

Summary

On Christmas Eve in Bokkos and Barkin-Ladi areas in Nigeria's central Plateau State, armed bandits carried out a series of attacks across over 17 villages, leading to 200 deaths, over 300 wounded, and numerous displacements. The perpetrators, suspected to be Fulani herders, remain unidentified. These recent attacks underscore the ongoing security deterioration in the region marked by enduring ethno-religious tensions.

Recent events and developments

Throughout December 23 and December 25, unknown gunmen targeted at least 20 communities in the Bokkos and Barkin-Ladi districts of the Plateau State in Central Nigeria. At least 200 villagers were killed and 300 injured as well as numerous forced displacements. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attacks. However, Fulani herders, who are known for conducting similar attacks in northwest and central Nigeria, are suspected. Following the attacks, President Bola Tinubu issued orders for widespread searches to identify the perpetrators and relief efforts. However, human rights groups, such as Amnesty International criticized the government's inadequate actions to prevent the attacks and respond. The region has been particularly prone to bandit attacks and inter-communal violence between various ethnic and religious groups for many years due to access to land and water. The Plateau region experienced similar events on December 1, 2023, when 11 persons were allegedly killed by Fulani militia in the Pukah community, and in May 2023 when 100 people were killed in communal clashes.

Impact assessment

The Christmas attacks highlight the security gap between Nigeria's urban centers, such as Abuja, and the rural areas. Unprevented past incidents in the Plateau region involving bandit violence indicate the likelihood of continued violence in the region. As the government battles multiple fronts against armed groups, especially in the northeast of the country, such as the Boko Haram terrorist group, inter-communal violence, and bandit attacks will likely remain untreated and open possibilities for more well-coordinated attacks. Moreover, the inability to prevent such attacks further exacerbates ongoing security deterioration in other unstable regions, such as Borno State, Zamfura, or Kaduna. As a result of the recent attacks, the government will almost certainly face increasing pressure to bolster security measures in rural areas to prevent further violence within communities. The potential failure to prevent and quickly react to future violent incidents will very likely heighten ongoing social discontent among Nigerians.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure all staff traveling to Nigeria undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Avoid all non-essential travel to central Nigeria and northern Nigeria. If travel is necessary, staff should plan their journey ahead, check the state of the roads and be aware of potential checkpoints and roadblocks.
- Monitor local news and liaise with local contacts to be informed of relevant developments.

Customized advice

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