

# BOKO HARAM AND ANSARU

## Stakeholder Analysis

## Boko Haram

### Profile

Boko Haram (BH) is a Sunni Islamist armed group based in Borno state in northeast Nigeria. 'Boko Haram' translates from Hausa to 'western education is forbidden'. The group was founded in 2002 by an Islamist cleric named Mohammed Yusuf in response to Nigeria's democratic transition, nationalism and Western influence. The group's official name is not Boko Haram but Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". Members are known to reference the Islamic verse that states, "Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors." After BH pledged allegiance to Islamic State in March 2015 it is now also known as 'Islamic State's West Africa Province' (ISWAP) (DIIS 2015; Clarion Project 2016).

The Sambisa Forest Reserve in northeastern Nigeria has been a key BH hideout for years. Sambisa Forest covers a vast area in four different states. It's large, sparsely populated and has lots of tree cover that hampers aerial surveillance. It also has few roads, a rocky, hilly terrain, and is infested with landmines, making access by land difficult to nearly impossible (Voice of America 24/05/2016). Other areas, such as the Lake Chad islets or the Mandara hills, offer long-lasting cover for guerrilla operations (ICG 04/05/2016). In early August 2016, BH is reported to be establishing a new base in Burra Forest, Bauchi state, after the Nigerian army counterinsurgency in Borno. The forest is in a remote area and extends into three states. Kidnappings and looting have been reported (Daily Trust 10/08/2016; Naij 10/08/2016; Pulse 11/08/2016).

There are no current and credible public estimates of BH's troops numbers, however in 2015 BH power was estimated at around 15,000-20,000 (Amnesty International 01/2015; Clarion Project 2016; Stanford University 08/2015). Although their precise citizenship has been difficult to ascertain, evidence suggests that most BH militants and suicide bombers to date have been Nigerian and Nigeria-based. However, the Government of Cameroon acknowledged there were Cameroonian members of the group in both Cameroon and Nigeria (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

After Yusuf's execution in 2009 his followers splintered into at least five factions. Abubakar Shekau's group appears to be focused on fighting the Nigerian government in

Borno, while other units expanded their attacks in Nigeria and have conducted limited operations in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (CFR 05/03/2015).

**Boko Haram in Cameroon:** BH is responsible for suicide bombings, raids, and targeted killings of Cameroonians in the Mayo- Sava, Mayo- Tsanaga, and the Logone and Chari Divisions of the Far North Region, including the villages of Amchide, Blabline, Bia, Fotokol, Kolofata, Waza, and other localities at the border with Nigeria. BH's bombing campaign had a fundamental impact on the population, government, and security forces of Cameroon, ultimately leading to professionalise security forces and government operations (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

**Boko Haram in Chad:** BH attacked Chad in retribution for Chad's role in the MNJTF and for countering BH in Nigeria and elsewhere in the region. BH's attacks on villages, IDP camps, and military installations in the Lake Chad region represented a significant increase from the attacks on villages in 2014. Following twin attacks in N'Djamena in June 2015, the Government of Chad found and arrested the leadership of the BH cell in N'Djamena, leading to the discovery of a BH safe house and a large weapons cache (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

**Boko Haram in Niger:** In 2015, BH repeatedly crossed the border from Nigeria to launch multiple attacks in the Diffa Region of Niger, leading to the deaths of numerous civilians and security forces (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

### Leadership and structure

**Mohammed Yusuf (2002-2009):** Yusuf was a trained Salafist (an adherent of a school of thought often associated with jihad), and was strongly influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah, a fourteenth-century legal scholar who preached Islamic fundamentalism and is an important figure for radical groups in the Middle East. He didn't have complete control of the group, and after his execution his followers splintered into different factions (CFR 05/03/2015). Yusuf was killed in 2009 and replaced by its current leader, Abubakar Shekau (Clarion Project 2016).

**Abubakar Shekau (2009–Current):** Shekau leads the group with an iron fist, killing rivals and not permitting other commanders to get publicity by appearing in videos (Clarion Project 2016). Nigerian officials and many experts are convinced that Shekau has become a brand adopted by leaders of different factions of BH, and that the men in the videos are actually look-alikes (CFR 05/03/2015). Although he pledged allegiance to IS in 2015, Shekau has become known for preferring BH's autonomy from foreign jihadist groups (IBT 13/08/2016).

**Abu Musab Al-Barnawi (2016–Current):** Following Shekau's replacement, the group split into two factions, one loyal to Shekau and the other to Abu Musab Al-Barnawi (IBT 11/08/2016).

### Operational Structure

The operational structure of the group is fluid. Members operate in cells with relative autonomy and control. BH's political and spiritual leader is called the *Amir* (the leader). He heads the council of elders, called *Shura* (council), with seven members. Each *Shura* member heads a *Lajna*, a ministry. The commanders are called *qaid* and have executive powers. The sub commanders, *munzirs* lead the operations of the foot soldiers, *maaskars* (Amnesty International 01/2015).

In BH captured towns, an Amir is installed who commands BH troops and administers the town and surrounding villages. The degree of governance attempted by BH varies by location, according to the leadership of the Amir. In some towns, they appear to look after their fighters without much thought for civilians, while in others Amirs settle disputes, enforce rules and allocate supplies among civilians (Amnesty International 01/2015).

### Historical Background

Before 2009, the group did not aim to violently overthrow the government. Yusuf criticised northern Muslims for participating in an illegitimate, non-Islamic state. But clashes between Christians and Muslims and harsh government treatment, including pervasive police brutality, encouraged the group to radicalise (CFR 05/03/2015).

In July 2009, BH members refused to follow a motorbike helmet law, leading to heavy-handed police tactics that set off an armed uprising in Bauchi state and spread in Borno, Yobe, and Kano states. The army suppressed protests, leaving more than 800 dead. Yusuf, his father-in-law, and other sect members were arrested during the clashes and were shot outside the police headquarters, actions human rights groups denounced as extra-judicial killings. In the aftermath of the 2009 unrest, an Islamist insurrection under a splintered leadership emerged. Members of BH carried out a number of suicide bombings and assassinations from Maiduguri to Abuja and staged a prison break in Bauchi, freeing more than 700 inmates in 2010 (CFR 05/03/2015).

BH's transition from fringe group to violent insurgency followed the escalation of tensions with state authorities, in which extrajudicial killings featured heavily. Since then the Nigerian government has been drawn into an open war with its members, which have resulted in thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of casualties and millions of IDPs (Chatham House 07/2014).

### Objectives and ideology

Growing distrust in political leadership, a lack of government presence, and chronic underdevelopment created the perfect context for radical groups to take root and flourish in northern Nigeria. The origins of BH are in the north's long history of radical ideology, and sometimes violence, and in movements that have periodically emerged since the 19th century with anti-state agendas (Chatham House 07/2014). BH ideology has exploited the inequality between the northeast region and the rest of the country, as well as localised inequality between the poor majority and the few elites in the northeast. Scarce formal employment opportunities, and the need of youth to distinguish themselves in their communities, led to the belief that successful business ownership is a clear way to advance in society, a belief that BH took advantage of to coerce and recruit members. BH also took advantage of deeply held grievances around government inadequacies to gain a foothold in communities. Without access to or interaction with public officials, and little opportunity to express grievances, request services, or affect the political debate, many communities initially supported the idea of an opposition to what they considered an ineffective government (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

BH regards itself as the successor to Usman Dan Fodio who founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which ruled parts of Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon from 1804 until it was formally abolished by the British in 1904. BH regards the current Sultan of Sokoto, who has a traditional, religious and tribal role, as non-Islamic as he cooperates with the Nigerian government. BH wants to concentrate all religious authority in their hands (Clarion Project 2016).

BH is waging an extremist insurgency in the name of creating an Islamic caliphate based on their understanding of sharia law to replace the current Nigerian state (DIIS 2015; Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

The immediate objective of BH is to establish strict sharia law in northern Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Muslim. Although twelve northern states have implemented sharia governance, BH believes it is too lenient and violates Islam (Clarion Project 2016).

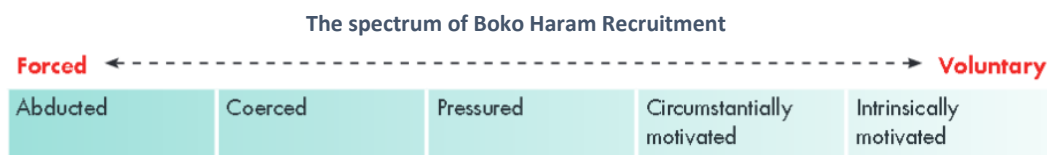
## Members

In October 2014, BH was estimated to have 15,000 to 20,000 members, but the number is likely to have declined since then, following military offensives by Nigerian government forces (Stanford University 08/2015). However, fighters still number in the thousands, the vast majority of them youth (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

BH's first followers, also called Yusuffiya, consisted largely of impoverished northern Islamic students and clerics, as well as professionals, many of whom are unemployed (CFR 05/03/2015). However, an assessment from April 2016 shows that there is no typical demographic profile of BH members. Members come from diverse backgrounds. No pattern exists with regard to employment, societal status, education, or marital status. About half of former members participating in a study were found to be ethnically Kanuri, the largest ethnic group in BH-affected areas, and the other half from 11 other ethnic backgrounds. While the proportion of Kanuri is significant, BH's messaging resonates across diverse ethnic groups (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

## Recruitment

Recruitment in BH falls on a grey area on the spectrum between having been forced to join and having joined of free will (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).



Source: (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

Prior to 2009, the religious and ideological aspects attracted a higher proportion of youth than after the group turned more violent. Many joined because they believed in the movement. Many were attending preaching led by BH members in Maiduguri. Linked to the religious factors, many women saw an opportunity in joining, mostly through learning the Quran. In some cases, women's roles afforded them opportunities for higher status. Both men and women were involved in recruiting members of their own sex. Influence from social and business peers was also a key factor in recruitment. Almost all former members cited a friend, family member, or business colleague as a factor in their joining BH. In many communities, individuals in the youth's *majalisa*, the Hausa word for "council" that is used commonly to describe a formal or informal peer group, would impact that youth's decision to join (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016). Women recruited to BH were most often confined to cleaning and cooking in the context of forced marriage. Some were able to become teachers and preachers to other women (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

After the violence turn in 2009, most young people, and particularly young women fall somewhere in between the ends of the spectrum. Abduction into BH occurs both for young men and for women, who may find themselves vulnerable to abduction if their village is targeted (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

In between the extreme ends, many were coerced or pressured to join, or perceived joining BH as the least bad option to address a challenge given their circumstances. Some young women said they felt obligated to join their husbands in the movement, even if their husbands hadn't threatened them or forced them to join. Others were coerced through the provision of loans that resulted in forced recruitment if they were unable to repay (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

## Operation mode and targets

BH operates as an insurgency/guerrilla force, with units having between 300 and 500 fighters each, carrying out attacks, but also trying to control territory and establish authority (Clarion Project 2016). BH follows a doctrine of unrestrained warfare, making no distinction between non-combatants and combatants; civilians and soldier; female and male, or even Muslims and non-Muslims (Clarion Project 2016). The tactics practiced by BH resemble organised criminal gangs and their practice of doling out favours, only to demand repayment at a high cost (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

During their attacks on towns, they would systematically target the military or police first, capturing arms and ammunition, before turning on the civilian population. They would shoot anyone trying to escape, rounding up and executing men of fighting age (Amnesty International 13/04/2015). Women were sometimes tasked with burning homes during attacks (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

In addition to ground battles, there has been a spike in suicide bombing attacks. The majority of suicide attacks have been carried out, many of them forcibly, by young people and children, mostly female, and some of those as young as eight years old (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016; IRIN 19/04/2016). BH has regularly used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombs to kill civilians and attack crowded places such as schools, markets, and bus stations. BH has also targeted churches and mosques, and Islamic leaders critical of their activities. The group demonstrated its nationwide reach with bomb attacks in Abuja, Jos, Kano, and Lagos (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

BH uses captives as human shields in Sambisa Forest against military bombings (Voice of America 24/05/2016).

## Targets

BH systematically targets those it calls *kuffir* or unbelievers. This encompasses all those who do not agree with the group's religious and political beliefs. As BH opposes secular authority, all those working for the government are covered by this term, including politicians, local government officials, traditional leaders, and civil servants. Ordinary citizens who collaborate with Nigerian security forces, the Civilian JTF, or those who work with the government are also called unbelievers. BH refers to all those living in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, as unbelievers and has warned civilians against fleeing to Maiduguri (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

BH has called Islamic religious authorities unbelievers if they disagree with the group's ideology. Islamic scholars and clerics are often among the first targets for assassination when BH raids a town or village. BH fighters have destroyed many mosques in northeast Nigeria. Christians are also considered unbelievers and the group has destroyed churches and killed and abducted Christians. In many instances ordinary Christians and Muslims are offered the opportunity to join the group and convert to BH's religious and political views. If they do not, they may be killed or forced to leave their home (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

BH members have searched civilians for government-issued ID cards, considering this to be evidence of loyalty to the government (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

## Occupation

BH fighters ruthlessly enforced a common set of rules across towns under their control, which they would announce to the assembled population soon after taking over. Residents were ordered not to sell or consume cigarettes, Indian hemp, or other drugs; men had to let their beards and hair grow and wear trousers that did not touch the floor; women should cover themselves including their faces in public; all transactions had to be conducted directly between producer and consumer; intermediaries were forbidden; women were not allowed to move around outside without a permissible reason, travel between towns required special permission from the Amir, and residents were frequently prohibited from leaving BH territory (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

Although there were fewer restrictions on men, BH have killed or imprisoned many men of fighting age. Most households were therefore dependent on children to collect food, or on assistance from BH members. Although looted food was often distributed for free, in many locations BH allowed or even encouraged trade. BH was reportedly operating a credit system in Dikwa. (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

Life under BH was particularly hard for those who refused to convert to BH's interpretation of Islam. BH required residents to attend their daily prayers. Failure to

attend was punishable by flogging. The group's members would preach to people, instructing them on their methods of praying, worship and performing ablutions. BH members were telling residents that their previous practices and the texts they used to learn about Islam were wrong and that government officials and politicians were corrupt, unbelievers and that people must obey Islam instead. Christians abducted by BH had to learn Islamic prayers and practices (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

Civilians were discouraged or prevented from leaving BH's towns and camps. In some places people were told to leave or join BH. By contrast, in several locations BH actively imprisoned people, placing them in large houses or in prisons under armed guard. In other areas, civilians were allowed to remain in their homes or moved into available homes, without constant guard. However, BH fighters patrolled the streets and the areas between towns looking for those trying to escape. If discovered, escapees were turned around and, in some cases, flogged or executed (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

## Funding sources

Very limited information is available, however most of BH's funds are believed to come from criminal activities (Amnesty International 01/2015; US Department of State 02/06/2016). In its early years, the group financed its operations through donations from members and patrons and by extorting money from businesses and civilians. From 2010, frequent bank robberies supplemented the money raised through extortion. The group's influence grew, so did its financial resources, which were used to recruit new members. Young unemployed men found themselves with money, access to weapons, and the power to extort money from others in society. Since 2013, BH has sustained its operations by looting markets, shops, and homes and has stolen arms and ammunition from the military barracks it has overrun (Amnesty International 01/2015).

There are persistent allegations that BH has links with Nigerian politicians, collaborators within the military, and international jihadi groups that provide the group money and weapons (Amnesty International 01/2015). In 2002, Osama Bin Laden invested the equivalent of USD 3 million in northern Nigeria, where Muslims are the majority, to promote his brand of Salafist Islamism. In 2012, BH claimed that they were receiving financial support from Al Qaeda (Clarion Project 2016).

## Support among the local population

Despite widespread devastation linked to BH, lack of access due to insecurity has prevented a deep understanding of participation in the group (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

Before 2009, Yusuf had an estimated 280,000 followers (Clarion Project 2016). Broad frustrations with government created initial community acceptance of BH, which took advantage of deep grievances around government inadequacies and security abuses to gain a foothold in communities. About half of former members reported that their communities at some time generally supported the group, hoping it would bring a change in government. That support later waned as BH's tactics became more brutal (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016). BH relatively easily recruits young men by offering them money and jobs, and by addressing their grievances related to failed governance, corruption, underdevelopment, and high rates of unemployment (DIIS 2015). Many youth described either accepting loans prior to joining or joining with the hope of receiving loans or capital for their mostly small, informal businesses (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

However, after the death of Yusuf and the change in leadership and tactics in 2009, the public opinion shifted against BH. A 2013 Pew poll found that BH's support among Muslims in Nigeria decreased by 24% from 2010 to 2013, with only 2% expressing a favourable opinion of it (Clarion Project 2016). Youth who resisted joining shared a narrative of BH as a corrupt, greedy organisation focused on enriching its leaders. These messages were multiplied by religious and traditional leaders at a very local level and speak to community members' existing concerns about corruption and unresponsive governance (Mercy Corps 08/04/2016).

## Alliances

**Al Qaeda:** Yusuf's supporters were called Nigerian Taliban and dozens among them were trained in Afghanistan by Al Qaeda. In 2002, Osama Bin Laden invested the equivalent of USD 3 million in northern Nigeria, where Muslims are the majority, to promote his brand of Salafist Islamism. Bin Laden also endorsed an Islamist revolution in order to topple the Nigerian government and establish a sharia-based state. In 2012, BH claimed that they were receiving financial and technical support from Al Qaeda (Clarion Project 2016). The Nigerian government's assessment that BH was an Al Qaeda linked terrorist movement left it with few options other than using force to deal with the group (CFR 05/03/2015).

**Islamic State:** In March 2015, BH's leader Abu Bakr Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in an audio message. The pledge does not mean that the two groups are operating as one unit, but provided increased legitimacy to the Islamic State's claim to be the only legitimate jihadist group. BH possibly made the pledge in order to be on the winning side in the conflict between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda and also in order to attract legitimacy in Nigeria and foreign recruits for its army (Clarion Project 2016).

**Al Shabaab:** BH is reported to have links to the Somali group Al-Shabaab (Clarion Project 2016).

Often the focus on links to international 'terrorist' organisations ignores the context in which BH emerged and emphasises security issues that only radicalise the group further (CFR 05/03/2015).

## Who are their enemies?

BH has specifically identified the United States and other Western countries as eventual targets (Clarion Project 2016).

In November 2013, the U.S. State Department designated BH as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) (Clarion Project 2016). The US in 2016 has sent military personnel to conduct airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations as part of the fight against BH (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

## Relations with humanitarian organisations

BH claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja in 2011 (CFR 05/03/2015).

## Humanitarian needs

**Protection:** Thousands of women and girls have been abducted by BH since the start of 2014 and many have been forced into sexual slavery and trained to fight. Men and women, boys and girls, Christians and Muslims, have been killed, abducted and brutalised. Abducted women and girls were forced into marriage with BH militants and abducted men and boys were forcibly recruited into the group or conscripted to serve as spies. BH takes the women and girls they abducted directly to camps in remote communities or to makeshift transit camps such as one established in Ngoshe prison. From transit camps BH would move them to houses in towns and villages and indoctrinate them with their version of Islam in preparation for marriage (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

**Education:** BH intentionally targeted teachers and pupils in an effort to prevent children from going to school. Thousands of children were forced out of schools across communities in Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, and Kaduna states. In March 2014, the Borno state government decided to close all secondary schools in the state in order to protect students and teachers from further attacks. The state government announced that all schools would be reopened in November 2014 (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

**Food Security:** With restrictions on people's movement, basic activities like obtaining food and gaining a livelihood were a challenge (Amnesty International 13/04/2015).

# Ansaru

## Profile

Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, which translates as "Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Lands" (Ansaru) publicly splintered from BH in January 2012. It was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the USA on 14 November 2013 (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

The reason behind Ansaru's creation was the defecting of some BH members against Shekau's brutality, which advocated the indiscriminate killings of Muslims (IBT 13/08/2016).

Ansaru operates in northern and central Nigeria (IBT 13/08/2016).

Although the group is a BH faction, it is believed the two groups reintegrated in the Nigerian-Cameroon border region, where they exchange resources and militants (IBT 13/08/2016).

## Leadership and structure

Ansaru's leadership structure remained unclear (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

**Khalid al-Barnawi** is considered to be the leader (US Department of State 02/06/2016). Khalid al-Barnawi was captured in Lokoja, capital of Kogi state (BBC 03/04/2016).

**Mamman Nur**, has become an influential figure within Ansaru. The future development of BH could depend on Nur, given his connection to international groups (IBT 13/08/2016). Nur was born in Maroua, the capital of Cameroon's Far North Region and he was third in command of BH when it was led by Yusuf. It is believed Nur introduced Shekau to Yusuf. He was not chosen as Yusuf's successor because Nur, unlike most BH commanders, does not come from the Kanuri tribe. He was trained with Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Nur is believed to have played a role in BH splitting into two groups by supporting Abu Musab Al Barnawi (IBT 11/08/2016).

## Objectives and ideology

Ansaru's stated goals are to defend Muslims throughout Africa by fighting against the Nigerian government and international interests. While Ansaru claims to identify with BH's objectives and struggle, it has criticised the group for killing fellow Muslims (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

## Members

Total membership is unknown. Given its narrower scope of operations, it is estimated that Ansaru's membership is much smaller than that of BH (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

## Operation mode and targets

Ansaru does not attack Muslim civilians or force women and children to carry out suicide bombing missions (IBT 13/08/2016). Since its inception, Ansaru has targeted westerners, and Nigerian government and security officials (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

In November 2012, Ansaru raided a police station in Abuja, killing Nigerian police officers and freeing detained terrorists from prison. In January 2013, Ansaru attacked a convoy of Nigerian peacekeepers on their way to Mali. Ansaru has also carried out multiple kidnapping operations targeting civilians. In late 2012, Ansaru kidnapped a French engineer claiming the action was justified due to French involvement in Mali. Similarly, in early 2013, Ansaru kidnapped and subsequently executed seven international construction workers. Ansaru did not publicly claim any attacks in 2014 and 2015 (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

## Funding sources

Ansaru maintained a working relationship with BH and during 2014 may have re-joined with the larger group (US Department of State 02/06/2016).

## Alliances

Ansaru is ideologically aligned to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (BBC 03/04/2016).