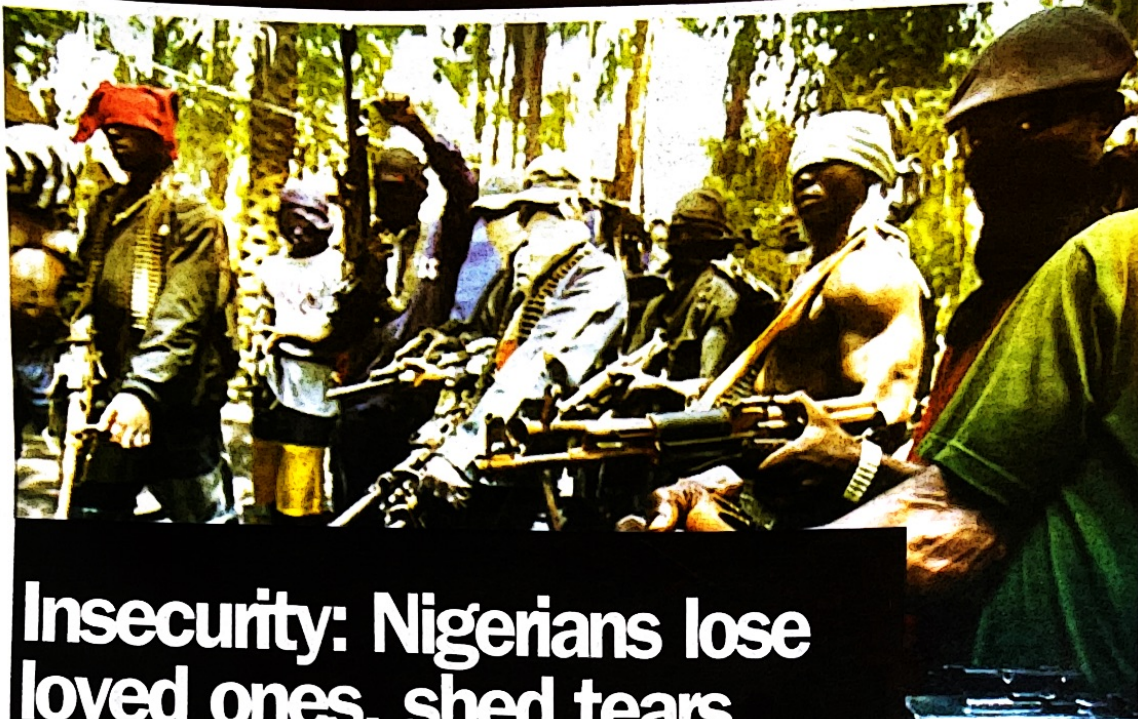


# TIME CAPSULE: 2024 REVIEW

# 2025 IN VIEW



## Insecurity: Nigerians lose loved ones, shed tears, now live in fear

- Mass abductions characterised the year; N/E ranks highest
- S/E tops ransom payments, accounts for 40% nationwide
- Cyber criminals defraud Nigerians of N8. 8B
- Over 200 security personnel killed; 140 policemen in FCT alone
- Security experts, CSOs speak on challenges, opportunities in 2025

By Evelyn Usman

**A**S the curtain closed on 2024, for many Nigerians, it was a desperate struggle to survive, to stay safe, and to hold on to hope.

The country's security landscape presented a devastating spectacle, ensnared in a complex web of internal and external threats that painted a gruesome picture of bloodshed, tears, and fear.

The Nigeria Police Force, being the lead security agency in the country, suffered a devastating blow, with 140 policemen losing their lives in the line of duty in the Federal Capital Territory, alone, in the year 2024.

The military was not spared, as evident in the ambush on April 19, 2024, where six brave personnel — two officers and four soldiers, lost their lives in Karaga Village, Niger State as well as other killings witnessed in the North-East, South-East and South-South regions of the country.

From the rampant banditry, insurgency, kidnapping, and armed robbery that plagued the country, to the menacing presence of groups like the

Islamic State in West Africa Province, ISWAP and the new Islamic insurgent group — Lakurawa terrorists in the North-West, to the ethno-religious conflicts among different ethnic and religious groups, especially in the Middle Belt, which led to localized violence and heightened tension across communities, and in the Niger Delta, where oil theft

and related violence affected both local livelihood and national economic stability, the nation's security agencies faced an uphill battle to keep citizens secure.

Furthermore, the country struggled to contain other critical issues, including the scourge of cultism, the illicit trade in drugs and arms, terrorism financing, money laundering, and the growing menace of cybercrime, particularly among the youth, which posed a significant threat to national stability and security.

**Tragically, many kidnap victims were brutally murdered despite their families paying ransom**

### Tragic losses

The year was marred by a series of tragic losses of defenceless Nigerians. The rural dwellers in particular lived in perpetual fear as bandits invaded their homes, leaving a trail of death and destruction in their wake. The sound of gunfire became a hauntingly familiar echo through the once-peaceful villages, as families were forced to flee for their lives.

But it's not just the immediate danger that devastated these communities. The lingering fear of attack also led to a crippling deprivation of their

livelihoods. Farmers became too afraid to tend to fields, they abandoned their crops and livestock to wither and die.

The rural economy was slowly being strangled, as the very people who once worked the land with pride and purpose are now forced to cower in fear because their homes and livelihoods came under constant threat from marauding bandits.

### In the South-East

The South East region of the country, witnessed a surge in violence perpetrated by separatist groups enforcing sit-at-home orders, which essentially attacked Nigeria's sovereignty with effrontery and arrant disregard to constituted authority. The alarming situation escalated on November 18, 2024, when unknown gunmen launched simultaneous attacks on Abatete and Ukpo communities in Anambra state, leaving a trail of destruction and death, including three vigilante members and an innocent citizen. These senseless attacks were recurring nightmares which instilled fear and uncertainty among the populace.

In the year under review, another devastating attack in Aba, Abia state resulted in the loss of 11 lives, including five military personnel and six civilians, with the Army blaming the outlawed separatist group, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement, for the incident.

Many civilians among whom were youths were alleged to have been killed, harassed and assaulted by security personnel in a bid to end the reign of the separatist group in the region.

In fact, a report by SMB Morgen, an Africa-focused market/security intelligence gathering firm, revealed that a staggering N419.2 million ransom was paid between July 2023 and June 2024 in the South-East.

This alarming figure accounted for 40% of the total N1.048 billion paid across the six geo-political zones during the same period, with Anambra State being the hardest hit, as families shelled out N350.2 million in ransom payments, a whopping 88% of the N400 million demanded by kidnappers.

A breakdown of the ransom payments across the South-East states as revealed by the report, showed that Imo State paid N39 million as ransom, Abia State paid N25 million, while Enugu State and Ebonyi State paid significantly lower amounts, with N4 million and N1 million, respectively, as ransom in one year.

But in the regional breakdown of the N2.2 trillion ransom payments made in the same period.

According to another data from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in its 2024 Crime Experience and Security

Perception Survey, the South-East paid N85.4 billion, an amount lower when compared to N1.2 trillion paid in the North West, which accounted for the highest share.

### Kidnapped, murdered

Tragically, many kidnap victims were brutally murdered despite their families paying ransom. A heart-wrenching example was the case of Major General Richard Duru (ret'd), who was kidnapped in Imo State in September 2024 and had his car stolen. His family paid a ransom of \$50,000, but shockingly, he was still killed by his captors, who were later arrested by the Imo State Police Command.

According to the report, out of the 2.2 million Nigerians kidnapped, at least 614,937 lost their lives, representing a fatality rate of 12.8%, while the murder rate was highest in rural areas, with 335,827 incidents, compared to 279,110 in urban areas.

The report also indicated that the North-West recorded the highest number of kidnappings with 1,420,307 cases, followed closely by the North-Central with 317,837 and the South-East with 110,432.

A staggering revelation from the report showed a total of 2.2 million Nigerians fell victim to kidnapping nationwide.

In the African continent, Nigeria was ranked as the second most dangerous country in Africa, after South Africa, with a score of 66.7 points, on the Statista Crime Index 2024.

### Catholic priest's woes

The year also witnessed a disturbing trend of kidnappings and killings of Catholic priests, with perpetrators showing no regard for their religious office. Some of the priests kidnapped last year included: Father Thomas Oyode, rector of the Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary School, kidnapped on October 27, 2024, and released 11 days later; Father Christian Uchegbu, kidnapped on November 6, 2024; Father Emmanuel Azubuike, kidnapped on November 5, 2024; Father Basil Gbuzuo, kidnapped on May 15, 2024; Fathers Kenneth Kanwa and Jude Nwachukwu, kidnapped in February 2024; and Father Christian Ike, kidnapped on June 16, 2024.

### Brazen approach in kidnap

The year 2024 was marked by a surge in mass kidnappings across Nigeria, leaving a trail of