

**Nextier**

# Nigeria Violent Conflict Bi-Monthly Report (March – April 2023)

Insights from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database





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## Introduction

For over two decades, insecurity in Nigeria has grown in [scale and sophistication](#), posing an extraordinary risk to valued assets such as lives, investments, and the state's territorial integrity. Gunmen attacks, farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, thuggery and kidnapping are among the numerous security travails in Nigeria. These diverse and complex security challenges reflect the country's social and economic inequalities and governance shortcomings, contributing to unrest in the country. These security challenges have continued into 2023.

In the [previous Nigeria Violent Conflict Bi-monthly report](#), prevalent crisis types include banditry, thuggery and gunmen attacks. Current data from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database shows that the pattern of violence has continued in this manner. Between March and April 2023, banditry was predominant in the Northwest, gunmen attacks in the Northcentral and thuggery in the Southwest and Southeast. During the review period, the [36 states of Nigeria held their gubernatorial and state assembly elections](#), with records of isolated incidents of armed conflict and electoral violence. The devastating effects of violent conflict make the challenge a top priority for the incoming national and sub-national governments. Also, the latest outbreak of a civil war in Sudan is an upsetting event that [may negatively impact the Sahel, especially Nigeria](#). Scholars argue that the war, which has claimed about 400 lives, could have a [domino effect](#) across the troubled Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. Already, many Nigerians are [stranded](#) due to the humanitarian burden of the war, with the Nigerian government making [urgent efforts](#) to rescue its citizens.

# Banditry

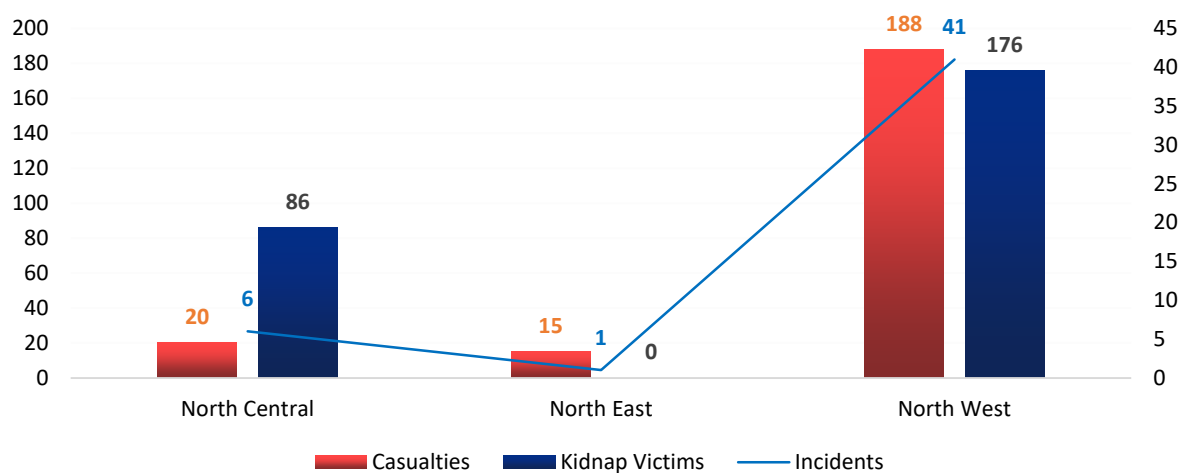


Banditry has been dominant in Northern Nigeria. Between March and April 2023, the Northwest recorded a high banditry count. North-western states like Kaduna, with a long history of [ethnoreligious conflict](#), have seen tension in the area coincide with acts of banditry by unscrupulous elements. Due to high unemployment and other social factors, banditry has become a [lucrative business](#) for young people.

## Trend of Violent Conflict

### Violent Conflict Data by Region: Banditry

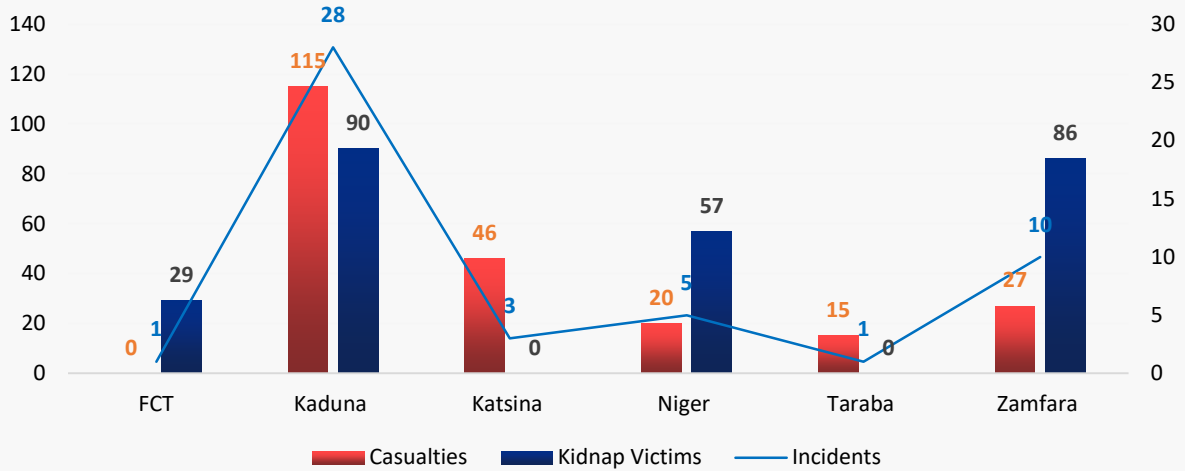
Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

## Violent Conflict Data by State: Banditry

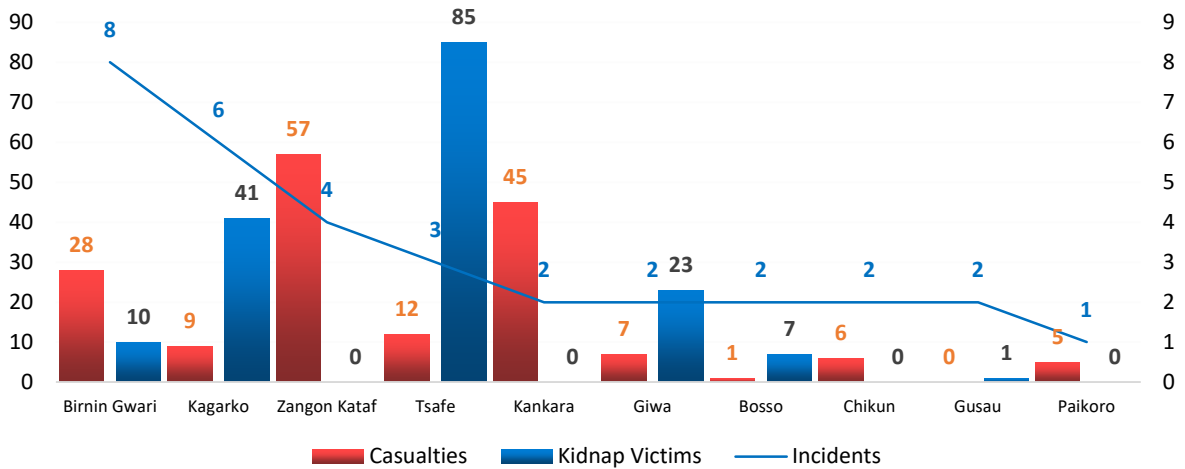
Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

## Banditry: Most Affected LGAs

Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

### Key Findings

Between March and April 2023, Northwest Nigeria witnessed a spike in banditry. Although some incidents were recorded in the Northcentral and Northeast regions, the Northwest recorded the highest, with 41 incidents and 188 casualties. The most affected state was Kaduna, with 115 deaths. Kaduna state, over time, has been plagued with ethnoreligious tensions that banditry has [exacerbated](#). The [incident](#) in Zangon Kataf local government area of Kaduna led to the death of 29 civilians while significant damage was done to properties by the marauding bandits. In the number of kidnap victims, Kaduna state ranked first with 90 kidnaps, while Zamfara ranked second with 86 victims.

### Key Responses

Security agencies have taken an offensive approach in neutralising bandits and destroying their camps. For example, [Operation Hadarin Daji](#) destroyed bandit camps in Zamfara through intelligence gathering and identification of bandit strongholds. Some reports suggest that security agencies are [erecting security](#)

[camps and observation posts](#) near violent spots to improve operations and emergency response. For instance, in Zangon Kataf Local government of Kaduna State, [a joint military and police camp is stationed 3km](#) close to the main town, Zonkwa. Although attacks

### Recommendations

- Security agencies should intensify intelligence gathering by deploying spies and intelligence agents to dangerous areas to find local collaborators, understand their operations and plans and avert attacks.
- There is a need to strengthen efforts to search and mop-up arms in circulation to reduce access to weapons by bandit groups.
- To discourage further recruitment, the Nigerian government should launch a program of radical sensitisation in the afflicted states preventing young people from engaging in or supporting banditry.

## Gunmen Attacks



The scourge of unknown gunmen has taken centre stage in various parts of the country, while the term unknown gunmen have come to characterise the frequent incessant attacks, abductions and killings by gun-wielding men. In a drive to define the group, a previous [Nextier publication](#) described gunmen as unidentified violent armed groups. Gunmen attacks are carried out by 'Unknown Non-State Armed Groups' (UNSAG). The media usually does not define this group's identity, hence the label of unknown gunmen. Other times gunmen assaults may be tied to the activity of a specific criminal organisation or thrive under the guise of repeated insecurity driven by a well-known criminal syndicate, despite having no connection to the famous group. Gunmen attacks are widespread in Southeast Nigeria, with isolated reports from other parts of the country.

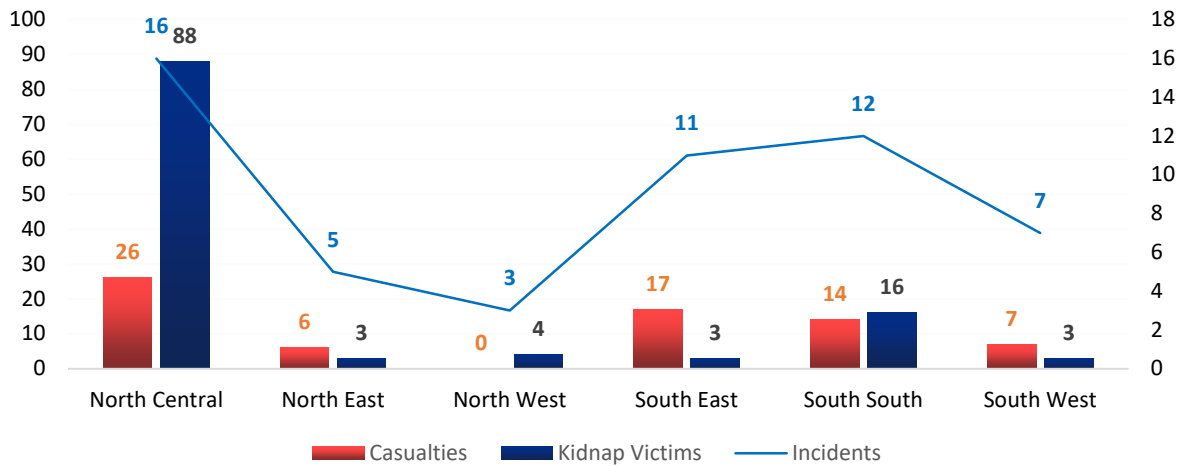
Gunmen attacks on civilians, government facilities and security forces continued to play out between March and April 2023. Although the Southeast peaked in gunmen attacks between January and February 2023, their activities in April and March 2023 occurred mainly in the Northcentral region.



## Trend of Violent Conflict

### Violent Conflict Data by Region: Gunmen Attacks

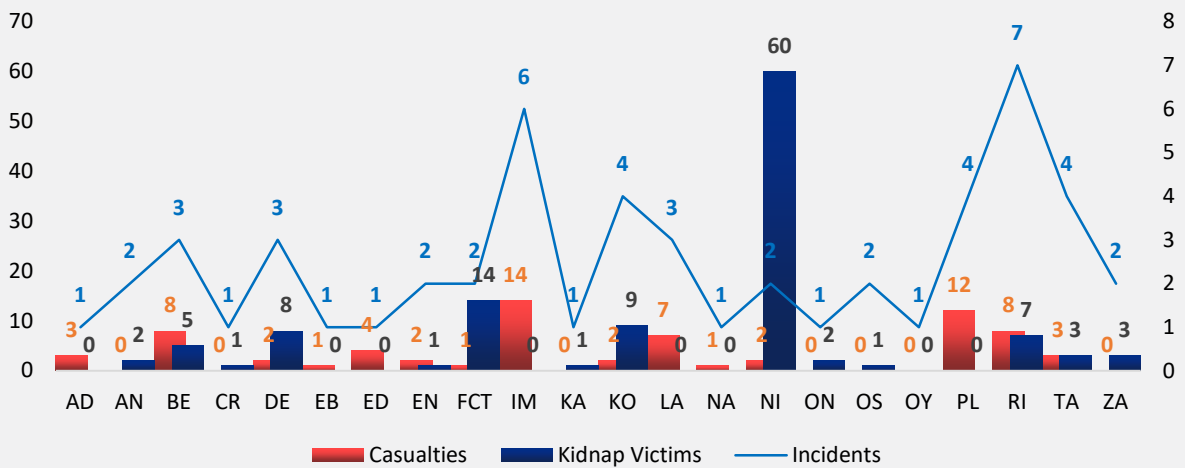
Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

### Violent Conflict Data by State: Gunmen Attacks

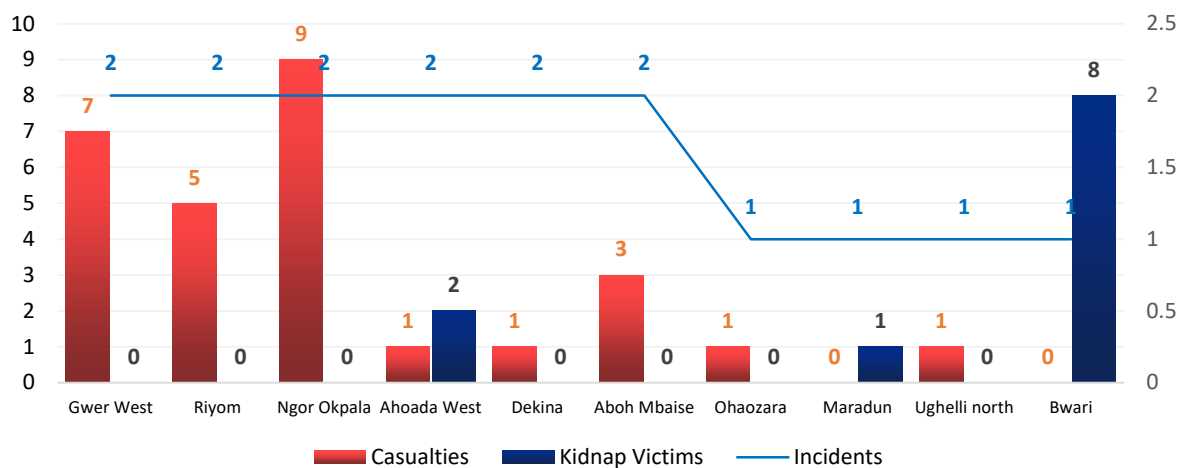
Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

### Gunmen Attacks: Most Affected LGAs

Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database



## Key Findings

According to the Nextier Violent Conflict Database, Northcentral Nigeria has the highest number of incidents of gunmen attacks. Gunmen attacks in the Northcentral region peaked at 16 incidents with 26 casualties and 88 kidnap victims. Gwer-West in Benue state recorded seven losses from gunmen attacks. The [incident](#) in Tse Fela and Tse Akyegh communities culminated in the death of seven civilians while properties, including food barns worth millions of Naira, were destroyed. Aside from casualties from attacks in the region, the kidnap count emanating from 2 incidents in Niger state stood at [60 kidnap victims](#). The simultaneous occurrence in Paikoro and Munya local government was revealed to be a kidnap for ransom.

## Key Responses

A reactive deployment of security agents has met the frequency and hostility of gunman attacks. There have also been calls for stationing personnel in areas prone to gunman attacks in the Northcentral region. Proximity to violent hotspots is necessary to increase proactive response time. For example, after gunmen raided Paikoro and Munya local government area in Niger State, [they encountered a closeby Joint Security Task Force](#) in Sarkin Pawa, which led to the killing of many gunmen.

## Recommendations

- The government should promptly identify violent hotspots and establish more surveillance posts and camps to avert attacks and provide a springboard for rapid responses.
- Addressing the smuggling and proliferation of weapons within national borders must take priority.
- Tackling all socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, remains sacrosanct to curb the increasing insecurity.

# Thuggery



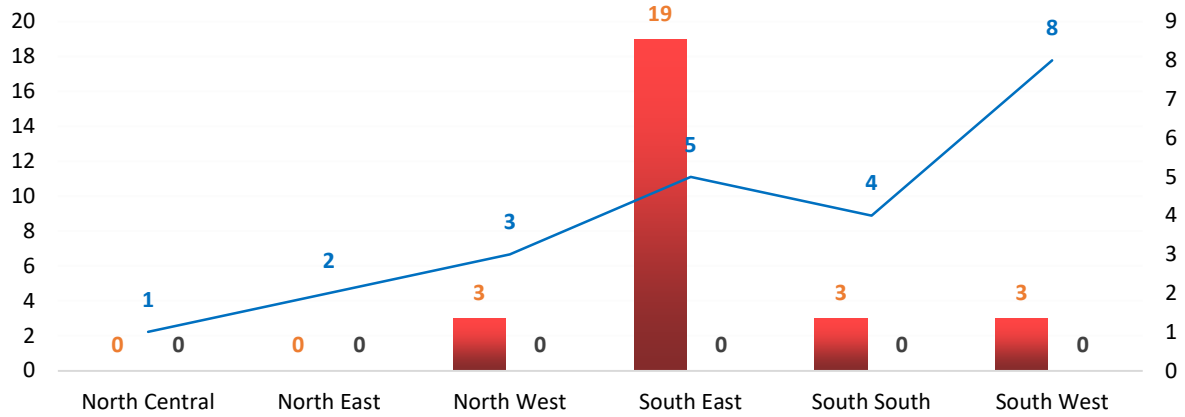
Image by Foreign Policy

The standard operating procedure of thugs has continued to be the [intimidation and victimisation](#) of innocent citizens and opposition groups through violence. Thuggery remains a typical feature in the Nigerian election cycle. Between March and April 2023, acts of thuggery, most directly linked to elections, were recorded across Nigeria. Election rigging and voter suppression through thugs played out across Nigeria, especially in Southeast Nigeria.

## Trend of Violent Conflict

### Violent Conflict Data by Region: Thuggery

Period: March 2023 - April 2023

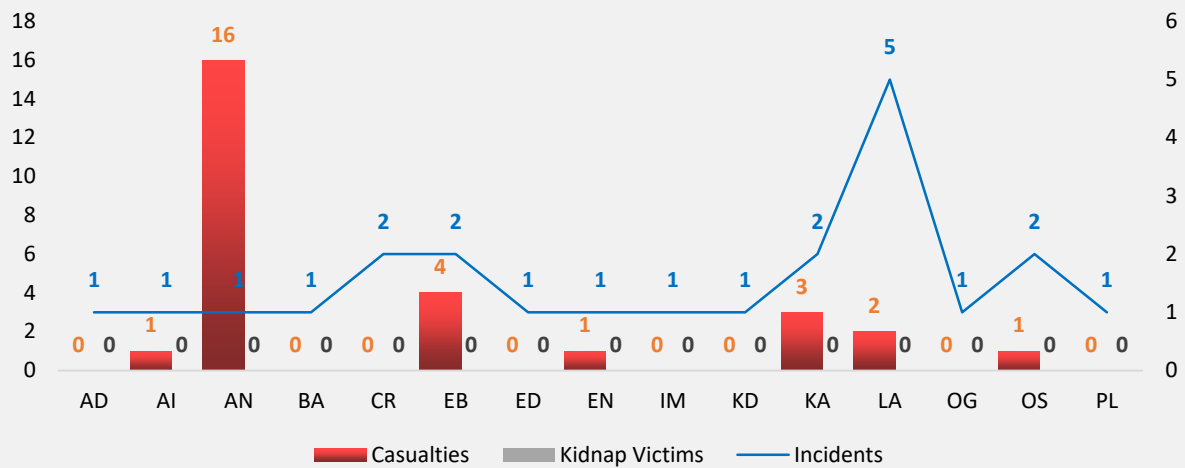


Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Legend: Casualties (Red Bar), Kidnap Victims (Grey Bar), Incidents (Blue Line)

### Violent Conflict Data by State: Thuggery

Period: March 2023 - April 2023

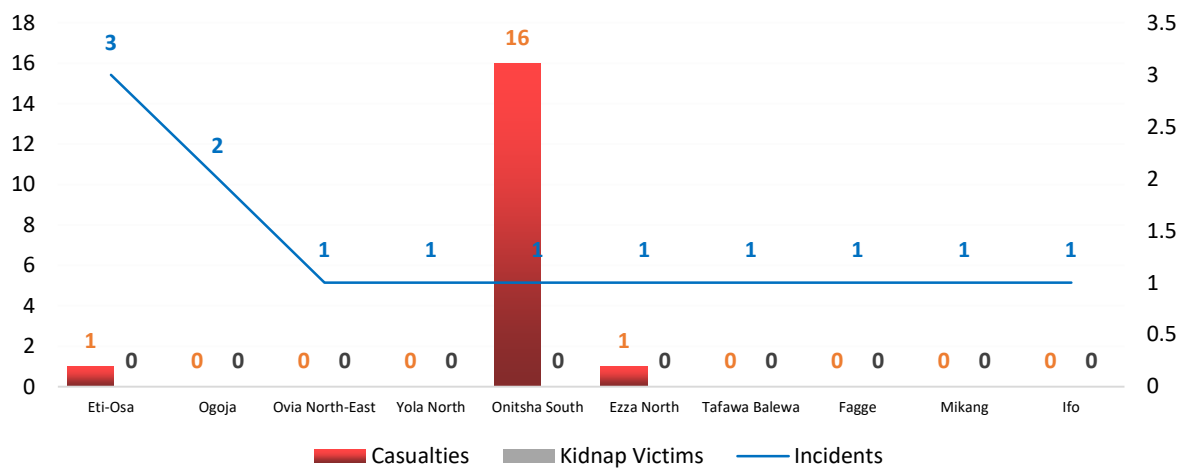


Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Legend: Casualties (Red Bar), Kidnap Victims (Grey Bar), Incidents (Blue Line)

### Thuggery: Most Affected LGAs

Period: March 2023 - April 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Legend: Casualties (Red Bar), Kidnap Victims (Grey Bar), Incidents (Blue Line)

## Key Findings

Data from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database shows that the impact of thuggery was dire in the Southeast region, with five incidents and 19 casualties. This is in addition to the fact that the area has been a hotbed for non-state actors such as secessionist groups. An incident of thuggery, as seen in Onitsha South, recorded the highest number of casualties occurring from a single incident. The Southwest, particularly Lagos, followed closely with fewer casualties but more incidents. However peculiar to all incidents across the country, the critical drivers of thuggery have been primarily hoodlums and directly connected to the elections.

## Key Responses

Acts of thuggery, especially the ones related to the elections, were met with police and military action. For instance, operatives of the Nigerian Army [gunned down political thugs](#) in the Gboko local government area of Benue State. Open condemnation from state leaders has also followed, as seen with the Lagos state governor, who described acts of thuggery as a [“highly condemnable act”](#).

## Recommendations

- There is a pressing need for strategic and well-equipped law enforcement to arrest perpetrators and sponsors of thuggery.
- Deterrence through strict punishment of perpetrators and sponsors could reduce acts of thuggery.
- With the recognition of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy as catalysts to thuggery, necessary actions through poverty alleviation schemes, job creation and affordable education should be prioritised.

# Conclusion

Within March and April 2023, banditry, thuggery, and gunmen attacks dominated the violent scenes, creating a sense of fear and instability. The Nigerian government’s attempt at addressing these challenges through law enforcement, community participation, and condemnation recorded some achievements. However, the continued insecurity still poses a severe challenge to the Nigerian government and security forces. Nonetheless, if the political, economic, and social problems at the root of the current crisis are addressed, there is hope that the country will attain stability for development.



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