

Boko Haram Insurgency and the Violation of Regional Human Rights Norms in Nigeria: An Analysis of the African Charter

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Submitted: 2026, Apr 27; Accepted: 2026, Jun 03; Published: 2026, Jun 15

Citation: Boniface U. E. (2026). Boko Haram Insurgency and the Violation of Regional Human Rights Norms in Nigeria: An Analysis of the African Charter. *Int J Digital Journalism*, 2(1), 01–15.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on regional human rights norms in Nigeria, with a focus on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. It specifically examines the type and extent of human rights abuses perpetrated by Boko Haram between 2020 and 2026, identifies the specific Charter provisions violated, and evaluates the effectiveness of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in addressing these abuses. The study, which employed a qualitative research technique, required a documentary analysis of secondary sources, including scholarly articles, human rights reports, media outlets, and official documents from regional organizations like the ACHPR. SWOT and PESTEL analyses were used to contextualize the findings within broader institutional and environmental contexts. The results show that Boko Haram consistently and systematically violates human rights through attacks on places of worship and education, mass killings, kidnappings, and forced displacement. Key African Charter rights, including the rights to life, dignity, education, freedom of speech, and peaceful assembly, were violated by these crimes. Despite issuing policy recommendations and public denunciations, the ACHPR's weak enforcement authority seriously impeded its ability to provide responsibility and restitution. The analysis comes to the conclusion that Boko Haram's actions highlighted institutional flaws in Africa's regional human rights enforcement system in addition to weakening Nigeria's human rights safeguards. It recommends strengthening the ACHPR's mission, integrating human rights principles into counterterrorism frameworks, strengthening domestic implementation of the African Charter, and establishing extensive victim assistance services.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Human Rights Violations, African Charter, ACHPR, Insurgency, Freedom of Expression, Documentary Analysis, Nigeria

1. Introduction

In the global human rights discussion, the execution of pledges has taken the role of standard-setting, underscoring the need for an updated protection system capable of addressing emerging concerns throughout the continent. Modern African Union (AU) institutions have been under increasing pressure to enhance and mainstream human rights protections since the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in 1981 [1]. Ongoing conflicts in countries like Burundi and the Central African Republic continue to generate new violations, straining existing protective mechanisms. The persistent breaches of fundamental rights enshrined in Africa's primary human rights treaties raise questions

about the commitment of African states to uphold and safeguard these rights, especially when national systems are either incapable or unwilling to act [2].

The most recent of the three regional legal or quasi-judicial human rights frameworks is the African human rights system, which was created under the AU. Its commission and court have complimentary duties, just like the InterAmerican and original European systems. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) evaluate how well states adhere to human rights standards, including how

they handle specific complaints. Everybody has unique abilities and purposes. This regional framework is based on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, sometimes called the Banjul Charter, which was ratified by most OAU member states and went into force on October 21, 1986.

In Nigeria, peace and security have been adversely affected by the Boko Haram conflict, which has led to previously unheard-of levels of bloodshed and instability. Because of the possibility of assaults, kidnappings, or abductions, many citizens are terrified to leave their houses or bring their kids to school. Since the Nigerian Civil War, the group has caused more violence than any other group [3]. Boko Haram's sophisticated approach, which disrupts daily life and endangers public safety, has grown to encompass individuals after first targeting security officials [4,5].

Boko Haram and its supporters, including the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), persisted in their terrorist activities between 2020 and 2026, causing forced relocations, mass murders, sexual assaults, property devastation, and denial of access to basic services like education. Most victims of these crimes, which are blatant breaches of international human rights law as well as the African Charter, are civilians, especially women and children [6]. Given this, the study assesses the effectiveness of contemporary human rights frameworks and, by looking at this historical period, pinpoints any flaws in methods of protection and enforcement [7].

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Boko Haram has increased its deadly actions in Northern Nigeria in spite of counterterrorism efforts, particularly between 2020 and 2026. According to the African Charter, the group's actions—mass kidnappings, infrastructure damage, and forced relocations—amount to serious human rights crimes. Communities, local economies, education, and democratic government have all been harmed by these attacks [8]. The problem has been made worse by claims that Nigeria's security forces have engaged in extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary detentions. The persistence of these violations despite existing legal frameworks highlights the discrepancy between policy and practice. This study, therefore, investigates the disappointment of the African human rights system during the Boko Haram insurgency from 2020 to 2026, aiming to identify weaknesses and propose strategies for improved protection [9,10].

1.2. Objective of the Study

- To investigate the nature and extent of human rights violations committed by Boko Haram groups in Nigeria.
- To analyze the specific ways in which Boko Haram's activities have undermined the fundamental rights enshrined in the ACHPR.
- To assess the extent the ACHPR has effectively addressed human rights violations resulting from the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Conceptual Literature

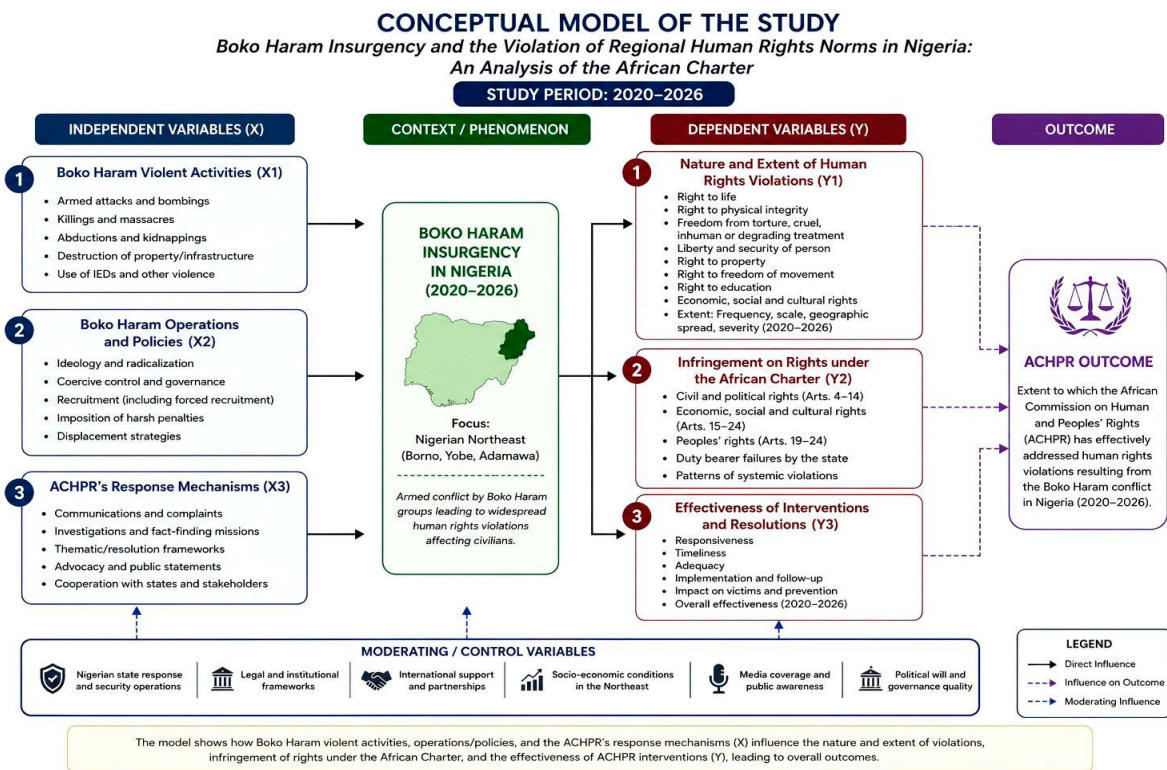


Figure 1: Author's Conceptual Model, 2026

2.2. Boko Haram Insurgency

Insurgency is a long-term, methodical conflict that is carried out to accomplish particular intermediate objectives that ultimately result in the overthrow of the current order [6]. Insurgency is the organised use of violence and subversion to seize, overthrow, or contest political authority in an area in the United States Counter-Insurgency Guide. The purpose of insurgency is to topple or undermine the government and gain total or partial authority over the people and resources of a region [7]. They accomplish this by using political mobilisation, propaganda, subversion, and force (including terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and coercion/intimidation). When non-ruling organisations inside a state are incapable of using conventional methods to accomplish their political objectives, they may resort to insurgency as a tactic [8]. Insurgent groups' primary goal is to undermine the current administration and increase their popularity.

The primary political driving force behind the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is the terrorists' ambition to establish an Islamic State under Sharia law in lieu of the Nigerian State, especially in the Muslim-dominated Northern region. The Qur'an, the foundation of Sharia law, governs both private and public behavior [9]. In contrast to what the Muslim populace wants, Boko

Haram believes that the problems of corruption, bad governance, and Western influence may be resolved via the establishment of a rigid Sharia-compliant Islamic State. The gang has used all kinds of guerrilla warfare and brutality against the government and populace since declaring emergency in an effort to overthrow Nigerian institutions that they believe to be corrupt and Western-influenced.

The group's hostility towards the government of Nigeria is unprecedented in the nation's insurgent history. Boko Haram has intimidated opponents and killed people by using bombs to launch assaults on targets in the West or the government. During raids on towns and villages, its militants have massacred citizens, attacked and kidnapped educators and students, conscripted men and boys against their will, abducted at least 2000 young ladies and girls, and compelled several of them to enter married, set fire to homes and schools. With many victims still missing, the kidnapping of more than 200 girls from Chibok Secondary School in Borno State on April 14, 2014, is still a striking illustration of the group's depravity. Between 20,000 and 35,000 killings have been attributed to Boko Haram since its founding in 2002, with the majority of those deaths taking place after 2009 [10].

S/N	State	Date	Incident Description	Estimated Fatalities	Nature of Destruction	Source
1	Borno State	June 13, 2020	ISIS-WA fighters attacked Monguno and Goni Usmanti communities, targeting civilians and military personnel.	Over 58 persons killed	Military vehicles destroyed and civilian properties damaged	BBC News Pidgin (2020)
2	Borno State	August 18, 2020	ISIS-WA insurgents attacked Kukawa town and abducted more than 100 residents.	Fatalities not clearly reported	Security facilities attacked and mass kidnapping recorded	BBC News Pidgin (2020)
3	Borno State	November 28, 2020	Koshebe massacre in which Boko Haram militants killed rice farmers working on farmlands.	About 110 persons killed	Farmlands destroyed and 15 women abducted	Wikipedia – Koshebe Massacre (2020) Wikipedia – Koshebe Massacre (2020)
4	Yobe State	October 30–31, 2023	Gurokayeya attacks involving raids on villages and attacks during a funeral procession using landmines.	About 37 persons killed	Villages attacked and vehicles destroyed by explosives	Wikipedia – 2023 Yobe State Attacks
5	Borno State	April 24, 2024	ISWAP fighters launched coordinated armed attacks on villages and security formations.	About 85 persons killed	Villages razed and infrastructure damaged	Punch Nigeria (2024); GTI Report (2025)
6	Borno State	May 26, 2024	Jihadist militants carried out armed assaults on civilian communities in Borno State.	About 30 persons killed	Residential properties and public facilities damaged	Punch Nigeria (2024)
7	Borno State	June 29, 2024	Suicide bomb attacks in Gwoza targeted a wedding ceremony, hospital, and civilian gathering areas.	About 32 persons killed	Hospital facilities and civilian properties damaged	Wikipedia – Koshebe Massacre (2020)
8	Borno State	July 31, 2024	Konduga market bombing by suspected Boko Haram suicide attackers in a crowded marketplace.	About 19 persons killed	Market infrastructure destroyed and several civilians injured	Wikipedia – Boko Haram Insurgency
9	Yobe State	September 1, 2024	Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgents launched coordinated assaults on rural communities in Yobe State.	About 100 persons killed	Houses, shops, and public infrastructure destroyed	Punch Nigeria (2024); GTI Report (2025)

10	Yobe State	September 3, 2024	Tarmuwa massacre in which IS militants attacked villagers, worshippers, and farmers.	About 130 persons killed	Homes, schools, and shops looted and burned	Wikipedia – Tarmuwa Massacre
11	Borno State	January 14, 2025	Lake Chad massacre involving execution of farmers and fishermen in Dumba by jihadist groups.	Between 40 and over 100 persons killed	Fishing and farming communities destabilized	Wikipedia – List of Massacres in Nigeria
12	Borno State	2025 (Various Dates)	Renewed Boko Haram suicide bombings and attacks on civilian gatherings across northeastern Nigeria.	At least 12 persons killed in major incidents	Markets, settlements, and residential buildings destroyed	Human Rights Watch (2025)
13	Borno State	September 5, 2025	Boko Haram militants attacked Darul Jamal community during a night raid operation.	Over 60 persons killed	Homes set ablaze and mass displacement recorded	Wikipedia contributors (2025).
14	Borno State	October 2025	Boko Haram insurgents captured Kirawa border town near Cameroon and attacked military installations.	Several persons killed	Military barracks, palace, and civilian homes destroyed; over 5,000 persons displaced	Wikipedia contributors (2025).
15	Borno State	January 29, 2026	Suspected Boko Haram/ISWAP fighters attacked Sabon Gari community and targeted construction workers and soldiers.	Between 20 and 60 persons killed	Construction sites and nearby settlements destroyed	Wikipedia contributors. (2026).
16	Borno State	March 2026	Coordinated attacks were launched on Nigerian military bases in Kukawa and neighboring communities.	At least 14 persons including soldiers killed	Military facilities and operational equipment destroyed	GeneralCarlosQ17. (2026)

Source: Author's Compilation (2026) from secondary sources.

Table 1: Summary of Major Boko Haram and ISWAP Attacks in Nigeria (2020–2026)

2.3. Human Right

The concept of human rights is extremely complicated since it lacks a precise definition. Several academics have attempted to define or conceptualize the word "human rights" in a number of ways [11]. Examining the main patterns in the many perspectives on human rights is enough. In general, human rights are intrinsic and fundamental to human nature and are vital to the manifestation of individuality and humanity, without which no one could exist as a person [12-14].

Donnelly (2007), they are unchangeable natural laws that cannot be acquired or taken away. As a result, human rights are international in the knowledge that everyone believes in principles. Human rights are those that represent the demands or assertions made by individuals or groups on behalf of society; some of them are legally protected and included in *lex lata*, while others are still aspirations that will eventually be realized [15,16]. Among these fundamental rights are the freedoms of thinking, speech, and life, in addition to the right to legal equality. These rights stand for the government's entitlements to the individual or groups and/or the individual's obligations. Since these rights are granted "naturally," it is impossible to take them away because of a person's gender, race, creed, or ethnicity.

According to UNOHCHR (2019), human rights encompass all of an individual's rights regardless of their national or social origin, property, birth, race, color, sex, language, religion, political views, or any other status. Human rights legislation protects both persons

and communities from acts that violate their basic liberties and diminish their self-respect. Conventions, principles, established international legislation; along with other legal sources all express human rights. Human rights legislation forbids states from participating in specific activities and requires them to act in a certain manner. Everyone is treated equally and without prejudice when it comes to human rights. Respecting certain human rights while disregarding others is not enough. divided human rights into three more general categories, although only two of them apply in this context [17].

- (i) Social and Classic Rights: although the state must provide some guarantees under social rights, classical rights entail a responsibility for the state to refrain from certain behaviors. The freedoms of association, expression, and assembly, a few examples of traditional rights that are covered by both civil and political rights include the right to a fair trial.
- (ii) Civil and Political: Civil rights include the protections against physical violence, such as the rights to life, liberty, and personal security. These include protections from brutal treatment and torture, arbitrary detention and arrest, interference with one's property and private rights, and restrictions on one's freedom of movement, freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion.

In general, political rights encompass the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly; participation in national governance; and voting and being elected. It is implied that there has been a breach if any of these rights are disregarded, ignored, or

contradicted by the acts or inactions of stakeholders.

Any activity that violates or breaches a rule, a contract, a concept, or anything that deserves respect is considered a violation [18]. It is any behavior that disregards a significant principle. Any act that disregards the law is considered a violation, and violations typically result in fines or punishments; however, the severity of the transgressions or misdeeds perpetrated and the legal provisions determine the penalties or punishments.

However, according to, the act of disregarding the freedoms guaranteed by national, regional, or international legislation. Human rights violations are when someone violates the law or does anything that goes against what the law considers to be a respect for human rights [19]. It is the failure to uphold the legal obligations to protect human rights. Therefore, when this is involved, both action and inactivity may be regarded as breaches of human rights. A violation occurs when a state, its representatives, or non-state actors, including private individuals, violate, disregard, or deny fundamental human rights, such as civil, political, cultural, social, and economic rights, or when they breach any clause of widely accepted human rights treaties and agreements. Human rights are not unrestricted, though, because they must be exercised with respect and concern for the rights of others. Everybody will only be bound by the legal limitations imposed to guarantee that the rights and liberties of others are appropriately acknowledged and upheld, as well as to meet the legitimate requirements of public order, morality, and general welfare.

2.4. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights led to the creation of the ACHPR. The Commission formally started operating in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on November 2, 1987, a year after the African Charter went into force. The Commission presently reports to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, with its headquarters located in Banjul, Gambia. The organization is responsible for keeping an eye on the rights outlined in the African Charter [20]. Its responsibilities include visiting nations, passing resolutions and declarations, reviewing national reports on human rights conditions that each state must submit every other year, and making decisions about communications or complaints from member states, individuals, and non-governmental organizations. The African commission has established a system of "special measures" to carry out its mandate, including working groups that monitor and investigate specific issues pertaining to the commission's work and Special Rapporteurs to whom specific allegations of human rights violations in specific areas may be brought. In addition to being a great marketing tactic, this approach has given the commission a greater understanding of how well human rights are upheld throughout the continent. Its six special rapporteurs are now working on issues including human rights defenders, freedom of expression and information access, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, prisons and sites of detention in Africa, and women's rights in Africa [20].

In addition to any other responsibilities that the Assembly of Heads of State and Government may designate, the African Charter expressly assigns the commission the following tasks: promoting human and peoples' rights; safeguarding those rights in accordance with the Charter's requirements; and providing interpretation of the African Charter upon request from a state party, AU institution, or African group recognized by the AU. Article 45(1)(c) mandates that the commission collaborate with other international and African organizations that support and defend human and peoples' rights. Collaboration with organizations like the Inter-American Commission, Inter-American Court on Human Rights, and other national and international human rights organizations has been sought in order to accomplish this. The commission's working connections with national human rights organizations and NGOs have improved, and more state representatives and other stakeholders now attend its sessions. According to the rules of procedure, these groups are allowed to attend commission meetings.

2.5. Human Rights Violations in Nigerian Society

One of the nations where reports of violations of human rights are common is Nigeria and occurs in practically every aspect of daily life. Some of Nigeria's often violated human rights are listed below.

Unlawful infringement of First-Generation Rights and other civil, political, and moral rights;

Akhaine and Chizea (2011) claim those threats, killings, the undemocratic intrusion of political candidates, and the significant financial support of the prebendal political milieu all amounted to abuses of Nigerians' political rights. Here are some specific examples of violations of civil, political, and moral rights:

- Abuse of Right to Life: Torture and extrajudicial executions by government security personnel are the main examples of this human rights violation.
- Abuse of Right to Freedom of Movement: Kidnappings and disappearances, which have been on the rise in Nigeria, are examples of human rights violations. Kidnappings in Abia State, especially those of women, children, and other civilians, have made the situation worse [21].
- Abuse of Right to Freedom of Religion: In defiance of Nigeria's secularity clause, cleric fanatics have repeatedly violated human rights [22,23]. iv. Violation of the Right to Free Assembly: Anti-administration protests and rallies are frequently suppressed by the Nigerian government. It is unfortunate to observe that the Nigerian government has consistently neglected to confront these violations of human rights and bring those responsible to justice.

Economic, social, and cultural rights (second generation rights) are unlawfully violated; The following are the rights of citizens that are violated by these types of human rights abuses:

- Abuse of the Right to Education: Unfortunately, corruption, bribery, and nepotism are all detrimental vices in Nigeria's educational system, even if education is the finest instrument

for influencing national progress. However, the university council believed that some Nigerian states had less access to education and that not all Nigerians have equal access to admission to some state-owned universities. Nigerian people are in fact required to get free education in accordance with the Fundamental Goals and Directing Principles of State Policy; but, in reality, tuition is still required for students in some states and federal institutions where this has been applied.

- **Violations of the Right to Standard of Living:** It is unfortunate to observe that the level of corruption in public services is the reason for this violation. In general, corruption has permeated every aspect of Nigerian life. It is a violation of citizens' rights to have dishonest governmental servants.

Illicit Violation of Community Rights or Solidarity (Third Generation Rights);

- **Abuse of Right to Clean and Healthy Environment:** The right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment has been denied to some groups in Nigerian society. For example, environmental rights violations are contributing to the violence in the Niger-Delta area. also bemoaned the conditions of abuse, exploitation, neglect, injury, and hardship that vulnerable children and orphans in Nigeria had to endure [24]. ii. **Jail and Prisoner Rights:** The jail system in Nigeria is an absolute nightmare. After completing their sentences, those who leave it seldom undergo reform; instead, they become recalcitrant recidivists. The high number of inmates awaiting trial is one of the issues facing Nigeria's prison system. Due to a lack of jail infrastructure, this inevitably results in cell congestion [25]. The prisoners' human rights are being flagrantly violated by these conditions. Similarly, the lack of cars to transport inmates to court and the lack of health facilities hinder their ability to receive proper medical treatment. iii. **Abuse of the Right to Self-Determination:** The majority of agitators from various ethnic groups in Nigeria have been in the forefront of the fight for freedom or self-determination. The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign States of Biafra (MASSOB), the Niger Delta people, and others has made this right to self-determination their main cause.

2.6. Theoretical Literature

Although armed conflicts and human rights abuses in Africa can be analysed using a variety of theories, the Human Needs Theory (HNT), developed by John Burton in 1990, serves as the basis for theory of this investigation. Regarding its effects on human rights, the reaction of state and non-state actors, and the function of regional human rights bodies, HNT provides an engaging prism through which to view the bloody and ongoing conflict in Nigeria that is spearheaded by Boko Haram.

According to Burton's Needs Theory, people are motivated by a number of basic, non-negotiable wants, including autonomy, security, identity, acknowledgement, and involvement, all of which, if ignored, will unavoidably result in conflict. These human demands are existential in nature and cannot be exchanged or disregarded, in contrast to material interests that may be discussed or compromised. People or groups may turn to violence as a last option to affirm their humanity, restore their dignity, or regain their feeling of belonging when their needs are consistently ignored or neglected.

Human wants are Non-Negotiable and Universal: Burton makes the assumption that all people, regardless of their culture, nationality, or geography, have basic wants including identification, security, acknowledgement, autonomy, and involvement. These needs are necessary for human existence and dignity; they are not merely wants or preferences.

Extended Conflicts Are Caused by Unmet Human Needs: According to the hypothesis, when people or groups are denied access to these necessities, long-lasting and deeply ingrained conflicts (such as the Boko Haram insurgency) result. Affected groups may turn to violence or revolt when their demands are consistently ignored or violated, particularly by governmental actors or prevailing social structures.

Traditional Conflict Resolution Techniques Are Not Enough: According to HNT, conventional approaches to conflict resolution, including compromise, negotiation, or power-sharing, frequently fall short because they focus on surfacelevel concerns (such territory or resources) rather than the fundamental needs of people. Only by meeting these fundamental needs can there be true peace.

Human Behavior Is Needs-Driven, Not Rational-Interest-Driven: HNT makes the assumption that individuals are motivated more by their existential and psychological needs than by financial gain, in contrast to rational choice theories that see human behavior as based on cost-benefit analyses. As a result, violent acts frequently reflect intense psychological or identity-based resentment.

This theory is especially applicable to Nigeria, where socioeconomic, political, and historical injustices have exacerbated a sense of exclusion and marginalization among many populations, especially in the northeast, where Boko Haram first appeared. Extremist beliefs have thrived in Nigeria because to the government's ongoing inability to address systemic issues including poverty, bad governance, restricted educational opportunities, and religious marginalization.

2.7. Empirical Literature

Author(s) / Year	Key Focus / Objective	Countries / Sample	Methodology	Main Findings	Implications of Findings	Relevance to Present Study
Chidozie (2025)	Examined the experiences of young women and children affected by Boko Haram atrocities and how insurgency reshaped gender dynamics.	Nigeria; qualitative data from the International Christian Centre	Qualitative approach using overlapping identity analysis	Findings revealed that women and children experienced captivity, displacement, abuse, and survival struggles, while gender roles were reshaped under insurgency conditions.	Demonstrates the severe humanitarian and gender-based consequences of insurgency.	It highlights the human rights abuses and social consequences associated with Boko Haram activities in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.
Salihu and Shodunke (2024)	Investigated the effects of the Boko Haram-induced crisis on orphaned children in Northeastern Nigeria.	Nigeria; 308 orphaned children in Damaturu, Yobe State	Qualitative interview-based study	Children faced recruitment into armed groups, sexual exploitation, forced labour, begging, and deteriorating living conditions.	Shows that insurgency disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, especially children.	It provides evidence of violations of rights protected under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).
Lawan, Usman, and Umar (2024)	Investigated human rights abuses committed by the Joint Task Force (JTF) during counterterrorism operations.	Nigeria	Doctrinal methodology using legal materials, statutes, and case laws	The study found that the JTF committed serious human rights violations against civilians.	Calls for accountability and public disclosure of investigative reports on abuses.	It examines human rights violations arising from both insurgent and state security operations.
Nwagwu and Enwelum (2024)	Examined the implications of counterterrorism operations for human rights in Nigeria.	Nigeria	Doctrinal research approach using primary and secondary sources	Security personnel committed torture, unlawful detention, and other abuses during counterterrorism operations.	Recommended stronger implementation of anti-torture laws and training on protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs).	It assesses how responses to Boko Haram insurgency can also undermine human rights protections.
Muslim (2024)	Investigated widespread human rights abuses and the sociopolitical factors sustaining them in Nigeria.	Nigeria	Qualitative research methodology	Findings showed persistent human rights violations in Northeastern Nigeria due to insecurity, inequality, and weak governance.	Suggests the need for judicial reforms, accountability, and security sector reforms.	It explains structural conditions enabling rights violations linked to insurgency.
U.S. Department of State (2023)	Reported on the human rights situation in Nigeria, focusing on abuses by Boko Haram, ISWAP, and other armed groups.	Nigeria	Human rights monitoring and reporting	Findings showed widespread killings, kidnappings, torture, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and recruitment of child soldiers.	Demonstrates the continued deterioration of human rights and regional security.	It provides recent evidence of violations of ACHPR-protected rights caused by insurgent activities.
Mamman (2020)	Examined public policy responses to Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.	Nigeria; 12 public policy professionals	Qualitative case study using interviews and archival records	Effective counterinsurgency requires coordinated policy implementation among Nigerian authorities.	Highlights the importance of policy collaboration in combating insurgency.	It assesses institutional responses to insurgency and their effectiveness.
Idu (2019)	Investigated the political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.	Nigeria	Literature-based qualitative study using secondary data	Boko Haram insurgency weakened political stability, national security, and economic development in Nigeria.	Indicates the inability of the Nigerian government to effectively contain insurgency.	It demonstrates the broader consequences of insurgency on governance and rights protection.
Anazor (2018)	Assessed the effectiveness of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in enforcing human rights in Africa.	Africa	Comparative and doctrinal analysis	The ACHPR faced limitations due to weak enforcement powers and lack of binding authority.	Weak institutional capacity undermines effective regional human rights protection.	Highly relevant because the present study evaluates the effectiveness of the ACHPR in addressing Boko Haram-related violations.

United Nations (2015)	Investigated abuses and violations committed by Boko Haram and their impact on human rights in affected countries.	Nigeria and neighbouring countries affected by Boko Haram	Human rights investigation and documentation	Findings revealed rape, torture, abductions, killings, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and use of child soldiers.	Such violations may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.	It directly links Boko Haram insurgency with violations of international and regional human rights norms.
Adetoro and Omiyefa (2014)	Investigated the problem of human rights violations in Nigeria and threats to human dignity.	Nigeria	Conceptual and analytical study	The study found widespread torture, unlawful detention, police brutality, kidnappings, and abuse of citizens' rights.	Highlights the weak protection of human dignity and constitutional rights in Nigeria.	It provides a broader context for understanding human rights violations within Nigeria.
Source: Researcher's Compilation (2026).						

Table 2: Empirical Literature Review

2.8. Gap in Literature

The majority of current publications ignore the legal aspects of these transgressions and the related responses of governmental actors in favor of a wide focus on insurgency and displacement. SWOT and PESTEL analyses are used to examine both internal and external elements affecting human rights enforcement in order to enhance this study. Empirical research documenting misuse trends, evaluating governmental responsibility, and assessing the efficacy of the ACHPR during this current era is lacking. This study fills these gaps by identifying specific rights violations, analyzing the Charter's protective mechanisms, and critically appraising the regional system's response. As a result, it gives African human rights study a current, fact-based legal analysis.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in documentary analysis. This approach was chosen because of the study's exploratory and analytical nature, which seeks to understand the dynamics of human rights violations within the context of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from 2020 to 2026. Qualitative research enables a thorough examination of complex social and political concerns, such as patterns of abuse,

the roles of state and nonstate actors, and institutional responses to violations resulting from conflict.

3.2. Sources of Data

Only secondary data sources, drawn from a wide range of trustworthy and respectable sources, are used in this study. Scholarly publications, policy papers, court decisions, reliable media coverage, and regional and global human rights reports (such those from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the ACHPR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) are examples of these.

3.3. Method of Data Analysis

The secondary sources included in this study were carefully chosen and include human rights reports, policy papers, academic journal articles, and legal documents. The research goals and important clauses of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights will serve as the guidelines for the manual coding method that will be applied to these sources. Thematic coding will facilitate the categorisation of content into meaningful clusters that reflect recurring issues, institutional actions, and human rights violations.

3.4. Logical Data Framework (LDF)

Research Question	Hypotheses	Major Variables	Empirical	Method of Data	Sources of Data	Method of Data Analysis
What is the nature and extent of human rights violations committed by Boko Haram groups between	There is significant pattern in the nature and extent of human	x: Boko Haram violent activities y: Nature and extent of human rights violations	Number and type of violations (killings, abductions, attacks), geographical locations, frequency, displacement figures	Documentary analysis, content analysis	Human rights reports (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch), UN Reports, media archives, academic publications	Thematic analysis, trend analysis
In what specific ways have Boko Haram's activities undermined the fundamental rights protected under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights?	Boko Haram's activities have significantly undermined the fundamental rights protected under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights between 2020 and 2026.	x: Boko Haram operations and policies y: Infringement on rights under the Charter	Documented violations of rights: right to life, education, security, freedom from torture, etc.	Content analysis, comparative analysis	African Charter, case reports, regional court decisions, academic journals	Descriptive analysis, qualitative coding
To what extent has the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights effectively addressed human rights violations resulting from the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria?	The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has not significantly addressed human rights violations resulting from the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria during the period under study.	x: Commission's response mechanisms y: Effectiveness of interventions and resolutions	Number of resolutions, fact-finding missions, enforcement outcomes, policy actions taken	Documentary review, institutional analysis	Official AU/African Commission documents, press releases, NGO reports, academic literature	Evaluation analysis, content analysis

Source: Author's Adoption, 2026

Table 3: The Logical Data Framework

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Question one and Hypothesis one

4.1.1. Nature of Human Rights Violations

- Massacres and Killings**

Up to 110 people and peasant farmers were murdered and six injured during the Koshebe massacre, which occurred on November 28, 2020, in the hamlet of Koshebe, Nigeria, in Borno State. The victims were working in rice fields in Koshebe village, which is close to the metropolis of Maiduguri in northeastern Nigeria (This Day, 2020). The Boko Haram insurgency was believed to be responsible for the incident [26]. About 15 women were also kidnapped [27]. Following that, there were reports of another massacre committed by fanatics in the Yobe State local government area of Tarmuwa, Nigeria, which claimed the lives of 130 people [28]. During the massacre, the militants posted posters threatening to carry out the similar actions against other communities that engage in "treachery" [29].

- Abductions and Forced Conversions**

In 2024 alone, there were at least 580 kidnappings or abductions of citizens, mostly women and girls, in several states. Boko Haram and other armed organisations have lately bolstered their influence by forming alliances with armed bandits [30].

- Attacks on Civilians and Infrastructure**

It was reported in June 2024 that a female suicide bomber

killed fifteen people during an attack on a wedding in Gwoza, Borno State. More people were killed in later strikes that targeted the burial and a nearby hospital [31].

4.1.2. Extent of Human Rights Violations

In northeastern Nigeria, Boko Haram has caused over 2 million people to be uprooted from their homes and over 35,000 people to be slaughtered. Millions of people are now in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the violence's destruction of villages, disruption of agriculture, and destruction of local economy (The World Hour, 2024). Thousands of refugees have fled to neighbouring nations as a result of the displacement problem, which has also spread beyond Nigeria's borders. Over 300,000 Nigerians are thought to have sought asylum in these nations, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [32]. In 2023 alone, 4,998 Christians were killed in Nigeria, with Boko Haram being a significant perpetrator of these targeted attacks [33].

According to the content analysis, Boko Haram consistently violated human rights between 2020 and 2024, as evidenced by: Targeted Massacres: Regular mass murders of civilians, especially peasants and farmers. Systematic kidnappings of women, girls, and children that frequently result in forced marriages and conversions are known as abductions. Attacks on Civilian Infrastructure: In order to increase civilian deaths and create panic, weddings,

funerals, hospitals, and schools are specifically targeted. Religious persecution is the deliberate targeting of Christian communities, which results in a high death toll and forced relocation.

According to the qualitative documentary analysis, there is a noteworthy and recurring trend in the kind and scope of Boko Haram's human rights abuses in Nigeria from 2020 to 2024. These breaches, which result in a significant death toll and relocation, include mass murders, kidnappings, assaults on civilian infrastructure, and religious persecution.

4.2. Analysis of Question two and Hypothesis two

- **Right to Life (Article 4)**

According to the Koshebe Massacre in 2020, Boko Haram has carried out several attacks that have resulted in a significant number of fatalities. For instance, the Koshebe massacre in November 2020 claimed the lives of at least 110 farmers in Borno State. Similarly, 130 civilians lost their lives in the September 2024 Tarmuwa catastrophe in Yobe State.

- **Right to Security of Person (Article 6)**

Numerous kidnappings have been carried out by the Boko Haram gang. As per Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (2025), more than 580 individuals, mostly women and girls, were abducted in several nations in 2024 alone. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (2024) reports that forced marriages and other types of exploitation are frequently the result of these kidnappings.

- **Prohibition of Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (Article 5)**

Survivors report experiencing severe violations including forced marriages and sexual assault. Additional difficulties faced by girls who escaped Boko Haram captivity were inadequate aid and illegal military imprisonment [34].

- **Right to Education (Article 17)**

According to Amnesty International (2024), attacks against schools, instructors, and students including the kidnapping of these individuals have been conducted in an attempt to prevent people especially children from receiving what Boko Haram considers to be a "Western" education. Attacks on educational facilities are a result of Boko Haram's ideology, which rejects Western education. Interestingly, more than 40 women and girls were kidnapped in Mafa, Borno State, in 2024. Access to school is seriously hampered by such acts, especially for girls.

- **Right to Freedom of Expression and Assembly (Articles 9, 10, and 11)**

Nigeria was deemed to have violated these rights during the #EndSARS demonstrations in 2020 by the ECOWAS Court, notwithstanding the fact that it was mostly attributable to state actors. Although not specifically related to Boko Haram, residents' capacity to exercise their rights is impacted by the larger environment of instability [35]. In additional discoveries After Lawan Andimi was killed by Boko Haram in February 2020, the Christian Association of Nigeria planned

prayer marches around the country. The demonstrations brought attention to the group's influence on the right to gather and religious freedom [36]. The qualitative documentary analysis supports the hypothesis that Boko Haram's activities between 2020 and 2026 have significantly undermined fundamental rights protected under the ACHPR. The group's actions have led to violations of the rights to life, security, freedom from torture, education, and, indirectly, freedom of expression and assembly.

4.3. Analysis of Question three and Hypothesis three

- **Condemnation of Human Rights Abuses**

The ACHPR has voiced serious concerns about human rights violations in Nigeria, especially in light of large-scale demonstrations and security measures. The Commission emphasized that such activities may infringe the right to life provided by Article 4 of the ACHPR and condemned the deaths of at least 13 individuals during protests in August 2024. The Commission urged Nigerian authorities to ensure that law enforcement personnel respect the right to peaceful protest and adhere to the legislation [37].

- **Advocacy for Victims of Abductions**

The ACHPR's Country Rapporteur on Human Rights in Nigeria condemned in March 2024 the mass kidnapping of over 280 students and instructors in Kuriga, Kaduna State, and the kidnapping of 15 students from Sokoto. The Commission invited the Nigerian government to mobilize all the necessary resources for the safe and timely release of the abducted victims and urged the kidnappers to ensure the safety and security of their captives. The Commission emphasized the importance of conducting unbiased inquiries into these incidents in order to ensure accountability [37].

- **Monitoring of Military Operations**

The ACHPR has been monitoring military activities in Nigeria with an emphasis on the use of force and its impact on civilians. In December 2023, the Commission issued a statement about a drone assault by the Nigerian army that resulted in the deaths of over 80 people. The Commission emphasized the need for the utmost caution and care in such operations in order to comply with Article 4 of the African Charter and urged Nigeria to take action to prevent such regrettable events and ensure accountability when they do occur [37,38].

- **Engagement with National Human Rights Institutions**

Regarding claims of human rights breaches, the ACHPR has worked with Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). After Reuters covered the event in 2024, the NHRC started looking into claims of infanticide and forced abortions in the Northeast Boko Haram insurgency. The ACHPR is committed to assisting domestic systems for human rights protection and accountability, as seen by its cooperation with national organizations such as the NHRC [38-40].

SWOT Dimension	Key Issue	Detailed Analysis	Implications for Human Rights Protection in Nigeria
Strengths	Established Legal Framework (African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights)	The ACHPR (1981) guarantees the rights to life, liberty, dignity, freedom of speech, a fair trial, and protection from discrimination and torture.	This legal foundation strengthens advocacy and provides normative standards for evaluating Boko Haram-related abuses and state responses.
Strengths	Existence of Institutional Mechanisms	The Commission released declarations and communications between 2020 and 2026 denouncing human rights violations and terrorist acts connected to Boko Haram and other conflicts.	Demonstrates the Commission's watchdog role and its capacity to draw regional and international attention to violations.
Strengths	Collaboration with National Institutions	To enhance accountability, monitoring, and documenting of violations, the ACHPR has worked with domestic institutions including Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), civil society organizations, and legal advocacy groups. Localized reporting and policy discussion are supported by such collaboration [41].	Enhances domestic ownership of human rights protection and improves access to evidence on violations.
Strengths	Improved Documentation and International Visibility	Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and media outlets are just a few of the local and international groups that have made significant documenting efforts in response to the Boko Haram insurgency. These stories have raised awareness of gender-based violence, forced relocation, kidnappings, and murders.	Better documentation strengthens advocacy, international pressure, and legal accountability processes.
Weaknesses	Lack of Enforcement Powers	One of the primary institutional shortcomings of the ACHPR is its limited authority. The Commission does not have the authority to prosecute criminals or enforce the law; instead, it mostly offers recommendations and advisory opinions.	Weak enforcement reduces compliance and limits the practical impact of Commission decisions on insurgents and state actors.
Weaknesses	Delayed and Reactive Responses	ACHPR interventions are often reactive rather than preventative. Responses have a limited deterrence effect since they frequently follow massive crimes. For example, vocal condemnations of military operations that killed civilians routinely went unpunished.	Delayed responses weaken confidence in regional protection mechanisms and reduce preventive capacity.
Weaknesses	Funding and Capacity Constraints	The Commission's capacity to carry out field missions, investigations, and quick assessments in unstable conflict areas like North-East Nigeria is hampered by ongoing budget, staff, and logistical support shortages.	Limited resources undermine timely intervention and reduce institutional effectiveness.
Weaknesses	Limited Grassroots Engagement	Direct contact with war-affected groups, including women, young people, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), is still scarce. This restricts local perspectives and lowers community participation in the formulation of laws and decisions.	Human rights interventions may fail to reflect lived experiences and local protection priorities.
Opportunities	Strengthening Regional Judicial Mechanisms	Growing support for the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights offers a chance to complement the ACHPR by improving judicial enforcement and compliance processes among member states.	Enhanced judicial authority could close enforcement gaps and improve accountability.
Opportunities	Technological Innovations for Monitoring	New techniques for recording infractions and keeping an eye on inaccessible combat areas are provided by emerging technology including satellite images, geospatial surveillance, digital reporting systems, drones, and mobile apps.	Technology can improve early warning systems, evidence gathering, and rapid response mechanisms.
Opportunities	International and Regional Partnerships	Collaborations with international non-governmental organizations, humanitarian groups, ECOWAS, and the UN Human Rights Council offer financial support, training, technical help, and more extensive advocacy support.	Collaborative efforts can strengthen institutional capacity and improve regional coordination against abuses.
Opportunities	Post-Conflict Justice and Reparations Frameworks	Growing demands for victim compensation, rehabilitation, and transitional justice provide Nigeria the chance to create postconflict judicial systems that adhere to international and African human rights norms.	Victim-centered approaches may support reconciliation, accountability, and longterm peacebuilding.

Threats	Persistent Terrorist Violence and Insecurity	Boko Haram and splinter groups such as ISWAP continue to attack civilians, schools, religious institutions, and security formations. Persistent violence sustains humanitarian crises and weakens institutional responses.	Ongoing insecurity complicates investigations, monitoring, and enforcement of human rights protections.
Threats	State Complicity and Culture of Impunity	There has been insufficient investigation or prosecution of allegations of illegal executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, and abuses by security personnel during counterinsurgency operations.	Failure to address impunity may deepen public distrust and perpetuate cycles of violence and abuse.
Threats	Humanitarian and Displacement Crisis	Prolonged insurgency has generated massive displacement, overcrowded IDP camps, food insecurity, and inadequate healthcare and sanitation. These conditions expose vulnerable populations to exploitation and further rights violations.	Humanitarian crises increase vulnerability and complicate rights protection efforts.
Threats	Shrinking Civic and Democratic Space	Articles 9 and 11 of the African Charter ensure the freedoms of expression and assembly, have been diminished by restrictions on journalists, activists, and civil society groups covering instability and violations of human rights.	Weak civic space undermines accountability, transparency, and public participation in human rights governance.

Source: Author's Compilation (2026) based on ACHPR reports, secondary literature, and conflict-related human rights documentation.

Table 4: SWOT Analysis of the African Human Rights System in Addressing Boko Haram-Related Human Rights Violations in Nigeria

PESTEL Dimension	Key Issue	Implications for Human Rights and Regional Stability
Political Factors	Government Instability in Conflict-Affected Regions	Weak governance structures have reduced citizens' access to justice, security, and basic public services, thereby increasing vulnerability to human rights abuses.
Political Factors	Weak Enforcement of Human Rights Obligations	Weak enforcement encourages continued violations of fundamental rights and undermines confidence in regional human rights institutions.
Political Factors	Counterterrorism Operations and Human Rights Violations	Excessive use of force by security agencies risks further violations of regional human rights norms and deepens public distrust in state institutions.
Economic Factors	Destruction of Livelihoods and Infrastructure	Economic destruction has increased poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and dependence on humanitarian assistance.
Economic Factors	High Cost of Counterinsurgency operations	Excessive military spending may weaken long-term socio-economic development and limit investment in human rights protection mechanisms.
Economic Factors	Decline in Foreign investment and Commercial Activities	Reduced investment contributes to economic stagnation, youth unemployment, and social frustration that may fuel further insecurity.
Social Factors	Humanitarian Crisis and Population Displacement	Humanitarian conditions in IDP camps expose displaced populations to additional violations of dignity, security, and health rights.
Social Factors	Disruption of Education	Long-term disruption of education increases illiteracy, unemployment, radicalization risks, and social instability.
Social Factors	Psychological Trauma and Social Fear	Persistent trauma undermines social cohesion, mental health, and post-conflict reconciliation efforts.
Technological Factors	Use of Advanced	Technological warfare raises ethical and legal questions concerning civilian protection and compliance with international human rights standards.
Technological Factors	Digital Propaganda and	Digital radicalization complicates counterterrorism efforts and increases transnational security threats within the region.
Environmental Factors	Destruction of Ecosystems & Agricultural Lands	Environmental destruction worsens food insecurity, poverty, and displacement in affected communities.
Environmental Factors	Restricted Access to Farmlands and Food Insecurity	Food shortages and rising hunger increase humanitarian dependence and socioeconomic instability.
Environmental Factors	Climate Change and Resource Competition	Environmental stress and resource scarcity indirectly sustain insecurity and violent extremism.
Legal Factors	Violations of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	Continuous violations demonstrate the severe erosion of regional human rights protections in conflict areas.

Legal Factors	Limited Effectiveness of ACHPR Interventions	The African Charter's rights to life (Article 4), dignity and freedom from torture (Article 5), liberty and security (Article 6), freedom of expression (Article 9), freedom of assembly (Article 11), and education (Article 17) have all been violated by Boko Haram's actions. Weak institutional enforcement limits the effectiveness of regional legal protection frameworks.
Legal Factors	Culture of Impunity and Weak Judicial Accountability	Persistent impunity undermines justice, encourages repeated abuses, and weakens public confidence in the rule of law.
Source: Author's Compilation (2026) based on ACHPR reports, UNHCR data, UNICEF reports, FAO publications, Nigerian government documents, and secondary literature.		

Table 5: PESTEL Assessment of Boko Haram Insurgency and the Violation of Regional Human Rights Norms in Nigeria (2020–2026)

Stakeholder	Implications of Findings
Nigeria (Federal Government & Security Agencies)	- Need for stronger compliance with the African Charter. - Improve civilian protection and avoid collateral damage (e.g., 2023 drone strikes). - Strengthen internal accountability mechanisms.
Benue, Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and other States	- Develop community-based reintegration and trauma support for displaced persons and Boko Haram defectors. - Rebuild destroyed schools, hospitals, and civic spaces.
Nigerian National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)	- Enhance human rights monitoring in conflict zones. - Collaborate more closely with international partners and ACHPR. - Advocate justice for victims of both state and non-state actors.
West Africa Region (ECOWAS)	- Encourage member states to jointly fund regional security and counter-insurgency mechanisms. - Promote cross-border intelligence sharing. - Support peace education and deradicalization programs.
Sub-Saharan Africa	- Recognize how terrorist insurgency can quickly destabilize fragile democracies. - Invest in early-warning systems and humanitarian contingency plans.
African Union (AU)	- Reform and empower the African Commission to enhance enforcement of its rulings. - Mainstream counter-terrorism within AU Peace and Security frameworks. - Provide AU-led peacekeeping options.
African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)	- Increase proactive monitoring of ongoing conflicts. - Issue binding resolutions where possible. - Push for stronger follow-up mechanisms and engagement with victims.
International Human Rights Bodies (e.g., UNHRC, Amnesty)	- Strengthen collaboration with African institutions. - Provide technical, legal, and investigative support to the ACHPR and NHRC. - Document abuses for international legal redress.
Civil Society Organizations & NGOs	- Expand grassroots-level rights education. - Monitor and report violations, especially in IDP camps. - Advocate for rehabilitation and justice for victims.
Global Stakeholders (e.g., EU, US, UK)	- Condition military aid on human rights performance. - Support post-conflict reconstruction and trauma support. - Assist in surveillance and humanitarian logistics.
Media and Human Rights Journalists	- Ensure safe, independent reporting on human rights issues. - Play a role in documenting violations and raising global awareness. - Promote responsible conflict-sensitive journalism.
Source: Author's Adoption, 2026	

Table 6: Implications of Findings to Relevant Stakeholders

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Between 2020 and 2026, the Boko Haram insurgency had a severe and catastrophic effect on Nigeria's human rights situation [42-45]. According to this analysis, the group's activities directly violate a number of the ACHPR clauses. In conclusion, a robust, coordinated response from local, national, and continental actors

is necessary to halt violations of human rights and strengthen the African human rights system against violent extremism [46-48].

The following recommendations are put forth:

- Improve Domestic Human Rights Law Implementation: Nigeria's domestic legal system and law enforcement must more fully integrate the requirements of the African Charter

[49]. Laws and court decisions must demonstrate adherence to these international norms. Strengthen the ACHPR's Role: The African Union should provide the ACHPR additional funding and enforcement power so that it can more effectively look into and monitor violations of human rights by state and non-state actors, including Boko Haram [50-52].

- Strengthen Victim Support Systems: Nigeria and its regional partners should give Boko Haram victims—especially women, children, and internally displaced people—more socioeconomic, legal, and psychological support [53].
- Invest in Counter-Terrorism Accountability: When carrying out security operations against Boko Haram, human rights standards must be closely followed. Investigating government infractions and rebel violence requires independent examination [54-56].
- Strengthen Community Resilience and Early Warning Systems: While promoting inclusion and communication, local peace building efforts and grassroots intelligence networks should be strengthened in order to detect and halt extremist activities [57,58].

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