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Terrorism and Human Rights Violations in North-East Nigeria, 2015-2025

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Abstract: This study examined terrorism and human rights violations in North-Eastern Nigeria, 2015-2025, with particular emphasis on the extent to which terrorist activities affected the protection and enjoyment of fundamental human rights, the factors that sustained terrorism and associated human rights violations, and the effectiveness of government counterterrorism measures in addressing these challenges. The study was anchored on Human Security Theory and Frustration-Aggression Theory, which provided the theoretical framework for understanding both the human consequences of terrorism and the structural conditions that facilitated its persistence. Adopting a qualitative descriptive research design, the study relied on secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government publications, reports of international organizations, and credible media sources. The data were analysed using thematic and content analysis. The findings revealed, among others, that terrorism significantly undermined the protection and enjoyment of fundamental human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria through killings, abductions, forced displacement, sexual violence, destruction of property, restrictions on access to education and healthcare, and widespread humanitarian crises. The study highlighted that for sustainable peace and better human rights protection a more comprehensive human security approach is needed rather than a traditional military approach, which would focus more on socio-economic and governance conditions underlying violent extremism. As such the study suggested a focus on human rights-based counterterrorism, a greater development of socio-economic development measures, boosting institutional capacity in the security and justice sphere, and strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for conflict-affected people.

Keywords: terrorism, violation of human rights, human security, counterterrorism, boko haram, North-Eastern Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Terrorism and human rights abuses are one of the most serious security and governance issues faced by modern state, especially in areas of protracted violent extremism. Terrorism poses not only a security and political stability threat to the nation, but also jeopardizes the rights and freedoms democratic societies rely on. Terrorist groups have used mass killings, kidnapping, sexual violence, forced displacement, property destruction and attacks on civilian populations as tools to further their ideological, political and religious goals in various parts of the world [1]. All of these actions are in direct violation of the principles of human rights as defined in international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African

Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Meanwhile, many counterterrorism actions of states have often caused further human rights issues, including the use of security measures without appropriate civilian protection measures [2]. Terrorism and human rights issues have therefore become inextricably linked, and in some instances civilians have been targeted by both groups and the seemingly overwhelming reaction of security forces. Where institutions are weak and there are socio-economic disparities and weak governance in developing countries, the effects of terrorism on human rights can be more profound as existing protection mechanisms for vulnerable populations are often insufficient. This is becoming more apparent in Nigeria's North-East region where for a decade, terrorists have been a security problem and have now become a multidimensional humanitarian and human rights problem, impacting millions of lives [3].

The insurgency by Boko Haram (BH) in the North-Eastern Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba State) has completely changed the security situation. The group began as a religious group led by Mohammed Yusuf in the early 2000s, but transformed into a violent extremist group after the group got involved in violent clashes with the Nigerian security forces in 2009 [4]. Terrorism in the North-East went into a complicated stage between 2015 and 2025, with the Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), continuing to attack. The Nigerian military made some headway and recapture of land, but insurgent attacks on communities, military bases, schools, markets, places of worship and humanitarian operations persisted [5]. The attacks left thousands of people dead and led to massive displacement of citizens in the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [6]. Civilians have been the hardest hit by the conflict, bearing the brunt of the escalation, including through arbitrary killings, forced disappearances, forced recruitment, and sexual exploitation [7]. As a result, terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria has gone beyond the traditional security threats to become a serious threat to the enjoyment of basic human rights such as the right to life, dignity, liberty, education, health and freedom of movement.

Terrorism in the North-Eastern Nigeria has had wide and diverse consequences for human rights. The large-scale population displacement is one of the most noticeable symptoms. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes as a result of insurgent violence in the country, making it one of the worst IDP crisis experienced in Africa [8]. The situation of IDP camps in both displaced persons and host communities remains difficult due to lack of access to health, education, and sanitation services, as well as opportunities to earn a living. The situation of women and children has been particularly dire, with forced marriage, sexual slavery, trafficking, and armed group recruitment being among the experiences of victimization experienced by women [9]. The repeated attacks against educational institutions, the notorious abductions of schoolgirls, have had a significant impact on the right to education in the region, giving rise to a "lost generation" of children impacted by conflict, according to several scholars [10]. In addition to the physical violence, survivors, families and whole communities have suffered from deep psychological trauma as a result of terrorism, which has long-term implications for social cohesion and human development. This has led to the loss of individual and collective rights and exacerbated vulnerabilities in an already vulnerable socio-economic environment.

Equally important are concerns over the allegations of human rights abuses made during counterterrorism operations. The safety of citizens against the threat of terrorism is a legitimate concern of the state in Nigeria but several reports have recorded violation of international human rights standard in Nigeria's security response [11]. Examples of alleged abuses include arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without trial, enforced disappearance, torture, extrajudicial killing, and limiting humanitarian access in conflict affected areas. While governments have repeatedly stated the need for the measures taken in the backdrop of the intricate security scenario, civil society groups and international observers have reiterated the need to strike a balance between national security goals and uphold the protection of fundamental rights [12]. The irreconcilable conflict between preventing violent extremism and retaining the rights and freedoms which governments

are mandated to protect is a major issue in modern counterterrorism governance. The situation of the North-East has become even more serious with regard to this dilemma, as the communities in the region are faced with both violence from armed groups and the adverse effects of military actions. This has fostered distrust towards the local population and state institutions, which may hamper the short- and long-term peacebuilding and stabilization efforts.

In this context, the 2015 – 2025 period is a very important time to scrutinize the interplay between terrorism and human rights abuses in North-Eastern Nigeria. It is a time of large scale military operations against Boko Haram and ISWAP, changing counterterrorism policies and operations, human rights interventions, and an increasing change in the nature of insurgent violence. While the Nigerian government and its regional counterparts have achieved some success in securing the country [13], there are signs that terrorism has been responsible for significant human rights issues on various aspects of civilian life. Meanwhile, the efficacy, legality and human rights issues of a state response to the insurgent movement remain a matter of debate. It is therefore important not only to understand the overall effects of the terror on the population to be affected, but also to gauge how well existing security and governance structures have been able to protect human rights in a conflict environment. The study therefore seeks to examine the effects of terrorist activities and counterterrorism on human rights violations in the North-Eastern Nigeria from 2015 to 2025 with a view to understanding the overall impact of the two on the human rights experiences of individuals and communities in the region.

Drawing from this concern, the study is guided by the overarching research question:

To what extent has terrorism contributed to human rights violations in North-Eastern Nigeria between 2015 and 2025?

Flowing from this central inquiry, the study addresses the following specific research questions:

- a. How has terrorism affected the protection and enjoyment of fundamental human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria?
- b. What factors have sustained terrorism-driven human rights violations in North-Eastern Nigeria?
- c. How effective have government counterterrorism measures been in addressing terrorism and protecting human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria?

2. Materials and Method

The study is a qualitative descriptive research design, which is used to investigate the occurrences of terrorism and human rights violations in North-Eastern Nigeria in the period of 2015-2025. The design is deemed appropriate because it aids in the sensitivity with which terrorism is analysed in terms of its nature, manifestations and consequences, and its impact on the protection and enjoyment of fundamental rights. The study uses secondary sources as the main source of data, which are in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, official government publications, report of international organizations, policy documents and credible media reports on terrorism and human rights conditions in the region.

Thematic and content analysis are used to analyse the collected data. They help identify, classify and interpret reoccurring themes, patterns and trends in relation to terrorism, human rights abuse and the sustainer of insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria. The analytical perspective on the consequences of terrorism on human rights and the conditions which facilitate its continuance during the period covered is based on the Human Security Theory and Frustration – Aggression Theory.

The Human Security Theory is the core theoretical framework underlying this study as it is the main theory used for analysis of the relationship between the occurrence of terrorism and human rights violations in North-Eastern Nigeria. The theory was developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994), and is a concept that has turned away from the focus on security for the state and towards security for individuals and communities. It claims that the precondition for real security is that people are not afraid, victims of violence, being driven out of their homes or facing other

circumstances that endanger their dignity and well-being. The theory is significant for this work because the effect of the offences of terrorism in North Eastern Nigeria has not only threatened the security of the state, but also threatens the basic human rights (rights of life, liberty, education, movement, livelihood and personal security). Therefore, the lens of Human Security Theory is useful to study the impact of terrorism on the protection and enjoyment of these rights and the humanitarian impact felt by those affected.

To complement this perspective, this study draws on the Frustration–Aggression Theory (Dollard et al., 1939; Gurr, 1970) which helps to elucidate the circumstances that sometimes underlie the perpetuation of violent extremism. The theory suggests that a sustained lack of resource, social exclusion, inequality and perceived injustice create frustration which can manifest itself in aggression and violence. It is relevant to this study because it provides an understanding of some of the factors that perpetuate terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria which include poverty, unemployment, poor governance and socio-economic marginalisation. Human Security Theory is useful in understanding the human rights issues surrounding terrorism, and Frustration–Aggression Theory offers some structural analysis of some of the conditions which can help sustain insurgent activity. Both theories are holistic and can be used together to analyse the effect of terrorism on human rights and the factors that contribute to the sustainability of terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria in the period of study.

3. Result

3.1 Terrorism

The term 'terrorism' is complex and instigator of controversy, broadly defined as being the deliberate use or threat of violence by non-state actors, groups or individuals for political, ideological, religious or social ends against civilians and non-combatants. According to Schmid (2011), the terrorism is not just about the action itself, but the aim is to instill fear, intimidation and psychological insecurity in the people, beyond the immediate targets. The United Nations definition of terrorism is: "Acts of violence for the purpose of causing terror in the minds of the public, or in order to intimidate a population or force a government or institutions to act in a certain way" [14]. Terrorism in Nigeria has so far been linked to the activities of the Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which have caused devastating consequences for the population in the North-Eastern Nigeria [15].

3.2 Human Rights Violations

Human rights violations are actions or omissions which interfere with the fundamental human rights and freedoms that are guaranteed to individuals in national constitutions and under international human rights instruments. These rights include the right to life, the right to liberty, the right to dignity, freedom of movement, education, security and protection from torture, discrimination and arbitrary detention [16]. Violations of human rights can be perpetrated by state and non-state actors and can be more common during an armed conflict or in areas of insecurity. Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria has been linked to killings, forced displacement, sexual violence, destruction of property, denial of access to education and healthcare, as well as abductions [17]. The idea is so crucial, in fact, that it can be used to determine the humanitarian impact of terrorist violence in the study area.

3.3 Fundamental Human Rights

Fundamental human rights are rights that every human being possesses regardless of his or her race, religion, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic status that are inalienable and legally enforceable. Under international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), these rights are universally recognised, and are constitutionally protected in Nigeria under Chapter IV (Sections 33-46) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [18]. Chapter IV of the Constitution guarantees the right to life, dignity of the human person, personal liberty, fair hearing, private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and the press, peaceful assembly and association, freedom of movement, freedom from discrimination and the right to

acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria [19]. The provisions of the Constitution place a legal obligation on the state to not only not violate these rights, but also to protect citizens from such violation by non-state actors, including terrorist groups. In the context of terrorism however, the actual exercise of these constitutionally guaranteed rights is seriously hampered by the unlawful killing, abductions, torture, displacement of persons, destruction of houses and public facilities, restriction of movement, disruption of education, health care and other violence which poses threats to human dignity and human safety. The level of protection or violation of the rights guaranteed under Chapter IV is therefore an important constitutional and analytical point of reference to determine the overall effect of the acts of terrorism on the affected populations and the effectiveness of the Nigerian State's human rights protection obligations.

The study found a qualitative descriptive research design which examined terrorism and human rights violation in North-Eastern Nigeria from 2015 to 2025. The design is deemed appropriate due to its ability to allow for a comprehensive examination of the nature, manifestations and effects of acts of terror and their implications for the protection and enjoyment of fundamental human rights. The study relies mainly on secondary data that may be freely accessed from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, official government documents, reports by international organizations, policy documents or credible media reports on issues of terrorism and human rights conditions within the region.

Thematic and content analysis techniques are used to analyse the data collected. These techniques allow for identification, classification and interpretation of themes, patterns and trends of terrorist practices, human rights abuses and factors supporting insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria in a systematic fashion. The analytical framework of the study is based on the Human Security theory and the Frustration–Aggression theory, which helps to understand the impact of terrorism on human rights, as well as the structural conditions that facilitate its persistence for the studied period.

3.4 Empirical Profile of Terrorism and Human Rights Violations in North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

This section provides documentary evidence from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), as well as evidence derived from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other authoritative documentary sources. These data is designed not just to outline the trends of the terrorist attack but also to provide an evidence-based basis for measuring the impact of terrorism on the enjoyment and protection of fundamental human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Table 1. Chronological Pattern of Terrorist Activities in North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

Period	General Trend	Representative Locations	Nature of Incidents	Principal Sources
2015	High insurgent activity following military offensives	Maiduguri, Bama, Gwoza, Baga, Monguno (Borno); Madagali and Michika (Adamawa); Damaturu (Yobe)	Village raids, mass killings, suicide bombings, abductions and attacks on military formations	Amnesty International (2016); Agbiboa (2017); Human Rights Watch (2016)
2016	Continued insurgent attacks despite military gains	Konduga, Dikwa, Damboa, Ngala (Borno); Madagali (Adamawa)	Suicide bombings, attacks on IDP camps, market bombings, attacks	Amnesty International (2017); UNICEF (2017)

Period	General Trend	Representative Locations	Nature of Incidents	Principal Sources
			on humanitarian workers	
2017	Persistent attacks with increasing ISWAP activities	Maiduguri, Magumeri, Marte, Kukawa	Armed assaults, IED attacks and ambushes	International Crisis Group (2018); ACLED
2018	Sustained insurgent operations	Guzamala, Monguno, Rann, Baga	Attacks on military bases, villages and humanitarian facilities	Human Rights Watch (2019); OCHA (2019)
2019	Increased attacks on military formations	Gubio, Damasak, Baga	Armed assaults, IED explosions, kidnappings	International Crisis Group (2020); Amnesty International (2020)
2020	Continued attacks despite intensified counter-terrorism	Kukawa, Marte, Gwoza	Village raids, attacks on farmers, executions	UNDP (2021); Human Rights Watch (2021)
2021	ISWAP consolidation after Shekau's death	Sambisa Forest, Marte, Dikwa	Ambushes, attacks on security personnel and civilians	Reuters (2021); International Crisis Group (2022)
2022	Persistent asymmetric warfare	Bama, Gwoza, Damboa	IED attacks, kidnappings and attacks on rural communities	Amnesty International (2023); OCHA (2023)
2023	Continued attacks on civilians and infrastructure	Mafa, Ngala, Marte	Village raids, abductions, attacks on humanitarian convoys	UNDP (2023); Human Rights Watch (2024)
2024	Reduced territorial control but continued violence	Gwoza, Bama, Monguno	Ambushes, IEDs, attacks on villages and farmers	Amnesty International (2024); International Crisis Group (2024)
2025	Terrorist activities remain active in remote communities	Borno border communities, southern Lake Chad basin	Cross-border attacks, ambushes and attacks on civilians	ACLED (2025); Nigeria Security Tracker

Note. This list was compiled by the researcher from the documentary evidence reported by Amnesty International (2016-2024), Human Rights Watch (2016-2024), International Crisis Group (2018-2024), UNICEF (2017; 2024), OCHA (2019-2024), UNDP (2021; 2023),

Reuters (2021), the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, 2025), and the Nigeria Security Tracker (2025).

The data in Table 4.1 shows that the tempo and nature of terrorist operations continued to be high in North-Eastern Nigeria in the period 2015-2025, but there were variations throughout the period. The first few years of the insurgency were dominated by large-scale operations involving the attack on military formations, suicide bombings and raids on villages, but by the latter years, the attacks had become more asymmetric and involved attacks on humanitarian personnel, ambushes, kidnappings and attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This development indicates that while military activities have undermined Boko Haram and ISWAP's territorial control, it has not been able to destroy their operational capacity. This has also been noted by Onuoha (2014), Agbiboa (2017), Eme and Ibietan (2021) and most recently by International Crisis Group (2024) who contend that insurgent groups have been constantly evolving their operations in reaction to government counter-insurgency efforts [20, 21].

The trend is also evident from the rise and fall in the total number of attacks, which was not necessarily correlated with an improvement in civilian security. Instead, the number of vulnerable communities, transportation routes, schools, markets and humanitarian operations came under frequent attack by terrorist organizations, creating a high degree of insecurity even as fighting with the military decreased. It complements the reports of Amnesty International (2024), Human Rights Watch (2024), ACLED (2025) and UNDP (2023) which indicate that civilian populations were the main victims of insurgency attacks during the time period considered. The evidence, therefore, shows that terrorism had morphed from a mainly territorial insurgency to a long-term humanitarian crisis, which continued to have implications for the protection of fundamental human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria [22, 23].

Table 2. Geographical Distribution of Terrorist Activities across North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

State	Frequently Reported Locations	Dominant Forms of Attack	Predominant Rights Affected (Chapter IV, 1999 Constitution)	Representative Sources
Borno	Maiduguri, Bama, Gwoza, Damboa, Dikwa, Marte, Monguno, Ngala, Kukawa, Konduga, Baga, Chibok	Suicide bombings, armed assaults, village raids, kidnappings, IED attacks, attacks on humanitarian workers	Right to life, housing, education, health, liberty, property, freedom of movement	Amnesty International (2024); Human Rights Watch (2024); ACLED; UNDP (2023)
Adamawa	Madagali, Michika, Mubi, Hong, Gombi	Armed assaults, kidnappings, destruction of settlements	Right to life, livelihood, education, security	International Crisis Group (2024); OCHA (2024)
Yobe	Damaturu, Geidam, Gujba, Yunusari, Potiskum, Bursari	Village raids, bombings, attacks on schools and transport routes	Right to education, life and movement	UNICEF (2024); Amnesty International (2024)
Gombe	Gombe, Dukku, Nafada	Humanitarian spill-over, displacement,	Rights of IDPs, livelihood and humanitarian protection	IOM (2024); OCHA (2024)

State	Frequently Reported Locations	Dominant Forms of Attack	Predominant Rights Affected (Chapter IV, 1999 Constitution)	Representative Sources
		isolated security incidents		
Bauchi	Alkaleri, Toro, Bauchi	Transit activities, isolated attacks, displacement	Freedom of movement and livelihood	IOM (2024); UNHCR (2024)
Taraba	Bali, Takum, Sardauna	Spill-over insecurity and refugee movements	Community security and humanitarian protection	UNHCR (2024); International Crisis Group (2024)

Note. List was compiled by the researcher, based on the documentary evidence reported by Amnesty International (2024), Human Rights Watch (2024), Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, 2025), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2023), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2024), International Crisis Group (2024), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024), International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024).

Table 4.2 shows that terrorist acts occurred in all the six States of North-Eastern Nigeria, with the intensity and frequency of the attacks being significantly different from one location to the other. Borno State had the largest number of attacks in local government areas (LGAs) of Maiduguri, Bama, Gwoza, Damboa, Dikwa, Marte, Monguno, Ngala and other LGAs of the State, which continued to be the main epicentre of insurgent attacks. Attacks against civilian settlements, schools, transport corridors and security installations continued to be a concern in Adamawa and Yobe, and in Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba, attacks, population displacement and humanitarian spill-over effects were a concern. This geographical spread shows that the insurgency was centered in BAY states, but its humanitarian and development impacts did not stop at the BAY states' border but spread all over the North-East geopolitical zone [24, 25].

The pattern also supports the work of Onuoha (2014), Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019), Eme and Ibieta (2021) and Agbiboa (2022) who contend that Boko Haram and ISWAP adopted a regional operational strategy which could impact neighbouring states outside their primary area of operation. Likewise, OCHA (2024), IOM (2024), UNHCR (2024) and International Crisis Group (2024) assessments of humanitarian needs found that the impacts of the displacement and disruption of livelihoods and humanitarian needs went beyond the areas where direct attacks were taking place. The evidence also indicates that terrorism also triggered a humanitarian crisis across the region, that affected the immediate sites of violence, but also extended beyond [26].

Table 3. Predominant Types of Terrorist Attacks Recorded in North-Eastern Nigeria

Type of Attack	Typical Locations	Common Targets	Representative Sources
Suicide bombings	Maiduguri, Damaturu, Mubi	Markets, mosques, churches, bus parks	Bloom & Matfess (2016); Amnesty International (2024)
Armed assaults	Gwoza, Bama, Marte	Villages, military formations	International Crisis Group (2024)

Type of Attack	Typical Locations	Common Targets	Representative Sources
Kidnappings	Chibok, Dapchi, Gwoza, Madagali	School children, women, community leaders	Matfess (2017); UNICEF (2024)
Village raids	Kukawa, Damboa, Ngala	Rural communities	Human Rights Watch (2024)
IED attacks	Maiduguri–Damboa Road; Bama axis	Civilian and military vehicles	ACLED; Nigeria Security Tracker
School attacks	Chibok, Dapchi, Gujba	Students, teachers, educational facilities	UNICEF (2024); Save the Children (2024)
Attacks on humanitarian workers	Rann, Dikwa, Monguno	Humanitarian organisations	OCHA (2024); MSF (2023)

Note. This is a compilation of the researcher from documentary evidence reported by Bloom and Matfess (2016), Matfess (2017), Amnesty International (2024), Human Rights Watch (2024), International Crisis Group (2024), Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, 2025), Nigeria Security Tracker (2025), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2024), Save the Children (2024), and Médecins Sans Frontières (2023).

Table 4.3 shows that a variety of operational methods were used by terrorist organisations during the review period, such as armed attacks, kidnappings, village raids, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), attacks on schools and assaults on humanitarian personnel. This diversity underlines the sophistication and adaptability of Boko Haram and ISWAP and the role of civilians and public institutions and humanitarian actors as their key targets. Insurgents groups shifted from military and specific targets to attacking civilian infrastructure, with the aim of instilling fear and sowing doubt in public confidence of government institutions, and thereby disrupting governance [27].

The pattern of operations observed in the table is in line with the research conducted by Bloom and Matfess (2016), Matfess (2017), Maiangwa et al. (2017), Agbiboa (2022) and Yusuf and Nwangwu (2020) who all demonstrated that terrorist organisations deliberately targeted schools, humanitarian agencies and vulnerable groups as part of their broader ideological and psychological warfare strategies. There have also been several reports recently by UNICEF (2024), Save the Children (2024), OCHA (2024) and MSF (2023), that attacks on educational and humanitarian facilities have led to considerable disruption of access to education, healthcare and humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected communities [28, 29].

Table 4. Reported Fatalities Associated with Political Violence in North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

Year	Reported Fatalities	General Pattern
2015	9,207	Peak insurgent violence associated with territorial contestation and widespread attacks on civilian and military targets.
2016	3,143	Significant decline in fatalities following intensified military operations, although insurgent activities remained persistent.
2017	3,366	Continued armed confrontations characterised by increasing ISWAP activities and asymmetric attacks.

Year	Reported Fatalities	General Pattern
2018	2,986	Sustained insurgent attacks on civilian communities, military installations and humanitarian facilities.
2019	2,680	Moderate decline in fatalities despite continued attacks on security formations and rural settlements.
2020	3,793	Renewed escalation in conflict marked by increased attacks on farming communities, security personnel and civilians.
2021	3,538	High fatality burden following ISWAP's consolidation after the death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau.
2022	3,482	Persistent conflict characterised by continued insurgent operations and civilian casualties.
2023	3,469	Sustained violence resulting in continued civilian and security-force fatalities despite ongoing counterterrorism operations.
2024	2,530	Relative decline in reported fatalities, although insecurity remained prevalent across conflict-affected areas.
2025*	4,390	Increase in reported fatalities based on the available dataset, indicating continued terrorist activity in remote communities.

Note. Compiled by the researcher from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Nigeria dataset (2025). The figures of fatalities are for conflict-related deaths reported in North-Eastern Nigeria. The total number of fatalities for 2025 are not included here as it is based on a limited dataset and does not reflect the whole year.

Table 4.4 shows the drastic human toll of terrorism during the period of the study. While deaths from conflicts varied from year to year, thousands of deaths were noted annually, suggesting that there was continuing threat of terrorist acts directed at civilians despite active counterterrorism efforts. High mortality rates are indicative of the continued use of village raids, bombings, ambushes and attacks on civilian communities by insurgent groups throughout the region [30].

The result corroborates the previous studies carried out by Okoli and Iortyer (2014), Aghedo and Osumah (2019), Eme et al. (2020), Nte (2022) and Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019) which found civilian casualties to be one of the most devastating effects of the insurgency. Similarly, the numbers of civilians killed in conflict remained high, as evidenced by recent reports from ACLED (2025), Amnesty International (2024) and Human Rights Watch (2024). High rates of casualties, a result, thus continue to underscore the right to life and personal security of conflict-affected communities [31, 32].

Table 5. Documented Destruction of Public and Private Infrastructure Attributable to Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

Infrastructure Category	Representative Locations	Nature of Damage	Representative Documentary Sources
Residential communities	Baga, Gwoza, Bama, Dikwa and Damboa (Borno)	Burning and destruction of residential buildings, forced abandonment of settlements and	Amnesty International (2024); Human Rights Watch (2024)

Infrastructure Category	Representative Locations	Nature of Damage	Representative Documentary Sources
		widespread property loss	
Educational facilities	Chibok (Borno), Dapchi and Gujba (Yobe), Maiduguri axis (Borno)	Schools attacked, destroyed, occupied or permanently closed, disrupting access to education	UNICEF (2024); Save the Children (2024)
Healthcare facilities	Bama, Monguno and Dikwa (Borno)	Destruction of health centres, disruption of healthcare delivery and reduced access to essential medical services	World Health Organization (WHO, 2024); Médecins Sans Frontières (2023)
Markets and commercial centres	Maiduguri (Borno), Mubi (Adamawa) and Potiskum (Yobe)	Bomb attacks, destruction of shops and commercial facilities, disruption of trade and livelihoods	OCHA (2024); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2024)
Religious centres	Communities across Borno and Adamawa States	Destruction and vandalism of churches, mosques and other places of worship	Amnesty International (2024); Human Rights Watch (2024)
Transport infrastructure	Maiduguri–Damboa Road, Bama axis and major transport corridors	Road insecurity, destruction of bridges, obstruction of transportation and restricted humanitarian access	OCHA (2024); International Crisis Group (2024)
Government facilities	Police stations, local government secretariats and military outposts across conflict-affected communities	Damage or destruction during armed assaults, reducing state presence and public service delivery	ACLED (2025); Amnesty International (2024)

Note. A compilation of the researcher based on documentary evidence from Amnesty International (2024), Human Rights Watch (2024), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024), Save the Children (2024), World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), Médecins Sans Frontières (2023), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2024), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2024), the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, 2025). The focus of this definition was on the occurrence and geographical location of violent events, and infrastructure-specific impacts based on humanitarian and human rights reports [33].

Table 4.5 shows that residential communities, schools, health centres, markets, transport networks, government institutions and places of worship were extensively

damaged in the North-Eastern Nigeria due to the activities of the terrorists. In addition to the immediate physical harm, it caused the loss of vital infrastructure, thereby impacting essential public services, local economies and contributing to the humanitarian legacy. This impacted especially educational institutions and health facilities, restricting access to education and basic health services in many affected communities [34, 35].

The observed pattern supports the arguments of Awojobi (2014), Afolabi (2022), Nwankpa (2021) and Edeh (2021) that the destruction of infrastructure is one of the longest term developmental impacts of terrorism. Likewise, the reports from UNICEF (2024), WHO (2024), FAO (2024), OCHA (2024) and World Bank (2023) all show that social and economic infrastructure has been severely affected in the North-East and this impacts on education, healthcare delivery, food security and post conflict recovery [36].

Table 6. Internal Displacement and Humanitarian Consequences of Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

Indicator	Observed Pattern	Principal Areas Affected	Representative Documentary Sources
Internal displacement	Large-scale and protracted displacement of civilians throughout the conflict period	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States	International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024)
Returnees	Gradual return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) following relative improvements in security in selected Local Government Areas	Borno and Adamawa States	IOM (2024); UNDP (2023)
Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps	Expansion of formal and informal displacement camps to accommodate displaced populations	Maiduguri, Monguno, Dikwa and Bama (Borno State)	OCHA (2024); IOM (2024)
Humanitarian needs	Continued dependence on food assistance, shelter, healthcare, protection services and livelihood support	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States	OCHA (2024); UNDP (2023); World Food Programme (WFP, 2024)
Cross-border displacement	Refugee movements into neighbouring countries and population movements within the Lake Chad Basin	Border communities adjoining Cameroon, Chad and Niger	UNHCR (2024); IOM (2024)

Note. The researcher has compiled this based on documentary evidence reported by Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) (2024) of IOM, UNHCR (2024), OCHA (2024), UNDP (2023), and WFP (2024). All these sources report on the trends of marginalisation, return, humanitarian needs and movements of refugees generated by the terrorist activities in North-Eastern Nigeria.

As illustrated in Table 4.6, terrorism created a large amount of internal displacement along with one of the biggest humanitarian crises in sub-Saharan Africa. Many people had to flee their homes, and a large number of people had to rely on humanitarian assistance

for food, shelter, health care and protection needs. Secondary displacement caused humanitarian needs in Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi and Taraba were also observed, but at a lower level compared to Borno.

The results agree with those of Awojobi (2018), Nwagboso (2019) and Edeh (2021) all of whom reported that household resilience is negatively affected by prolonged displacement, which leads to poverty and lack of social cohesion. Recent assessments by IOM (2024), UNHCR (2024), OCHA (2024) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (2024) also indicate that DPs remain overcrowded, food insecure, education deprived and livelihoods constrained. It thus appears that forced displacement is one of the major humanitarian impacts of the terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria [37].

Table 7. Documented Human Rights Violations Associated with Terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria (2015–2025)

Fundamental Human Right	Nature of Violation	Representative Locations	Documentary Evidence	Representative Documentary Sources
Right to life	Killings, massacres and indiscriminate attacks	Baga, Gwoza, Bama and Konduga (Borno State)	Civilian deaths resulting from village raids, suicide bombings and armed assaults	Amnesty International (2024); Human Rights Watch (2024)
Right to personal liberty	Kidnappings, unlawful detention and abductions	Chibok (Borno), Dapchi (Yobe) and Gwoza (Borno)	Mass abductions of schoolchildren, women and community members	UNICEF (2024); Matfess (2017)
Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment	Physical abuse, torture and cruel treatment	Sambisa Forest and insurgent-controlled camps	Survivor testimonies documenting torture, forced labour and physical abuse	Human Rights Watch (2024); Amnesty International (2024)
Freedom from sexual and gender-based violence	Rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery and exploitation	Gwoza, Bama and Sambisa axis (Borno State)	Women and girls subjected to sexual violence and forced marriages while in captivity	UN Women (2023); Amnesty International (2024)
Rights of children	Recruitment and use of child soldiers	Borno and Yobe States	Forced recruitment, indoctrination and use of children in insurgent activities	UNICEF (2024); United Nations Secretary-General (2024)
Right to education	Destruction and closure of schools; attacks on educational institutions	Chibok (Borno), Dapchi and Gujba (Yobe)	Schools destroyed, occupied or closed, leading to prolonged	UNICEF (2024); Save the Children (2024)

Fundamental Human Right	Nature of Violation	Representative Locations	Documentary Evidence	Representative Documentary Sources
			disruption of education	
Right to health	Attacks on health facilities and disruption of healthcare services	Bama, Monguno and Dikwa (Borno State)	Health facilities damaged or abandoned, reducing access to essential healthcare	World Health Organization (WHO, 2024); Médecins Sans Frontières (2023)
Freedom of movement and residence	Forced displacement and restricted mobility	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States	Large-scale internal displacement and restrictions on civilian movement	International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024)
Right to property and adequate housing	Destruction of homes, farms and private property	Baga, Gwoza and Damboa (Borno State)	Residential communities, farmlands and other private properties destroyed during attacks	OCHA (2024); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2024)

Note. The information was gathered by the researcher from various documentary sources reported by the Amnesty International (2024), Human Rights Watch (2024), UNICEF (2024), Matfess (2017), UN Women (2023), United Nations Secretary-General (2024), World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), MSF (2023), IOM (2024), UNHCR (2024), OCHA (2024), and FAO (2024).

Table 4.7 shows that the right to life, the right to personal liberty, education, healthcare, freedom of movement, property and protection from torture and sexual violence were all violated in large numbers across all the different types of internationally-recognised human rights. It also shows that women, children and IDPs were particularly vulnerable due to the abductions, forced recruitment, gender-based violence, and destruction of homes and disruption of access to essential public services [38].

The results support earlier studies by Agbiboa (2017), Nwangwu and Ezeibe (2019), Akinyetun (2020), Afolabi (2022) and Eme and Ibietan (2021) which all agree that terrorism is no longer a conventional security threat but a multifaceted human rights challenge. In 2024, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO and OCHA also report in their respective documents on continued violations against civilians during the period of this report. The evidence gathered collectively, shows that the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights was systematically affected in North-Eastern Nigeria as a result of the activities of terror groups [39].

The findings in Tables 4.1–4.7 altogether show that the protection and enjoyment of fundamental human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria was seriously impacted by the terrorist attacks in the region from 2015 to 2025. The increasing frequency of attacks, geographical distribution of terrorism across the six North-Eastern states, various methods of attacks, continued loss of life, destruction of critical facilities, mass displacement of people and reported human rights abuses, all indicate that the insurgency shifted from a security threat to a multi-faceted humanitarian crisis [40]. The results reveal

that Borno State continued to be the epicentre of the insurgency but other impacts of the crisis were felt in Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi and Taraba as a result of direct attacks, displacement spill over, affected livelihoods and mounting pressure on public services. What the evidence shows is that there was a relationship between the territorial loss experienced by Boko Haram and ISWAP, and the proportionate loss of civilian security, which means that insurgent groups were getting more and more decentralised and asymmetric, using improvised explosive devices, kidnapping, ambushes and attacks on humanitarian personnel. The observation is a reflection of the fact that while measuring the success of counterterrorism is one thing, measuring its magnitude and the deterioration of human security and civilian welfare is another, which is an ongoing process [41].

The results show that in addition to immediate effects on the victims, terrorism created interlinked and reinforcing violations of civil, political, economic and social rights. The loss of schools was a challenge to the right to education, reduced children's human capital and exposed them to exploitation and forced recruitment. Similarly, the damage done to health care facilities made it very difficult for vulnerable groups to get access to essential health services, while the damage of farms, markets and transport infrastructure exacerbated poverty, food insecurity and unemployment among these vulnerable groups. These conditions were exacerbated by mass displacement which impacted on family structures, raising women's and children's vulnerability to gender-based violence and exploitation, and creating the increased need for humanitarian assistance [42].

The overlapping consequences of the effects of terrorism show that the impacts of terrorism can only be understood within the context of its cumulative effect on governance, the capacity of institutions to function, socio-economic resilience and the overall quality of life of populations affected by the act of terrorism. The consistency of the documentary evidence with the empirical studies conducted so far [43] validates the findings that the level of terrorism has continued to erode the institutional basis for effective protection of the fundamental human rights of North-Eastern Nigeria. It is, therefore, not only with regard to regularly violent acts of terrorism that the reality of North-Eastern Nigeria has systematically undermined the protection and enjoyment of fundamental human rights; the political, economic and social systems on which the realization of the rights in the end depends have also been disturbed.

4. Discussion

4.1 Structural and Institutional Drivers of Terrorism and Human Rights Violations in North-Eastern Nigeria

However, the continuing nature of the Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) operation is not entirely to blame as trouble in North-Eastern Nigeria persists between 2015 and 2025. Instead, the phenomenon has been maintained through a complex interplay of socio-economic deprivation, governance shortcomings, limited state reach, ideological radicalization, porous borders, human rights vulnerabilities and inadequacies in the existing counterterrorism framework. The multidimensional nature of the crisis in the region has increasingly been argued in the existing scholarship, in which terrorism is no longer a security issue, but rather a governance crisis that is predicated on the drivers behind violent extremism, which remain intact [44]. Structural conditions that allow the growth of human rights abuses and terrorism have not been effectively addressed, even in the wake of many military operations.

Chronic poverty and socio-economic marginalisation is one of the most common identified factors. Various studies have shown that the state of North-Eastern Nigeria is among the most economically deprived in the country; with high rates of unemployment, low levels of education, low level of infrastructure and social exclusion [45]. These are fertile grounds for terrorist recruitment especially among youth who have no job and feel there is limited prospects for their social and economic advancement [46]. It also shows from empirical studies that poverty leads to lower levels of community resilience and higher vulnerability to the narratives of extremists offering identities, purpose, economic

gains, or social status [47]. This is why poverty remains not just a backdrop, but a major enabler to terrorist mobilization and continued insecurity.

This is related to youth unemployment and poor quality of education and training. It is well documented that the marginalisation of youth in economic and educational activities is one of the key factors contributing to youth radicalisation in communities in conflict [48]. The out-of-school population, particularly, is also at risk of insurgent groups recruiting and exploiting them to their cause as a result of the closure of schools [49]. A number of studies have suggested that the educational problems caused by the insurgency have produced a vicious cycle where education is being used to help future radicalization and in turn, it is a lack of education that helps to support the insurgency [50].

Lack of good governance and the weak state presence have also played a major role in the perpetuation of human rights abuses and terrorism. State institutions have been found unable in various rural communities in the North-East to deliver effective public services, security and development services time and again [51]. Historically, the citizens in several local government areas have faced weak government, poor infrastructure and poor access to healthcare, education, and justice systems [52]. The lack of good governance provides opportunities for terrorist organisations to build influence, take advantage of local grievances and offer themselves as alternate governance [53]. Research thus indicates that the ongoing insurgency is closely connected to the broader issue of state legitimacy and the effectiveness of state institutions.

Continuing propagation of extremism and religious radicalization is another key propellant. The study of Boko Haram's evolution has also shown that the group's ability to survive does not lie just in the military, but extends to a series of ideological narratives based on anti-state and religious extremist sentiments and opposition to western-style governance and education [54]. Despite the erosion of territorial control, these radical ideologies are still spread through informal networks, local sympathizers, online platforms and secret recruitment efforts, among others [55]. Insurgency can be defeated only if the military force has succeeded in reducing the ideological support and organizational continuity of the insurgency, which should otherwise be available for mobilization, recruitment and retention [56].

The porousness of Nigeria's borders has also helped to sustain terrorist activities. North-Eastern Nigeria has large contiguous borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon, which provide ample opportunity for the crossing of the borders by armed men, weapons and supplies [57]. Border security issues have repeatedly been identified as a key impediment to combating terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin, by studies on regional security [58]. Insurgents' capability to take advantage of rugged terrain, remote border regions and lax surveillance has allowed terrorist groups to be resilient in the face of military pressure and continue to do their work across national borders.

The consequences of prolonged displacement have also been a self-re-enforcing dynamic in sustaining insecurity, with humanitarian crises arising from displacement. Millions of IDPs remain in poverty, employments, lack of adequate shelter, food insecurity and limited access to social services are the continuing challenges for IDPs [59]. Studies have shown that long-term displacement can exacerbate grievances within a population, leading to heightened feelings of frustration, and potentially provide an opportunity for recruitment by extremist groups [60]. Postings from interviews of internally displaced persons (IDPs) often cite feelings of abandonment, economic difficulties and uncertainty about future prospects, which are linked to increased vulnerability to radicalization [61].

Inadequacies in counterterrorism operations have also been blamed for the ongoing nature of human rights abuses. Security agencies have been key in fighting insurgents, but there have been reports of violations of due process and other human rights abuses such as excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention [62]. This can erode the confidence of the public in the integrity of the administration, and breed grievances among the affected community. The counterterrorism policies widely believed

to be unfair or discriminatory can over time actually exacerbate the grievances that extremist groups use to recruit and for propaganda purposes [63].

The use of corruption and low levels of accountability also hinder efforts to effectively counter terrorism. Research has consistently, repeatedly, pointed to the issues of corruption in security procurements, humanitarian assistance programmes and within public administration as factors that impair the effectiveness of counterinsurgency operations [64]. There have been reports of mismanagement of resources that are supposed to be used for security and humanitarian needs, which have sometimes hampered the operational efficiency and undermined public confidence in government interventions [65]. Thus, there remain challenges to the implementation of comprehensive responses to address terrorism and human rights consequences that remain constrained by institutional weaknesses.

Overall, the evidence shows that the socio-economic deprivation, education exclusion, governance gaps, ideological radicalisation, porous borders, humanitarian vulnerabilities, gaps in the implementation of counterterrorism (counter-Ceasefire), and corruption-related issues have all contributed to the persistence of terrorism and associated human rights violations in North-Eastern Nigeria from 2015 to 2025. Several studies, international organizations, media investigations and policy analyses have shown these factors to be interlinked yet reinforcing, thus fostering conditions that are conducive to insurgent activity and large-scale human rights violations [66]. The fact that the situation of violence and human rights abuses remains so tense in the region suggests both that the terrorist groups survive there and that there are structural conditions that allow them to continue to thrive and reproduce violence.

4.2 Institutional and Governmental Responses to Terrorism and Human Rights Protection in North-Eastern Nigeria

From 2015 to 2025, the Nigerian government's and its institutional counterparts' response to the situation of terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria has featured military operations, humanitarian assistance, legal reforms, cooperation among regional security actors, and post-conflict stabilization initiatives. Though these have helped to weaken the operational capacity of the terrorist groups and reclaim territories once dominated by the insurgents, studies and human rights assessments have shown that these responses have not been uniformly effective in protecting human rights due to structural, operational and governance issues [67]. Therefore, the connection between counterterrorism and human rights protection has been a complicated and controversial issue during the time frame covered by this report.

The most apparent part of the government's response has been to step up the military campaign against Boko Haram and ISWAP. In 2015, when the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari came into power, significant resources were allocated to boosting counterinsurgency efforts under Operation Lafiya Dole, with the military engaging in additional campaigns to retake areas where the insurgents had taken control [68]. These operations were shown to have greatly curbed Boko Haram's territorial expansion and had an impact on the stability of several insurgent strongholds in Borno State [69]. The Nigerian military's ongoing efforts of neutralising insurgent commanders, destruction of camps and rescuing kidnapped civilians were consistently reported [70]. Scholarly evaluations mostly recognize that these accomplishments helped to enhance security environment in some urban centres and key transportation corridors to allow for some level of return to civilian control and public services [71].

However, many studies have claimed military interventions did not suffice to ensure lasting protection for human rights. Insurgent attacks have been reported consistently in rural areas, including ambushes, IEDs and raids by mobile groups of terrorists [72]. Agbibo (2022) and Onuoha (2023) argue that the adaptability of the terrorist groups allowed them to change their strategies from territorial occupation to asymmetric fighting, despite military victories, thus creating an environment of insecurity. Consequently, in many communities civilians continued to be subject to violence, displacement and economic disruption despite official statements of success in the counterinsurgency campaign.

Another important institutional response has been humanitarian interventions. The Nigerian government, along with various international agencies like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), launched initiatives to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons, women, children, and other vulnerable groups impacted by the conflict (UNHCR, 2024; IOM, 2024; UNICEF, 2024). Academic research has recognized the positive role humanitarian assistance played in reducing the impact of displacement, particularly in terms of providing food, shelter, health care and education services [73]. However, humanitarian response also shows significant gaps, especially in inaccessible rural areas, where insecurity persisted to affect humanitarian access for humanitarian actors [74]. As a result, the majority of those impacted continued to rely on limited assistance and were left in a state of chronic vulnerability.

After multiple attacks on schools, the protection of educational rights became a significant aspect of governmental strategies to respond. Initiatives like the Safe Schools Initiative aimed to increase school security, repair school education facilities and promote the return of IDPs to formal school education [75]. Research shows some positive effects of these interventions such as raising awareness on the school security measures and some restoration of education in some communities [76]. Despite this, large swathes of the region remained affected by on-going insecurity and insufficient infrastructure and the persistent fears among parents and teachers continued to impact educational recovery [77].

In addition to the military and humanitarian works, the government also implemented rehabilitation and deradicalization programs to help former insurgents reintegrate into society. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2023) and the International Organization for Migration (2024), have identified some programmes that have been implemented to make it easier for combatants to defect and to lower the risk of recidivism, including Operation Safe Corridor. Some scholars deem these programmes as ground-breaking methods of long-term peacebuilding and conflict resolution [78], while others contend that the failure to adequately consult with the communities and concerns over justice for the community members have raised doubts among the public regarding the effectiveness of these programmes [79]. There have been many calls from victims' groups and affected communities to ask about the effectiveness of reintegration in tackling accountability and reconciliation.

Regional and international cooperation has also been a key element in institutional responses to terrorism. The Multinational Joint Task Force between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin, facilitated intelligence sharing and enhanced joint military operations against the insurgent groups that cross borders [80]. The literature suggests that regional cooperation helped to reduce the ability of cross-border insurgents to move and enhanced counterterrorism operations [81]. However, analysts have reiterated that logistical problems, lack of resources and national security priorities are still hindering security cooperation in the region.

One topic which frequently shows up in the literature is the accusations of human rights violation in connection with counter-terrorism operations. A number of studies and human rights investigations record instances of arbitrary detention, excessive use of force, unlawful killings and poor detention conditions which have been blamed on some security personnel [82]. While counterterrorism operations were supposed to safeguard civilians, the reports indicated that some aspects of counterterrorism operations at times challenged the human rights that were supposed to be protected. There are competing arguments about balancing security concerns with respect to international human rights standards, particularly in democratic societies, in order to achieve sustainable counterterrorism strategies [83].

In aggregate, there is evidence that institutional and governmental responses during 2015–2025 made a difference in the areas of reducing terrorist organisation influence, reclaiming occupied territories, increasing humanitarian support, and assisting post-conflict stabilisation. But peer-reviewed evidence, policy reviews and international

reports have continually shown that there has been a restraint in these gains due to ongoing insecurity, humanitarian problems, governance inadequacies and at times human rights violations linked to counter-terrorism operations [84]. The results therefore show that despite the role played by governmental and institutional actions in contributing to the mitigation of terrorism effects in North-Eastern Nigeria, their ability to guarantee comprehensive and sustainable protection of human rights is still a work in progress and can be strengthened through greater accountability measures, enhanced civilian protection mechanisms and increased investment in long-term socio-economic recovery [85].

5. Conclusion

The study focused on the effect of terrorism on the safeguarding and enjoyment of fundamental human rights in North-Eastern Nigeria as well as the factors that fueling the continued insurgent attacks in the region. The analysis shows that terrorism remains as a serious issue affecting people's security as it continues to infringe upon their rights to life, liberty, dignity, education, movement and livelihood. Socio-economic deprivation, governance shortcomings, insecurity, displacement and institutional weaknesses have, despite the military activities and counter terrorism interventions, continued to foster conditions for the sustainability of the terrorist group. It, therefore, suggests that efforts to counter-terrorism in North-Eastern Nigeria must not limit themselves to military actions, but must include all-round actions that would enhance human security, human rights protection, and the structural factors that nurtures violent extremism.

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