**For Immediate Release**

**Recent attacks in northern states pose "a serious threat to the nation of Nigeria", according to Baroness Cox**

(London, November 6, 2014) - Following Boko Haram’s dismissal of a ceasefire with the Federal Government last week, there has been a surge in violent attacks in northern Nigeria. The escalation in violence over the course of 2014 – which has been the deadliest year since the start of the group’s insurgency – looks set to continue.

Baroness Cox, founder and CEO of the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), has said in response to recent events that “*the scale of terrorist violence in Northern Nigeria constitutes a reign of terror which demands more attention from the international community. If it continues unabated, the humanitarian crisis will further escalate and could be a serious threat to the nation of Nigeria.”*

Mubi, the second largest-town in Adamawa state, was attacked and seized by Boko Haram militants [last Wednesday 29th October](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/30/us-nigeria-violence-idUSKBN0IJ21820141030). The militants [were reported](http://sunnewsonline.com/new/?p=88537) to have destroyed a police station, the palace of the Emir of Mubi, a military unit and a prison (freeing all prisoners). [Reports](http://www.tribune.com.ng/news/news-headlines/item/20334-boko-haram-benue-govt-evacuates-indigenes-from-adamawa) also suggest that militants targeted both Adamawa State University and the Federal Polytechnic, and some students [have told journalists](http://www.osundefender.org/?p=192829) that they were tortured before fleeing to the bush or seeking refuge in neighbouring Cameroon.

Over the past week, Boko Haram militants have killed dozens of residents, including the [son of the Emir of Mubi](http://dailypost.ng/2014/11/01/boko-haram-destroys-cds-house-kills-emir-mubis-son/), [two local imams](http://www.punchng.com/news/bharam-brings-mubi-under-sharia-amputates-10/), and a [university lecturer](http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/147407/thousands-flee-as-boko-haram-seizes-nigerian-town). They have destroyed several churches and ordered Christians [to leave the town](http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/boko-haram-carries-out-pogrom-against-christians-in-mubi/193340/), convert to Islam or be killed.

The sect allegedly renamed the town ‘Madinatul Islam’ (i.e. ‘The City of Islam’) and implemented a strict interpretation of Sharia law. Under their week-long administration, some residents were [stoned to death](http://saharareporters.com/2014/11/04/boko-haram-carrying-out-sharia-law-mubi-stoning-death-amputating-escapee) for committing ‘capital offences’ and ten others had their [hands amputated](http://www.punchng.com/news/bharam-brings-mubi-under-sharia-amputates-10/) for looting the houses of fleeing residents. Thousands were [forced to flee](http://www.worldbulletin.net/todays-news/147407/thousands-flee-as-boko-haram-seizes-nigerian-town) to the neighbouring town of Yola or through the mountains into Cameroon.

In another recent attack, which took place on Monday 3rd November, a suicide bomber targeted a procession of Shia Muslims who were marking the ceremony of Ashura, in the town of Potiskum, Yobe. The bomber [reportedly embedded himself in the procession](http://allafrica.com/stories/201411040187.html) before detonating the explosive as they marched through a marketplace.

The attack left 32 people dead and 119 wounded, [according to a hospital official](http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/nigeria-suspected-boko-haram-suicide-bomber-kills-32-1472946). A Potiskum resident, Mohammed Gana, whose brother was killed in the attack, [said he counted 23 bodies at the scene](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/03/nigeria-suicide-bomber-shia-muslims-potiskum).

No group has yet claimed responsibility. However, Boko Haram, who denounce Shias, a minority in Nigeria, as non-Muslims and who were [allegedly responsible](http://www.presstv.com/detail/2014/07/30/373343/nigeria-shia-mosques-bombed-8-killed/) for the July 2014 attack on a Shia open air mosque in the same town [are suspected to be behind the attack](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-29882218).

According to a Shia leader, [reported by the BBC](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-29882218), the security forces killed another five people after arriving on the scene.

The Nigerian Security Forces have been implicated in [severe human rights violations](http://www.hart-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/HART-Visit-Report-Nigeria-2014.pdf) in the course of their response to the insurgency including extra-judicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention and disproportionate use of force.

In a clash in Borno State last week, military officers and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a vigilante group, killed 41 members of Boko Haram. Members of the Civilian JTF then beheaded the insurgents and paraded the heads around the town. [According to one member of the vigilante group](http://dailypost.ng/2014/10/31/insurgency-41-boko-haram-members-beheaded-biu-failed-attack/), this was to *“encourage [the people] to stand against the Boko Haram fighters, who are now destroying our villages”*.

When HART visited north-eastern Nigeria in July, we found a rapidly deteriorating situation with civilians suffering both from Boko Haram’s near-daily atrocities, and the often brutal response of the security forces and local vigilante groups.

The trauma and tension of lives lived under constant threat of attack was all too evident. As one man in Bauchi said to us: “*Everyone is suspicious of everyone. The battle has changed. Everywhere is a battleground, and everyone you see is an enemy – because you don’t know who is the enemy. We are in a very dangerous time”*. Read the full report [here](http://www.hart-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/HART-Visit-Report-Nigeria-2014.pdf).

**About Boko Haram**

Boko Haram is an extreme militant group that [seeks to establish an Islamic state](http://www.hart-uk.org/blog/past-present-boko-haram-historical-context/) throughout Nigeria. Since 2009, it has resorted to a strategy of brutal violence to further these aims, attacking political, military, religious and civilian targets.

Precise figures of casualties resulting from the insurgency are very difficult to come by, however, reliable sources such as [John Hopkins University’s Connect SAIS Africa Programme](http://www.connectsaisafrica.org/research/african-studies-publications/social-violence-nigeria/) estimate that Boko Haram has killed 11,121 people since 2009. In the first three quarters of 2014 alone, 5,156 have been killed, making 2014 so far almost as deadly as the preceding five years of Boko Haram’s insurgency.

The conflict has [displaced an estimated 1.5 million people](http://www.hart-uk.org/blog/fear-and-loathing-in-northern-nigeria/#sthash.jPJoDAhg.dpuf) in the six north-eastern states of Nigeria affected by the conflict, and has caused over 75,000 people to seek refuge in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Last [Thursday](http://www.hart-uk.org/news/baroness-cox-raises-question-developments-northern-nigeria-house-lords/), Baroness Cox raised a question on Nigeria in the House of Lords, asking Her Majesty’s Government about their assessment of recent developments with particular reference to Boko Haram’s activities.

Baroness Cox emphasized that, having recently visited areas afflicted by Boko Haram’s insurgency, *“the scale of suffering… massively exceeds that reported by the media”.*

She highlighted that “*this year alone 2,000 women and girls have been abducted*”, a figure that includes “*the widely publicized kidnapping of the schoolgirls at Chibok*”.

She also reminded the Minister that “*local people do not believe that the federal and state authorities are sufficiently willing or able to stop Boko Haram’s reign of terror”*.

**Press**

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