

1.2. The Nigerian State and state-affiliated actors

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2021

Some Nigerian State authorities and affiliated actors, such as the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF), the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Islamic Police (*hisbah*), and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), are accused of committing a wide range of human rights violations, including unlawful killings, sexual violence and abuse, recruitment and use of child soldiers, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill treatment of civilians [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.6.1, 1.3.1.7].

NAF is accused of extrajudicial executions, mass deaths in custody, torture, fumigation, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention. The Military Special Board was set up to investigate the alleged human rights violations related to events of 30 May 2016 in South East Nigeria, but did not find any wrongdoing by the army [[Targeting](#), 2.5.1.1]. NAF was found guilty of killing hundreds of members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in 2015, according to the Kaduna State Judicial Commission of Inquiry [[Targeting](#), 3.8.3.1].

The **NPF** has been involved in abuses of human rights such as acts of extortion, beatings, illegal detention, sexual harassment. In response to allegations of extrajudicial killings and other abuses, the NPF introduced a voluntary Code of Conduct in January 2013, which provides a set of guiding principles and standards of behaviour for police officers. The NPF has also introduced human rights officers at all police stations, however their ability to prevent human rights abuses is limited for various reasons, including due to lack of authority at the local level [[Actors of protection](#), 3.3].

A special police unit, the **Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)** had been established to curb armed robbery. Some of the unit's personnel were reported to have intimidated, arbitrarily arrested, extorted, tortured, raped, and killed citizens [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.3.1.2]. In October 2020, SARS was disbanded following widespread protests. The largely peaceful country-wide protests had been met with violent response by the Nigerian security forces [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.3.1.1, 1.3.1.2]. The NPF subsequently announced that they would set up a new Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team to replace the old unit, provoking widespread concern and further protests [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.3.1.2].

There are a number of groups formally or informally linked to state authorities. One prominent example are the **Islamic police (*hisbah*)**, operating in the Sharia-implementing states. They are reported to arrest and torture LGBTIQ persons and women accused of immorality, and to target Christians sporadically [[Targeting](#), 2.5.3.2]. *Hisbah* also have coercive disciplinary functions, such as forcibly preventing persons of different sexes to mix in the public transport system; enforcing a dress code, especially on women in educational institutions; preventing the performance of music and films; seizing and destroying alcoholic drinks, etc.

CJTF is a state-sponsored and state-aligned paramilitary group. It cooperates with the Nigerian security forces and has the task of protecting local populations and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Boko Haram's attacks [[Targeting](#), 2.5.4.2]. It is reported that CJTF has committed serious human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, acts of torture and recruitment of children [[Targeting](#), 2.5.4.4]. Furthermore, they are reported to have become part of the local war economy, participating in criminal networks, while acting as a local police force [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.3.1.6].

Lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic are reported to have led to additional security force abuses and instances of police brutality [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.3.1.7]. Armed forces have also responded with increased airstrikes and ground operations in areas affected by banditry [[Security situation 2021](#), 1.4.1.1].

In December 2020, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court concluded that there is reasonable basis to believe that war crimes and crimes against humanity had been committed by the Nigerian military from the beginning of the non-international armed conflict with Boko Haram since June 2011. The Prosecutor of the ICC has also examined alleged crimes falling outside of the context of this conflict.^[8]

^[8] Statement of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the situation in Nigeria, 11 December 2020, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nigeria> , Preliminary examination: Nigeria <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=201211-prosecutor-statement>, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nigeria>. [[back to text](#)]