



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on the Islamic sect, “Boko Haram” or similar sounding names/spellings. Information on these groups activities, objectives, faith, rituals, leadership, membership, history and current situation in Nigeria. Information on the treatment of those who are members or are perceived to be members of the group by the government and/or society and whether membership of the sect is illegal?

The areas of Nigeria affected by the recent religious riots in which Boko Haram were said to be involved and the number of people killed / injured / displaced during these riots. How the sect is regarded within the wider Islamic community

A July 2009 *IRIN News* report states:

“MAIDUGURI, 31 July 2009 (IRIN) - Security forces have killed innocent civilians and unarmed men in a crackdown on the radical religious group known as Boko Haram, which reportedly left several hundred people dead in Maiduguri, northeastern Nigeria, residents and human rights activists told IRIN.

“It is unbelievable the way the security forces went about indiscriminately shooting and killing innocent residents of Maiduguri, and members of Boko Haram,” Shamaki Gad Peter, head of Jos-based League for Human Rights told IRIN.

Peter said he has received reports from Maiduguri residents that they witnessed street vendors and passers-by killed in crossfire during fighting between security forces and Boko Haram in recent days, as well as disarmed Boko Haram members being shot dead. Peter said security forces have not made enough effort to identify the targets of their crackdown - Boko Haram supporters wear no uniform and do not carry identity cards.

Over the past week Boko Haram, a radical group calling for strict Islamic rule, has attacked police headquarters in five states, as well as prisons, government buildings and churches, according to observers.

Following clashes between the group and security forces some 4,000 city residents fled to army barracks outside Maiduguri where they are receiving food, water and medicine from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the National Emergency Management Agency, ICRC delegate Ibrahim Aliyu, told IRIN.

A reporter told IRIN that while standing outside police headquarters he witnessed three captured and disarmed members of the sect being shot at close range by

security forces.” (IRIN News (31 July 2009) *NIGERIA: Innocents “indiscriminately shot and killed”, rights groups say*)

A July 2009 *Reuters* news report states:

“LAGOS, July 30 (Reuters) - Security forces in northern Nigerian battled the remnants of an Islamic sect loosely modelled on Afghanistan's Taliban movement, following days of unrest which have killed more than 180 people.

Members of the group -- known as Boko Haram -- have attacked police stations and government buildings as well as rampaging through residential areas armed with home-made guns, petrol bombs, machetes and knives in four states in northern Nigeria.

The violence first erupted on Sunday in Bauchi state after some members of the group were arrested on suspicion of plotting to attack a police station.” (Reuters (30 July 2009) *Q+A – Who are the Islamic sect in northern Nigeria?*)

The same report under the heading ‘Who or What is Boko Haram?’, states:

“Sometimes referred to as the "Nigerian Taliban", the group's members are followers of a self-proclaimed Islamic scholar, Mohammed Yusuf, who is radically opposed to Western education and wants sharia (Islamic law) to be adopted across Nigeria.

Based in Maiduguri, capital of the northeastern state of Borno, his followers include former university lecturers and students in other northern states including Kano, Yobe, Sokoto and Bauchi, as well as illiterate, jobless youths.

Boko Haram means "Western education is sinful" in the Hausa language spoken across northern Nigeria and sums up the main pillar of the group's ideology. Some of its members resigned their jobs as lecturers when they joined the sect.

Yusuf himself, who is thought to be in his mid-30s and have considerable private wealth, had a Western-style education, but his followers -- who come from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the predominantly Muslim north -- say he was also educated in Iran.

Boko Haram followers pray in separate mosques in cities including Maiduguri, Kano and Sokoto, and wear long beards and red or black headscarves.

They believe their wives should not be seen by any men other than themselves and are not supposed to use Western-made goods.

Anybody who does not follow their strict ideology -- whether Christian or Muslim - is considered an infidel.” (ibid)

A July 2009 *Daily Trust* news article states:

“The battle between security forces and followers of the Boko Haram sect appeared to have come to an end with the killing yesterday of the leader of the group few hours after he was captured in Maiduguri.

The police claimed that Malam Mohammed Yusuf, whose followers battled troops and policemen for the past five days in as many states, was killed in a shootout with security men. But a BBC reporter in Maiduguri said Yusuf was arrested and paraded before journalists with no apparent sign of injury.

"He has been killed. You can come and see his body at the state police command headquarters," spokesman for the Borno State Police Command Isa Azare told Reuters news agency.

The state Police Commissioner Christopher Dega had earlier announced the capture of Yusuf and said he was being held at the Giwa Barracks." (Daily Trust (31 July 2009) *Nigeria: Boko Haram Leader Killed*)

The article continues as follows:

“The violence erupted when members of the group attacked a police station in Bauchi, and the police responded by raiding the sect's enclave killing more than 50. It later spread to Borno, Yobe, Kano and Katsina states leaving up to 300 people, mostly followers of the sect, killed.” (ibid)

A July 2009 article from Nigeria's *Vanguard* newspaper states:

“ABUJA — LEADER of Boko Haram, the Islamic sect blamed for days of deadly violence in Nigeria has been killed in custody, police officials say.

The announcement came just hours after police said they had captured Mohammed Yusuf in the city of Maiduguri. His followers have been blamed for violence in the north that has left more than 300 people dead.

“He has been killed. You can come and see his body at the state police command headquarters,” said Isa Azare, spokesman for the Maiduguri police command, told Reuters news agency.

He was arrested earlier in the day, after reportedly being found hiding in a goat pen at his parents-in-law's house.” (Vanguard (30 July 2009) *Boko Haram leader, Yusuf, killed*)

The same report under the heading ‘18 suspected Boko Haram members nabbed in Jos’, states:

“In Jos, Plateau State, the police have arrested 18 people suspected to be linked to the Boko Haram sect. One of them, Shamsudeen Salisu Nakofa, was arrested with a large quantity of yet-to-be-sewn army camouflage and other things which

he claimed he was taking to Bauchi to supply to members of the fundamentalist group.

Another suspect said to be the supplier of the bales of camouflage materials was also paraded.

Parading the suspects to newsmen yesterday, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Gregory Anyanting, said 16 others mostly youths from Katsina state including a Ghanaian and a Nigerien were arrested in a house in Jos and were being investigated to ascertain if they had any link with the sect.

He said the arrests followed security surveillance following the outbreak of violence in Bauchi and other states assuring that the police would do all it can to maintain peace in the state.

Answering questions from newsmen, Nakofa who denied being a member of Boko Haram said he was requested to supply the materials by members of the sect in Bauchi." (ibid)

A July 2009 *BBC News* article states:

"At least 39 people have died in clashes between security forces and a radical Islamist group in the north-eastern Nigerian city of Bauchi, officials say.

The clashes occurred after dozens of men armed with guns and explosives attacked a police station.

They were repelled and security forces responded by attacking a settlement on the edge of the city, reports said.

Authorities said the militants belonged to Boko Haram, a group that wants Sharia law imposed across Nigeria." (BBC News (26 July 2009) *Dozens killed in Nigeria clashes*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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United States Department of State
Vanguard