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NIGERIA'S BOKO HARAM AND ITS VIOLENT INSURGENCY
Written by Irene Lees to accompany her drawings, 2017



2003 beginnings

The group now known as Boko Haram began to emerge in 2003 when a collection of like-minded Islamists retreated to a remote area of the northeast called Kanamma. Here they violently clashed with authorities.

They had been followers of a young, charismatic preacher named Mohammed Yusuf. He had a strict, fundamentalist interpretation of the Qur'an and believed that the creation of Nigeria by British colonialists had imposed a Western and un-Islamic way of life on Muslims....

MEANING OF BOKO HARAM

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Yusuf founded his own mosque in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri. Outsiders gradually came to know his Salafist sect as Boko Haram, based on their understanding of his teachings,

The most commonly accepted translation of the name, a phrase in the indigenous lingua franca Hausa, is “Western education is forbidden” It could have a wider meaning though, since “boko” may also signify “Western fraud” or similar interpretations.

The group has since said it wants to be known by a phrase that translates to “People Committed to the Prophet’s Teachings for Propagation and Jihad”

Events in 2014

Much of the world learned of the Boko Haram terrorist group after they kidnapped 276 school girls from their dormitory in the town of Chibok in 2014....

A number of students escaped the kidnappers in two groups. According to the police, approximately 276 children were taken in the attack, of whom 53 had escaped. Other reports said that 329 girls were kidnapped, 53 had escaped and 276 were still missing....

Amnesty International said it believes the Nigerian military had four hours’ advance warning of the kidnapping but failed to send reinforcements to protect the school.....

Jonathan Hill of Kings College London, has pointed out that Boko Haram kidnapped these girls after coming increasingly under the influence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and asserts that the group’s goal is to use girls and young women as sexual objects and as a means of intimidating the civilian population into non-resistance.

Research Sources:

Amnesty International
Africa Check
Media