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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P9\_TA(2020)0012**

#### **Nigeria, notably the recent terrorist attacks**

##### **European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2020 on Nigeria, notably the recent terrorist attacks (2020/2503(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Nigeria, most recently on 18 January 2018<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the statement of 24 December 2019 attributable to the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General on Nigeria,
- having regard to the report of 25 November 2019 of the Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the European Union,
- having regard to the end of visit statement of 2 September 2019 of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on her visit to Nigeria,
- having regard to the UN Security Council Press Statement of 31 July 2019 on Acts of Terrorism in North-East Nigeria,
- having regard to the statement of 29 July 2018 by the Spokesperson of the VP/HR on the Boko Haram terrorist attack in Borno, North-East Nigeria,
- having regard to the section of the Human Rights Watch World Report 2019 on Nigeria,
- having regard to the Human Rights Committee concluding observations on Nigeria in the absence of its second periodic report, of 29 August 2019,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief of 2013,
- having regard to the award of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to human rights defender Hauwa Ibrahim in 2005,
- having regard to the 2019 Global Terrorism Index,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 458, 19.12.2018, p. 43.

- having regard to the letter on the restrictions on humanitarian actions in North-East Nigeria addressed to the VP/HR and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management by the Chair of the Committee on Development,
  - having regard to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in particular its provisions in Chapter IV on the protection of freedom of religion, and the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,
  - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, ratified by Nigeria in April 1991,
  - having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979,
  - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
  - having regard to Rules 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the security situation in Nigeria has significantly deteriorated in recent years, posing a serious threat to regional and international security; whereas human rights violations and mass killings are widespread, notably in the North-East Region of the country; whereas over 36 000 people have been killed by the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria since 2009;
  - B. whereas the country is in its 10th year of a regionalised armed conflict; whereas violent extremism and terrorist activities, in particular, are on the rise, with jihadist groups, such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), growing in power and influence; whereas Boko Haram has attacked Nigeria's police and military, politicians, schools, religious buildings, public institutions and civilians with increasing regularity since 2009; whereas the vast majority of victims are Muslims;
  - C. whereas Nigeria ranks third out of 163 countries on the Global Terrorism Index behind Iraq and Afghanistan, making it the third in the list of countries most affected by terrorism;
  - D. whereas the security situation has been aggravated by an escalation of religious and ethnic violence in some parts of the country, including the conflict in the agricultural Middle Belt, where farmers and nomadic herders are in conflict over land and water resources;
  - E. whereas it is believed that ISWAP currently holds dozens of captives, including Christian leaders, security forces and aid workers;
  - F. whereas Nigeria's population, the most numerous in Africa, is almost equally distributed between Muslims and Christians; whereas the country is home to the region's largest Christian community, with nearly 30 million Christians living in northern Nigeria; whereas historic rivalry between the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south has dramatically intensified with the spread of radical Islam;
  - G. whereas ISWAP claimed responsibility for the execution of 11 people in a video released on 26 December 2019; whereas the group claimed all those killed were

Christians, and that the attack was in retaliation for the death of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria;

- H. whereas these killings are part of a wider series of terrorists acts, including the attack of 24 December 2019 on a Christian village near Chibok that resulted in the death of seven villagers and kidnapping of a teenage girl, the killing of three civilians outside Biu on 23 December 2019, and the killing of seven civilians in Nganzai on 22 December 2019;
- I. whereas according to the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, over 6 000 Christians have been murdered since 2015 by jihadist groups or have perished as a result of the ‘your land or your blood’ policy carried out by Fulani militants; whereas in the Sharia States Christians face constant discrimination, and are often considered second-class citizens;
- J. whereas although President Muhammadu Buhari has condemned the killings and urged the population not to become divided along religious lines, these attacks have been carried out with total impunity, with perpetrators rarely being held to account; whereas an Amnesty International report has demonstrated wilful negligence by the Nigerian Security Forces concerning the deadly attacks against farmers’ communities;
- K. whereas Human Rights Watch has reported that the Nigerian military has detained over 3 600 children, half of them girls, suspected of involvement with Islamist and non-state armed groups, often on the basis of little or no evidence; whereas many detainees have suffered abuse, including sexual violence, and have died in detention from disease, hunger, dehydration or gunshot wounds; whereas the military has systematically denied access to the detention facilities to verify the conditions in which children are held;
- L. whereas the situation of girls and women in Nigeria is especially problematic due to generalised discriminatory practices, limited access to health services and education, widespread female genital mutilation and child marriages;
- M. whereas the International Criminal Court (ICC) has stated that there are reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute have been committed in Nigeria by Boko Haram and the Nigerian Security Forces (NSF), including murder and persecution; whereas in its 2019 Report on Preliminary Examinations, the ICC concludes that despite a number of steps taken by the Nigerian authorities towards ascertaining the criminal responsibility of alleged perpetrators, the investigative or prosecutorial steps undertaken to date in relation to members of Boko Haram and the NSF appear to have been limited both in scope and depth;
- N. whereas since 2015 the government has been criticised for its inadequate handling of the Islamic insurgency across the country; whereas Nigeria’s military and police are facing a myriad of security threats and appear overstretched and unable to tackle simultaneous security crises;
- O. whereas the Multinational Joint Task Force has driven terrorist groups out of many areas under their control since its establishment in 2015, though the region still remains highly unstable; whereas the recent withdrawal of 1 200 Chadian soldiers, coinciding with a surge of violence in the North-East Region, has caused concern among the population; whereas hundreds of Nigerian civilians installed nearby fled the area fearing new attacks by the jihadists after this withdrawal;
- P. whereas the EU, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Economic Community of

West African States (ECOWAS) launched a project on Peace and Security Architecture and Operations (EPSAO) in October 2019; whereas the objective of the project is to strengthen ECOWAS mechanisms and capacity to manage conflict and support a post-conflict environment in West Africa;

- Q. whereas the situation in Nigeria has caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and led to the displacement of more than 2 million people in the North-East, according to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); whereas according to Human Rights Watch most internally displaced people cannot exercise their basic rights to food, housing, education, health, protection from harm, as well as the right to freedom of movement; whereas the EU has allocated EUR 28,3 million to support humanitarian assistance in the country; whereas humanitarian aid needs are far from being met by current funds;
- R. whereas according to section of the Human Rights Watch World Report 2019 on Nigeria, over 35 000 internally displaced people returned to north-eastern communities in 2018 despite security concerns and the lack of basic necessities, including food and shelter;
- S. whereas nearly half of the Nigerian population live in extreme poverty; whereas it is estimated that over 7 million Nigerians are in urgent need of life-saving assistance;
- T. whereas thousands of Nigerians are risking their lives on the migration routes to the EU in the hope of living in better economic, social and security conditions;
- U. whereas the humanitarian space in the country has shrunk, with the kidnapping and killing of several aid workers; whereas eight aid workers were killed in 2019, part of a total of 26 who have lost their lives in the conflict since 2011; whereas security risks often hinder aid delivery and have caused the departure of many humanitarian organisations;
- V. whereas, furthermore, the Government has suspended a number of international aid agencies and charities, claiming they had been acting as money-launderers for Islamist groups; whereas in September 2019, the Nigerian Armed Forces requested the closure of Action Against Hunger and Mercy Corps without notice, leaving 400 000 people without access to aid;
- W. whereas under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU engages in regular political dialogue with Nigeria on human rights and democratic principles, including issues such as ethnic, religious and racial discrimination;
  - 1. Deplores the terrorist attacks which have taken place in the country; reiterates its concern about the protracted crisis in Nigeria and the volatile security situation in the north-east, and strongly condemns the repeated violations of human rights, international and humanitarian law, whether based on religion or ethnicity;
  - 2. Condemns in particular the recent increase in violence against ethnic and religious communities, including the targeting of religious institutions and worshippers;
  - 3. Extends its condolences to the families of the victims, and expresses its solidarity with the Nigerian people, who have been suffering the effects of terrorism in the region for over a decade;

4. Urges the Nigerian authorities to guarantee respect for human rights in the country, and to protect the civilian population from terrorism and violence; insists that such efforts must be conducted in full accordance with respect for human rights and the rule of law, in line with the country's international obligations;
5. Considers any form of extermination of human beings or ethnic cleansing barbaric and a crime against humanity; urges the Nigerian Government to address the root causes of violence by ensuring equal rights for all citizens and non-discrimination legislation; insists, in this regard, on the need to further promote inter-religious dialogue and the peaceful coexistence of citizens irrespective of their religion, engaging with all relevant stakeholders, including the Nigerian Inter-religious Council;
6. Recalls that women and children are most vulnerable to the effects of conflict, terrorism and violence in the country; deplores the fact that children are increasingly recruited by terrorist groups and used as child soldiers or suicide bombers;
7. Is deeply worried by the reports of ill-treatment of children detained in military facilities; calls on the Nigerian authorities to allow the UN access to its military detention facilities, sign a formal handover protocol to ensure that children detained by the military are quickly transferred to appropriate child protection authorities, and to end military detention of children; insists that the counter-terrorism response, as well as the judiciary and law-enforcement framework, should be tailored to protect the rights of the most vulnerable populations, including children;
8. Reminds the Nigerian authorities of their obligation to protect the rights of children and to ensure protection and provide care to those affected by terrorism or conflict, including by ensuring their access to education; further recalls that education and economic opportunities are powerful tools against radicalisation, and urges international partners to support the provision of accessible, quality education as part of an anti-terrorism strategy in the region;
9. Is deeply concerned that Nigerian women continue to be victims of discrimination, violence, sexual abuse and rape; urges Nigeria to fully implement CEDAW; urges greater support for the victims of the widespread sexual and gender-based violence, including psychological support;
10. Stresses that the fight against impunity is fundamental to the stability of the country and the building of lasting peace; calls, therefore, on the Nigerian authorities to conduct immediate, thorough and transparent investigations to bring perpetrators to justice and hold them accountable; further calls for measures to improve the capacity and independence of Nigeria's judiciary system as a means to promote the effective use of criminal justice to combat violence, terrorism and corruption;
11. Deplores that progress has stalled in the fight against Boko Haram, ISWAP and the increased occurrence and severity of suicide attacks and direct attacks against military positions; recalls that Nigeria's President Buhari was re-elected in 2019 on the promise of defeating the violent extremism promoted by Boko Haram and other terror groups, and urges the President to implement his campaign promises;
12. Supports the objectives of the Peace and Security Architecture Operations project led by the EU and ECOWAS; encourages strong Member State support to contribute to capacity building and conflict resolution in West Africa;

13. Reaffirms its support for the regional Multinational Joint Task Force, and commends its efforts to effectively fight terrorism and restore stability in the Lake Chad region; recalls that terrorism knows no borders, and calls on the countries of the region to continue to coordinate their efforts to make the entire region secure;
14. Encourages further security sector reform in Nigeria to strengthen the capacity of national and regional actors in combatting terrorism; calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Member States to continue EU technical assistance in this field;
15. Warns against an instrumentalisation of the farmers-herders conflict as a means to spread religion-based hatred; urges the Nigerian Government to implement the National Livestock Transformation Plan that aims to protect the interests of both farmers and pastoralists; believes that further steps are necessary, such as strengthening conflict mediation, resolution, reconciliation and peacebuilding mechanisms;
16. Stresses the interdependence of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security in the country; believes that military action alone is not sufficient to combat terrorism effectively; calls on the Nigerian Government to develop a comprehensive strategy that addresses the root causes of terrorism, by focusing on a preventive approach that aims to eliminate the appeal of terrorist ideology, curtail opportunities for recruitment and radicalisation, and cut off its funding, as well as by supporting and funding community-focused programs of civil society organisations;
17. Calls on the EU, the African Union and the international community to step up their efforts in supporting the fight against terrorism in Nigeria, and pursue continued political and security assistance in the country, as well as the entire region;
18. Is deeply concerned by the impact of the security situation in the country on the effectiveness of humanitarian and development aid; calls for the EU to continue to pursue its humanitarian and development efforts not only in Nigeria, but also the region as a whole; welcomes the additional EUR 50 million pledged by the EU in 2019 to support recovery and resilience in Nigeria;
19. Acknowledges the pressures Nigeria and neighbouring countries are under from regional displacement; calls for increased support and donor coordination for the displaced population in Nigeria, including additional financial resources from the international community; recalls that development funds should not be diverted from their initial objective to eradicate poverty in all its forms;
20. Condemns all attacks on humanitarian aid personnel or facilities, and urges measures to ensure the safety of aid workers and a secure environment for humanitarian organisations to carry out their essential work;
21. Is extremely concerned at rapidly intensifying climate change and its impact on lives and livelihoods, particularly in the Middle Belt; reiterates that long-term solutions need to be found for protecting natural resources and ensuring access to them; recalls that tackling the climate emergency is a vital component of securing economic stability and peace in the region;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Vice-President of the Commission / High

Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President and Parliament of Nigeria, the African Union, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, and the Pan-African Parliament.