

## ISWA - Boko Haram

The **Islamic State in West Africa**, formerly known as, "Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad") but more commonly known as **Boko Haram** until March 2015, is a jihadist terrorist organisation based in northeastern Nigeria, also active in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon, with the main goal being to "*purify Islam in northern Nigeria*". Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the group has been led by **Abubakar Shekau** since 2009.

Since the current insurgency started in 2009, Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was at one time the world's deadliest terror group according to the Global Terrorism Index, for example in 2014 Boko Haram killed over 6,600 people, and have carried out mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014.

In mid-2014, the militants gained control of swathes of territory in and around their home state of Borno, estimated at 50,000 square kilometres in January 2015. Corruption in the security services and human rights abuses committed by them hampered initial efforts to counter the activities of the Group.

The U.S. designated Boko Haram and its offshoot Ansaru as a Foreign Terrorist

Organisation (FTO) in November 2013, citing Boko Haram's links with AQIM and its responsibility for

"thousands of deaths in northeast and central Nigeria over the last several years including targeted killings of civilians".

Boko Haram is thought to have raised substantial sums from kidnap for ransom and extortion. In 2013, Boko Haram kidnapped a family of 7 French tourists on vacation in Cameroon and two months later released the hostages along with 16 others in exchange for a ransom of **US\$3.15 million**. As well as extortion from local residents, Boko Haram has claimed to extort money from local state governments.



**Leader: Abubakar Shekau**

**Location: North Eastern Nigeria, (Borno State) also active in Chad, Niger and Northern Cameroon.**

**Strength: 4,000 - 6,000 fighters**

**Affiliations: to Islamic State since 2014/15**

**Financing: Extortion & Kidnap for Ransom**

Whilst Boko Haram was better armed and better motivated than Government troops, they made progress. Since 2015 however, the Nigerian Government with regional and international support have made significant gains against the Group and by 2019, the Group continued to experience further declines with the loss of much of the territory it once controlled, with now the group retaining control over some villages and pockets of territory from which it continues to launch deadly suicide attacks and abduct civilians, mostly women and children.