

NOT THE DARK IS I HEAR



FIFTH REPORT ON VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA 2015

NIGERIA
WATCH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The findings show a general decrease in fatalities in 2015 (17,031, compared with 22,544 in 2014)
- The main causes of violent deaths in 2015 were political/religious crisis, crime, and accidents.
- Boko Haram insurgency accounts for most of the deaths recorded in 2015

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce this annual report. For the first time since the creation of the Nigeria Watch Project in June 2006, the report has been written entirely by Nigerian scholars from the University of Ibadan. The study has been conducted by Dr. Timothy Adeola Adams, with the help of Assistant Coordinator Vitus Nwankwo Ukoji and Information Retrieval Specialists Abiola Victoria Ayodokun and Victor Chinedu Eze. I also wish to thank the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) and the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria) for their continuing support.

This fifth report on lethal violence in Nigeria is based on data collated between 1 January and 31 December 2015. As Nigeria Watch is not a human rights organization but a research group, the report does not issue recommendations and highlights only the main findings. Indeed, our aim is first of all to address the general lack of data with regard to violence and its victims. There is no tradition of statistics in Nigeria. In addition to civilian deaths, even battle deaths in the ranks of the military are not properly recorded.

During the Nigeria–Biafra War, at a time when many soldiers were recruited without a name and number, the army, for instance, did not send a letter to families to inform them about how and where their relatives died and were buried. A retired Brigadier-General thus complained bitterly that he “fought a war in which no records were kept”¹. The question is open: has casualty-recording improved since then? Is the war on Boko Haram better reported?

In such a context, an evidence-based overview of fatal violence in Nigeria is useful for security analysts as well as aid practitioners. In its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations thus recognized peace as one of the main goals to promote. It aims to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere. It also intends to provide legal identity for all, including birth (and, possibly, death) registration². And homicide rates have been identified as a key indicator to measure violence and tackle security issues. The Nigeria Watch Project clearly contributes to such an attempt.

The Nigeria Watch research work is supported by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP). Please visit www.nsrp-nigeria.org for more information about NSRP

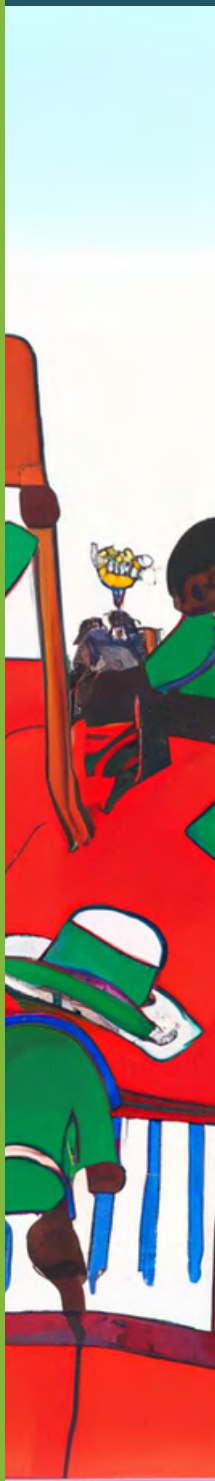
1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

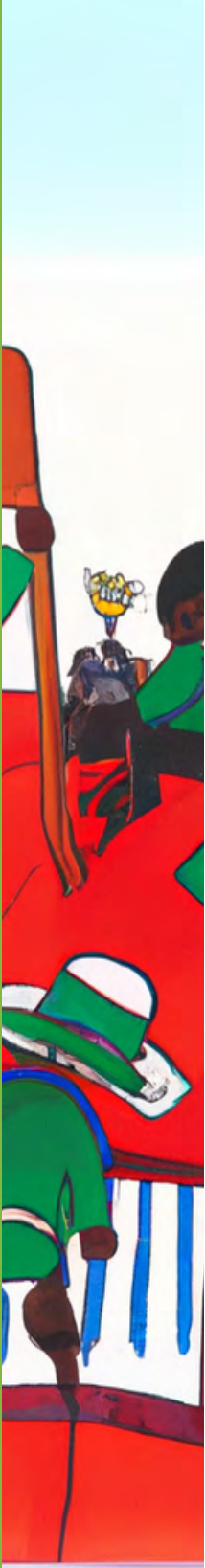
The study of violence is an important component of the development process. This is because it provides the yardstick for a nation's governance rating in terms of peace and security. Hence, the availability of credible statistics on violence can serve critical development purposes, especially for assessing the security risk of particular locations, monitoring trends of violence over time, evaluating the performance of the security sector, and alerting a national government and the international community to the need to reconfigure the current security architecture in order to reduce to the barest minimum the conditions that make wanton destruction of lives and properties possible.

1.1. Methodological issues

Reducing violence to statistical data can be quite challenging. Here, three critical issues are germane: first, researchers are faced with the sources for collecting data on violence, sources which are often controversial; second, researchers have to resolve issues by using indicators that are comprehensive; third, they run the risk of devising categories that are not comprehensive enough to reflect the true situation on the ground. In other words, statistics are deficient in accounting for all the fatalities that are perpetrated. However, samples can be used to analyze trends over a particular period of time.

Access to reliable sources of data, as captured in the previous Nigeria Watch reports, remains a major concern to researchers in Nigeria. Even official sources such as the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) have proven deficient in producing credible crime statistics that can be assessed by researchers and members of the public. For instance, between 1990 and 2003, the NPF did not publish its annual report on crime. Even among other stakeholders, there is no systematic coordination of data on fatalities to the extent of making it a reliable source of information for serious research ventures.



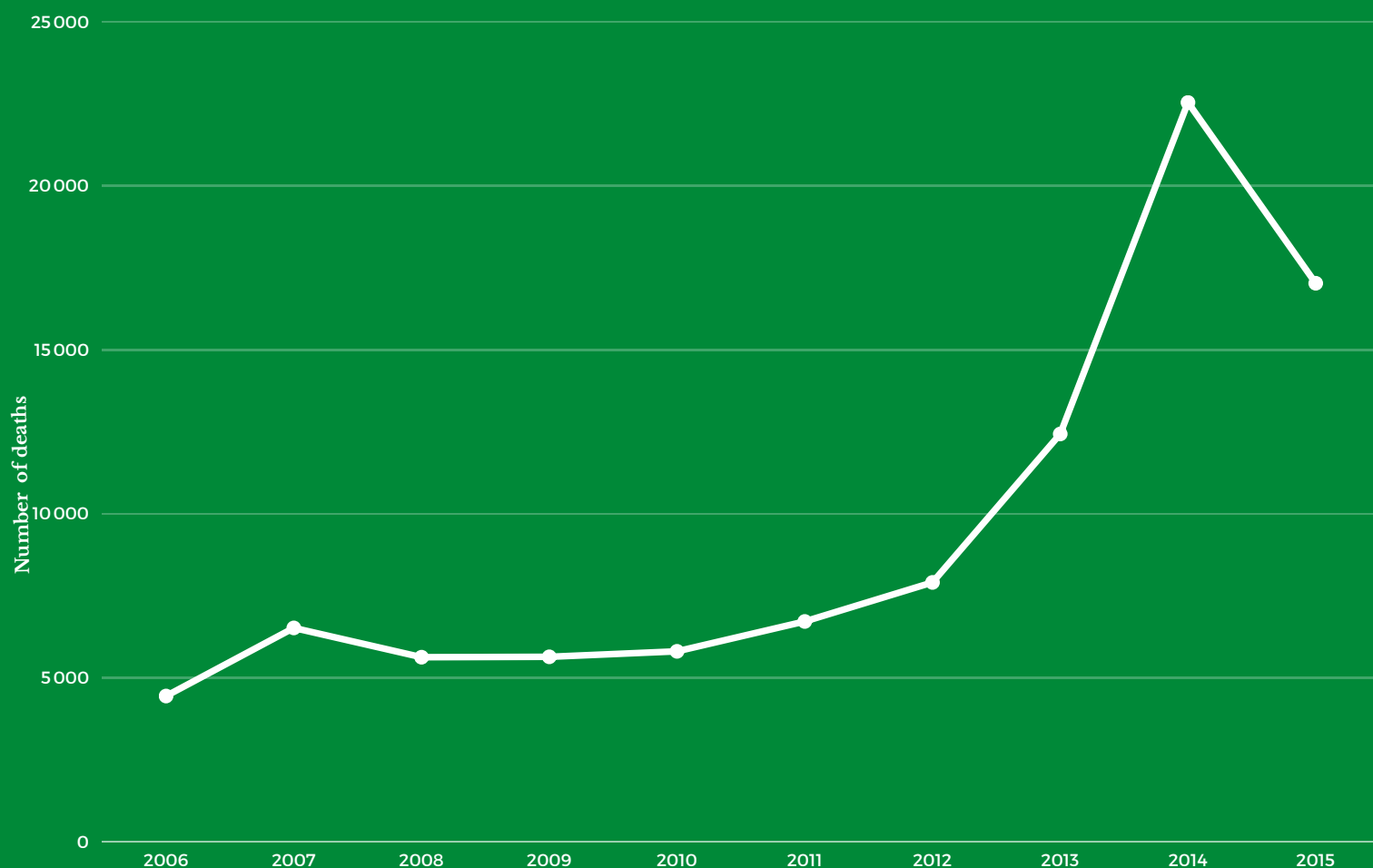


Nigeria Watch fills this need. In essence, it relies on open sources, including regular crosschecking of data with official sources. Although it cannot be a perfect alternative, it offers a systematic and credible option able to identify trends of violence and produce a functional Geographical Information System (GIS) that can provide answers to four fundamental questions:

1. Where/when is violence taking place?
2. Is violence increasing or decreasing?
3. What are the main causes of violence?
4. What is the security risk of particular locations?

Providing answers to these questions makes the Nigeria Watch database a unique source of data on fatal violence in Nigeria.

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF VIOLENT DEATHS PER YEAR IN NIGERIA (2006 - 2015)



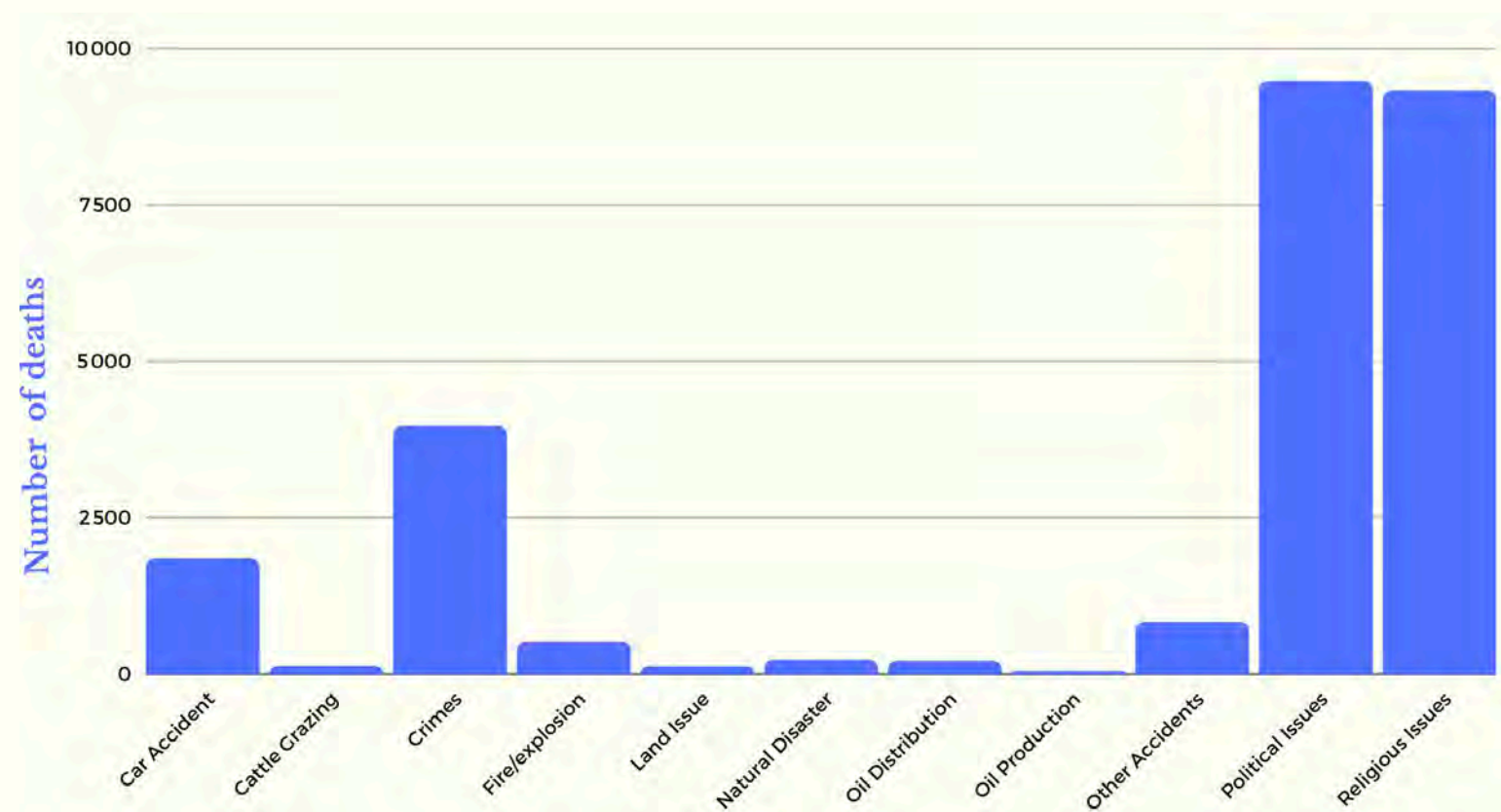
1.2 Summary of previous reports

Officially released in June 2014, the previous report captured various aspects of fatal incidents across the country from July 2006 to May 2014. It showed that the main causes of violence, ranked by intensity, were related to accidents, crime, political clashes, ethno-religious tensions, and economic issues. But it also revealed that political-cum-religious violence and the Boko Haram crisis became the most worrisome driver of fatalities after the declaration of emergency rule by the Federal Government in May 2013.

The statistics in Figure 1 show that fatalities in Nigeria have been rising continuously since 2008. Although there was a sharp decline in 2015, the number of fatalities was still very high—this year represents the second-highest figure since 2006. Most of the incidents that accounted for violent death in 2015 can be attributed to the Boko Haram crisis, road accidents, and criminal activities.

NB: Data collated between June 2006 and December 2015

2. MAIN FINDINGS IN 2015



Cumulated figures of violent deaths in Nigeria, by cause (2015)

2.1 Main causes of violence in 2015: The Boko Haram crisis

In order of intensity, the causes of violence between January and December 2015 were related to political and religious killings, crime, accidents, oil distribution, sorcery, cattle grazing, and land issues. The insurgency in the north-east accounted for most of the political and religious-motivated deaths across the country. Boko Haram attacks and military operations constituted over 50% of fatalities reported in Nigeria in 2015: 9,264 out of 17,024 fatalities.

However, the preparations for the 2015 general elections brought some respite, as the period witnessed major military campaigns against the terrorists.³ In fact, the elections had to be postponed amid criticism from opposition parties to give enough time for the security agencies to restore law and order in the troubled states in the north-east, particularly Borno, where a number of local governments were lost to the insurgents. Even at that, the general elections precipitated a number of fatal incidents during the polls.

The pattern of Boko Haram violence actually contributed to the manner in which the general elections were conducted. Although the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) faced some internal logistic problems related to the introduction of new card readers, the increased violence in February 2015 largely informed the postponement of the elections from 14th and 28th February to March 28th and April 11th, respectively. Between January and February alone, more than 58 deadly attacks were orchestrated by Boko Haram members in various parts of the north-east.

2.2. Car accident

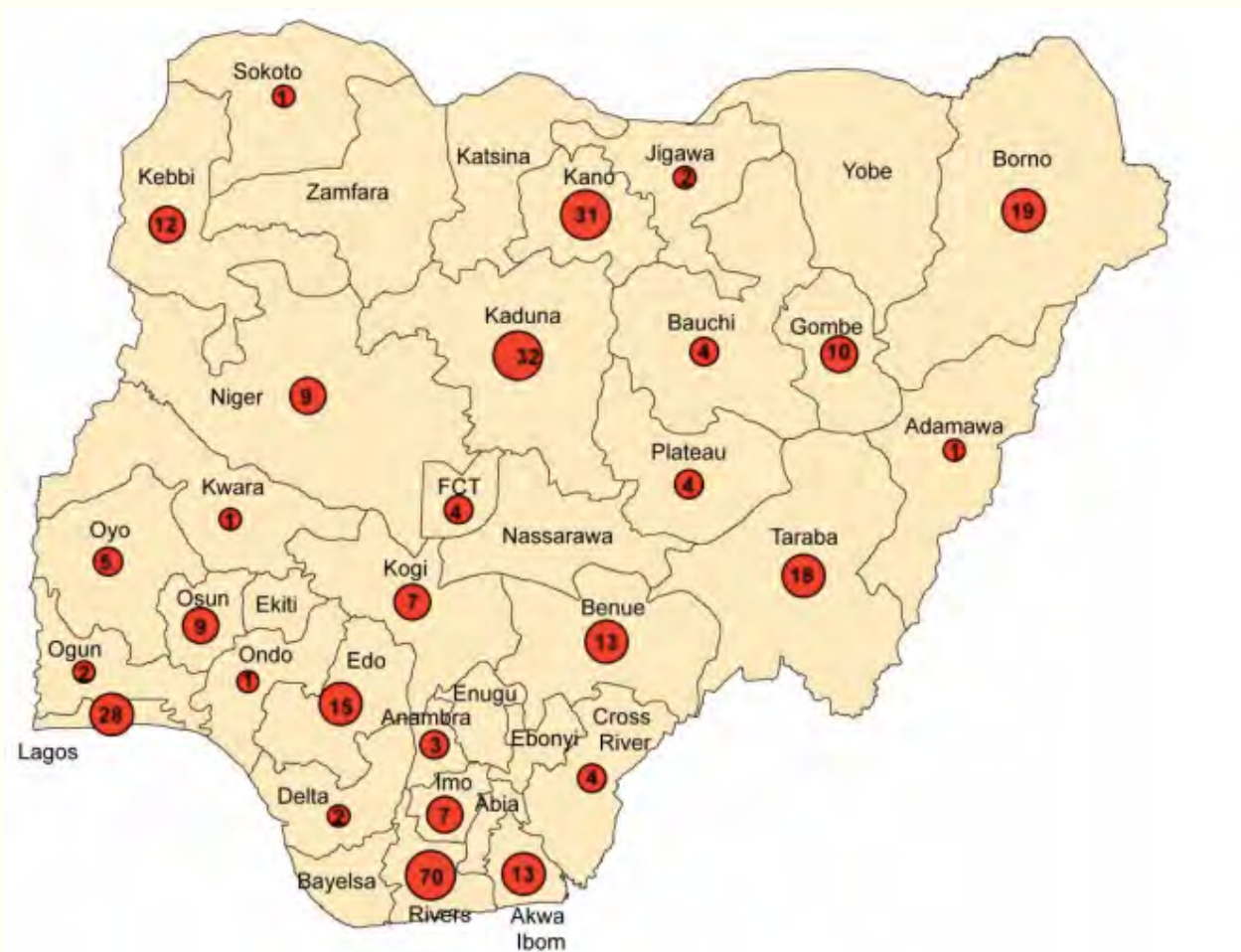
Previous findings have shown that road accident is one of the major causes of fatality in Nigeria, yet with different patterns across the country.⁴ Out of 1,835 victims who died as a result of road accident in 2015, 193 casualties were reported in Anambra, 171 each in Abuja and Delta State, 146 in Ogun, 124 in Lagos, 110 in Oyo, 83 in Kogi, 78 in Ondo, and 77 in Cross River. The states least prone to fatal road accident included Akwa Ibom, Sokoto, Imo, Taraba, Oyo, Borno, Bayelsa, Niger, and Rivers. The high incidence of accidents in the seat of political power (i.e. the Federal Capital Territory) is ironic because the city has the best road network and maintenance in the country. Moreover, its traffic is very much controlled by the Federal Road Safety Commission, the Police, the Army, and Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIO). Most of the road mishaps are concentrated in the southern suburbs of Abaji and Kwali councils, probably because these are the main access routes into Abuja.

2.3 CRIME

Crime covers a wide range of illicit activities, including armed robbery, cattle rustling, police brutality, kidnapping, cultism, sorcery, and domestic violence. It is usually prevalent in cities with high population density, such as Lagos, Asaba, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, Kano, and Abuja. In 2015, fatalities related to crime were concentrated in Lagos (457), followed by Benue (441), Plateau (414), Rivers (340), Delta (243), Taraba (219), Kaduna (184), and Zamfara (172) states (Map 1). Lagos also recorded the highest number of fatal incidents related to crime (254 incidents), ahead of Delta (124), Rivers (89), Plateau (60), Benue (56), and Abuja (51). When it comes to the rates of fatalities per capita, however, Lagos ranked only seventh, behind Plateau, Benue, Taraba, Rivers, Delta, and Sokoto states.



2.4 POLITICAL VIOLENCE

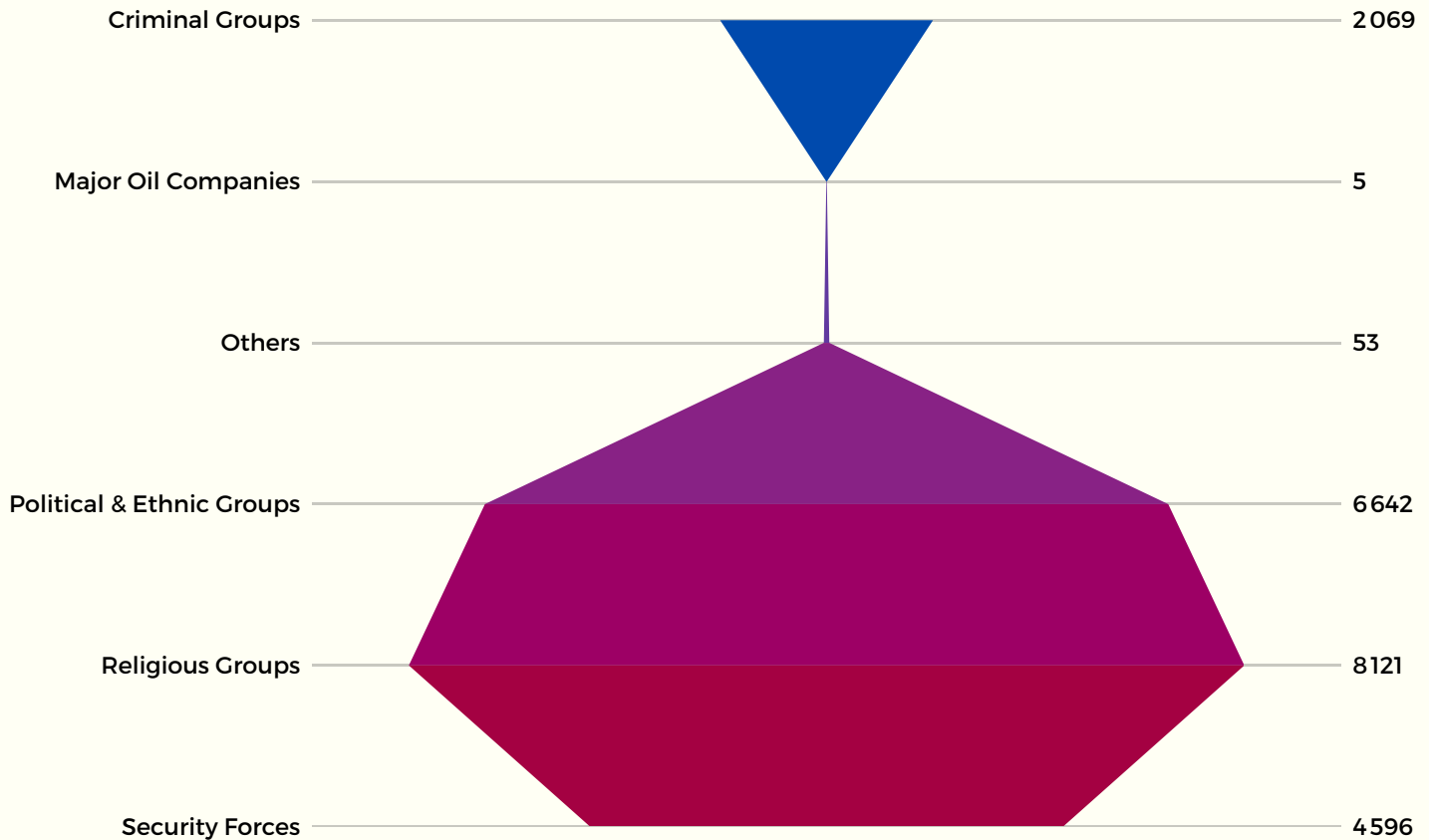


Distribution of fatalities caused by political violence during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria (January – April 2015)

Political actors have substantial stakes in violence. Beyond the Boko Haram crisis, cultist groups, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), and armed gangs are known to be used by politicians to cause mayhem—for instance, during elections. However, Figure 5 shows that the 2015 general elections were not as deadly as the previous polls. Even the fiefdom of Boko Haram, Borno, did not record as many fatalities as would have been expected (Map). Election violence affected mainly Rivers State (70 casualties), Kaduna (32), Kano (31), Lagos (28), Taraba (18), Borno (19), Edo (15), Benue (12), and Akwa Ibom (12).

For the first time in the history of Nigeria, the main political parties had signed a peace pact prior to the elections and under the aegis of the former military head of state, General Abdulsalmi Abubakar. Also, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague sounded serious warnings that individuals found culpable of electoral violence would be prosecuted.⁵ In addition, the United States President Barack Obama made a live broadcast encouraging the people of Nigeria to deliver violent-free elections⁶.

2.5. MAIN PROTAGONISTS OF VIOLENCE



Main protagonists of violence per number of fatalities in 2015

Political and religious groups played major roles in the killings that took place in 2015 due to the activities of Boko Haram in the north-east. In this region, the role of the security forces has attracted particular criticism because of massive violations of human rights. Amnesty International's (AI) report, for instance, implicated the Nigerian armed troops in the killing of thousands of innocent citizens in the fight against the insurgents since 2009.⁷

REFERENCES

- 1 Alabi-Isama, Godwin [2013], *The Tragedy of Victory: On-The-Spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic Theatre*, Ibadan, Spectrum, p. 434
- 2 According to section 7 of the 1999 Constitution, Nigerian Local Governments are supposed to register all births, deaths and marriages. But they usually fail to do so.
- 3 Fatality Trends (Nigeria Watch newsletter) Vol. 2, No 1, 2015
- 4 Nigeria Watch 2014 Annual Report p. 7.
- 5 <http://icirnigeria.org/2015-polls-international-criminal-court-warns-against-electoral-violence/>
- 6 <http://www.channelstv.com/2015/03/23/full-text-obama-delivers-a-message-to-nigerians-on-peaceful-election/>
- 7 Amnesty International Annual Report, 2014/15, P274. This report was officially released in February 2015.