

**KEY MESSAGES**

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\*Disclaimer: The contents of this briefing note do not necessarily reflect the views of DFID or the UK Government.

\*\* All reports are based on anonymous NSRP sources.

## ON THE GROUND

### 1. VIOLENCE PERSISTS IN NORTH EAST DESPITE OFFER OF AMNESTY

The spate of violence attributed to the Jama'atu Ahli Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) persisted in the North East, and mostly in Borno State, throughout April despite the offer of amnesty by the Federal Government to militants who accept dialogue and eschew the path of violence. The decision of the government to constitute a committee to examine the possibility of granting amnesty to JAS militants followed escalation of violence after the presidential visit to the region early March. However, the offer of amnesty appears to be too little too late as some of the JAS factions who claim they have lost many of their members and many other members in government detention centres have defied the offer and threatened to continue fighting. The division over acceptance of amnesty among JAS factions partly explains the reluctance of some appointees to serve on the committee on dialogue and resolution established by the Federal Government. Alhaji Datti Ahmed and Comrade Shehu Sani who rejected the appointment on grounds of non-consultation were involved in previous botched peace efforts with JAS. NSRP sources claim Ahmed and Sani are angry about the way government handled the previous peace initiatives each of them was involved in, which allegedly resulted in the killing of some JAS members and emissaries they were discussing with.

The pattern of JAS attacks remained largely the same in April. Assaultants suspected to be JAS militants targeted security officials, government officials and some civil servants. Police stations in border local government areas (LGAs) also came under attack. The allegation of heavy handed response by security agencies was the subject of public discussion when soldiers assigned to the Multinational Task Force (MTF) were accused of killing up to 185 persons and destroying many houses. However, the soldiers who were stationed in the border town of Baga, on the shores of the disappearing Lake Chad, reportedly said most of the casualties were recorded when fleeing suspected JAS militants who killed some soldiers fled into the community and used the residents as human shields. The investigative panel set up by the Federal Government has reported that the casualty figure was much lower but some residents and independent observers do not believe the account of government sources.

The intensity of violence in Borno is believed to have led to a spill over to border areas in neighbouring Yobe and Adamawa states that had seen significant reduction in violent incidents in the past months. There were also indications that some of the incidents of violence were the result of the proliferation of criminal groups in the region. NSRP sources also suggest that the faction of JAS still loyal to its supreme leader is mostly concerned with the detention of its members and innocent residents held in government detention centres and payment of compensation for the losses they have suffered. Indications that this faction of JAS may be inclined to peaceful resolution if its conditions are met emerged when the group released the French citizens kidnapped in Northern Cameroun after Cameroonian authorities released some detained members of the sect. Some security sources, however, claim the hostages were released after payment of ransom.

The outlook for security in Borno and parts of the North East is unlikely to improve in the coming months. The fence mending measures of Governor Kashim Shettima, of Borno State, who has in the past few months become more responsive to reported attacks by militants and allegations of human rights violations, are expected to build confidence. However, it will take a while to rebuild public trust in public security agencies. Moreover, the spate of kidnappings and armed robbery orchestrated by criminal groups will continue to pose threats to security whether or not JAS and its breakaway factions accept the amnesty.

## **2. KADUNA CONSOLIDATES SECURITY GAINS**

Kaduna State remained largely stable in April. There were no major security incidents in the state. Interventions by the state government, security agencies and community leaders contributed to the cessation of violence which affected several communities in Southern Kaduna in the past two months. Consequently, threats to evict Fulani from affected areas were not carried out and there were no incidents of reprisal attacks. The only reported incidents of violence were the killings of two policemen on patrol duty and Yohanna Yakubu, the younger brother of Engr. Andrew Yakubu, the Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) by unknown gunmen.

The motive of the killings remains unknown as the gunmen involved in the separate incidents have not been identified. Although the police authorities claim the late Yohanna Yakubu, who is also a staff of NNPC, may have been a victim of an armed robbery incident, family members believe he was assassinated. This allegation stems from suspicions that some groups in the state are not happy that Yakubu, who is from southern Kaduna was given one of the most attractive jobs in the country. However, the fact that the two incidents occurred in southern Kaduna strengthened perceptions that the zone is not well served by security agencies. Leaders of southern Kaduna have in the past two months been canvassing for the deployment of more security operatives to the zone to check communal violence and armed banditry.

The security situation in Kaduna promises to improve in the coming months. This is particularly as a result of the proactive efforts of the Governor Ramalan Yero to reach out to all groups in the state especially the people of Southern Kaduna who still mourn the passage of former Governor Patrick Yakowa. The governor visited communities affected by communal violence and promised relief and reinforcement of security. NSRP sources claim the overtures are partly intended to water the grounds for Yero's expected campaign for re-election in 2015.

## **3. VIOLENCE PERSISTS IN RURAL PLATEAU**

Rural communities especially in Riyom LGA and Wase LGA experienced some incidents of violence in April. In Riyom, communities attacked by gunmen wielding sophisticated weapons included Ganawuri, Dukum, Tanjol, Jol and Rim. The LGA has experienced resumed fighting between Berom and Fulani groups in the past

months. In Wase, violence which started in Wadata two months ago spread to other communities such as Mavo, Lamba, Wase Tofa and Tsamiyar. The violence between predominantly Tarok people and the Fulani also spread to neighbouring Mikang Quan Pan and Langtang North LGAs. The spread of violence to these communities has raised fears of escalation of violence to 2004 levels when a state of emergency was declared. This is particularly so because Southern Plateau is believed to have a high concentration of small arms and light weapons given the high concentration of ex-servicemen in communities in the area.

The response mechanisms to these incidents of violence appear to be ineffective as security agencies tended to arrive very late at scenes of violence to make any impact. This has been attributed to the fact that most of the troops serving in the Special Task Force (STF) are deployed to protect Jos, the state capital. Vigilante groups established by communities to prevent attacks have not been able to ward off attackers who are alleged to be armed with more sophisticated weapons. It is believed that this situation has contributed to weapons proliferation as affected communities seek to acquire more sophisticated weapons to protect themselves.

Plateau residents welcomed the offer of amnesty to JAS. The state has not been targeted by JAS for some months now. However, NSRP sources believe the presence of the STF troops in strategic locations of Jos and environs is indicative that security agencies have been working hard to prevent another JAS attack. The outlook for security in Plateau remains bleak as underlying drivers of violence in the state, especially the perceived discrimination against so-called 'settlers', are not being addressed.

#### **4. KANO EXPERIENCES RELATIVE IMPROVEMENT IN SECURITY**

There was discernible improvement in the security situation in Kano in April. An indicator of growing confidence among security agencies on the state of security was the reduction in the number of the ubiquitous road check points in Kano metropolis. Confidence building measures undertaken after the fatal suicide bomb attack on the transport station in March appeared to be succeeding as there were no reports of mass relocations and reprisal attacks. The huge turnout of visitors to the second set of mass weddings sponsored by the state government in all 44 LGAs also showed growing confidence in security in Kano.

The major incident of breach in security was a foiled assassination attempt apparently targeting Alhaji Ado Bayero, the Emir of Kano. This was the second assassination attempt in four months. Two of the suspected assassins were lynched by irate worshippers at the mosque near the Emir's palace. The JTF reportedly shot the third suspect in custody for attempting to escape. This killing raised fears of a cover up amidst public expectation that the suspect would have provided useful information for investigation. The incident also reinforced the rumour that one of the likely successors to the 82 years old emir currently serving in government is behind the plot to kill the emir.

The outlook for security in Kano in the coming months remains bleak. The attack on Ringim in neighbouring Jigawa State late April lent credence to concerns that the

security build-up in Kano in the past year has led to the relocation rather than elimination of the militants. The attack reportedly targeting Mr. Hafiz Ringim, the immediate past Inspector General of Police, led to loss of lives and property. The militants suspected Ringim would be attending an event in the community when they struck. The former police chief survived a previous assassination attempt by suspected JAS militants at the Police Headquarters in Abuja in June 2011. He was dismissed, and subsequently retired from the Nigeria Police Force in January 2012, over perceived failure of the Police to check incidents of suicide bomb attacks by suspected JAS militants and public outrage over the escape of a suspected leader of JAS from police custody. He has been living in London since his retirement because JAS had threatened to kill him.

## **5. POWER TUSSLE ESCALATES IN NIGER DELTA**

The deepening rift among prominent politicians in the Niger Delta worsened in April threatening the fragile peace secured by the amnesty programme. The longstanding feud between President Goodluck Jonathan and Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State degenerated, raising fears of instability in Rivers State. The feud followed the familiar path where presidents mobilized federal appointees to undermine 'insubordinate' governors. NSRP sources suspect that the president orchestrated the battle for control of the Rivers State Chapter of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) between Amaechi and Chief Nyesom Wike, the Minister of State for Education. Wike served as Amaechi's Chief of Staff between 2007 and 2011 and was nominated by Amaechi to represent Rivers State in the Federal Executive Council. He sponsored a candidate to oppose the re-election of the incumbent Chairman of the Rivers State PDP, who is an ally of the governor. The plot succeeded when a Federal High Court declared Wike's candidate as the lawfully elected chairman of the party.

There are widespread fears that state institutions are being manipulated by the main actors (Jonathan and Amaechi) and that politicisation of these mediating institutions would undermine prospects for stability and reconciliation. Most observers claimed the president sponsored the judgment which made Amaechi to effectively lose control of the party in the state. It is also widely believed that Amaechi influenced the State House of Assembly to suspend the chairman and councillors of Obio Akpor LGA, who are Wike's loyalists. Wike was a long serving chairman of the LGA. The state party executive led by Wike's loyalists responded by suspending 27 PDP state legislators from the party. The House of Assembly has accused the president of plotting to impeach Amaechi and destabilize the state.

Airport authorities were also accused of grounding the aircraft belonging to the Rivers State Government for political reasons. Although there were controversies over the registration of the aircraft, most Nigerians who have spoken on the issue believe it was a ploy to undermine Amaechi's travels across the country to mobilize support for his ambition to re-contest the chairmanship of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) and also position himself as vice presidential candidate for a Northern presidential aspirant in 2015. NSRP sources claim the attack on Amaechi is intended to weaken his political influence in Rivers State chapter of the PDP and secure delegates vote

for Jonathan in the PDP primaries for 2015 presidential elections. The attack is reportedly also being used to warn other governors and politicians of the dangers of openly opposing the purported ambition of Jonathan to remain in office beyond 2015.

The region also continued to witness violence associated with disagreements among ex-militants over the spoils of the amnesty programme. Suspected ex-militants killed 12 policemen in an ambush against Kile Selky Torghedi, an ex-militant leader popularly known as General Young Shall Grow. General Young Shall Grow had secured the services of the security agencies for the funeral ceremony of his late mother in Southern Ijaw LGA of Bayelsa State. He led one of the groups that accepted the amnesty in 2009 and is now a security aide to Governor Seriake Dickson of Bayelsa State. The suspected ex-militants were allegedly aggrieved that General Young Shall Grow had diverted funds allocated to their group.

There were also indications that factions of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) remained discontent with the outcomes of the amnesty programme. One of the factions linked to Henry Okah, who is serving a life imprisonment in South Africa for his role in the bomb attack on Abuja during Nigeria's 50<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary, has issued threats to resume attacks on state and oil company facilities. The faction is believed to have deceptively claimed responsibility for the killing of the policemen. It is also this faction that is believed to be responsible for the threat to revenge the killings of Christians in Northern Nigeria by suspected JAS militants. NSRP sources note that this group has been substantially weakened and lacks the capacity to embark upon any major attack on security agencies and oil companies.

There were several indicators of improvement in responses to security threats. Firstly, government, security agencies and community leaders have so far succeeded in preventing an armed invasion of the communities around the creek where the policemen were killed. Anxious residents of the state are relieved that a reoccurrence of the unfortunate Odi incident where soldiers ransacked the community in search of suspected killers of seven policemen in 1999 has been averted. Secondly, the Joint Task Force (Operation Pulo Shield) announced it had recorded some breakthrough in containing the activities of national and international networks involved in oil theft. Some vessels suspected to be used for oil theft were impounded and both Nigerians and foreigners arrested.

However, there are lingering fears that the Niger Delta has not escaped the violent conflict trap. The incentives for groups involved in organized criminal activities outweigh the costs. NSRP sources claim that oil bunkering will continue as long as local communities benefit from it and government fails to arrest the alleged barons in the business. There is also the widespread belief that militancy will continue as long as government and oil companies continue to award security contracts to militant groups.



## THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

### 6. NO NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON AMNESTY FOR JAS MILITANTS

The reactions to indications that the Federal Government was set to grant amnesty to JAS militants showed that the country is divided on the desirability and feasibility of the amnesty proposition. The heated debates over the idea of amnesty influenced the name given to the committee established to discuss with JAS. The committee is known as Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of the Security Challenges in the North. The national leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the leadership of Northern CAN have led the opposition to the proposal to grant amnesty to JAS and other militant groups operating in Northern Nigeria. They have argued that proponents of the amnesty are insensitive to the families and churches that have lost their loved ones, places of worship and properties as a result of attacks by suspected JAS militants. Hard-line factions of JAS have also opposed the offer of amnesty on the grounds that they have committed no wrong. These factions claimed they deserve apology and restitution from the Federal Government and the security agencies for the killings of their members and destruction of their property and places of worship.

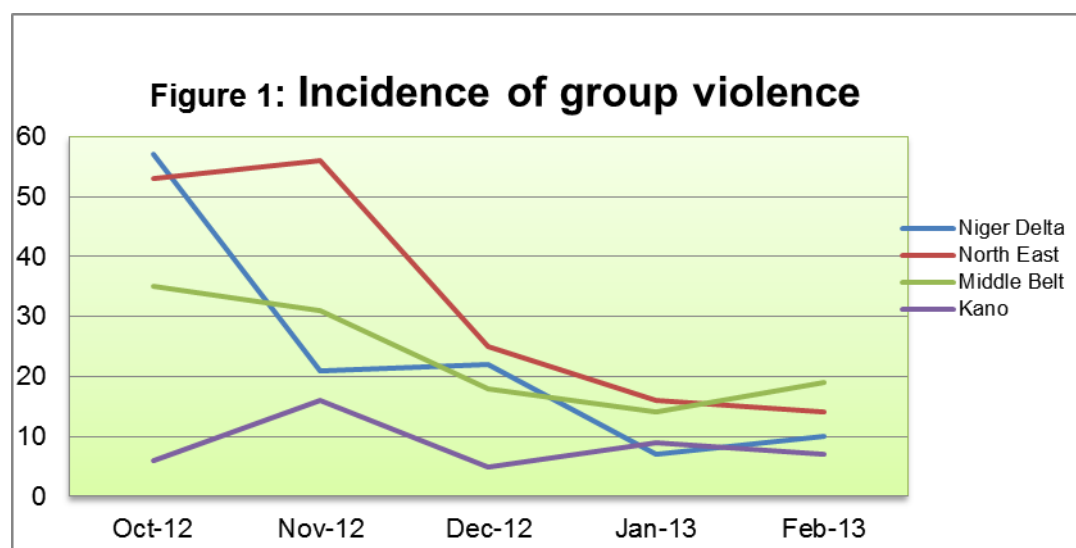
Remarkably the emerging fault-lines in the debates for and against amnesty for JAS have not been along religious and regional lines. Most religious and regional groups include people who support and those who oppose proposals for amnesty for JAS. Some Christian leaders, notably some Catholic Bishops have supported the idea of amnesty as a price the country has to pay for peace. Also some leaders of communities of southerners resident in Northern Nigeria have openly supported the amnesty offer.

Most of the debates have focussed on the feasibility rather than desirability of amnesty. Many commentators have expressed scepticism on the possibility of a group which professes to be motivated by an ideology of Islamization of the country to accept amnesty. Some outspoken Northern leaders have said the amnesty is doomed because of the false steps the Federal Government has taken. This group criticised the Federal Government for ignoring the advice of northern leaders on how to resolve the insurgency. Among this group are those who pick holes in the composition of the committee established to negotiate with JAS. The committee is said to include persons that lack credibility and have no clout with JAS leadership and membership. Some northern leaders also fault the Federal Government for appointing predominantly northerners into the committee. This group believes that insurgency by JAS is a national problem and resolution initiatives should include credible persons from all parts of the country. NSRP sources indicate that the greatest obstacle to the amnesty project is the suspected ambition of President Jonathan to contest the 2015 elections. These sources claim that some of the northern leaders who are influential with JAS are reticent about leading the dialogue with JAS because early resolution of the insurgency would enhance the prospects of re-election of Jonathan. This is based on the perception that opposition parties and interest groups would effectively use the security challenges in the country to mobilize voters against Jonathan's candidacy in 2015.

Some NSRP sources claim that the president and his allies have not been enthusiastic in pushing the idea of amnesty over fears that some northern leaders opposed to his candidacy in 2015 would scuttle the effort. Consequently, the president is perceived to have merely inaugurated the committee to change the perception that his administration is unwilling to engage with the militants. These sources claim the uneventful end of the committee established by the Northern Governors to recommend ways of addressing the insurgency is indicative of the absence of political will to address the crisis.

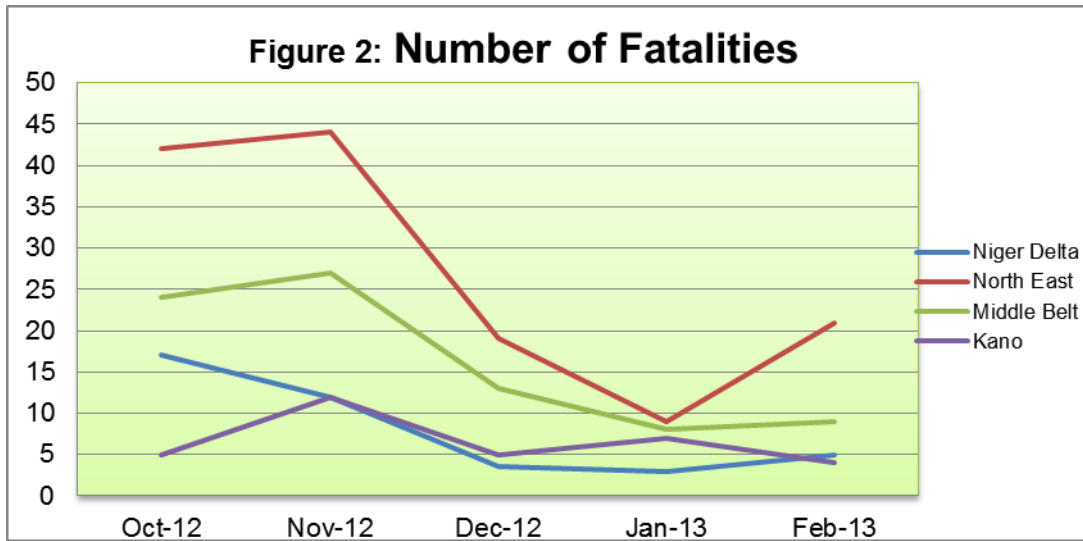
## 7. NORTH EAST RECORDS HIGHEST FATALITIES FROM ARMED VIOLENCE

Data on conflict trends collected by Nigeria Watch and Nigeria UNLOCK show that the North East (Borno and Yobe) recorded the highest number of fatalities from armed violence over a five month period for which data is available (between October 2012 and February 2013). Almost all incidents recorded in Borno and Yobe resulted in deaths. This is clearly due to the intensity of violence and the fact that militants seem to outnumber security agencies in most cases. It is also related to the methods adopted by JAS militants in the states. These include drive-by shooting and gun-battles with security agencies which tend to result in higher casualty figures.



The number of fatalities was lowest in Kano and the Niger Delta (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers). Generally, there was reduction in the incidents of violence in most regions between October and January. However, incidents started rising mid-January and in February especially in the Niger Delta and the Middle Belt (Kaduna and Plateau). This is as a result of the resumption of violence between Fulani and communities in Plateau and Southern Kaduna as well as rising incidents of oil theft, piracy and kidnapping in the Niger Delta.





Kano appeared to be the most stable with the state experiencing the lowest level of fluctuation in number of incidents. Fluctuation levels in incidents of violence were higher in the Niger Delta and Middle Belt. This is probably due to the episodic nature of violence in the regions. A fuller picture of conflict trends will be presented in the next issue of the Conflict Briefing when data on March 2013 will be available.