

NATIONAL CONFLICT WATCH – FEBRUARY 2025

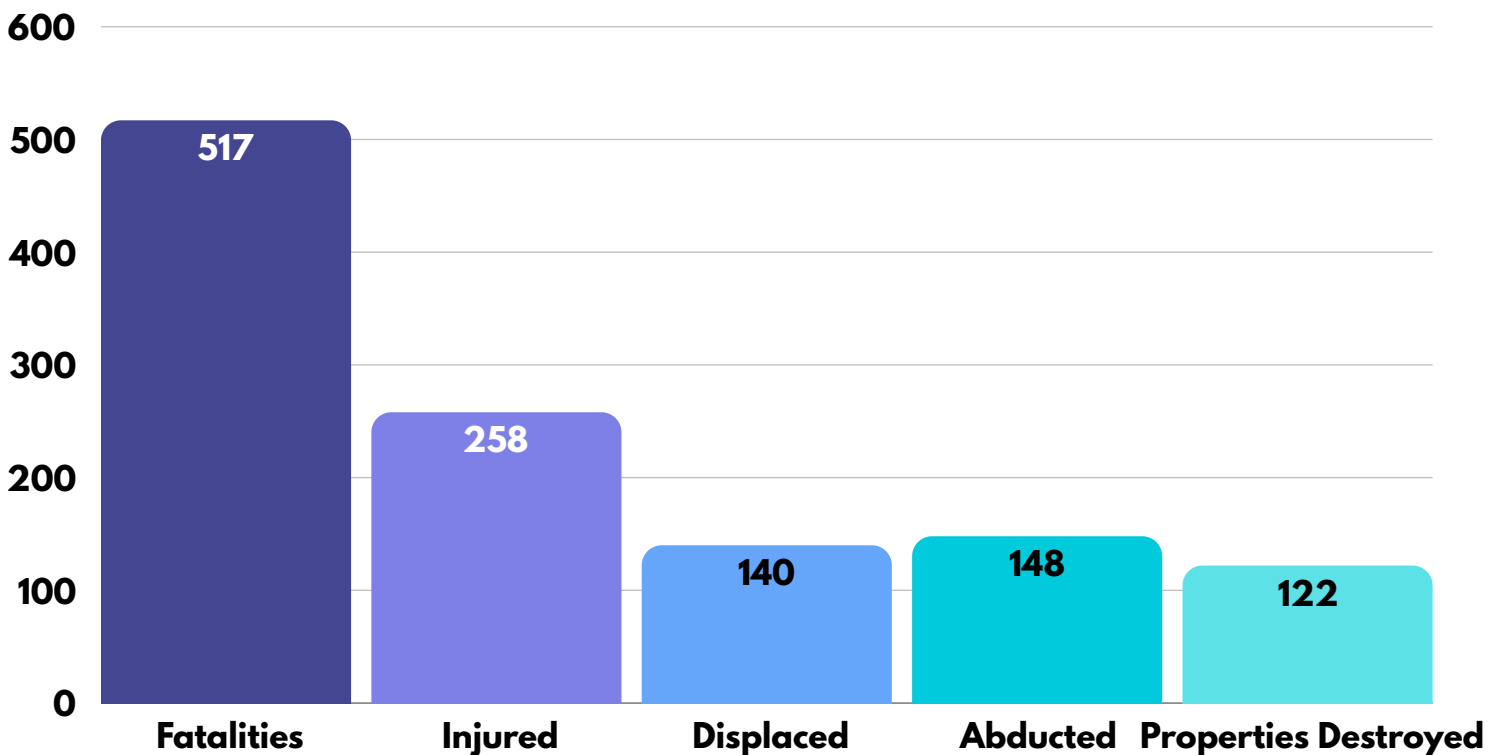
Overview

February 2025 was another turbulent month across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. The month is marked by escalating violence, insurgent attacks, communal clashes, political unrest, and targeted killings. Armed groups continued to challenge security forces, while civilians faced heightened threats from abductions, cult rivalries, and economic disruptions. Although security forces intensified counter-offensives, insurgents, militias, and criminal networks adapted and retaliated, leading to widespread insecurity. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the conflict landscape, highlighting key trends and emerging threats.

South-East: Persistent Violence Amid Communal Clashes and Armed Raids

The South-East witnessed boundary clashes, suspected herdsmen attacks, gunmen assaults, and security operations. In Abia State, a boundary clash between Ariam and Ikot Okum communities left one dead, one missing, and three injured. Ebonyi State suffered multiple attacks, including a gunmen assault in Amagu that killed 10 people, a suspected herdsmen attack in Nkalaha that left 16 dead and 25 houses burned, and a renewed land dispute in Ivo LGA, where four people were killed.

In Imo State, security forces engaged in a prolonged gun battle with IPOB and suspected kidnapers, resulting in five fatalities. The region recorded 36 deaths, three injuries, and 32 properties destroyed, with no reported abductions or arrests.





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South-South: Cult Rivalries, Abductions, and Political Unrest

The South-South saw cult clashes, mass kidnappings, and growing political tensions. Armed rivalries between Vikings, Eiyee, and Greenlanders led to multiple shootouts in Edo and Rivers, resulting in fatalities. High-profile abductions targeted Catholic priests, travelers, and entire families, particularly in Rivers and Edo. Pirates abducted 20 travelers along the Bonny-Okrika waterways, releasing only eight. Community protests erupted over oil spills in Rivers, land disputes in Delta, and NDDC appointments in Ughelli, leading to major road blockages.

Security forces were also entangled in conflicts. Police and Air Force officers clashed in Delta over the arrest of fraud suspects, while NSCDC officers killed a Bolt driver in Benin City, triggering mass protests. The deadliest cult clash occurred in Rivers, where 10 people died in a Deybam vs. Icelanders war in Obelle.

South-West: Political Violence, Abductions, and Cult Conflicts

The South-West continued to grapple with electoral violence, cult rivalries, mob justice, and rising abductions. Political clashes between APC and PDP supporters in Osun led to multiple fatalities, with violent incidents recorded in Iragbiji, Agba, and Ikire. Tensions were further fueled by attacks on campaign offices and rival supporters.

Mass protests erupted across Lagos, Ondo, and Oyo over electricity issues, salary disputes, and governance failures. In Ondo, protesters set fire to a police station following an alleged extrajudicial killing.

Kidnappings remained a serious threat. Seven travelers were abducted along the Owo-Ipele-Benin highway, while police raids in Ondo and Lagos led to the rescue of hostages and recovery of arms. Mob violence also surged, with an estate in Lagos attacked by a mob attempting to apprehend a suspected kidnapper.

North-Central: Militia Attacks and Rising Insecurity

The North-Central region remained plagued by militia violence, farmer-herder clashes, and abductions. In Benue, suspected Fulani gunmen killed six people in Logo LGA, while militants in Shiroro, Niger, attacked villages, causing mass displacement.

Abductions surged, with the Munya LGA Secretary and his family kidnapped in Niger, and gunmen in Kotonkarfe, Kogi, executing two hostages over ransom delays. Protests also erupted, with students shutting down Federal University Lokoja for three days after a deadly accident killed five students.

Security forces launched airstrikes against Niger-based militias in Alawa Forest (Shiroro), eliminating at least 10 fighters. In another operation, troops killed a notorious militia leader in Barkin Ladi, Plateau.

North-East: Insurgent Battles and Tactical Adaptation

The North-East experienced intensifying insurgent attacks and counteroffensives. A major Boko Haram vs. ISWAP battle in Abadam, Borno, left 31 ISWAP fighters dead, deepening the power struggle between the factions.

Security forces were heavily targeted. Six personnel were killed in multiple engagements, while troops eliminated 17 insurgents in Borno, seizing AK-47s, RPGs, and armor-piercing ammunition. Insurgents ambushed military units in Gwoza, capturing two gun trucks, and strengthening their mobility and firepower.

Civilians suffered heavily. At least 27 people were abducted, including a medical professional in Adamawa and 14 fishermen in Borno—the latter released after a ransom payment. A village head was assassinated in Ngala, part of insurgents' ongoing strategy to undermine local governance.

Despite these threats, 1,542 refugees voluntarily returned to Banki, Borno, from Chad, reflecting growing confidence in security improvements, though vulnerabilities persist.

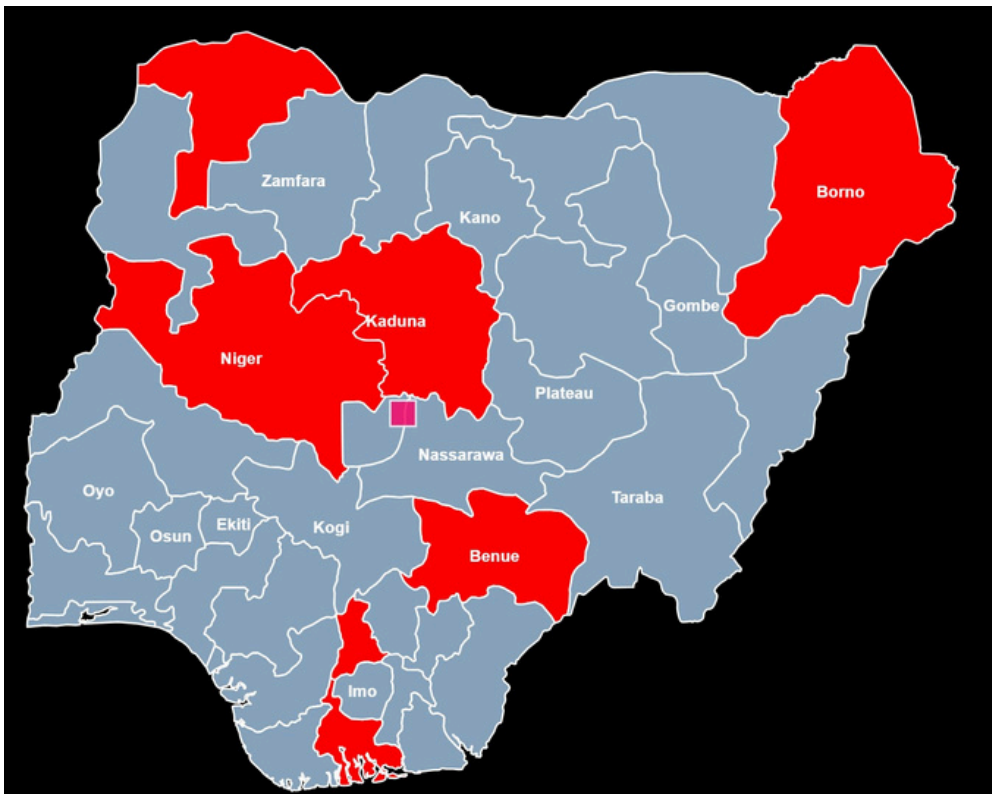
North-West: Militia Raids, Government Crackdowns, and Civil Unrest

The North-West saw sustained banditry and militia violence, security operations, and public unrest. Armed groups escalated attacks in Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna, prompting military counteroffensives.

A major airstrike in Zurmi, Zamfara, on February 7 killed up to 50 militia members, while on February 17, troops overran a Katsina militia camp, eliminating a gang leader. However, militias retaliated. In Safana, Katsina, three police officers were ambushed and killed, while in Sokoto, six community guards were slain in Sabon Birni.

Religious leaders were also targeted. A Zamfara militia abducted a chief imam in Maru, triggering mass protests, while in Sokoto, ten worshippers, including an imam, were kidnapped from a mosque. Civil unrest spiked as Kaduna residents blocked roads on February 12 in response to rising militia attacks. In Zamfara, enraged residents set fire to an Emir's palace following the abduction of a religious leader.

CONFLICT HOTSPOTS



Conclusion

February 2025 reinforced Nigeria's worsening security crisis, as insurgents, militias, and criminal networks continued to challenge state authority. Communal clashes, banditry, insurgent ambushes, political unrest, and mass abductions remained persistent threats. Security forces achieved some tactical victories, but retaliatory attacks and increasing sophistication among armed groups indicate protracted instability.

Early Warning

The ongoing insurgent rivalries in the North-East, rising political tensions in the South-West, and worsening militia violence in the North-West point to a high-risk security environment in the coming months. The persistent abduction of religious leaders, cult clashes in the South-South, and unresolved land disputes in the North-Central and South-East suggest potential escalation. Strengthened intelligence gathering, community engagement, and coordinated security interventions are critical to mitigating these threats and preventing further violence.

WEAPONS RECOVERED

AK-49 Rifle: 1

RPG Bombs: 4

12.7 x 108mm Armor-Piercing Rounds: 920

7.62mm Special Rounds: 86

5.6mm Rounds: 14

AK-47 Magazines: 7

English-Made Pistol: 1

Daggers, Cutlasses, Jack Knives: 76+

AK-47 rifles: 29+

G3 rifles: 2

Dane guns: 3+

Magazines: 8+

Rounds of ammunition: 62+ (7.62mm special and NATO rounds)

Locally made rifles: 6

RPGs seized: Unspecified

Locally made rifles: 4