense of the entire population. The acquisition of wealth due to selfish acts and greed has characterized most societies in Nigeria, and that has negated the social and economic efforts of many societies therein. Corruption in the form of election rigging, abuse of power, embezzlement of public funds, buying of voters cards, reported cases of underage voting, distribution of money at polling centers, manipulation of voters' registers, diversion of electoral materials, ballot box snatching, unlawful possession of firearms and other electoral offences are rife. This scenario engendered more chaos, conflicts, insurgency, socio-political, religious and economic crises. Adebajoko & Okorie (2014), are of the view that, corruption acts as a primary catalyst for systemic instability, fueling a cycle of crises across socio-political, security, and economic sectors. It undermines the rule of law, drains public resources, and fosters deep inequalities that lead to widespread chaos.

**Low access to education:** this is a serious issue in Nigeria particularly among the low income earners in the economic ladder. The high cost of education has ensured that the poor teeming masses are effectively denied access to education, while some have had to drop out of schools, particularly in the Northern part of

Nigeria, leading to the almajiri incidence and becoming a liability on the society, and a willing tool for socio-economic, political and religious crisis, this is more as a result of the inability of parents of such students to cope with the subsisting exorbitant school fees that are charged by the schools. The exorbitant school fees notwithstanding, most of the schools do not provide the necessary school facilities such as computer sets, well equipped laboratory, sporting equipment and so on (Famade, 2015). In Philos Ethics Humanit Med. (2025), the Almajiri system in Northern Nigeria, once a revered traditional Quranic educational structure, has degenerated into a socio-economic liability, with millions of children facing neglect, begging, and vulnerability. These children are frequently manipulated as tools for violence, political thuggery, and religious extremism, significantly impacting regional stability-Umar SI, Maaji SM. From sacred education to street exploitation: the Almajiri Crisis in Nigeria as a nexus of public health failures, legal paralysis, and global security risks.

**Weak legal framework:** the fact that there appears to be an increase in crime rate in Nigeria is itself is a great challenge for crisis and insurgency in Nigeria. Personal liberty to freedom of movement has been curtailed, as you are not sure who will be the next to be kidnapped either by the insurgents, ritualist or kidnappers for ransom. To Esoimeme (2014), the weak legal framework has ensured that, many innocent Nigerians continue to languish in various prisons scattered across the country and the real criminals are being released through plea bargaining, executive pronouncement, granting of amnesty unending trials and postponement of judgment. The Nigerian criminal justice system faces significant challenges characterized by a weak legal framework, leading to a high population of inmates awaiting trial, many of whom are innocent or petty offenders, while high-profile offenders may benefit from lenient plea bargains or political maneuvering. The system is plagued by delays, poor investigation, and a reliance on "holding charges," which result

in extended, often indefinite, incarceration for many individuals.

### **Effects of Boko Haram insurgency on National Development in Nigeria**

The Boko Haram insurgency has inflicted many negative consequences on the Nigerian state. Some of these negative consequences are examined below;

#### **Political Effect**

The insurgence of Boko Haram in Nigeria has drastically reduced government performance in the affected areas. The insurgence of Boko Haram has made public forum a caution able place to be in some Northern Parts of Nigeria. Since 2011, it has become a policy that there cannot be public assemblage without permit in Federal Capital Territory; Abuja and some Northern parts of Nigeria with exception of North-East where public assemblage have been totally banned due to activities of Boko Haram. Furthermore, the conduct of any election in the three north-east states of Adamawa, Bornu and Yobe at the 2015 general election is in doubt according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Aro, 2011).

#### **Religious Effect**

The activities of Boko Haram have aggravate such that, it has developed negative impact in the minds of some Christian faithful's that all Muslims are extremist without taken into cognisance that extremism is applicable to both Christianity and Islam. A well respected Nigerian Reverend refused to assist his sister because she failed to convert to Christianity. It should be noted that the activities of Boko Haram have made some Non-Muslim who have not been privilege to mingle with Muslim in their life to belief that all Muslim are fundamentalist while some of them were mischievous with their opinion with little exclusion about few Muslims from Yoruba Part of Nigeria.

Amnesty International reports on flagrant violations of the right to education of both Christian and Muslim Nigerians trapped in Boko Haram's spiral of lethal violence (Human Rights Watch, 2012).The terror campaign on Christian churches in northern Nigeria by the Islamic

militant group Boko Haram continues to impact Sunday worship services. The group's threat to launch coordinated bloody attacks on churches, aiming to prevent worship services from taking place has led many Christians in Jos, Kaduna, Kano and other major cities in the north to stay away from the churches. Even Muslims stayed off the streets (Amnesty, 2013).

#### **Social Effect**

The social challenges posed by insurgence of Boko haram can also be attested to by the mass movement of residents who are from other states of the federation, out of the North Eastern part of the country, especially Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. And not only that, insurgence of Boko Haram have reach the extent that suspicious and rumour of attack is the easiest information to spread within North-Eastern Zone of Nigeria (Times Live, 2014). The recent suicide bombing at a football viewing centre during the Brazil 2014 world cup that left more than ten football fans killed and many injured also attest to the negative social effect of Boko Haram on the social life of the people (Haaretz, 2014). According to Relief Web (2026), the mass movement of people has led to internally displaced persons, and flow of refugees not only within Nigeria, but also to neighbouring countries such as Niger Republic, Chad, Cameroon ans so on. The Boko Haram insurgency (including splinter groups like ISWAP) has caused a sustained, large-scale humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, resulting in massive population displacement since 2020. As of early 2026, the conflict has displaced over 3 million Nigerians internally, with an additional 408,000+ refugees fleeing to neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Along with these movement are gender base violence that takes place in the various displacement camps.

#### **Educational Effect**

The destruction and closure of schools, the flight of teachers and pupils and the pervading sense of fear are paralyzing the education system in North-East Nigeria. Not only are the consequences catastrophic in the short term, in

the long term they are likely to have a disastrous impact on regional development. According to the Amnesty international (2013), at least 70 teachers and more than 100 pupils have been injured or killed since 2012. Furthermore, the activities of Boko Haram have made some Nigerian who are not from Boko Haram affected states to avoid been posted to serve the country on the scheme of National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) on the affected states in Northern Nigeria (IRIN, 2013). According to Ahmed, Yahaya, Jidda & Dingari (2024), health facilities and other infrastructures have also been negatively affected by the boko haram insurgents. Boko Haram insurgents have caused extensive damage to health facilities and infrastructure in North-East Nigeria and the surrounding Lake Chad Basin, resulting in a severe, long-term humanitarian crisis. The insurgency has severely crippled the healthcare system, leaving millions in need of assistance and causing a significant decline in access to basic medical services.

**Economic Effect**

Insurgencies, not limited to Boko Haram, can easily cripple the economic activities of any place they spread their tentacles as well as led to migration of people from the affected places due

to uncertainty. Boko Haram have not only led to closure and abandonment of people’s business activities within affected states, but has also led to migration of people from those states as well as reduction of people’s patronage of product from Northern Region due to the rumour that members of Boko Haram are planning to send poisonous products from their region to other parts of Nigeria (The Nation, 2013). As a result of Boko Haram activities, 97 per cent of businesses have been negatively affected. Some have had to close down, while some had to retrench their workers, and others had to cut down on the number of hours of operation (Aro, 2011). Furthermore, the insurgencies of Boko Haram have reduced drastically; government derivation from the affected states due to instability in those places as well as reduced investment and growth of business in the affected places without excluding government executed projects. The 2011 World Investment Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reported dwindled business activities caused by insecurity. In Kano State alone, it has cost the Nigerian economy N1.3trillion (\$6 billion) lost as a result of attacks by the Boko Haram group (Aro, 2011).

**Major Boko Haram Attacks (2020–2026)**

**The following represents some of the major Boko Haram attacks between 2020-2026;**

<b>Date (Approx. Location</b>	<b>Description of Attack/Incident</b>
<b>Jan-Mar 2026</b> Borno State, Nigeria	Continued attacks on military bases and communities, including a March 1st attack where over 50 soldiers were killed.
<b>Mar 5, 2026</b> Ngoshe, Borno	Attack on newly resettled community; numerous civilians/soldiers killed, many abducted.
<b>Feb 21, 2026</b> Northwest Nigeria	Gunmen on motorcycles killed at least 50 people.
<b>Sept 5, 2025</b> Darul Jamal, Borno	Nighttime assault killing over 60 people.
<b>May 15, 2025</b> Mallam Karamti/Kwatanda:	Massacre of nearly 100 residents.
<b>July/Aug 2025</b> Lake Chad Region	101 recorded attacks by the group in this period.
<b>2024 (Various)</b> Borno/Yobe States	Series of ambushes on civilians, abductions, and IED attacks, including a September massacre in Tarmuwa.
<b>June 29, 2024</b> Gwoza, Borno	Triple suicide bombing, killing at least 32 people.
<b>Dec 23-25, 202</b> Plateau State	Widespread attacks killing ~200 people (often linked to bandits/militia).

<b>Oct 2023</b>	Zamfara State	Airstrikes against a gathering of bandits (mistakenly hit villagers).
<b>2022 (Various)</b>	Northeast/Northwest	Continued attacks including the March 28 Abuja-Kaduna train bombing.
<b>Feb 23, 2021</b>	Maiduguri, Borno	Rocket-propelled grenade attack, killing 10 people.
<b>Apr 2021</b>	Sambisa Forest	Intense military operations against the group; death of leader Abubakar Shekau reported.
<b>Dec 2020</b>	Kankara, Katsina	Mass abduction of over 300 students.
<b>Nov 28, 2020</b>	Zabarmari, Borno	Massacre of over 100 farmers in rice fields.
<b>Aug 18, 2020</b>	Kukawa, Borno	Attack on IDP camp; over 100 people abducted.
<b>June 13, 2020</b>	Goni Usmani, Borno	38 people killed, trucks burned.
<b>Feb 10, 2020</b>	Auno, Borno	30+ commuters burned to death in their vehicles.
<b>Jan 6, 2020</b>	Gamboru, Borno	Bombing in a market, killing 38 people.

**Source:** Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2026.

### Conclusion

The paper took off with the aim of investigating into the boko haram insurgency in Nigeria, vis-à-vis the implication on National development. Introduction to the subject matter was presented; also the historical background leading to the formation of the group was also explained.

Following this, the genesis of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria was established, likewise the paper identified the reasons for the continuous insurgency, despite all efforts to arrest the situation. The major implication of boko haram insurgency was also identified as political, religion, social, educational and economic effects.

Furthermore, pragmatic solutions in form of recommendations were also proffered in other to solve the problem. It is believed that the insurgency can be brought under control if some

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of the recommendations as suggested by the paper can be implemented by all concerned stakeholders.

### Recommendations

In order to stop the ugly tide of Boko Haram insurgency, the Nigerian government as a matter of urgency will need to carry out a re-examination of its military men. This is in view of the fact that some of them have already compromised the country's security by aiding and abetting Boko Haram. In other word, they themselves constitute a security threat to the nation.

Furthermore, the problems poverty, unemployment, inequality and lack of development must be given priority. There has to be a well marshaled road plan towards this not mere political statement.

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