

UN decries use of children as human bombs by Boko Haram

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Nigeria has greater causes of violence than Boko Haram —UN

ABUJA — The United Nations has said that land degradation and competition over access to land and water have triggered more bloody conflicts in Nigeria than Boko Haram.



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This handout picture released by the Nigerian army on April 30, 2015 and taken this week in an undisclosed location in the Sambisa Forest, Borno state, purportedly shows a member of the Nigerian Army standing next to a group of girls rescued in an operation against the Islamist group Boko Haram. Boko Haram hostages were held

in atrocious conditions in the group's Sambisa Forest stronghold, Nigeria's military said on April 30 after nearly 500 women and girls were released this week. AFP

PHOTO / NIGERIAN ARMY

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This came on a day two children and a teenager were killed after suspected herdsmen attacked Unguwan Rimi village in Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State, as UNICEF yesterday condemned the use of children as human bombs and in any combat or non-combat roles in the conflict in the North East.

Four persons were also killed when herders attacked Kpagoro vilage in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria, NAN, on the sideline of 2019 World Day to Combat Desertification in Ankara, Turkey, Executive Secretary of UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UNCCD, Ibrahim Thiaw, said: "More lives have been claimed in conflicts over access to land and water than Boko Haram. Everyday, you have more conflicts between people that are competing for access to land and water. The root cause of the competition is access to natural resources."

[Five killed in fresh Barkin Ladi attack\(Opens in a new browser tab\)](#)

World Day to Combat Desertification is celebrated every year globally on June 17 to promote good land stewardship for the benefit of present and future generations. This year's edition was jointly hosted at Ankara by the Government of Turkey and UNCCD, with ministers from 10 countries in attendance.

[Four killed on Wednesday night in Jos\(Opens in a new browser tab\)](#)

Thiaw said that the growing population with growing demand on resources, coupled with climate change and reduction of available land resources, were root causes of most of the bloody conflicts.

"So, the tipping point was reached a long time ago; and most of the time, this is also combined with bad governance at national levels," Thiaw said.

Conflicts over access to land

He said land restoration could not be left in the hands

of governments alone, and called for a review of the land tenure system in order to mobilise private business investment into the programme.

“This means there should be some concession for the business sector to participate in land restoration.

“It means that if a business restores a land, it gets concession on the land for 50 years or more so that the land remains restored rather than leave it barren.

“Otherwise, why would I invest in land restoration if I had no right on that land? If the land continues to belong to someone else, I won’t invest in it,” said the UNCCD boss.

Thiaw said economists had projected that every dollar invested in land restoration would generate five dollars, adding that restoring land also meant reducing risks of irregular and forced migration.

He said: “Restoring land will reduce forced migration and keep people on the ground to generate their own incomes and live their own lives.”

The UN official said forced migration was the worst that could happen to countries where people were departing from.

“Most times, countries of destination see it as a problem, but countries they are departing from have a bigger problem because people involved in forced migration are educated and a big loss to their national economies,” he said.

He also said although planting of trees was important and symbolic in land restoration, it was not the only solution to the problem.

According to him, “you can plant billions of trees, but unless you have good sensitisation, the trees will not grow or they clear off again.

“Land restoration is about security, reducing clashes between farmers and herdsmen over access to land and water, which may trigger the Third World War.”

He called on people to care more about land because land is important and interconnected with biodiversity.

Thiaw also called for the use of technology to produce solar, wind and small hydropower so as to create decentralised energy system in villages.

Some 196 countries and the European Union are parties to the Convention, of which 169 are affected by desertification, land degradation or drought.

In 2015, the international community agreed to achieve a balance in the rate at which land is degraded and restored by taking concrete actions to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, generally referred to as achieving land degradation neutrality, LDN, and mitigate the effects of drought.

In the last four years, 122 countries have committed to taking voluntary, measurable actions to arrest land degradation by 2030.

Also, 44 of the 70 countries that have suffered drought in the past have set up national plans to manage it more effectively in the future.

Three killed in Kaduna

Meanwhile, two children and a teenager were on Monday killed after suspected herdsmen attacked Unguwan Rimi village in Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Many of the residents were also said to have sustained injuries and were currently receiving treatment in unnamed hospitals.

A resident said the armed men started shooting immediately they entered the village, adding that the children were killed on the spot.

Confirming the incident, Yakubu Sabo, spokesman of the Kaduna police command, identified the victims as Monday Yahaya, Samson David and Ashimile Danladi.

Sabo, who disclosed that efforts were being made by the police to apprehend the culprits, said: "Information reaching us stated that on Monday, June 17, at about 14:25hrs, DPO Kauru received a distress call that armed men entered Unguwan Rimi village, Chawai District of Kauru LGA, and started shooting sporadically.

"The culprits in the process, shot dead one Monday Yahaya, 8 years; Samson David, 17 years; and Ashimile Danladi, 9 years respectively.

"Teams of policemen quickly moved to the area, evacuated the dead bodies to the hospital and ensured that the situation was brought under control.

“Preliminary investigation later revealed that the attack might not be unconnected with the attack of Fulani camp early morning of the same date in the area.

“However, efforts are on to apprehend the perpetrators and the command has intensified patrols and other proactive measures to forestall further breach of peace in the area.”

Use of children as human bombs

In a similar development, UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins, yesterday condemned the use of children as human bombs in combat or non-combat roles in the conflict in the North East of Nigeria.

Hawkins in a statement issued in Abuja said: “According to several reports, three children, two girls and a boy (ages unknown), were used to detonate explosives that killed 30 people and injured 40 others at a community football viewing center in Konduga, Borno State, on Monday.

“UNICEF sends its condolences to all those who have been killed or injured in this horrific incident. It is unacceptable that children should be used in this way.

“UNICEF appeals to all those involved in this terrible conflict to protect children at all times and to keep them out of harm’s way.

“This incident brings the number of children who have been reported as having been used as human bombs to five, since January 2019. In 2018, 48 children, including 38 girls, were used in suicide attacks.

“We again call on all parties to the conflict in North East Nigeria to immediately cease all attacks against civilians, to stop using children in this conflict, and to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law.”

Four killed in Plateau

Residents said herders on Monday attacked Kpagoro village in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau and killed one security personnel attached to the Operation Safe Haven, OpSH and three natives. The Police and member representing Riyom constituency in the state House of Assembly, Timothy Dantong confirmed the incident.

The incident would have recorded high casualty except that it occurred minutes before noon, a time many residents were not at home. The gunmen were said be shooting at random and torching about 50 houses.

A Special Task Force team drafted to quell the violence was engaged in a gun battle, resulting in the death of a soldier, it was gathered.

The State Police Commissioner, Mr. Isaac Akinmoyede said four people including a security agent attached to Operation Safe Haven have been confirmed dead in an attack on Kangboro village in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau.

Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Isaac Akinmoyede confirmed the incident saying it occurred Monday afternoon and that the Police and men of Operation Safe Haven had rushed to the community where they exchanged gunshots with the assailants.

According to him: “We exchanged fire with the attackers as they climbed a hill and during that, an STF personnel was shot and killed. But we were able to chase out the attackers. By Tuesday morning (yesterday), three additional corpses were recovered at the base of the hill while over 30 houses were set ablaze.”

He called on the people to remain calm as security agents were patrolling the area.

Dantong, yesterday, raised the issue during plenary on the floor of the House where he called for urgent security measures to be deployed in stemming the tide of insecurity in the area.

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