

PSJ-UK/iNSDEC DECEMBER MONTHLY INSECURITY REPORT

**“Localized Escalation amid National Decline: Regional Disparities, Lethal Hotspots,
and Entrenched Kidnapping in Nigeria”**

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Executive Summary:

The December 2025 Monthly Insecurity Report highlights a volatile and fragmented security landscape across Nigeria, characterized by sharp regional disparities and the concentration of extreme violence in localized hotspots, despite a national decline in overall attack frequency. While total atrocities fell by over 70% from November driven by a significant drop in abductions, lethal violence remained entrenched, with 134 fatalities recorded nationwide. The North Central zone emerged as the epicenter of insecurity, accounting for 47% of deaths and 56% of abductions, with Niger State alone reporting 40 fatalities, a 1,900% increase over the quarter.

Key flashpoints included Taraba State in the North East, where fatalities surged by 500% to 18 deaths, and Anambra State in the South East, which saw a 333% rise in lethal violence. Abductions remained highly concentrated, with Kogi (46) and Kwara (28) representing over half of national kidnappings. The threat landscape was dominated by Bandits and unidentified Gunmen, underscoring a shift toward criminal and militia-style violence over formal insurgency.

The economic, social, and humanitarian impacts are severe, disrupting agriculture, displacing communities, and straining social cohesion. This report underscores the urgent need for hyper-localized security strategies, differentiated responses to kidnapping and lethal violence hubs, and integrated humanitarian-economic interventions to prevent further escalation and stabilize at-risk regions.

Introduction:

The December 2025 Monthly Insecurity Report presents a comprehensive analysis of conflict-related incidents recorded across Nigeria during the reporting period, as collated by PSJ-UK/iNSDEC. Drawing from verified field reports and the compiled incident dataset, the report highlights persistent insecurity driven by armed banditry, insurgency, communal clashes, and criminal violence across multiple states and geopolitical zones. The data reflect continued threats to civilian safety, livelihoods, and national stability, with notable variations in the scale and intensity of attacks across regions. This report provides an evidence-based overview of fatalities, injuries, and abductions, serving as a critical tool for policy formulation, humanitarian response, and security sector engagement.

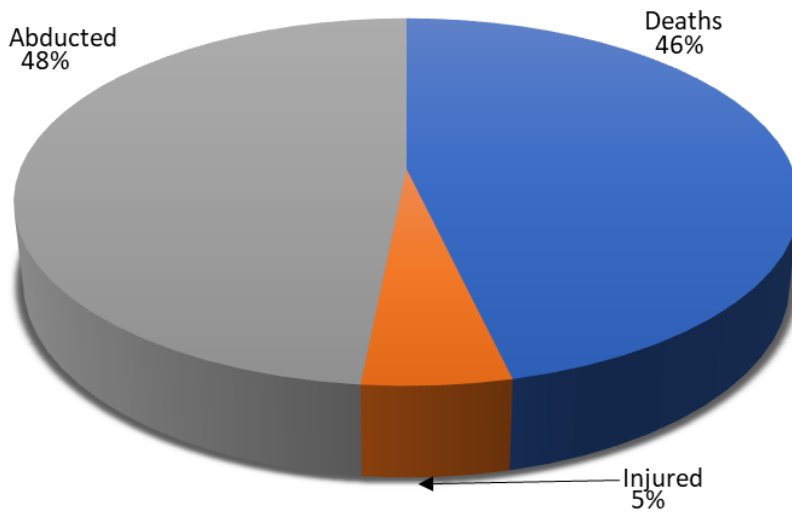


Figure 1: Total Atrocities for December, 2025 (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

In December 2025, a total of 134 deaths, 15 injuries, and 140 abductions were recorded nationwide, underscoring the severity and evolving nature of insecurity across the country. The high number of fatalities reflects the continued use of lethal force by non-state armed actors, particularly in conflict-prone and banditry-affected areas, while the reported injuries

further indicate the indiscriminate nature of attacks on civilian populations. Notably, the 140 abductions recorded during the month highlight the sustained reliance on kidnapping as a tactic for intimidation, ransom extraction, and territorial control, with several incidents occurring along major transit routes and rural communities. Analysis of the incident distribution in the attached dataset shows that these atrocities were not isolated but spread across multiple states and geopolitical zones, reinforcing concerns about the widening geographic scope of insecurity. Collectively, these figures demonstrate a troubling escalation in human impact and emphasize the urgent need for coordinated security interventions, community protection measures, and accountability mechanisms.

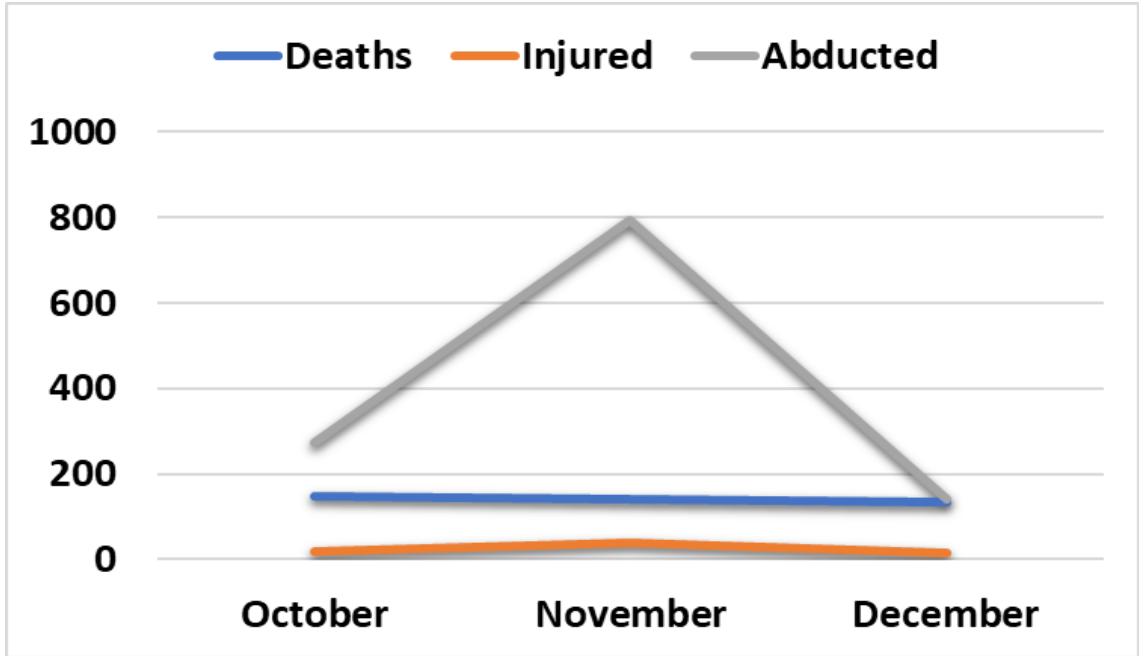


Figure 2: Comparison between Total Atrocities Committed between October-December 2025 (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

In reviewing the atrocities recorded from October to December, a clear peak in overall incidents occurred in November, with a total of 973 recorded cases largely driven by an extreme surge in abductions (793). This was followed by a substantial improvement in

December, where total atrocities fell sharply to 289, representing a decrease of over 70% from the previous month. This decline was primarily due to a significant drop in abductions, which fell from 793 in November to 140 in December.

However, the persistent level of fatalities remaining above 130 deaths each month indicates that lethal violence remains an entrenched and serious concern. For the December PSJ-UK/iNSDEC Monthly Insecurity Report, this trend should be highlighted as a sign of reduced but still critical insecurity, warranting continued focus on regions with high fatality rates and preparedness for potential volatility in abduction trends.

States with Highest Death Record:

An analysis of state-level fatality data for December 2025 indicates that insecurity-related deaths were most pronounced in Niger State, which recorded the highest number of fatalities at 40 deaths, underscoring its continued exposure to violent attacks linked to banditry and armed criminal activity. This was followed by Taraba State, with 18 deaths, reflecting persistent instability associated with communal tensions and armed confrontations. Anambra State recorded 13 deaths, highlighting the sustained impact of violent incidents and criminal attacks within the South-East during the reporting period. Similarly, Plateau State, with 12 deaths, continued to experience fatalities largely associated with recurring communal clashes and reprisal attacks. Sokoto State recorded 9 deaths, reinforcing concerns over ongoing security challenges linked to cross-border banditry and rural attacks in the North-West. Collectively, these states accounted for a significant proportion of total fatalities recorded nationwide in December 2025, as reflected in the compiled dataset, demonstrating that insecurity remains geographically dispersed but disproportionately concentrated in states facing entrenched conflict dynamics. This pattern emphasizes the need for targeted, state-specific security interventions and sustained conflict mitigation strategies.

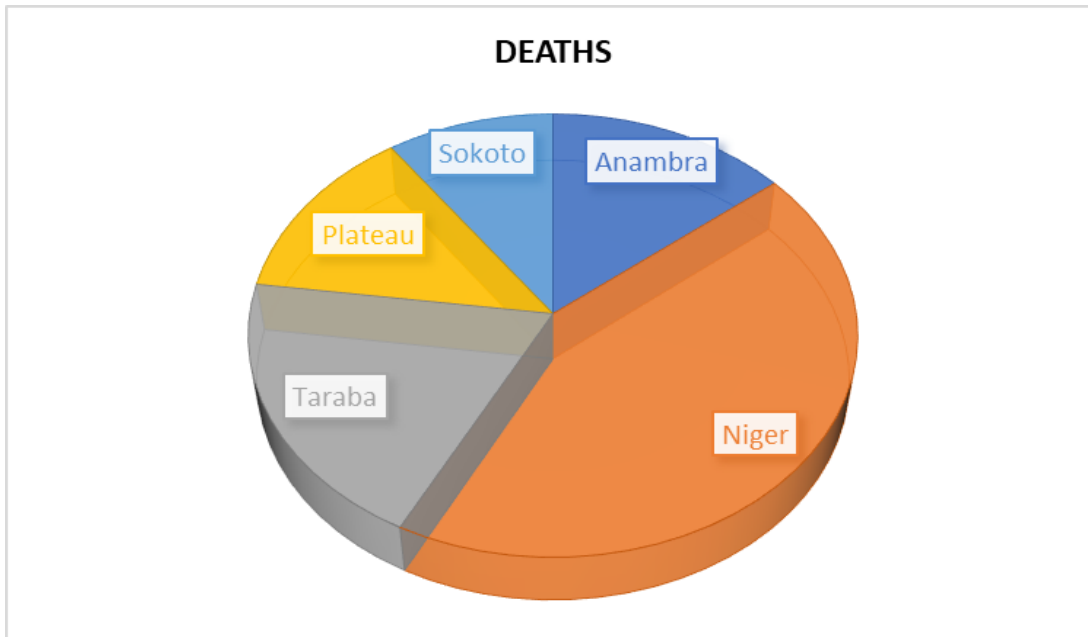


Figure 3: States with the Highest Deaths Cases in December, 2025 (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

States with Highest Abductions:

In December 2025, abduction incidents were heavily concentrated in a few key states, with Kogi (46) and Kwara (28) in the North Central zone accounting for the majority of cases. They were followed by Edo (18) in the South South, and Zamfara (14) and Kano (11) in the North West. Together, these five states represented approximately 84% of all national abductions for the month, highlighting persistent and localized kidnapping risks despite a sharp overall decline from November.

This concentration underscores that although the national trend improved significantly, specific regions—particularly the North Central and North West zones—remain critical hotspots for abduction activity. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this calls for continued targeted security measures and community engagement in these high-risk states to prevent a resurgence of kidnapping incidents.

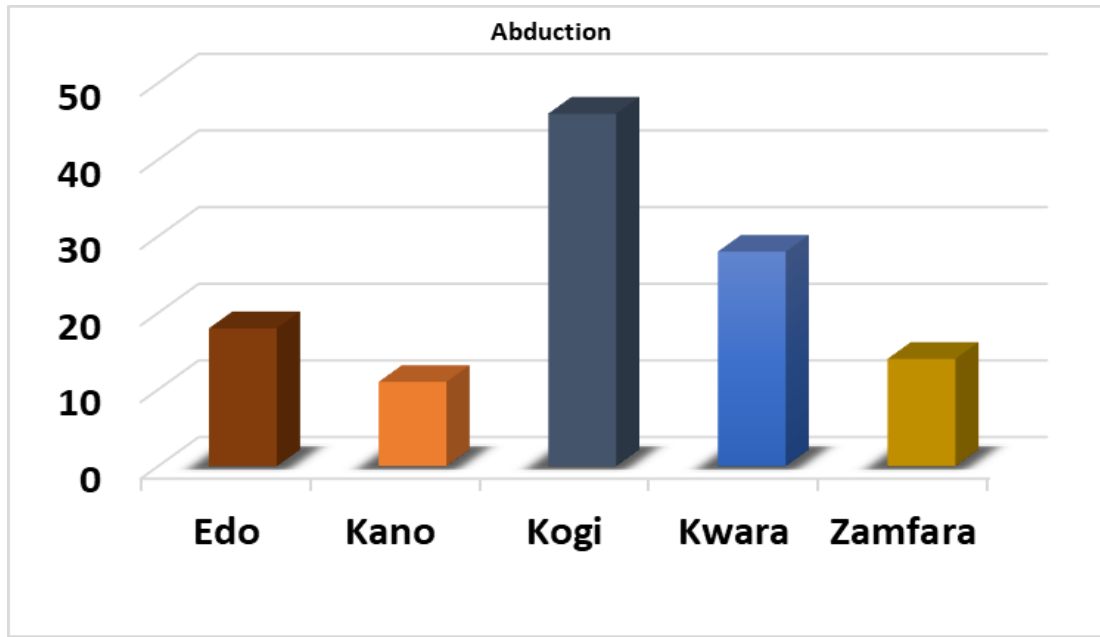


Figure 4: States with the Highest Cases of Abductions in December, 2025 (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

Frequency of Attacks in November:

An analysis of monthly attack frequency in 2025 indicates that December recorded 39 incidents, representing one of the lowest monthly totals in the year. When compared to preceding months, December reflects a continued downward trend in attack frequency, declining from 46 incidents in November and significantly lower than the peak recorded in May (140 incidents) and the sustained high levels observed between June and October. This reduction suggests a relative de-escalation in the number of reported attacks during December, which may be attributable to intensified security deployments, seasonal movement patterns, or temporary disruption of armed group operations. However, despite the lower frequency, the persistence of attacks in December confirms that insecurity remained entrenched across affected regions, with ongoing risks to civilian populations. The December figures therefore indicate not an end to violent activity, but rather a reduction in incident occurrence, underscoring the need for sustained vigilance and preventive security measures to consolidate and build upon this decline.

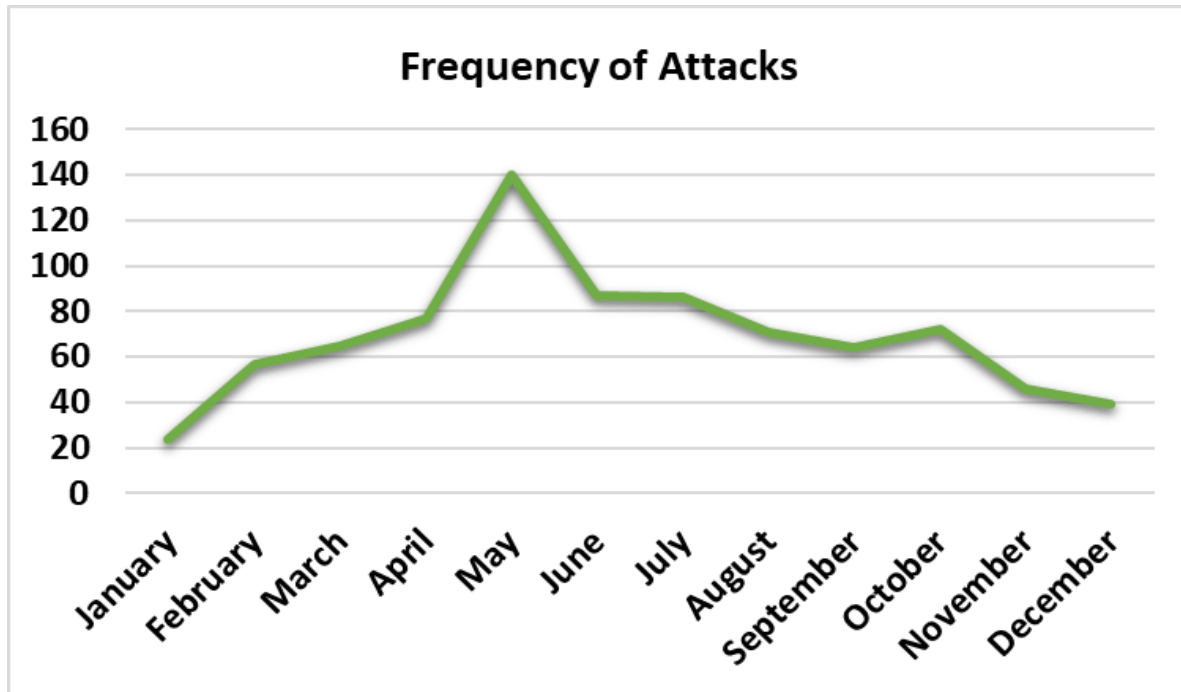
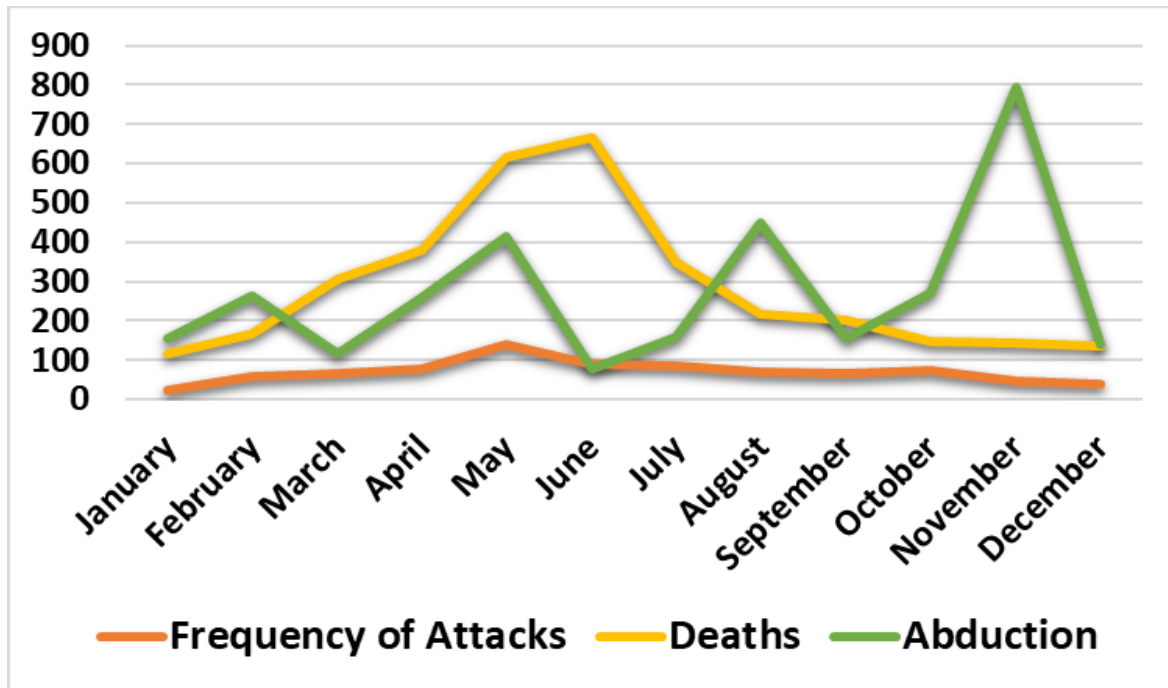


Figure 5: Frequency of Attacks across Months (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

Over the eleven-month period from January to December 2025, the relationship between the frequency of attacks, fatalities, and abductions reveals a complex and shifting security landscape. While the number of attacks generally trended downward after mid-year, the severity and nature of incidents did not follow a consistent pattern. Notably, months with lower attack counts sometimes resulted in higher casualties or a surge in abductions, as seen in November, which recorded the lowest attack frequency (46) but the highest abduction total (793). This indicates that non-state armed groups have adapted their tactics, increasingly prioritizing kidnapping operations even during periods of reduced overall activity.

December 2025 continued this trend of reduced attack frequency (39 attacks) and showed a corresponding decline in both fatalities (134) and abductions (140) compared to earlier peaks. This end-of-year de-escalation suggests a possible tactical recalibration or the effect of intensified security measures. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this highlights that

while quantitative improvements are evident, the threat profile remains volatile. Emphasis should be placed on the persistent risk of sudden tactical shifts—particularly toward mass abductions—and the need for sustained, intelligence-driven responses in high-risk states, even amidst broader declining trends.



Interplay between Frequency of Attacks, Deaths and Abductions across Months

(Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

Geopolitical Analysis:

The December 2025 regional analysis reveals a stark concentration of violence in Nigeria's northern zones, with the North Central region emerging as the most severely affected. This zone accounted for 63 deaths (47% of the national total) and 78 abductions (56% of the national total), alongside the highest number of injuries. The North West and North East zones followed, contributing to a combined northern total of 87% of all deaths and 81% of all

abductions for the month. This pattern confirms that the core of the country's lethal and kidnapping-related violence remains entrenched in the northern geopolitical regions.

In contrast, the southern zones recorded significantly fewer fatalities, with the South South and South West each reporting only one death. However, the South South zone represented a notable exception in terms of abductions, reporting 24 cases the second-highest of any zone largely due to incidents in Edo State. This indicates that while southern regions experienced less lethal violence, kidnapping for ransom persists as a serious criminal threat. The minimal number of injuries recorded nationwide suggests that incidents were predominantly fatal or abduction-focused. For the December report, this underscores the need for region-specific security strategies: continued counter-insurgency and banditry operations in the north, and enhanced policing against criminal kidnapping networks in the south.

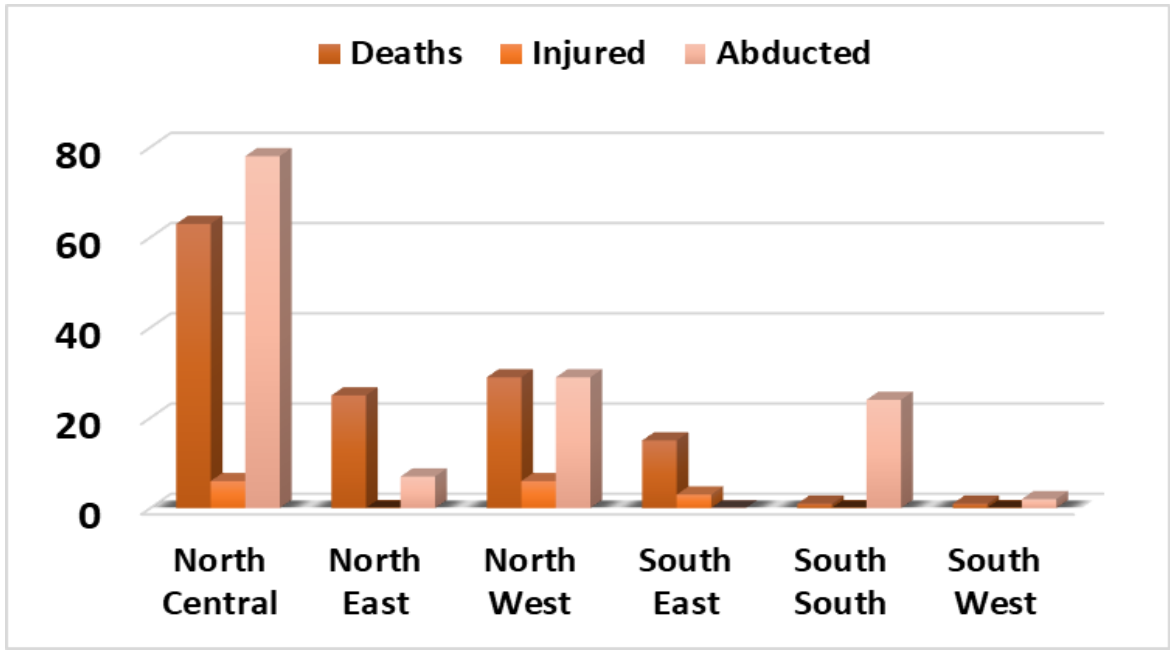


Figure 7: Regional Record of Atrocities in December, 2025 (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

Fatalities in North West:

The North West zone remained a significant hotspot for violence in December 2025, recording 29 fatalities and 29 abductions. Lethal violence was concentrated in the northwestern corridor, with Sokoto (9 deaths), Kebbi (8), and Zamfara (5) accounting for over 75% of the zone's fatalities. Meanwhile, abduction activity was focused in Zamfara (14) and Kano (11), which together represented 86% of the zone's kidnappings. This uneven distribution indicates that armed groups in the region employed varied tactics, with some states experiencing higher lethality and others serving as primary kidnapping hubs.

Despite a national decline in attack frequency, the North West zone's sustained levels of fatalities and abductions underscore the persistent and adaptable nature of the threat. The limited number of injuries recorded only six across the zone further suggests that incidents were often intended to be fatal or focused on abduction rather than wounding. For the December PSJ-UK/iNSDEC report, this highlights the need for tailored, state-specific interventions: enhanced combat operations in high-fatality states like Sokoto and Kebbi, and targeted anti-kidnapping measures in Zamfara and Kano, supported by improved cross-border coordination to disrupt armed group mobility.

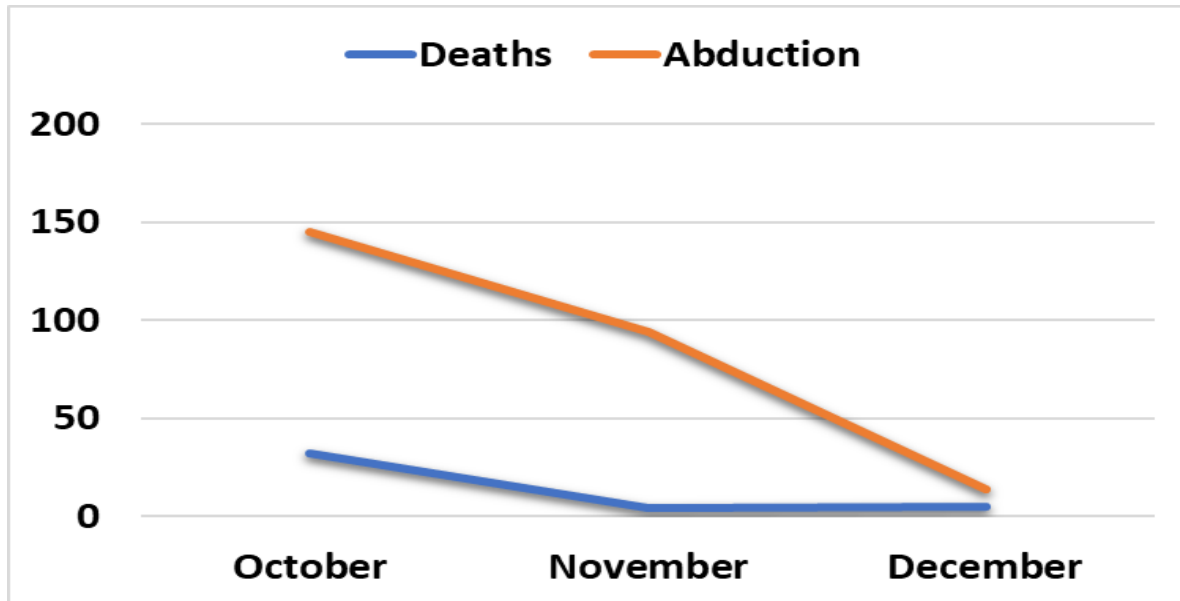


Figure 8: 3-Months Atrocity Trend in Zamfara

Zamfara State demonstrated a significant downward trend in both fatalities and abductions across the final quarter of 2025. Fatalities fell sharply from 32 in October to 4 in November, before a slight increase to 5 in December, a reduction of over 84% from the October peak. Abductions also declined consistently, dropping from 145 in October to 94 in November, and further to only 14 in December, representing a decrease of more than 90% over the three-month period. This notable improvement suggests either enhanced security effectiveness, tactical shifts by armed groups, or a combination of both.

Despite this positive trajectory, Zamfara remained one of the highest-risk states for kidnappings nationally in December, underscoring that the threat, though reduced, has not been eliminated. The drastic reduction in abductions from triple-digit figures earlier in the quarter is particularly encouraging but requires sustained vigilance. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, Zamfara should be highlighted as a case of measurable improvement, while emphasizing the need for continued security operations and community-based prevention to consolidate these gains and prevent a potential resurgence.

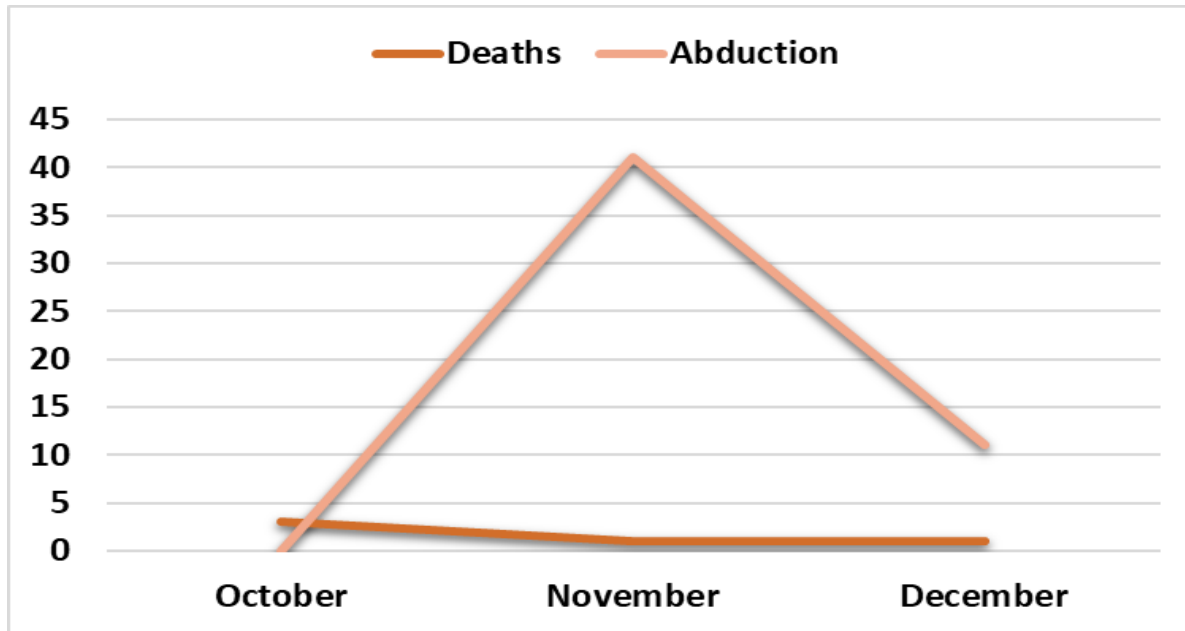


Figure 9: 3-Months Atrocity Trend in Kano

Kano State exhibited a distinct shift in the nature of violence across October to December 2025, characterized by consistently low fatalities but a dramatic fluctuation in abductions. Fatalities remained minimal, with three deaths in October and only one each in November and December. However, abduction incidents surged sharply from zero in October to 41 in November, before declining to 11 in December. This pattern indicates a significant tactical pivot by armed groups toward kidnapping operations in November, followed by a partial reduction while maintaining a continued, elevated risk.

The November abduction spike placed Kano among the highest-risk states in the country for kidnappings during that month, underscoring its vulnerability to sudden escalations in non-lethal but high-impact violence. Although December saw a 73% decrease from November's peak, the persistence of double-digit abductions confirms that Kano remains an active kidnapping hotspot. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this trend highlights the need for proactive, intelligence-driven security measures in urban and peri-urban areas of Kano to

prevent a resurgence of mass abductions and to address the ongoing threat, even amidst stable fatality levels.

North Central

The North Central zone was the most severely impacted region in Nigeria during December 2025, accounting for 63 fatalities (47% of the national total) and 78 abductions (56% of the national total). Violence within the zone was highly concentrated yet varied in nature: Niger State alone recorded 40 deaths, representing the deadliest single state in the country, while Kogi and Kwara emerged as kidnapping epicenters with 46 and 28 abductions respectively. Plateau State also experienced significant violence with 12 fatalities and 5 injuries, whereas Benue and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) remained relatively calm with minimal incidents.

This disparity highlights distinct tactical patterns—Niger suffered intense lethal attacks with no kidnappings, while Kogi and Kwara faced mass abductions with lower fatalities. The zone's overall high casualty and abduction rates underscore its continued vulnerability and the need for differentiated security responses. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, emphasis should be placed on targeting Niger for lethal violence reduction and Kogi-Kwara for anti-kidnapping operations, while maintaining vigilance across the zone to prevent spillover and further escalation.

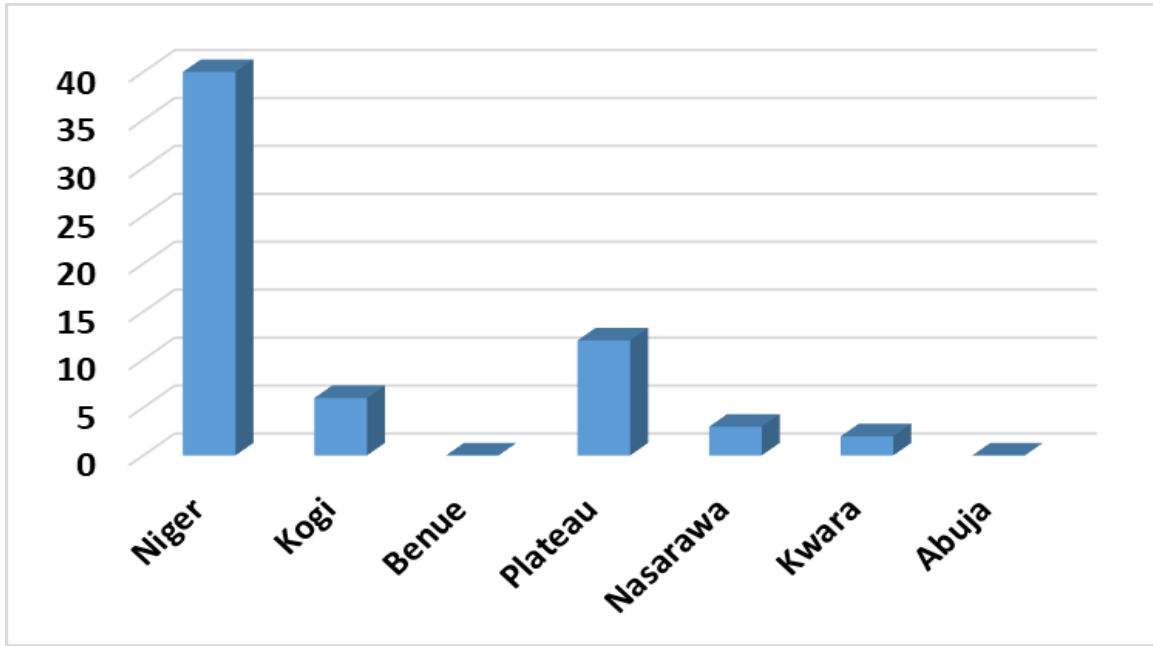


Figure 10: Deaths across North Central States

The North Central zone was the deadliest region in Nigeria during December 2025, recording a total of 63 fatalities, which accounted for 47% of the national death toll. Violence was highly concentrated, with Niger State alone responsible for 40 deaths representing over 63% of the zone's fatalities and making it the most lethal state in the country. Other states with significant casualties included Plateau (12 deaths), Kogi (6), Nasarawa (3), and Kwara (2). In contrast, Benue State and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) reported zero fatalities, indicating pockets of relative stability within the otherwise volatile zone.

This stark disparity highlights the intensely localized nature of lethal violence in the region, where a single state can disproportionately influence both zonal and national security metrics. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this necessitates emphasizing Niger State as a critical flashpoint requiring immediate and enhanced security intervention, while also maintaining vigilance across Plateau, Kogi, Nasarawa, and Kwara to prevent further

escalation. The overall severity in the North Central zone underscores its continued role as the epicenter of fatal insecurity in Nigeria.

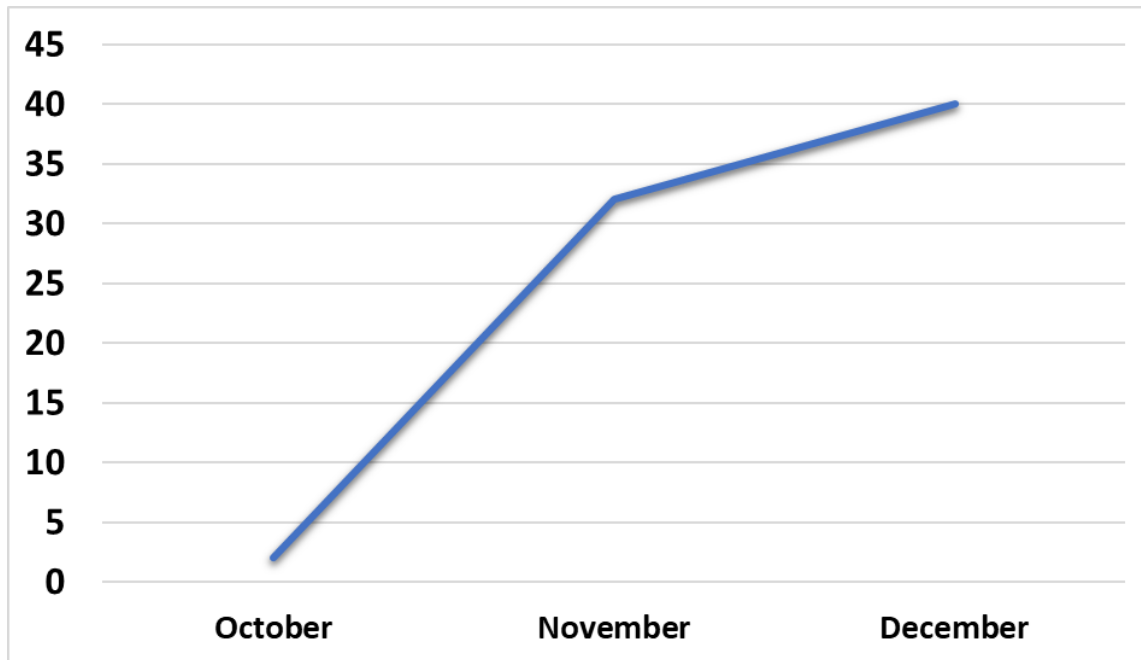


Figure 11: Death Trends in Niger between October-November, 2025

Niger State experienced a dramatic and alarming escalation in lethal violence over the final three months of 2025. Fatalities surged from just 2 deaths in October to 32 in November a staggering 1,500% increase and rose further to 40 in December, representing a cumulative increase of 1,900% over the period. This trend culminated in December with Niger recording the highest single-month death toll of any state in Nigeria, accounting for approximately 30% of all national fatalities and solidifying its status as the country’s most lethal conflict zone.

This sharp upward trajectory starkly contrasts with the broader national decline in violence observed in December, highlighting a localized and intensifying crisis within the North Central region. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, Niger must be emphasized as a critical and deteriorating priority, necessitating immediate, scaled security intervention and a

dedicated analysis of the underlying drivers whether related to armed group activity, inter-communal clashes, or operational gaps to prevent further escalation and stabilize the area.

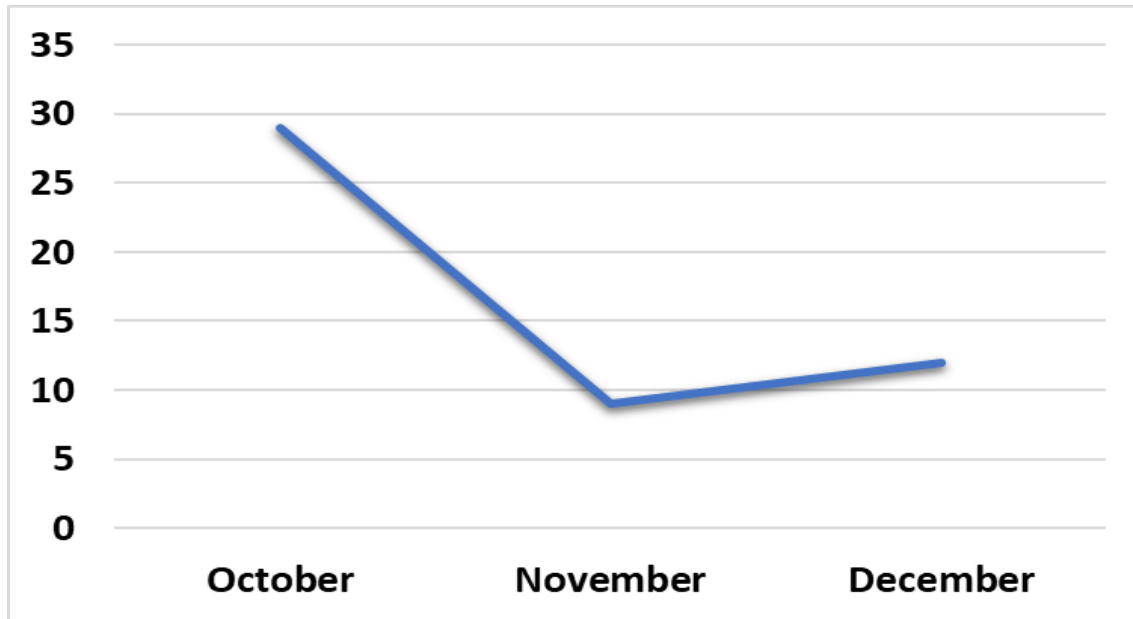


Figure 12: Death Trends in Benue between October-December, 2025

Plateau State exhibited a volatile but persistently high level of lethal violence across October to December 2025. Fatalities peaked at 29 in October before dropping sharply to 9 in November a 69% decrease only to rise again by 33% to 12 deaths in December. Despite this fluctuation, the state remained a significant contributor to violence in the North Central zone, consistently recording double-digit fatalities and ending the year as the second-deadliest state in the region after Niger.

This pattern underscores the fragile and cyclical nature of insecurity in Plateau, where temporary declines can quickly reverse amid unresolved tensions. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, Plateau should be highlighted as a persistent high-risk area requiring

sustained security engagement and enhanced conflict resolution efforts to prevent further escalation and consolidate any periods of relative calm.

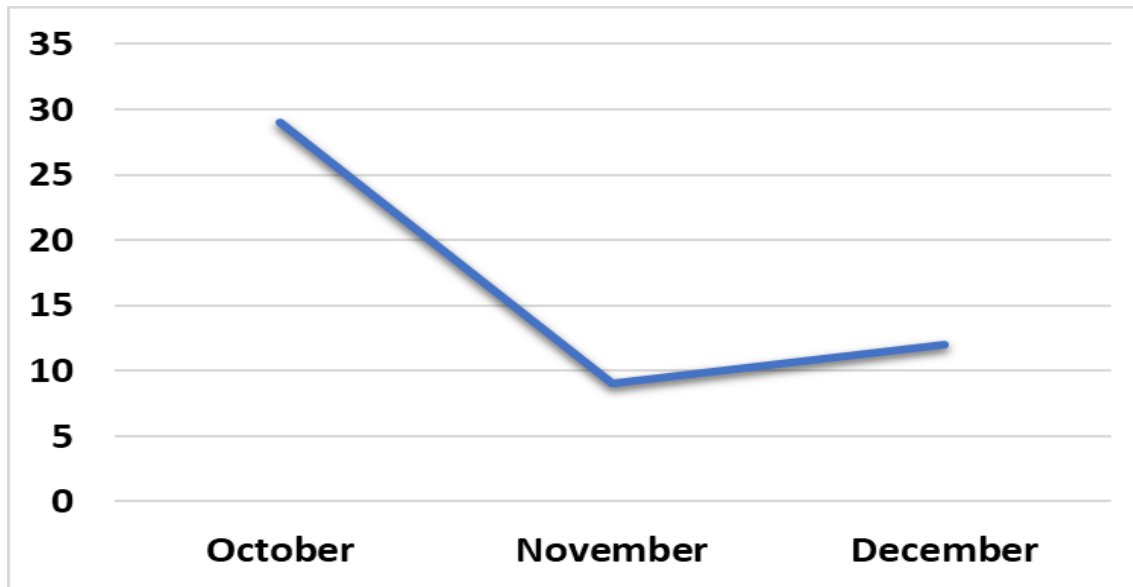


Figure 13: Death Trends in Kwara between October-December, 2025

Plateau State demonstrated a significant improvement in security during November 2025, with fatalities dropping sharply from 29 in October to just 9 a decrease of 69%. This notable reduction marks a positive deviation from the high levels of violence that characterized the state in the previous month and suggests a potential de-escalation of conflict intensity. For the November PSJ-UK/iNSDEC report, this decline should be highlighted as a favorable development within the otherwise volatile North Central zone.

However, the persistence of 9 fatalities confirms that Plateau remains a high-risk area where violence, though reduced, has not been eliminated. The report should emphasize the need to sustain and reinforce the security measures that contributed to this decline, while continuing community engagement and conflict resolution efforts to address underlying tensions and prevent a resurgence of lethal violence in the coming period.

North East:

The North East zone presented a mixed security picture in December 2025, with violence heavily concentrated in specific states while others remained calm. Taraba State was the epicenter of lethal violence, recording 18 fatalities (72% of the zone's total deaths) followed by Borno (5) and Gombe (2). The remaining states of Adamawa, Bauchi, and Yobe reported zero casualties, highlighting an uneven distribution of risk. Overall, the zone contributed 25 fatalities to the national total, representing 19% of all deaths, a significantly lower proportion than the North Central zone, indicating a relative but fragile reduction in its historical burden of national violence.

The concentration of fatalities in Taraba, adjacent to the volatile North Central region, suggests potential spillover or intensified local conflicts distinct from the traditional insurgency in Borno. The absence of reported injuries across the zone and minimal abductions (7 total) indicate that incidents were predominantly fatal. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this underscores the need to highlight Taraba as an emerging hotspot requiring targeted intervention, while maintaining vigilance in Borno and the currently stable states to prevent sudden regression.

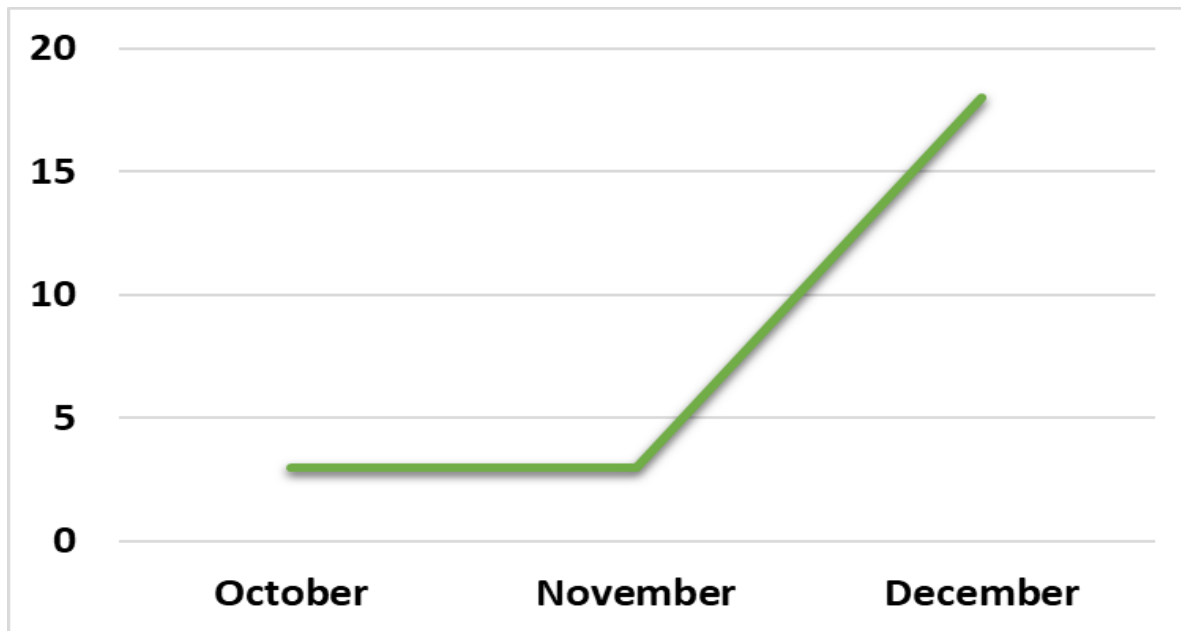


Figure 14: Death Trends in Borno between October-December, 2025

Taraba State experienced a dramatic and sudden escalation in lethal violence in December 2025, following a period of relative stability. Fatalities remained steady at 3 in both October and November before surging by 500% to 18 in December. This sharp increase positioned Taraba as the deadliest state in the North East zone for the month, single-handedly accounting for 72% of the region's total fatalities and marking a severe localized deterioration in security.

This trend starkly contrasts with broader national declines in violence, highlighting how specific flashpoints can experience intense volatility even during periods of wider de-escalation. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, Taraba must be emphasized as a critical and rapidly deteriorating priority, necessitating immediate investigation into the drivers of the surge such as communal clashes or cross-border spillover and the urgent deployment of enhanced security and humanitarian interventions to prevent further escalation.

Southern Region:

The Southern Region of Nigeria recorded significantly lower fatalities compared to the northern zones in December 2025, though with notable intra-regional variations. The South East was the most impacted southern zone, with 15 deaths concentrated in Anambra (13) and Imo (2). In stark contrast, the South South and South West each reported only 1 fatality (in Edo and Osun states, respectively). This demonstrates that lethal violence in the South remained highly localized, with the South East accounting for the vast majority (approx. 88%) of the region's total 17 fatalities.

While the overall fatality count in the South was low, the concentration in the South East—particularly Anambra's high toll—signals a persistent and serious security challenge in that sub-region. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this underscores that the southern zones are not uniformly stable. Emphasis should be placed on the emerging insecurity in the South East, while also noting that the South South's primary threat was abduction-based (24 cases) rather than lethal violence. Continued monitoring and targeted responses in the South East are essential to prevent further escalation.

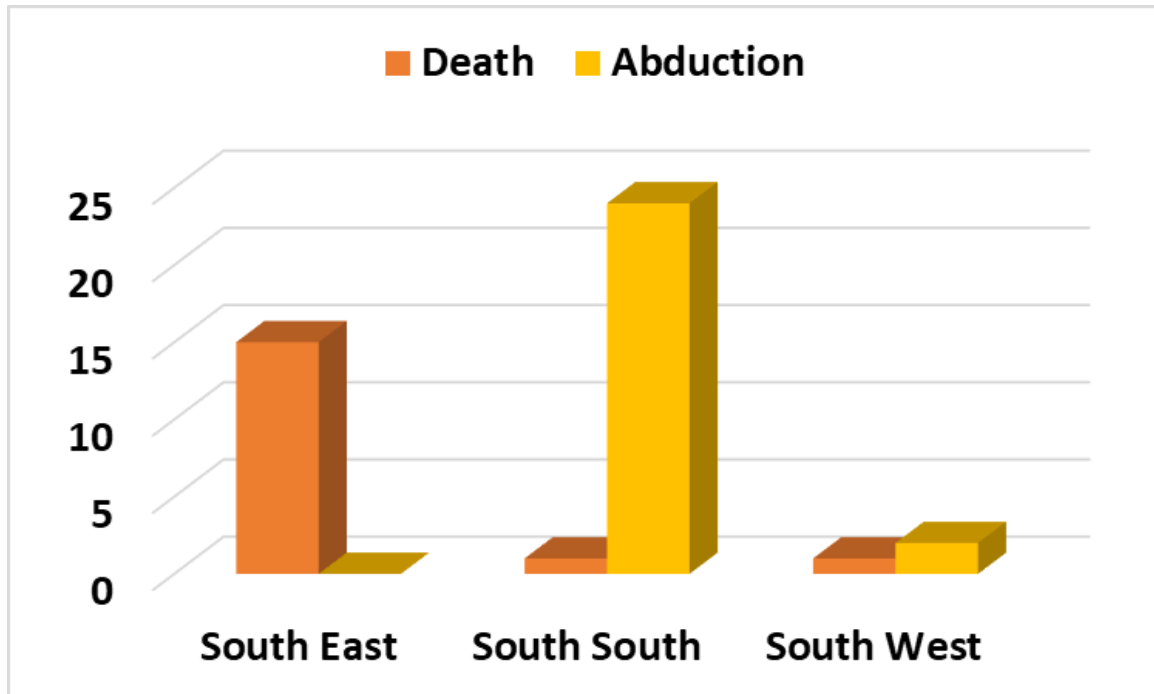


Figure 15: Atrocities in Southern Region

Anambra State experienced a severe and rapid escalation in lethal violence during the final quarter of 2025, marking a troubling shift in the security landscape of the South East. Fatalities rose sharply from zero in October to 3 in November, before surging by 333% to 13 deaths in December. This increase positioned Anambra as the most lethal state in the southern region and among the top five deadliest nationwide in December, underscoring a concentrated outbreak of violent assaults within the state. Notably, this surge occurred without a corresponding rise in abductions, which remained at zero, indicating a tactical focus on deadly attacks rather than kidnappings during this period.

When viewed within the national context, Anambra’s pattern diverges significantly from the crisis in northern Nigeria. While northern states such as Niger and Taraba recorded higher absolute fatalities (40 and 18, respectively), Anambra’s rate of escalation exceeded that of many northern hotspots. More distinctly, Anambra’s complete absence of abductions contrasts sharply with northern states like Kogi and Kwara, where kidnappings dominated the

threat landscape. This highlights a bifurcated national insecurity profile: the North continues to face combined lethal and abduction-based violence, while emerging flashpoints in the South, like Anambra, are experiencing intensifying lethal confrontations.

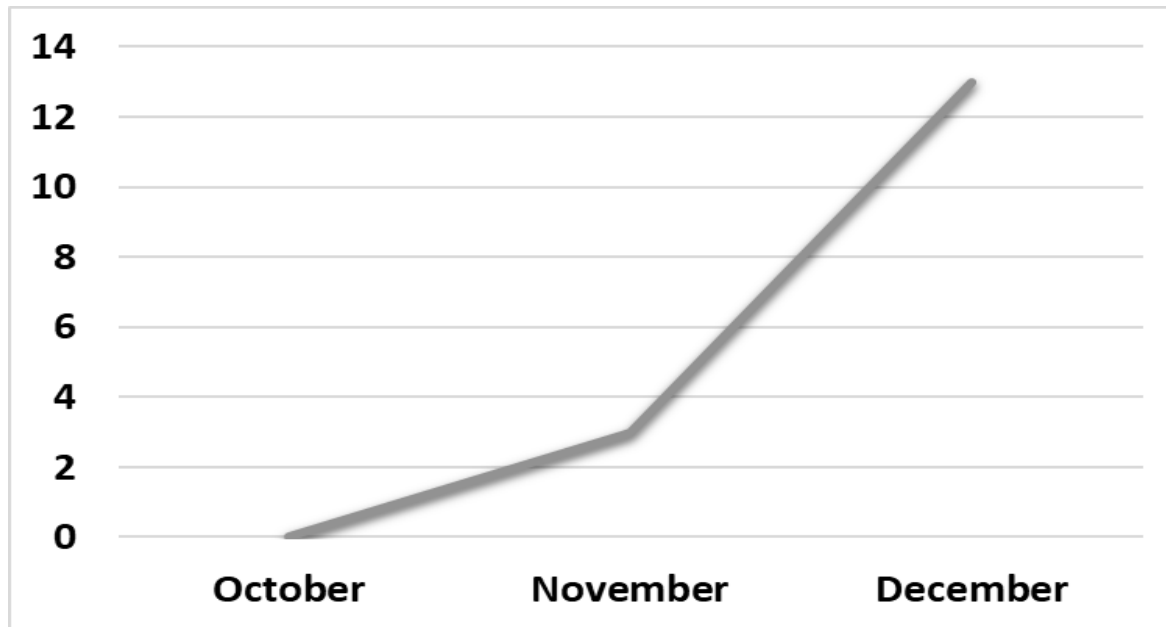


Figure 16: Deaths & Abduction Trends in Anambra State from October-December

For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC December report, this trend underscores that insecurity is not confined to the northern regions and is evolving in form and geography. Anambra must be highlighted as a critical and rapidly deteriorating hotspot in the South East, requiring urgent and tailored security interventions that address its unique pattern of lethal violence, distinct from the anti-kidnapping strategies emphasized in the North. Continuous monitoring and proactive measures are essential to prevent further escalation and regional destabilization

Actors:

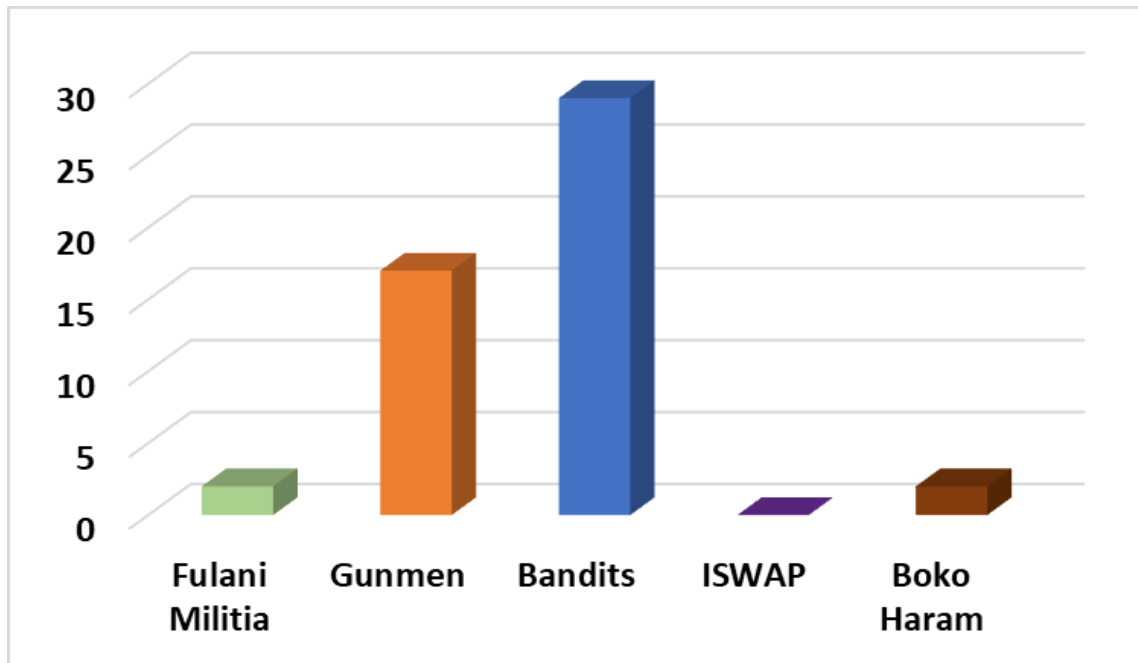


Figure 17: Actors of Atrocities in December 2025 (Source: iNSDEC Casualty Tracker, 2025)

The atrocity landscape in December 2025 was dominated by Bandits, who were responsible for 29 incidents, representing a significant plurality of attributed violent acts. Gunmen term often reflecting unidentified or generic armed actors followed with 17 incidents, indicating a substantial volume of violence from decentralized or less-defined sources. Fulani Militia and Boko Haram were attributed 2 incidents each, while ISWAP was notably absent (0 incidents) from reported engagements for the month.

This attribution profile underscores a continued shift toward criminal and militia-style violence over formal insurgency in the reporting period. The high count for Bandits aligns with trends observed in the North West and North Central zones, particularly in states like Zamfara, Niger, and Kaduna, where kidnapping and lethal raids persist. The minimal activity from Boko Haram and ISWAP suggests either a tactical retreat, reporting gaps, or a further

decoupling of the North East’s violence from these named groups in December. For the PSJ-UK/iNSDEC report, this indicates that security responses should prioritize combating armed criminality and militia violence, even as counter-terrorism vigilance in the North East remains necessary.

Summary of Atrocities:

States	Deaths	Injured	Abducted
Anambra	13	3	
Borno	5		3
Edo	1		18
Gombe	2		2
Imo	2		
Jigawa	1		
Kaduna	4		4
Kano	1	1	11
Katsina	1		
Kebbi	8		
Kogi	6	1	46
Kwara	2		28
Lagos			
Nasarawa	3		
Niger	40		
Osun	1		1
Oyo			1
Plateau	12	5	3
Rivers			6
Sokoto	9	4	
Taraba	18		2

Zamfara	5	1	14
Abuja			1

Impact of Atrocities in December:

The atrocities recorded in December 2025 have resulted in profound humanitarian, social, and security consequences across Nigeria. A total of 134 fatalities, 15 injuries, and 140 abductions were documented, underscoring a sustained climate of violence that continues to displace communities, disrupt livelihoods, and deepen psychological trauma. The North Central zone bore the heaviest burden, accounting for 47% of all deaths and 56% of abductions, with Niger State alone reporting 40 fatalities indicating severe localized humanitarian crises and overwhelming local response capacities. The sharp rise in fatalities in states such as Taraba (18) and Anambra (13), despite a national decline in overall incidents, highlights how rapidly insecurity can escalate in specific regions, diverting limited resources and complicating broader stabilization efforts.

The tactical prevalence of banditry and kidnappings particularly in Kogi (46 abductions) and Zamfara (14) has not only inflicted direct victimization but also perpetuated a pervasive fear that stifles economic activity, limits agricultural production, and disrupts education, especially in rural areas. The continued absence of mass-casualty terrorist attacks attributed to ISWAP or Boko Haram in December, while positive, does not offset the devastating impact of militia and criminal violence, which often targets civilians indiscriminately. The cumulative effect of these atrocities exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, strains humanitarian infrastructure, and reinforces cycles of retaliation and community fragmentation, ultimately undermining national cohesion and long-term peacebuilding initiatives.

Escalation of Violence and Regional Disparities:

The December 2025 security landscape was defined by a paradox of concentrated escalation amid a broader national decline in incident frequency. While overall attack numbers fell, specific states experienced catastrophic surges in violence: Niger State saw fatalities skyrocket by 1,900% over the quarter to 40 deaths, Taraba surged 500% to 18 deaths, and Anambra in the South East rose by 333% to 13 fatalities. Simultaneously, kidnapping corridors remained entrenched, with Kogi and Kwara in the North Central zone accounting for over half of all national abductions. This indicates that the national improvement masks severe, rapidly deteriorating crises in localized flashpoints.

Regional security disparities widened dramatically. The North Central zone was the epicenter of violence, bearing 47% of national deaths and 56% of abductions. In stark contrast, the South West and South South zones recorded minimal fatalities. The nature of threats also diverged regionally: the North Central faced combined lethal and kidnapping violence, the South East grappled with rising lethality but no abductions, and the South South's primary risk was abduction-based. This fragmentation underscores that Nigeria is not facing a monolithic insurgency but multiple, distinct conflict systems requiring tailored responses.

The prevailing violence was primarily attributed to Bandits and unidentified Gunmen, highlighting the dominance of armed criminality over formal insurgency, as groups like ISWAP recorded no attributed incidents. This tactical shift, coupled with the extreme regional disparities, presents a complex challenge: generalized security strategies are insufficient. The report concludes that response frameworks must prioritize hyper-localized, intelligence-driven interventions specific to each hotspot's threat typology—whether lethal raids, mass kidnappings, or communal warfare—to prevent further escalation and regional destabilization.

Impacts on Communities and Social Structures

The escalating violence in December 2025 has triggered severe economic, social, and financial crises that vary sharply across regions but collectively undermine national stability. In high-fatality states like Niger, Taraba, and Anambra, agriculture and markets have been paralyzed, leading to food insecurity, inflation, and collapsing livelihoods. In abduction-prone states such as Kogi, Kwara, and Edo, families are plunged into debt to pay ransoms, while small businesses face extortion and closure. This economic devastation is most acute in the North Central zone, which faces a compounded shock that threatens to reverse years of development and deepen poverty. Socially, communities are fragmenting under the strain of fear, trauma, and displacement. In states with communal violence like Plateau and Taraba, inter-ethnic tensions are reigniting, eroding traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms and fostering mistrust. Education is severely disrupted as schools close, particularly in rural areas of Zamfara, Kaduna, and Anambra, jeopardizing the future of youth. The psychological toll especially on women and children is profound, with rising cases of trauma and depression further weakening community resilience and cohesion.

These impacts threaten each region differently: the North Central faces a multidimensional humanitarian crisis; the North West's kidnapping economy entrenches criminal networks; the South East's lethal violence risks triggering retaliatory cycles and deterring investment; and the South South remains vulnerable to ransom-driven destabilization. Even the relatively stable South West faces pressure from internal displacement. Without integrated responses that combine security, economic recovery, psychosocial support, and community dialogue, these crises will deepen fragility, fuel further violence, and entrench the stark regional disparities observed in December.

Policy Implications:

The scale, nature, and geographical concentration of atrocities from October to December 2025 necessitate a recalibrated and multi-layered policy response. The following implications are derived from documented trends in states and regions with severe or escalating violence.

- **Adopt Hyper-Localized Security Strategies:**
Security operations must move beyond zonal approaches to state- and LGA-specific campaigns. This is critical in Niger State, which saw fatalities escalate from 2 (October) to 40 (December), and in Taraba State, where deaths surged from 3 (October/November) to 18 (December). Templates used in more stable regions are insufficient for these high-intensity hotspots.
- **Differentiate Between Lethal Violence and Kidnapping Hubs:**
Policy must recognize and respond to distinct threat typologies. Anti-kidnapping task forces with financial investigation units should be prioritized in abduction epicenters like Kogi (46 abductions in December) and Kwara (28), building on lessons from states like Zamfara, which saw high kidnappings in October (145) and November (94). Conversely, counter-raiding and communal conflict de-escalation frameworks are urgently needed in high-fatality states like Niger, Plateau (12 deaths in December, down from 29 in October), and Anambra (13 deaths in December, up from 0 in October).
- **Establish Rapid Humanitarian and Economic Stabilization Corridors:**
Regions experiencing sudden, severe escalation particularly the North Central zone, which accounted for 47% of December's fatalities require immediate, coordinated humanitarian and economic intervention to prevent collapse. This includes emergency

livelihood support, trauma counseling, and protection for displaced populations to mitigate the long-term social and economic decay that fuels further instability.

- **Enhance Inter-Zonal and Cross-Border Security Coordination:**

The spillover of violence from the North Central into neighboring regions, as seen in Taraba (North East), and the spread of lethal violence into the South East (Anambra), indicate fluid threat movement. Policy must mandate and resource formalized intelligence and operational coordination mechanisms between state police commands and regional security outfits across zone boundaries.

- **Implement Atrocity-Prevention Early Warning Systems in Volatile Regions:**

The dramatic quarterly escalations in Niger, Taraba, and Anambra demonstrate the failure of existing early warning systems. Policy should invest in integrated community-led and technology-augmented monitoring in historically volatile and newly emerging flashpoints to enable pre-emptive action before violence reaches critical levels.

- **Address the Ransom Economy Through Financial and Legal Measures:**

The sustained abduction crises in Kogi, Kwara, Edo (18 abductions in December), and Zamfara are financed through ransom payments. Policy must combine stringent enforcement of laws prohibiting ransom payments with targeted financial surveillance to disrupt the flow of funds to armed criminal groups, while simultaneously providing victim support.

- **Prioritize Community-Led Peacebuilding in Regions with Cyclical Violence:**

States like Plateau, which saw a high death toll in October (29) before a decrease in November (9) and a rebound in December (12), suffer from cyclical communal conflict. Long-term policy must shift resources to support locally owned dialogue,

reconciliation, and shared resource management initiatives to break these entrenched cycles.

Policy Recommendations

To stem the surge of violence and kidnappings across Nigeria, particularly in the North West, North Central, North East, and Southern regions, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Security and Intelligence:** Adopt UN-endorsed approaches for coordinated counterterrorism and anti-crime operations. Deploy rapid response units in hotspot areas, integrate intelligence-sharing platforms across states, and enhance surveillance using drones and early-warning systems. ECOWAS protocols on cross-border security should be applied to prevent interstate mobility of bandits and insurgents.
2. **Specialized Anti-Kidnapping Task Forces:** Following AU best practices, establish dedicated units to address mass abductions. Protect high-risk targets, including schools, highways, and vulnerable communities, while enforcing stringent anti-ransom policies. Encourage community reporting through secure hotlines and reward systems.
3. **Community-Based Policing and Vigilante Integration:** Support local vigilante structures by providing training, arms accountability, and integration with formal security forces. This strengthens local intelligence and rapid intervention capacity while reducing civilian-targeted attacks.
4. **Socioeconomic Resilience Programs:** Implement UN and AU recommendations for conflict-affected zones, including cash transfers, microfinance, and livelihood

recovery programs. Prioritize agricultural support, market rehabilitation, and youth employment schemes to reduce recruitment into criminal and insurgent networks.

5. **Humanitarian Protection and Rehabilitation:** Ensure prompt support for victims of violence, including psychosocial services, trauma care, and reintegration programs for abducted individuals. Establish safe corridors for displaced persons, consistent with UNHCR and ECOWAS humanitarian standards.
6. **Regional and Interagency Coordination:** Promote multi-state task forces for joint operations, sharing intelligence and resources. Standardize crisis response protocols across states to close jurisdictional gaps exploited by perpetrators.
7. **Long-Term Conflict Prevention:** Invest in education, governance reforms, and land dispute resolution mechanisms. Address structural drivers of violence, including poverty, unemployment, and social inequality, following AU peacebuilding guidelines.

These measures, if implemented collectively, will strengthen security, protect civilians, and foster long-term stability across Nigeria's most vulnerable regions.

Conclusion:

The December 2025 security landscape presents a complex and evolving challenge: national improvements in incident frequency mask severe and rapidly deteriorating crises in specific states and zones. The disproportionate burden borne by the North Central zone, alongside emerging flashpoints in the South East and North East, reveals a fragmented threat environment where uniform security approaches are inadequate. The dominance of Bandits and criminal militias highlights the need to prioritize anti-kidnapping and counter-raiding operations tailored to local threat typologies. Simultaneously, the profound humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of violence including displacement, economic collapse, and

community fragmentation demand integrated responses that combine security, livelihood support, and psychosocial care.

To prevent further escalation and address the root causes of instability, policymakers must adopt state-specific, intelligence-driven interventions, enhance cross-zonal coordination, and invest in community-led peacebuilding and early-warning systems. Only through a holistic, localized, and sustained approach can Nigeria mitigate the cyclical nature of violence and move toward lasting stability and security for all regions.