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Boko Haram and the terror caused
through sexual violence

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Abstract:

Since 2009, the region in northwest Nigeria suffers the terrorist threat of Boko Haram. In particular, the development of the conflict and the process of radicalization that the Abubakar Shekau faction has experienced during these past years has resulted in the use of violence against women due to reasons of gender. More specifically, the sexual objectification of women has proved to be a particularly effective tactic for achieving jihadist objectives.

This document analyses the social, ideological and strategic factors which have increased the practice of sexual violence as a weapon of terror by Boko Haram and which have greatly triggered the feeling of grievance and insecurity in the population. In short, all of this is affecting the very stability of the Lake Chad region. In this context, it is important to observe the causes, characteristics and consequences of this matter in order to measure the magnitude of the problem, as well as the extent of the effects that sexual violence causes on the victim, on her family nucleus and on the entire community. To sum up, all this will allow us to propose a series of recommendations in order to abolish the use of this terror tactic that, in the interest of an alleged jihad, threatens to blow up the communal living in northern Nigeria.

Keywords:

Nigeria, terrorism, Boko Haram, women, sexual violence

Introduction

The international security scenario resulting from the end of the Cold War and the changes operated by the phenomenon of globalization is currently characterized by the cooperation among multiple international actors who are facing various threats challenging global stability. In this context, the global agenda for peace focuses on the proliferation of intra-state conflict and more specifically, on transnational terrorism linked to jihadist extremism¹. Geographically, much of the political and academic discourse considers that the African continent is the largest scenario of armed violence in the world².

Currently, the Lake Chad region is threatened by the activity of Boko Haram, a terrorist group born in North West Nigeria whose purpose is to establish and expand an Islamic caliphate throughout the country and even beyond the country's borders. In particular, the faction led by Abubakar Shekau provokes growing interest, in the academic arena, given the despicable use of violence against women due to reasons of gender³ in pursuing their objectives. The exploitation of women in the context of the crisis and

¹ NAVARRO MILIÁN, Iván. La nueva narrativa del terrorismo internacional en África: respuestas y resultados. *Comillas Journal of International Relations*, (13):28-48, 28 November 2018, p. 36. Available at: <https://revistas.comillas.edu/index.php/internationalrelations/article/view/10695/10088> Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

² During the 1990s, Mary Kaldor's popular theory of "new wars" gave rise to several narratives that –based on factors such as ethnicity, underdevelopment and greed for natural resources– distinguished brutality and motivations of the African armed conflicts, in comparison with the conflicts that took place both before and during the Cold War. At present, much of the academic community has questioned these essentialist interpretations, which ignore other relevant historical, political and economic factors for the conflict analysis.

³ While the concept of "sex" points out the biological differences of the reproductive organs of human beings, the notion of "gender" is a social construction that, in the words of Joaquín de Juan Herrero and Rosa María Pérez Cañaveras refers to «the characteristics of conduct, attitude and personality that a society, in a certain historical and cultural period, designates as masculine or feminine». DE JUAN HERRERO, Joaquín y PÉREZ CAÑAVERAS, Rosa María. *Sexo, género y biología. Feminismo/s*, (10): 163-185, December 2007, p. 173. Available at: https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/6132/1/Feminismos_10_11.pdf Date consulted: 12/06/2019. For the purposes of this article, the term "violence against women due to reasons of gender" shall refer to the provisions of article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of the General Assembly: «any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life». United Nations General Assembly (A / RES / 48/104), February 23, 1994. Available at: http://www.aulaviolenciadegeneroenlocal.es/consejos Escolares/archivos/declaracion_sobre_la Eliminacion_de_la violencia_contra_la_mujer.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

especially the practice of sexual violence proves to be a dramatically effective terror tactic, given its level of impact on, not only the victim and the family, but also the social structure and consequently, on the regions own future⁴.

This document studies the context in which sexual violence is perpetrated by Boko Haram and its use as a weapon of terror, the severe consequences that it causes in Nigerian society and the consequent forced displacement flows in the region. The analysis of these different aspects will allow us to propose a series of recommendations aimed to improve the measures that have been applied until now, all of which aim to eradicate this scourge that is distorting the life and future of thousands of Nigerian women⁵ at the hands of an alleged jihad.

The situation of women in north western Nigeria

The analysis of the political, economic and social scenario where jihadist terrorism arises in Nigeria is an essential tool to understand the parameters that have favoured the evolution of Boko Haram: the ethnic and religious difference between the north and south of the country, the extreme poverty in the northern region, as well as the impact of both factors on national political activity⁶. Regarding sexual violence, it is worth considering whether the living conditions of women in the northwest of the country have some influence on this terrorist tactic.

According to Makama, traditional Nigerian society is based on the dominance of male gender. During the pre-colonial period, women did not enjoy the social position of men,

⁴ PALACIÁN DE INZA, Blanca. La violencia sexual como arma de guerra. Documento de Análisis IEEE 07/2013, p. 5. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA07-2013_ViolenciaSexualArmaGuerra_BPI.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁵ Given the specific circumstances that underlie the exploitation of women by Boko Haram, the present article will not refer to the special situation of vulnerability lived by those men and boys who are also victims of sexual violence. Nevertheless, it is a reality as critical as invisible.

⁶ Santé Abal summarizes this narrative very clearly: «the vicious cycle of feedback between underdevelopment and ethnicity sets the conditions for political discourse to incorporate them as a mobilization tool». SANTÉ ABAL, José María. Nigeria, elenco de conflictos, diagnóstico de sociedad (I). Documento de Análisis IEEE 14/2016, pp. 8-9. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2017/DIEEEA14-2017_Nigeria_Diagnostico_xlx_JMSA.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

although they did have some economic independence⁷. Authors such as Cooper and Algora agree that, after the arrival of the British Empire in the African continent, the transformation of the economy was decisive in the configuration of the social role of women. In particular, both analysts argue that the emergence of labour, based on the exploitation of resources, to supply the colonial metropolis generated a growing demand for man employment. Meanwhile, women remained in domestic agriculture⁸ and, as a result, were relegated to the familial sphere.

Over the years, the classic patriarchal structure has cemented gender roles in today's Nigerian society. Makama states that the low rate of schooling of young women is due to the responsibilities assumed within the family, which along with other conditions such as customs⁹ and economic capacity, prioritize the academic instruction of the male child¹⁰. In addition, this educational gap today represents a serious obstacle to the insertion of women into the working world. In this regard the International Crisis Group points out that, although many women are economic providers of the household –through retail, agricultural development and in some cases office work– their involvement in the development of Nigerian National income is reduced to the domestic sector¹¹. Finally, the

⁷ MAKAMA, Godiya Allanana. Patriarchy and gender inequality in Nigeria: the way forward. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(17):115-144, June 2013, p. 116-117. Available at: <https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/1161/1177>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁸ ALGORA WEBER, M^a Dolores. La Historia Contemporánea en África y sus efectos sobre la mujer en la sociedad subsahariana. *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 179-190, 2003, p. 186. Available at: <http://www.mariadoloresalgora.es/publicaciones/revistas-y-boletines/>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019. COOPER, Frederick. *Workers, peasants and the crisis of colonialism. On his: Africa since 1940, the past of the present*. New York (the United States of America), Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 22.

⁹ Common practices such as early marriage or the presumption that the daughter will not maintain her father's legacy, but will be part of the husband's family, are elements of social dynamics in northern Nigeria. International Crisis Group. *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*. Africa Report (242), December 5, 2016, p. 2. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/nigeria-women-and-boko-haram-insurgency>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019. FAPOHUNDA, Tinuke M. Diversity and Gender Parity in Nigeria: A Situation Analysis. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 5 (3): 254-260, December 2016, p. 256. Available at: <https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/ajis/article/view/9788/9426>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

¹⁰ MAKAMA, Op. Cit. 7, p. 121. In 2013, the Demographic and Health Study of the National Population Commission of Nigeria estimated an illiteracy rate of 72% among women in the north-west of the country, compared with 49% illiteracy in men. Cited in: Ibid, International Crisis Group, p. 2.

¹¹ International Crisis Group, Op. Cit. 9, p. 3.

marginalization of women's access both to education and the labour market limits their ability to acquire private property¹².

The analysis of the reality of the Nigerian woman must also focus on one final element, which is essential in the study of the terrorist practices of Boko Haram: the role that Islamic law plays on the northern federated states in Nigeria¹³ and the way in which it determines the low representation and power of women in local societies. Focusing on the gender issue, Makama emphasizes that «Sharia as religious law gives central place to paternalistic interpretation to women's appropriate roles and socio-political arrangement of the society»¹⁴. Therefore, a strict reading of Islamic precepts has promoted the conceptualization of women as a property¹⁵, restricting their roles in society on the basis of their ability to be a mother.

However, this reality represents a paradox regarding the exploitation of female sexuality in this Nigerian region. The simplification of the social role of women to motherhood and family care¹⁶ also gives their reproductive capacity an importance within the community itself that will serve as an advantage to Boko Haram.

Boko Haram and its horror tactics based on sexual violence

In 2009, Boko Haram went through its greatest process of ideological and violent radicalization and as a consequence, became extreme against women. According to authors such as Beatriz Mesa and José María Santé Abal, the coming to power of

¹² According to the Report on Gender in Nigeria of the British Council, in 2012, 4% out of 56.2% of the population of the Northeast that owned land were women, the lowest rate in Nigeria. Cited in: International Crisis Group, Op. Cit. 9, p. 2.

¹³ Sharia was first established in northern Nigeria by Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, Fulani preacher and founder of the Sokoto Caliphate between 1804 and 1808. Following the arrival of the British Empire, the implementation of Islamic law in the daily life of the Nigerian people was gradually relegated until its abolition in 1967. According to the International Crisis Group, Sharia became part of customary law, until Ahmed Yerima launched a campaign in 1999 to restore it in the north region of the country. Nowadays, there are twelve northern states that have reintroduced Islamic law, although only two of them have actually implemented their precepts. International Crisis Group. Northern Nigeria: Background to conflict. Africa Report (168), December 20, 2010, 42 p. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/northern-nigeria-background-conflict>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

¹⁴ MAKAMA, Op. Cit. 7, p. 127.

¹⁵ MAKAMA, Op. Cit. 7, p. 125.

¹⁶ MAKAMA, Op. Cit. 7, p. 122.

Abubakar Shekau after the death of Mohammed Yusuf transformed what had so far been an insurgent movement, into a terrorist organization linked to jihadist extremism¹⁷. According to this scenario, the tension of the conflict experienced an intense escalation characterized by the extreme degree of violence during the confrontations between the Salafist group and the Nigerian military force¹⁸; while increasing the magnitude and cruelty of the attacks on the civilian population, the media, churches and schools¹⁹.

In particular, the academic discourse dates Boko Haram's first actions of violence against women for gender reasons in 2011. It was then when the Nigerian government arrested one hundred women and children of terrorist leaders in retaliation for their attacks²⁰. According to Blanca Palacián, this response motivated Shekau to decree the widespread kidnapping of women and children²¹, which has become common practice of Boko Haram nowadays. In order to better illustrate this scenario, UNICEF estimates that between 2013 and 2018 the terrorist organization has held more than a thousand girls against their will²². Among many others, the case of Chibok stands out, where 276 girls from a secular school in Borno were taken against their will in April 2014. While this mass kidnapping was the

¹⁷ MESA GARCÍA, Beatriz. Boko Haram, de milicia a grupo terrorista. Documento de Opinión IEEE 33/2016, p. 7. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2016/DIEEEO33-2016_BokoHaram_DeMilicia_GrupoTerrorista_BeatrizMesa.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019. SANTÉ ABAL, José María. Boko Haram: movimiento ideológico, guerrilla insurgente y grupo terrorista. Documento de Opinión IEEE 49/2018, pp. 4-7. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2018/DIEEEO49-2018_Boko_Haram_JMSA.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

¹⁸ It is though inspiring Itziar Ruiz-Giménez's contribution to the analysis of the terrorist activity of Boko Haram. She draws attention to the narrative silences of the academic community when analyzing the conflict that takes place in northern Nigeria. Although this issue is not part of the subject of this analysis, the unfortunate response of the Nigerian government against this terrorist group turns out to be an essential element to contextualize the process of radicalization of the conflict. RUIZ-GIMENEZ, Itziar. Más allá de la "barbarie" de Boko Haram, ¿qué pasa en el norte de Nigeria? Viento sur, 139:13-18, April 2015. Available at: <http://grupodeestudiosafricanos.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/RUIZ-GIMENEZ-2015-Mas-All%C3%A1-Barbarie-Boko-Haram.pdf>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

¹⁹ SANTÉ ABAL, Op. Cit. 17, p. 8.

²⁰ PEARSON, Elizabeth y ZENN, Jacob. How Nigerian police also detained women and children as weapon of war. The Guardian, 6 May 2014. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/06/how-nigerian-police-also-detained-women-and-children-as-weapon-of-war>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

²¹ PALACIÁN DE INZA, Blanca. Boko Haram: usando niñas como armas. Documento de Análisis IEEE 07/2015, p. 6. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2015/DIEEEA07-2015_BokoHaram_Mujeres_BPI.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

²² BUSARI, Stephanie. UNICEF: Boko Haram has kidnapped more than 1000 children in Nigeria. CNN, 13 April 2018. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/13/africa/boko-haram-children-abduction-intl/index.html>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

first and most notorious of the terrorist group²³, the assaults on Baga and Dapchi, in 2015²⁴ and 2018²⁵ respectively, also received some attention from the media and international organizations.

Since then, Boko Haram has formed part of its current strategy on gender discrimination and even more dramatically, on the systematic violation of women's sexual and reproductive rights. To begin with, the growing numbers of Nigerians confined – voluntarily²⁶ or involuntarily– in the settlements of the terrorist organization are being exploited in accordance with the intersubjective understandings in the northwest of the country. On one hand, the gender-based social hierarchy is replicated during captivity by assigning the women tasks such as housework and parenting²⁷. On the other hand, Boko Haram's contempt towards women manifests itself by their continual use as spies, messengers or recruiters of other women and children for the jihadist cause²⁸. According to the International Crisis Group, it is only women who carry out these duties, since social stereotypes allow them to go unnoticed among the crowd and security forces²⁹.

According to Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, the social meaning attributed to

²³ PALACIÁN DE INZA, Op. Cit. 21, pp. 6-7.

²⁴ Agencia EFE. Boko Haram secuestra a decenas de mujeres en el norte de Nigeria. El Mundo, 16 January 2015. Available at: <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/01/16/54b94b6e22601d157d8b456d.html>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

²⁵ International Crisis Group. Preventing Boko Haram Abductions of Schoolchildren in Nigeria. Crisis Group Africa Briefing (137), 12 April 2018, 16 p. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b137-preventing-boko-haram-abductions-schoolchildren-nigeria>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

²⁶ According to the International Crisis Group, given the precarious situation in northern Nigeria and the lack of opportunities to access education, work life and political life, some women consider their adherence to Boko Haram as an opportunity to access to the Koranic education. International Crisis Group, Op. Cit. 9, pp. 5-10. In accordance, Oriola emphasizes the socio-economic problems that motivate women to have consensual sex with Boko Haram members, and thus keep their basic needs covered. ORIOLA, Temitope B. "Unwilling Cocoons": Boko Haram's War against Women. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40(2): 99-121, 12 de mayo de 2016, p. 106. Available at: <https://www.ualberta.ca/-/media/7CB7F5EA8A8B4D40B0DE1018FA12A569>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

²⁷ GARCÍA GARCÍA, María Isabel y CUADRADO, Jara. Mujer y violencia en Boko Haram: nuevas oportunidades para la prevención de la radicalización. *Revista Pensamiento Actual*, 18(31): 1-9, October 2018, p. 4. Available at: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6736432>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

²⁹ International Crisis Group Op. Cit. 9, p. 10. Moreover, both García García and Cuadrado as well as the International Crisis Group recognize that, on some occasions, although rare, the role of women has also reached the battlefield. GARCÍA GARCÍA y CUADRADO, Op. Cit. 27, p. 5.

femininity and masculinity also influences on «how gender works to underwrite or even produce the act of sexual violence»³⁰. In other words, while the concept of femininity is described according to standards such as peace and fragility, needing to be protected³¹; masculinity is associated with the control and use of force³². In this sense, the notion of power attributed to men translates into the obligation not only to protect, but also to punish women who do not meet social expectations³³. The sexual violence exerted by Boko Haram not only implies the sexual objectification of the victim, it is also used to shame the Nigerian community that does not support the jihadist cause. Considering this approach, it is worth looking at how the dichotomous approach between the social and the biological factor is essential in order to analyze this scourge in the Nigerian context³⁴.

Firstly, regarding the profile of the female victim, Temitope B. Oriola observes that Boko Haram distinguishes three categories by age as follows: girls under 14 years old, women and girls between 14 and 45, and women over 45³⁵. Oriola argues that the reproductive factor is decisive in this matter since «the terrorist group's sexual violence is primarily directed at women and girls within the reproductive age bracket»³⁶. Moreover, he emphasizes that single or childless women or girls acquire special value for the terrorist organization, under the belief that they have maintained their virginity, which is the maximum representation of female purity in the regional community³⁷.

Secondly, it is necessary to define what actions carried out by Boko Haram should be classified as sexual violence according to the Rome Statute. The international criminal legal framework states that «Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced

³⁰ ERIKSSON BAAZ, Maria y STERN, Maria. Sexual violence as a weapon of war? Perceptions, prescriptions, problems in the Congo and beyond. Africa Now and Nordic Africa Institute, 2013, p. 22. Available at: <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1148245/FULLTEXT01.pdf>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

³¹ Ibid, p. 20.

³² MAAROUF, Banu. Boko Haram and Sexual Violence as a Weapon of Warfare. Aalborg University Denmark, May 2018, pp. 31-32. Available at: <https://projekter.aau.dk/projekter/files/280855780/BanuMaaroufThesis.pdf>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

³³ ERIKSSON BAAZ y STERN, Op. Cit. 30, p. 21.

³⁴ ERIKSSON BAAZ y STERN, Op. Cit. 30, p. 22.

³⁵ ORIOLA, Op. Cit. 26, p. 108.

³⁶ ORIOLA, Op. Cit, 26, p. 108.

³⁷ ORIOLA, Op. Cit, 26, p. 108.

pregnancy [and] enforced sterilization»³⁸ are classified as crimes against humanity. Therefore, the academic community confirms the existence of a widespread environment of rape and sexual slavery in the settlements of Boko Haram³⁹. In addition, it is appropriate to include forced marriage into the narrative of this tactic, considering it is commonplace within Boko Haram and consequently, it results in sexual violence⁴⁰.

Thirdly, concerning the quantification and frequency of these crimes, it is extremely difficult to make a real estimate of the extent of this human drama; given the lack of official data on the number of women who suffer or have suffered at the hands of these brutal actions from Boko Haram. Furthermore, the intangible social stigmatization on those who report sexual assaults must be also taken into account. However, based on interviews with victims of Boko Haram, Maarouf concludes that the perpetrators of violence offer only two alternatives to women, forced marriage or sexual slavery⁴¹. Also, Oriola emphasizes that the main evidence of sexual violence is the high number of women who are pregnant among those who manage to escape or are rescued⁴².

Finally, according to Elisabeth Jean Wood, it is understood that sexual violence plays a strategic role when responding to action guidelines intentionally adopted by the perpetrator group, in order to achieve specific objectives⁴³. In particular, Shekau's propaganda on the internet is a clear evidence of his purposes in the development of deliberate terror tactics regarding gender, fighting secularism and causing obvious and lasting damage to the enemy⁴⁴.

³⁸ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (A/CONF.183/9), 17 July 1998, art. 7.1.g). Available at: [https://www.un.org/spanish/law/icc/statute/spanish/rome_statute\(s\).pdf](https://www.un.org/spanish/law/icc/statute/spanish/rome_statute(s).pdf). Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

³⁹ READ, Joe. Sexual violence and the Boko Haram crisis in north-east Nigeria. Humanitarian Practice Network, (70):24-27, October 2017, p. 24. Available at: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/sexual-violence-and-the-boko-haram-crisis-in-north-east-nigeria/>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁴⁰ MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, pp. 46-48. ORIOLA, Op. Cit. 26, p. 112.

⁴¹ MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, p. 36.

⁴² ORIOLA, Op. Cit. 26, p. 107.

⁴³ WOOD, Elisabeth. Variación de la violencia sexual en tiempos de guerra: la violación en la guerra no es inevitable, Revista Estudios Socio-Jurídicos, 14(1):19-57, 2012, p. 26. Available at: <https://revistas.urosario.edu.co/index.php/sociojuridicos/article/viewFile/1935/1788>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁴⁴ As Eriksson Baaz and Stern state, it is not necessary to identify a direct order to confirm that we are facing a situation where sexual violence is being use as a weapon of war, «implicit condoning or encouragement of rape can also serve strategic purposes». ERIKSSON BAAZ and STERN, Op. Cit. 30, p. 47. For more information about Shekau's messages see: MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32.

On the ideological level, the ultimate goal of establishing a Salafist caliphate even outside the Nigerian borders is intrinsic to the horror tactics based on sexual violence. Likewise, religious motivation is confused with certain cultural convictions. For example, Boko Haram justifies forced marriage as a way for women and children to convert to Islam⁴⁵, even if it is an involuntary abjuration. Moreover, Maarouf draws attention to what he calls "the belief of contamination", the presumption that, through sexual action and fertilization of women, the future child will inherit the blood, genes and ideology of the biological father⁴⁶.

As far as the human factor is concerned, Boko Haram exploits the female body for multiple purposes. Even though this matter will be discussed in depth later, it should be stressed that both Maarouf and Villellas Ariño perceive that sexual violence on women is not only aimed at rewarding the soldier or harming the victim, but is also used to spread messages of insecurity, humiliation and intimidation to the Nigerian community and their government⁴⁷. Donna Pankhurst further builds on this hypothesis, stating that it is an «attempt to weaken the counterpart, by concurrently targeting the male fighters and their inability to 'protect' their women»⁴⁸.

Sexual violence and forced migration

Currently the multiple splits within the terrorist group⁴⁹ and the response in the security sector, of the newly re-elected Muhammadu Buhari, after the February 2019 elections,

⁴⁵ MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, p. 40.

⁴⁶ MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, p. 39.

⁴⁷ MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, pp. 41-45. VILLELLAS ARIÑO, María. La violencia sexual como arma de guerra. Quaderns de construcció de pau (15), September 2010, p. 8 y 10. Available at: <https://escolapau.uab.cat/index.php/es/publicaciones/quaderns-de-construccio-de-pau.html>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019. Therefore, most of the academic arena firmly supports the theory that prevalence the collective dimension of sexual violence. That relegates, to an almost imperceptible level, the individual and personal motivations of the perpetrators. However, authors such as Elisabeth Jean Wood gives an important credit to the stimulus of reward without consequences on the perpetrator, as well as to the fraternity feeling created in that environment of impunity. WOOD, Op. Cit. 43, p. 36.

⁴⁸ Cited in: MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, p. 17.

⁴⁹ SANTÉ ABAL, José María. Boko Haram: movimiento ideológico, guerrilla insurgente y grupo terrorista. Documento de Opinión IEEE 49/2018, pp. 13-15. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2018/DIEEEO49-2018_Boko_Haram_JMSA.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

have weakened the menace of Boko Haram⁵⁰. Even so, the president acknowledges that the attacks and influence of the organization are still a threat⁵¹, which also extends to Cameroon, Chad and Niger⁵². In fact, jihadist violence in northern Nigeria has increased the exodus of a population that feels their mere survival is in imminent danger.

The information collected in 2019 in the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), prepared by the United Nations migration agency (IOM), confirms a total of 138,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon and 15,000 in Chad⁵³, although the number of forced displacements is much higher. In accordance with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2018 recorded more than 541,000 new displacements due to Boko Haram's attacks in north western Nigeria⁵⁴, the majority of these coming from the states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe⁵⁵. However, due to the action of the military forces and the Buhari government, IOM confirms that 1,642,696 Nigerians⁵⁶ have returned home, even though stability and security is still very precarious. However, the total number of people who still remain outside their home villages amounts 2.2 million⁵⁷.

⁵⁰ MORALES MORALES, Samuel. La persistente amenaza de Boko Haram contra la seguridad regional en África occidental. Documento de Opinión IEEE 72/2015, pp. 10-11. Available at: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2015/DIEEEO72-2015_Amenaza_BokoHaram_SamuelMorales.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁵¹ Buhari, reelegido en Nigeria pese a incumplir sus promesas. La Vanguardia, 27 de febrero de 2019. Available at: <https://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20190227/46730322723/buhari-presidente-nigeria-promesas-elecciones-generales.html>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁵² In 2012, the governments of the aforementioned countries created the Joint Multinational Force (MNJTF), with the objective of jointly addressing the threat that Boko Haram poses in the Lake Chad region. MORALES GONZÁLEZ, Alberto. Fuerza Multinacional Conjunta (MNJTF) contra Boko Haram. Documento de Opinión IEEE 130/2017. Available at: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2017/DIEEEO130-2017_MNJFT_contra_Boko_Haram_AlbertoMorales.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁵³ International Organization for Migration (OIM). Within and beyond borders: tracking displacement in the lake Chad basin Regional Displacement and Human Mobility Analysis, Displacement Tracking Matrix, March 2019, p. 14. Available at: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/dtm/lake_chad_basin_dtm_201903.pdf. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁵⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Nigeria. Available at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/nigeria>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019.

⁵⁵ MORALES MORALES, Op. Cit. 50, p. 11.

⁵⁶ OIM, Op. Cit. 53, p. 14.

⁵⁷ IDMC, Op. Cit. 54.

Undoubtedly, the magnitude of this human drama requires a detailed study of its motives and conditions. Among them, the systematic exercise of sexual violence as a weapon of terror is an important multiplier of the mass displacement in the northwest of Nigeria⁵⁸. As such, the main reason for many women and their families to flee the region is to avoid kidnappings, rapes, forced marriage or slavery; in addition to leaving behind the atmosphere of terror generated by jihadists. Additionally, sexual violence also destroys the social structure, something which affects the political, economic and cultural development of the entire region. Given this situation and according to humanitarian organizations, there is an incipient local activism that fights for the empowerment of women⁵⁹. Among others, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) or the Alternative for the Advancement and Protection of Women's Rights (WRAPA) stand out⁶⁰.

Despite this, the victims of sexual violence who manage to escape from Boko Haram must also, and often alone, deal with physical and psychological consequences, in addition to facing social stigma. As a consequence of their difficulties in reintegrating into the community⁶¹, the socioeconomic structure of the region, especially the economic activities traditionally attributed to women is being affected. In this regard, the International Crisis Group emphasizes that agriculture and retail have experienced a strong productive decline⁶². A widespread environment of terror and insecurity that not only weakens family ties⁶³, but also breaks social trust in the State and urges the civilian population to leave their homes and even to cross borders in search of a new life.

⁵⁸ ACNUR. Nigeria situation 2017, Supplementary appeal, July 2017, pp. 7-8. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/597704b87.pdf>. Date consulted: 12/06/2019

⁵⁹ VILLELLAS ARIÑO, Op. Cit. 47, p. 12.

⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, Op. Cit. 9, p. 11.

⁶¹ According to the International Crisis Group there is a generalized atmosphere of tension that, in some cases, is materialized in a series of fears, such as the possible evil inside the son whose father is a member of Boko Haram. International Crisis Group, Op. Cit. 9, p. 15. In addition, the cultural values associated with the sexuality of women generate a feeling of dishonour in the family that sometimes leads to the rejection of women. MAAROUF, Op. Cit. 32, p. 47.

⁶² International Crisis Group, Op. Cit. 9, p. iv.

⁶³ According to Villellas Ariño, the main damage intended to cause in the community is made through the breaking of the chain of honour, which goes on generation to generation through women. VILLELLAS ARIÑO, Op. Cit. 47, p. 9.

In conclusion: recommendations to eradicate sexual violence

Paradoxically, the exclusion and lack of empowerment of Nigerian women in the political, economic and cultural spheres reduces their social role to motherhood, and, at the same time, it increases their vulnerability to the terror of Boko Haram. Since 2009, this terrorist group has exploited women with spurious objectives, among which sexual violence stands out as part of their attempt to establish a Salafist Islamic caliphate, based on the most radical reading of Sharia.

The effectiveness of this terror tactics lies in its transversal impact as a weapon of terror. Thereby, both their ideological perspectives and the jihadist strategy come together in Boko Haram's motives and actions; they are not only aimed at despising and exploiting females, but also at attempting to stimulate a sense of humiliation and dishonour in men. The shame caused provokes an enormous tension within the community and consequently, the fracture of the social contract between the State and the population in northern Nigeria. Additionally, this scenario of insecurity increases conflict as well as instigates forced displacements both inside and outside the country.

Given the importance of the matter, the civilian population, the Nigerian state and the international community need to take responsibility for addressing this issue in all its dimensions and diminish –and eventually eliminate– the effectiveness of this crucial tactic in the achievement of Boko Haram aspirations. In this regard, the annex to this document contains different proposals for action with recommendations to address this tragic reality.

Starting with the Nigerian government, they must strengthen the social contract with the northern people and in particular, they must fight against the prevailing gender inequality. Measures such as the protection of the domestic economy and women's entrepreneurship, the promotion of access to education or women's participation in politics are, among others, pressing policies so as to build a scenario of confidence in the prevention and protection of women against sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

This national commitment must also be evident not only through speeches and official communiqués, but also over multiple initiatives that promote awareness within the community about the empowerment of women. Moreover, it is essential to support civil campaigns aimed at breaking myths that cause terror and hinder the process of reintegration of women who were the victims of sexual violence, as well as children born from relations with a Boko Haram member. Also, it would be advantageous to give a voice and support the leaders of Islamic civil associations, so that they can broadcast lectures of the Quran that encourage gender equality and in particular, promote respect for women's reproductive and sexual rights.

Also, the gender perspective should be a priority whenever security issues are addressed. The reinforcement of the “Safe Schools Initiative” of the government must be accompanied by a protocol of action for the security forces in preventing the kidnap of women and children during the assaults of Boko Haram in markets, churches and towns. At the same time, it is essential to foster a conception of femininity away from passiveness⁶⁴, specifically both the Nigerian government and the rest of the international actors present at the conflict must offer a space for women in the peace process; for example, as gender advisors, designers of strategies to combat Boko Haram, or mediators in ceasefire negotiations, in order to promote the agreed rescue of women. Finally, it is essential to offer a safe space where victims who are willing to participate in the fight against impunity for crimes against humanity and war can testify with no pressure of reprisal.

⁶⁴ VILLELLAS ARIÑO, Op. Cit. 47, p. 13.

In conclusion, stability in the Lake Chad region requires an inclusive, firm and effective response from state institutions and different civil societies that, along with the unavoidable support of the international community, would improve the vital conditions of the entire population, especially the most vulnerable survival in the social structure in these countries, women and children. Taking all of this into consideration would provide a considerable advantage in the fight against Boko Haram, whose eradication requires actions far beyond the security field. Concerning the human drama that is the focus of this analysis and argued by Elisabeth Wood, we must not forget that sexual violence is not an inevitable consequence of conflict⁶⁵. In order to achieve this, we must strengthen a social scenario where the appreciation of the female body never derives in its exploitation.

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⁶⁵ WOOD, Op. Cit. 43, p. 53.

Table 1: Suggestions to reduce the effectiveness of a terrorist tactic based on violence due to reasons of gender in the Nigerian context.

Source: own creation.

SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLES	MAIN LINES OF ACTION	EXPECTED GOALS
<p>Distrust in any State's effort when managing the situation of gender inequality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To develop legal protection of the domestic economy. This should include the promotion of entrepreneurship of Nigerian women (by financing, counselling, etc.). •To promote female participation in electoral processes and political affairs. •To reinforce the Ministry of Women's Affairs as the main platform of dialogue at the national level on gender equality (development of public programs for access to education, politics and private property). 	<p>The creation of a scenario of social reconciliation, with a strong general commitment to the political, economic and social development of the country.</p> <p>The reparation of social contract so the Nigerian government recovers its legitimacy to deal with the multiple crises that bane Nigeria.</p>

SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLES	MAIN LINES OF ACTION	EXPECTED GOALS
<p>Femininity concept. As long as women continue to be perceived in the conflict environment as passive, fragile and inactive, Nigerians will continue to be used in the conflict.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To design inclusive speeches and official announcements that exposes the situation of women living in the northwest of the country. • To create initiatives of awareness and women empowerment. • To design campaigns aimed at “breaking myths,” such as the belief that children born of a relationship with a Boko Haram member does inherit the father's ideology. • To encourage the participation of Islamic leaders and Islamic civil associations that disseminates a reading of the Quran that promotes gender equality and in particular, respect for women's reproductive and sexual rights. 	<p>The mitigation of the social construction about femininity linked to passivity and fragility. In addition, the establishment of social awareness about gender inequality.</p>
<p>Absence of a gender approach in the official response of the Nigerian government to the jihadist threat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reinforce the “Safe Schools Initiative” and design an action protocol for the security forces in the prevention of kidnapping during the assaults of Boko Haram. • To promote female participation as gender advisors when designing strategies to combat Boko Haram. Regarding the military response, it would be interesting to study the possibility of increasing female participation. 	<p>To decrease possible scenarios where women can be exploit according to their reproductive capacity or sexual objectification, while fighting directly against Boko Haram.</p>

SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLES	MAIN LINES OF ACTION	EXPECTED GOALS
Absence of a gender approach in the designing process of peace reconstruction .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase female participation in cease-fire negotiations or rescue operations for abducted women and girls. • To facilitate female participation when fighting against impunity for crimes against humanity and war. 	The creation of an environment where personal development and independence of women is possible, thus favouring their inclusion in society and reducing social inequality. In addition, the mitigation of the social construction about femininity linked to passivity and fragility.
Inefficiency of the gender approach in the official response of the Nigerian government to the humanitarian crisis .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs designed for women who have suffered sexual violence at the hands of Boko Haram. • To establish evaluation programs on the displaced shelters, as well as strength the official response to inadequate services and facilities that cover the particular needs of the affected women. 	The minimizing of the stigma towards women who have suffered sexual violence and their reintegration into the community, as well as children born from relationships with a member of Boko Haram. In the long term, these measures would foster social cohesion and the development of the country itself.
Limited cooperation among States and the commitment of the international community .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain and reinforce the coalition between affected states. • To strength the support of International Organizations in relation to the gender issue. For example, offering assets to encourage the participation of women in all areas of crisis, social development and community reconstruction. 	The promotion of the gender approach in the cooperation of States for the resolution of armed conflicts.