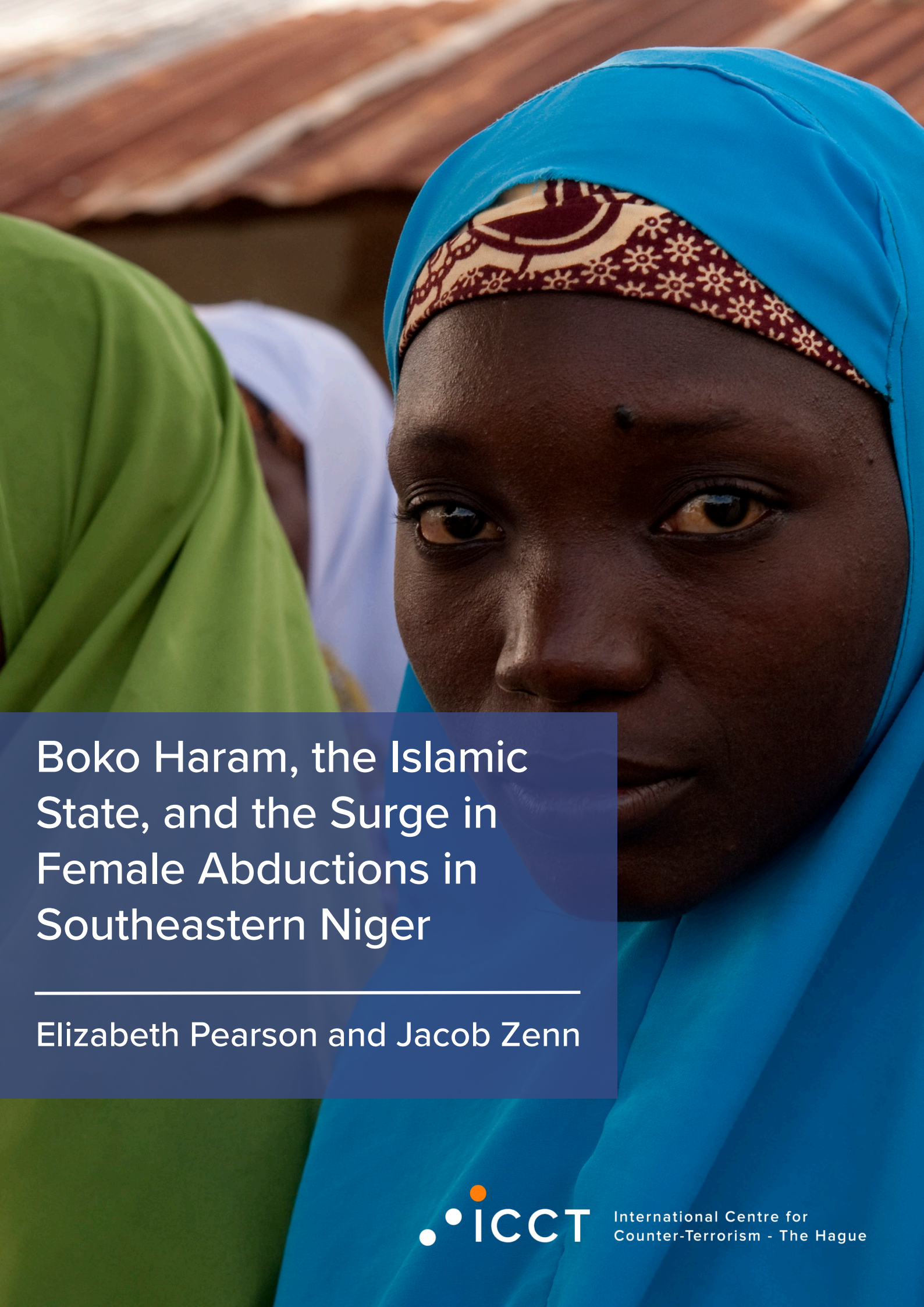

Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Surge in Female Abductions in Southeastern Niger

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ICCT International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague

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Abstract

This paper uses a gendered analysis, alongside original data,[1] to explore an increase in abductions of Muslim women and girls in southeastern Niger between March 2019 and the end of April 2020, and what this indicates about jihadist factional dynamics. These abductions occurred in operational areas historically associated with Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which is loyal to Islamic State. Yet, ISWAP condemns its rival faction, Abubakar Shekau-led Boko Haram (Jamaat Ahlus Sunnah Li-Dawa wal-Jihad), for that faction's abduction and self-described enslavement of Muslim women. As such the abductions are an anomaly. The piece, therefore, considers three alternative possible reasons for the surge of abductions in southeastern Niger during this period. These are: the rise of a new Abubakar Shekau-loyal Boko Haram sub-faction operating in ISWAP's historical areas of operations in southeastern Niger and around Lake Chad, led by the jihadist commander Bakura; leadership changes in ISWAP beginning in March 2019 that resulted in an ideological shift toward more 'Shekau-like' operations; and command-and-control issues, with ISWAP members engaging in abductions without leadership sanction. The paper argues that the new data, alongside a gender analysis of the ideological positions of the jihadist groups in the Lake Chad Basin Area, suggests the emergence of the new Bakura sub-faction contributed most to the increase in abductions of Muslim in southeastern Niger. The finding has implications for understanding the jihadist actors in the region, studying how gender functions in factionalisation, and developing a gendered policy to counter Boko Haram and a counter-terrorism strategy for member-states of the Lake Chad-based Multinational Joint Task Force.

1 The authors would like to thank Mamane Kaka Touda and Sembe TV for their assistance in corroborating some data. Thanks are also due to the two anonymous reviewers whose comments helped to improve this report.

UN Map of Nigeria, no 4228 Rev. 1, August 2014

Introduction

On 2 July 2017, thirty-three women and six children were abducted from the village of Nguéléwa, Diffa Region,[2] in Niger in what was the first major abduction to affect Nigeria's northern neighbor. The incident echoed Boko Haram's 14 April 2014, abduction of young women from Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria. However, the Nguéléwa abduction received almost no global attention, nor did Nguéléwa ever become a household name.[3] Moreover, no group claimed the Nguéléwa abduction or returned the women.[4] In stark contrast, the Chibok abduction was a key event in bringing Boko Haram global media attention and was claimed by Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau.[5] It also put the group firmly on the radar of the Islamic State.[6] A month after Boko Haram abducted the 276 mainly Christian teenagers from a girls' school in Chibok, Shekau declared those girls who had not escaped were his 'slaves' in a video.[7] The Islamic State also praised the Chibok abduction and the 'revival of slavery' in its flagship magazine, Dabiq, helping to pave the way for Shekau to pledge loyalty to the Islamic State in March 2015.[8] Since then, Shekau's fighters have forcibly abducted hundreds more women.[9] Reports found at least 700 Nigerian women in Boko Haram custody in 2019.[10] Nonetheless, in Niger, unlike neighbouring Nigeria, the abductions at Nguéléwa were an anomaly.

This paper shows that Nguéléwa is no longer an isolated incident, and addresses the implications of this. We present data showing a spate of abductions of women in southeastern Niger lasting thirteen months from March 2019 until the end of April 2020. This spate is notable, given most of Boko Haram's abductions have taken place in northeastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon. Additionally, the abductions contradict ISWAP's gendered ideology, yet take place in an operational area around Diffa that various analysts, including the authors, have previously identified as typically associated with ISWAP.

The southeast of Niger around Diffa is roughly 99 percent Muslim.[11] However, the abduction of Muslim civilian women is not consistent with ISWAP's previous practices or statements.

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2 Also spelled 'Ngalewa'.
3 The Nguéléwa abduction saw the social media campaign #JeSuisNguéléwa, but it did not generate anything like the attention of #BringBackOurGirls. 'Boko Haram's Lesser-Known Reign of Terror in Southeast Niger,' France 24 Observers, 16 January 2018.
4 'Enlèvement de 39 Personnes – Deux Ans Après, Aucune Nouvelle,' aniamey.com, 4 July 2019.
5 The group is properly called Jamaa'atu Ahlis-Sunnah lid Da'awati wal Jihaad (JAS), meaning 'people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad.' Shekau rejects the term 'Boko Haram', although it is the most widely used name to describe his faction.
6 Islamic State, 'Issue 4: The Failed Crusade,' Dabiq, October 2014, p. 15. See also Jacob Zenn, Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2020, pg. 240-241.
7 Abubakar Shekau, 'Message to the Umma, 6 May 2014,' in Abdulbasit Kassim, Michael Nwankpa, and David Cook eds., The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 301-309.
8 'Issue 4: The Failed Crusade;' Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, 'The Islamic State West Africa Province vs. Abu Bakr Shekau: Full Text, Translation and Analysis,' aymennjawad.org, 5 August 2018.
9 The Nigerian military claims that it has so far rescued 30,000 people from Boko Haram captivity, many of them women and children. '30,000 Rescued from Boko Haram in Two Years,' thenationonlineng.net, 5 February 2018.
10 Ahmad Salkida, 'Corps Member, Hundreds More Nigerians Rot in Boko Haram Custody,' salkida.com, 3 March 2019.
11 According to the 'CIA World Factbook 2019,' Niger's population was 99.3 percent Muslim (2012 estimate). Ten years earlier, in 2009, a Pew report found that 98.6 percent of Niger's population was Muslim. 'Niger,' CIA World Factbook, 2019; 'Sub-Saharan Africa Overview,' Pew Research Center, 7 October 2009.

Unlike Shekau, ISWAP has sought to portray itself as a group that does not victimise Muslim civilians who do not serve the government.[12] ISWAP has only acknowledged abducting Muslim women in two instances: Rann and Dapchi, both in Nigeria (discussed in Part Two in this report). In these cases, ISWAP deemed the women it abducted 'apostates' and not 'civilians'.[13]

Moreover, as this report will outline, ISWAP has criticised Shekau precisely because he has authorised Boko Haram's abductions of Muslim civilian women. ISWAP leaders claim this cannot be theologically justified unless such women are explicitly labeled 'apostates', according to criteria such as having offered support for Nigeria's army, providing healthcare or other services. According to ISWAP's takfirist ideology, such support means those women no longer qualify as being Muslim.

Shekau, meanwhile, has boasted of abducting Muslim women, which is why this tactic is associated with him personally, and therefore also with Boko Haram. Indeed, Shekau considers any women not participating in jihad with his group to be infidels who can be legitimately abducted and enslaved.[14] In fact, Shekau's treatment of women abductees, as well as his approval of child, including girl, 'suicide bombings' factored in his removal as ISWAP leader following Islamic State issuing guidance to ISWAP on that matter. This occurred in August 2016 and involved a series of bitter internal disputes.[15]

This report examines three plausible causes of these abductions:

1. The emergence of a new Abubakar Shekau-loyal Boko Haram sub-faction in southeastern Niger;
2. Leadership changes in Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in March 2019 that empowered ideologically Shekau-like leaders;
3. Issues with command-and-control, insofar as ISWAP members may have conducted

12 See Abdulbasit Kassim, Michael Nwankpa, and Mamman Nur,' 72. Exposé: An Open Letter to Abubakar Shekau by Mamman Nur,' in David Cook ed., Abdulbasit Kassim trans. The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 445-467; Audu Bulama Bukarti, 'The Battle for Hearts and Minds in the Lake Chad Basin,' Institute for Global Change, 14 May 2018; and Ndubuisi Christian Ani and Omar S. Mahmood, 'Factional Dynamics within Boko Haram' (the first in a two-part study examining current dynamics in violent extremist organizations), Institute for Security Studies, 6 July 2018. Shekau's targeting of Muslim civilians had previously drawn critique from another jihadi group in West Africa, Ansaru. See Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa, '36. Disassociation of the Jamaat Ansar Al-Muslimin from Targeting Muslim Innocents,' The Boko Haram Reader, pp. 275-283.

13 There are small percentages of Shi`a and Ahmadiyya Muslims in Niger, but neither ISWAP nor Boko Haram has historically targeted them or decried them regularly in videos or statements. It is therefore unlikely the women abducted from southeastern Niger are from those denominations, besides the fact that there are no mentions of those denominations being targeted. Most Muslims in Niger are Sunni but mix Sufi practices. Therefore, any Muslim women who were abducted are likely to fit that demographic. Neither ISWAP nor Boko Haram has, however, typically targeted Muslims in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region solely because they were Sufi. This is because it would require them targeting a very large part of the entire population, including in Nigeria's Borno State. Rather, they have focused on targeting Muslims because of action or inaction, such as working for the government (especially ISWAP) or not joining the jihad (Boko Haram), but not necessarily for their Sufi practices. Notably, the authors are not aware of any incidents of Boko Haram targeting Sufi shrines as part of its jihadi campaign. William F.S. Miles, 'Shari'a as Deafricanization: Evidence from Hausaland,' Africa Today, 2003, pp. 51-75; M.S. Umar, 'The Izala effect: unintended consequences of Salafi radicalism in Indonesia and Nigeria,' Contemporary Islam (August 2019): pp. 357-385; 'The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity,' Pew Research Center, 9 August 2012, p. 128.

14 Kassim, Nwankpa, and Nur, '72. Exposé: An Open Letter to Abubakar Shekau by Mamman Nur.'

15 See Ibid. Stewart, Phil. 'Boko Haram fracturing over Islamic State ties, U.S. general.' Reuters, 21 June 2016.

abductions outside the ideological or strategic goals of the group and without leadership approval.

Importantly, this report engages gender to consider these hypotheses. First, it gathers information on the numbers of women abducted; but most importantly, it applies a gender lens on the statements, practices and ideological codes of jihadists in the Lake Chad Basin area, in order to interpret the data. Through the analysis, the report highlights two important elements: the gulf between Boko Haram and ISWAP's policies on the enslavement of Muslim women and 'apostates'; and what these contrasting gendered policies indicate about the localised shifting factional dynamics between these two jihadi groups. This has implications for a complex understanding of gender in this arena, which is crucial to considering policy responses that are likely to work.

The report proceeds in four parts. Part 1 sets out the theoretical importance of a gendered analysis in this conflict. Part 2 then examines the trends in the targeting of women by ISWAP and Boko Haram in Nigeria and its borderlands around Lake Chad, including in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, as well as the rising number of abduction cases in southeastern Niger from March 2019 until the end of April 2020. Part 3 takes a gender lens to differences in Boko Haram's and ISWAP's ideological approaches to abduction, exploring why ISWAP has presented itself as a group that does not routinely target Muslim civilian women. Part 4 further assesses the likely causes of the apparent trends. Part 5, the conclusion, summarises the article's analysis, arguing that a consideration of gender provides evidence of factional shifts reported and a third sub-faction operating in southeastern Niger and loyal to Shekau. While detailed policy recommendations are beyond the scope of this paper, this final section emphasises the importance of gendered approaches in the four main countries that make up the Multinational Joint Task Force (Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon), in order to adequately address ISWAP and Boko Haram's gendered violence, and protect women.

A Gender Lens, Terrorism and Boko Haram

Policymakers and academics have focused on the role of gender in Boko Haram since the abduction of some 276 young women from Chibok, Borno state, in 2014 by members of Shekau's jihadist group, Jamaat Ahlus Sunnah Li-Dawa wal-Jihad, which is more popularly known as Boko Haram. Whilst the attack was not unprecedented, it succeeded in drawing global attention to the ways in which women were objectified and victimised in the jihadist insurgency in Nigeria's northeast. This mattered, given the lack of global political interest in either this conflict or the victimisation of women within it.

Feminist scholars had long discussed the neglect of the role of women in conflict. Authors including Elshtain, Enloe, Zalewski and Cockburn drew attention to the ways in which women's participation in conflict as active and willing fighters, had been overlooked, and therefore an important facet of war neglected, and the international system neglected.[16]

16 Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Updated Edition with a New Preface: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, 2nd Revised edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Marysia Zalewski, 'Introduction', in The 'Man' Question in International Relations, ed. Marysia Zalewski and Jane L. Parpart, 1 edition (Boulder, Colo: Routledge, 1997), 1–13; Cynthia Cockburn and Cynthia Enloe, 'Militarism, Patriarchy and Peace Movements', International Feminist Journal of Militarism 14, no. 4 (2012): 550–57, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2012.726098; Jean Bethke Elshtain, Women and War (University of

Governments had long constructed women as 'beautiful souls' in need of protection, and men as 'just warriors', and these stereotypes lingered in study of terrorist groups.[17] Women were habitually regarded as inherently peaceable, and their adherence to violent causes deemphasised or ignored, even where they took up arms for groups including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka or the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey.[18]

Authors also highlighted the ways in which women should be included in decision-making in conflict, and indeed in some contexts served as security personnel on the ground. At its most basic, it was argued, women's bodies needed to be counted. It is often not until women's numbers are known that they are taken seriously in conflict. One reason, for instance, that Cook and Vale's 2018 audit of women travellers to Islamic State was ground-breaking was that for the first time the scale of women's participation could not be ignored.[19]

As the literature developed insights into women and gender in war and terrorist organisations,[20] of key importance, particularly in feminist study of jihadist conflict, was the growing study of the ways in which groups sought to use theological doctrine to justify particular forms of violence against women, despite denying them inclusion in leadership roles. In this not all groups engaged in the same practices. Some groups employed women as suicide bombers, for instance, although such violence as that instituted by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in his role as the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq was exceptional.[21] There were reasons for this, as scholars sought to establish: Lahoud noted the inconsistencies of al-Qaeda and Islamic State doctrine on violence, given that defensive jihad permitted women to fight, yet in practice these groups only emphasised women's domesticity.[22] Dearing explored the reasons for women's absence in Taliban violence in Afghanistan, concluding that multiple factors coalesced to create the conditions for this: cultural (often religious), societal (and patriarchal) and ideological.[23]

Chicago Press, 1987).

17 Laura Sjoberg, 'Conclusion', in Women, Gender and Terrorism, ed. Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

18 Miranda Alison, 'Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam', Civil Wars 6, no. 4 (1 December 2003): 37–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240308402554; V. G. Julie Rajan, Women Suicide Bombers: Narratives of Violence, Reprint edition (London: Routledge, 2012).

19 Joana Cook and Gina Vale, 'From Daesh to Diaspora: Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State / ICSR' (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 23 July 2018), http://icsr.info/2018/07/icsr-report-launch-daesh-diaspora-tracing-women-minors-islamic-state/.

20 See for instance Farhana Qazi, 'The Mujahidaat: Early Female Warriors of Islam', in Women, Gender and Terrorism, ed. Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry (University of Georgia Press: Georgia, 2011); Katharina Von Knop, 'The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women', Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 30, no. 5 (17 April 2007): 397–414, https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701258585; Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics, First edition (New York: Zed Books, 2007); Jessica Davis, 'Women and Radical Islamic Terrorism: Planners, Perpetrators, Patrons?', The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, Strategic Link, no. 136 (May 2006).

21 Jessica Davis, 'Evolution of the Global Jihad : Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq', Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 36, no. 4 (April 2013): 279–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2013.763598; Mia Bloom, Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists (C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2011).

22 Nelly Lahoud, 'The Neglected Sex: The Jihadis' Exclusion of Women From Jihad', Terrorism and Political Violence, no. August (February 2014): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.772511; Nelly Lahoud, 'Can Women Be Soldiers of the Islamic State?', Survival 59, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 61–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2017.1282675.

23 Matthew P. Dearing, 'Like Red Tulips at Springtime: Understanding the Absence of Female Martyrs in Afghanistan', Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 33, no. 12 (17 November 2010): 1079–1103, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.523861.

Meanwhile, the multiple layers of factors were explored in work looking at both push and pull factors into terrorism.[24] Such work went beyond a simple counting of women, to an analysis engaging a gendered lens – a perspective in which women's roles and stories are emphasised in the context of their relationships, identities and roles in wider society. Still, however, gender remained largely absent in accounts of conflict or terrorism.[25] This was to change when in 2015 the United Nations stipulated the need for a consideration of gender in counter-terrorism practices in its Security Council Resolution 2242. Although largely focused on women, this resolution represented a shift in institutional thinking on gender and terrorism and at the highest levels.[26]

In Nigeria, policymakers have put greater emphasis on the importance of women in the jihadist conflict involving Boko Haram in the past five years. Nigerian women had long mobilised for their greater involvement in (gendered) security policy.[27] In 2013 – before the Chibok abductions – the Nigerian government produced a first National Action Plan on the Women Peace and Security Agenda, and in 2017, a second. Yet neither noted the complexities of women's roles already noted in the literature on gender, women and the insurgency.[28] Firstly, Boko Haram was clearly deliberately victimising specific women as part of its activities.[29] Barkindo et al. documented the ways in which Christian women were specifically targeted in 2012.[30] The following year saw Shekau explicitly threaten the abduction of the wives of security actors, in retaliation for the detention of Boko Haram wives. Documented by Zenn and Pearson in 2014, and to become a signature tactic of Shekau, the authors argued

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24 James Khalil and Martine Zeuthen, 'Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation', Whitehall Report (London: RUSI, 2016).

25 Elizabeth Pearson and Emily Winterbotham, 'Women, Gender and Daesh Radicalisation', The RUSI Journal 0, no. 0 (28 July 2017): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2017.1353251; Katherine E Brown, 'Gender and Counter-Radicalization: Women and Emerging Counter-Terror Measures', in Gender, National Security and Counter-Terrorism, ed. Jayne Huckerby and Margaret L. Satterthwaite (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013); Joana Cook, A Woman's Place: US Counterterrorism Since 9/11 (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2019); Chitra Nagarajan, 'Gender Assessment of Northeast Nigeria', February 2018, https://www.academia.edu/35870632/Gender_Assessment_of_Northeast_Nigeria.

26 'UNSCR 2242 & the Role of Women in Countering Violent Extremism', GIWPS Blog (blog), 18 November 2015, http://blog.giwps.georgetown.edu/unscr-2242-the-role-of-women-in-countering-violent-extremism/; Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, 'The Futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda', International Affairs 92, no. 2 (March 2016): 373–92, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12549.

27 Funmi Olonisakin and Karen Barnes, 'Introduction', in Women, Peace and Security: Translating Policy Into Practice (Routledge, 2010); T. O. Adefisoye and I. D. Adefisoye, 'Nigeria and the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security', Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives (JPADA) 4, no. 1 (2019): 16–29; Oluwafunmilayo Josephine Para-Mallam, 'Faith, Gender and Development Agendas in Nigeria: Conflicts, Challenges, and Opportunities', Gender & Development 14, no. 3 (1 November 2006): 409–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/13552070600980898. See also Chikodiri Nwangwu & Christian Ezeibe (2019) Femininity is not inferiority: women-led civil society organizations and "countering violent extremism" in Nigeria, International Feminist Journal of Politics, 21:2, 168-193, DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2018.1554410

28 Elizabeth Pearson and Chitra Nagarajan, 'Gendered Security Harms: State Policy and the Counterinsurgency Against Boko Haram', African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review 10, no. 2 (2020): 108–40, https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.10.2.06.

29 Funmilayo Idowu Agbaje, 'The Objectified Female Body and the Boko Haram Insurgency in Northeast Nigeria: Insights from IDP Camps in Abuja', African Security Review 29, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 3–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1776348.

30 Atta Barkindo, Caroline K Wesley, and Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku, 'Our Bodies, Their Battleground Boko Haram and Gender-Based Violence against Christian Women and Children in North-Eastern Nigeria since 1999' (World Watch Research Unit of Open Doors International, the Netherlands, November 2013), https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/research/3117403.

there was therefore a need for 'a greater appreciation of how gender factors in the group's violence.'[31]

Second, authors were also emphasising the active participation of women in Boko Haram, whether in operational roles, or in violence.[32] This became particularly important after 2014, when the first female suicide attacks took place. Yet the situation was complex: some of the women carrying out these attacks were young girls.[33] Some of those girls abducted by insurgents – in part through trauma bonding – later became emotionally attached to their husbands and children.[34] What was more, some of the actions of the jihadists appeared contradictory: while Shekau had ransomed some of the so-called 'Chibok girls' it abducted back to the Nigerian government, when ISWAP carried out a similar attack in Dapchi in 2018, it returned all but one of the young women kidnapped within a month. As Islamic State used women to create its proto-state in Syria and Iraq, it was clear ISWAP was also engaged in a gendered project of its own state-making.[35] More than ever it was important to establish the factors determining the complex ways in which jihadists viewed the roles of women, both as victims and as perpetrators. While Shekau's faction, Boko Haram, undertook on principle particular gendered actions – abductions of women and children and attacks with bombs borne by women – ISWAP did not.[36]

This report aims to emphasise the significance of such divisions through a gendered approach to acts of violence against women in the Lake Chad Basin region. It does two things: it provides some quantification of the women abducted; and engages with the complexities of gendered violence of these abductions by jihadist groups, in order to better understand the ways in which factions are constituted and the importance of gender in this. Of particular note is the authors' observed increase in abductions of women and girls in a region, southeastern Niger, where this was before 2019 relatively unnoticed and undocumented, as highlighted in the next section. Feminist theory underpins this report, as it builds on the work of scholars who have long pointed to the need to understand women's involvement in conflict, and in a variety of roles, but also to understand gender as a social construction that does work in enabling terrorist violence and organisational ideologies and norms.[37]

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31 Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, 'Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram', Journal of Terrorism Research 5, no. 1 (10 February 2014), http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/jtr/article/view/828.
32 Hilary Matfess, Women and the War on Boko Haram: Wives, Weapons, Witnesses (London: Zed Books, 2017).
33 Elizabeth Pearson, 'Wilayat Shahidat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Question of the Female Suicide Bomber', in Boko Haram: Behind the Headlines, ed. Jason Warner and Jacob Zenn (CTC Sentinel, 2018); Jason Warner and Hilary Matfess, 'Exploding Stereotypes: The Unexpected Operational And Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram's Suicide Bombers | Combating Terrorism Center at West Point' (CTC, August 2017), https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/report-exploding-stereotypes-the-unexpected-operational-and-demographic-characteristics-of-boko-harams-suicide-bombers.
34 Joan Reid et al., 'Trauma Bonding and Interpersonal Violence', Psychology of Trauma, 1 January 2013, https://digital.stpetersburg.usf.edu/fac_publications/198.
35 Sarah Ladbury et al., 'Jihadi Groups and State-Building: The Case of Boko Haram in Nigeria', Stability: International Journal of Security and Development 5, no. 1 (30 November 2016), https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.427.
36 Audu Bulama Bukarti and Rachel Bryson, 'Boko Haram's Split on Women in Combat', Institute for Global Change (blog), 17 September 2019, https://institute.global/.
37 Laura Sjoberg, Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

The Female Abduction Surge in Niger

Niger is a Francophone and predominantly Muslim country situated to the north of Nigeria.[38] In the first years of the Boko Haram insurgency after 2009, Niger saw neither the same number of overall Boko Haram attacks nor abductions of women as Nigeria. Niger suffered the first reported mass abduction of women by jihadists around three years after the Chibok kidnapping. This was on 2 July 2017, when jihadists raided the village of Nguéléwa, Diffa, near the border with Nigeria. Nine teenage boys were killed, and thirty-three women and six children abducted.[39] This type of attack, while new for Niger, had taken place many times before in neighbouring Nigeria. After the Chibok kidnapping in April 2014, human rights organisations, for example, reported that female abductions were occurring in Nigeria on a wide scale and mostly without widespread media publicity.[40] Since 2012, as noted, Shekau had explicitly justified the tactic in several videos. In one, he said that if the Nigerian security services continued capturing Boko Haram wives, he would retaliate in kind.[41] Throughout 2014-2015, women abducted by Boko Haram and then released – often pregnant – reported they had been taken primarily to provide material support to male fighters, and in domestic roles, cooking and caring for them.[42] They also acted as scouts, and in at least one reported case, were forced to commit violence for fighters.[43]

The 2 July 2017 Nguéléwa attack made headlines in Niger because it was the first to target women and children in the region as a group. Now, our data tracking female abductions in Nigeria, as well as parts of Niger, Chad and Cameroon bordering Lake Chad, shows a surge in abductions in southeastern Niger near Diffa from March 2019 to the end of April 2020, and some of these targeted women.[44] We saw no open-source reported Niger abductions after this date, which is why we stop here; abductions did however continue in Cameroon and Nigeria.

In making this assertion we acknowledge the limitations of the data, given our necessary reliance on open source reporting. There is also the broader difficulty of fact verification

38 'Niger Population 2019 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs),' worldpopulationreview.com.
39 'Boko Haram's Lesser-Known Reign of Terror in Southeast Niger.'
40 Mausi Segun and Samer Muscati, 'Those Terrible Weeks in Their Camp': Boko Haram Violence against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria, Human Rights Watch, October 27, 2014; Atta Barkindo, Caroline K Wesley, and Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku, 'Our Bodies, Their Battleground Boko Haram and Gender-Based Violence against Christian Women and Children in North-Eastern Nigeria since 1999,' World Watch Research Unit of Open Doors International, November 2013); 'Nigeria: Abducted Women and Girls Forced to Join Boko Haram Attacks,' Amnesty International, 14 April 2015.
41 Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, 'Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram,' Journal of Terrorism Research 5:1 (2014); Elizabeth Pearson and Jacob Zenn, 'Boko Haram and the Kidnapping of Women: A Troubled Tactic,' War on the Rocks, 11 March 2014.
42 Zenn and Pearson, 'Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram.'
43 Sam Masters, 'Boko Haram 'Told Kidnapped Woman to Cut Man's Throat', The Independent, 2014, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-told-kidnapped-woman-cut-man-s-throat-9821960.html.
44 The news media outlets monitored by the authors included online editions of newspapers as well as newswires and LexisNexis searches of media outlets in Africa, Europe, and the United States, including for instance Reuters, AFP, BBC Monitoring, and West African news sources. The authors also monitored the IISS armed conflict database and Nigeria Security Tracker, published weekly by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). They also noted attacks reported online by regional experts, including Ahmad Salkida, Fulan Nasrullah, Mamane Kaka Touda, and Beegeagle. The data collected by the authors includes both attacks reported by multiple media sources and attacks reported by single sources. The authors were not able to verify news reports with security sources.

in areas that are remote in terms of police, army and media access, and dangerously inaccessible due to the operation of the jihadist groups Boko Haram and ISWAP.[45] Nigerian military information on abductions has also not always been reliable.[46] Additionally, much of the open source data on the post-March 2019 abductions in southeastern Niger comes from reports from civilian journalists living in villages close to the incidents and who regularly report on human rights violations. Data is not verified by, for example, local government officials or external observers. Reports of the same event can note different figures, locations and dates. While we have taken care to check each event as a separate occurrence, such details are not always clear. Authors have also noted the difficulties of a gender assessment when basic data around gender is lacking;[47] in the Lake Chad Basin context, it is especially uncertain, and the authors have made educated assumptions when news reports of professions of abduction victims are mentioned but not explicitly the sex of those victims (e.g. loggers are predominantly men for instance). Seeking gendered data is one key task of a gendered analysis of the events in this conflict. Recording accurate gendered data is an important future task for officials working on this conflict.

With these caveats, according to the authors' open source database, from 2 July 2017 until 30 April 2020, there were some 108 abduction incidents reported in Nigeria and the borderlands around Lake Chad of the three additional countries where ISWAP and Boko Haram operate: Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. These incidents involved hundreds of civilians, both men and women.[48] The data has limitations, as noted above; conversely, it is not exhaustive, as more cases are likely unreported.[49] Appendix 1 details these media-reported abductions.[50] After the end of April 2020, abductions in Niger seem to stop.[51]

Appendix 1 shows sixty-two of the 108 abduction incidents listed above were in Nigeria, with eighteen of these reportedly exclusively targeting women and girls. In Niger there were twenty-three civilian abduction events (one in July 2017, two in November 2018 and

45 When terrorists attack a remote village lacking strong phone network coverage and reporters in the immediate vicinity, news of an attack can take days to emerge. In such cases, details can become muddled and witness reports can vary. Reports of clusters of attacks may be the result of reporters counting a single attack more than once. Jihadi threats to civilians can also deter people from reporting attacks. By looking at open source reporting certain details, including numbers of attackers and numbers of and identities or ages of those killed, injured, or abducted, are hard to ascertain. Moreover, sometimes those abducted do not know their age themselves. See also Will Ross, 'Why Reporting on Boko Haram Is Hard', BBC News, 13 January 2015, sec. Africa, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30794829.

46 This is the view of the authors. The early response to the abduction in Chibok in 2014 is instructive. See Aminu Abubakar, Faith Karimi, and Steve Almasy, 'Nigerian Military Retracts Claim That Abducted Students Were Freed', CNN, 18 April 2014, https://www.cnn.com/2014/04/17/world/africa/nigeria-abducted-girls/index.html.

47 Cook and Vale, 'ICSR Report Launch - From Daesh to Diaspora'.

48 These borderlands around Lake Chad include southeastern Niger, southwestern Chad, and northern Cameroon. Abduction incidents carried out elsewhere in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon are not in this dataset, including, for example, Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) abductions in Niger along the Malian and Burkinabe borders; Sudanese or Libyan militants' abductions in northern or eastern Chad; or abductions in southern Cameroon connected to the Ambazonia insurgency.

49 For additional data on other abductions in other parts of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, see START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD). In addition to English language sources, the authors' database includes local French-language Niger-based new outlets reporting on abductions. The authors have not found cases in the GTD that mandate inclusion in the Figure 1 data.

50 With thanks to the team at Sembe TV and to Mamane Kaka Touda for assistance in verifying certain locations.

51 Mamane Kaka Touda reports an isolated abduction of a male in Mainé Soroa, on 20 December 2020.

all the rest after March 2019). Moreover, seven of those twenty-three abduction cases were reported to have involved the abduction only of women or girls, with a further six involving both males and females. Additionally, there were sixteen abductions recorded in Cameroon and seven in Chad. In Cameroon, three abductions exclusively targeted women; in Chad that figure was five.

The timeline is important. There were twenty-three abductions across all four countries in 2018. In that year, Nigeria saw eighteen reported abductions, while Cameroon saw two, Chad saw one, and Niger two. Yet in 2019, there were fifty-three total abductions with fourteen – almost a quarter - in Niger, and seven of the Niger abductions targeted women or girls. This represented a significant uptick.[52]

It is hard to know a great deal about demographics. No details of the religions of the women abducted in Niger have been reported. There are small numbers of Christians in Niger, and they have at times been threatened and targeted by jihadists.[53] However, given around 99 percent of Niger citizens are Muslim and the one percent of Christians tend to be in Zinder, Maradi, or Niamey, which are outside southeastern Niger, all of the women abducted in southeastern Niger are likely to be Muslim.[54] Journalists have also not emphasised the religion of those targeted, which suggests these abductions were not understood as anti-Christian like, for example, was the case for the Chibok abduction. If Christians had been targeted, local reporters might likely have noted that fact.

There are three further observations generated by the data:

1. Only a small proportion of the attacks involving abductions have been claimed, and ISWAP made those claims.
2. Many abductions targeted men/boys as well as women/girls.
3. Most importantly for this article's analysis, March 2019 was a turning point in Niger and the beginning of a surge in the number of abductions generally, and abductions of females specifically. This surge appears to have ended after April 2020.

Attacks reported as exclusively targeting women made up a minority of the abductions in each country; however, those in Niger are nonetheless significant. This is because southeastern Niger is territory associated with ISWAP, rather than Boko Haram.[55] Specifically, analysts believe ISWAP predominated in Diffa, and around Lake Chad, including in Chad, Cameroon, and Nigeria, and in northern and western Borno and Yobe State, Nigeria. Boko Haram, in contrast, was considered to have predominated in southeastern Borno, especially from south of Maiduguri to the Cameroonian border and extending into Cameroon. [56]

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52 The news agency AFP reported UN sources suggesting 179 people had been abducted in Niger by the first week of August and 66 civilians abducted in July 2019, with 44 of the latter women. See 'Kidnappings Soar in Niger amid Boko Haram Insurgency,' Independent Uganda, 7 August 2019, and 'UN Says 66 Kidnapped in Southeast Niger in July,' News24, 6 September 2019. The reports do not blame Jihadists.
53 'United States Embassy Niamey Strongly Condemns the Terror Attacks in Diffa and Tillaberi,' U.S. Embassy in Niger.
54 'Niger,' CIA World Factbook, 2019.
55 Ani and Mahmood, p. 23. See also a USAID map obtained by journalist and researcher Obi Anyadike at 'This Is … Perplexing. The Nigerian Army's Super Camp Strategy Seems to Entail the Abandonment of the People in the Northeast, According to This Map from USAID,' Twitter, 8 October 2019.
56 Ibid.

Given the noted abductions in the ISWAP territory of Niger, the data therefore ostensibly raises the possibility that ISWAP may have from March 2019 begun to abduct Muslim civilian women – as well as men - in this area, despite the group's previous ideological opposition to this. In order to understand this gendered data, a gendered analysis of the ideologies and proclamations of groups is important. This helps to ascertain the likely identity of these attackers. The next section discusses gender in the ideological stance of ISWAP compared with its rival, Boko Haram, arguing that a gendered analysis demonstrates that ISWAP is not likely to have conducted these abductions. Rather, the abductions were likely conducted by Boko Haram, in particular a new Bakura-led sub-faction, as explained below.

Gender and Ideological Differences between Boko Haram and ISWAP

To understand the data relating to the abductions of (assumedly) Muslim women in southeastern Niger, it is necessary to consider key gendered differences between ISWAP and Boko Haram. How does gender enable or inform these groups' operations? It is apparent that much of the work gender does is in allowing factions to differentiate themselves, each from the other. This section explores how, firstly, ISWAP has been much less willing than Boko Haram to endorse the abduction of Muslim women and, secondly, that ISWAP, unlike Boko Haram, does not appear to have accepted enslaving Muslim women it considers apostates; rather, ISWAP executes such women. This, therefore, raised the question as to why southeastern Niger, which was an area where ISWAP was considered to have had a much stronger operational presence than Boko Haram, would see a surge in not only unclaimed abductions of men, but also of several dozen Muslim women from March 2019 until the end of April 2020.

Gendered Ideologies and the ISWAP Split

Both ISWAP and Boko Haram have engaged in violence against civilians. However, when ISWAP removed Shekau as leader in August 2016, it claimed he excessively targeted Muslim civilians, especially women.[57] Since then, ISWAP has continued to portray Shekau as too extreme in his treatment of Muslim civilians,[58] and has propagated that only ISWAP offers justice and mercy, or 'repentance,' for Muslims. ISWAP has – to some degree – successfully branded itself as the less brutal of the two factions. This is despite the obvious tensions between the group's rhetoric and actions, which are not always consistent. As will be explained, ISWAP has identified Muslim civilians who aid the state militarily, including by collaborating in providing humanitarian aid, as not only apostates but also targets. This designation includes both men and women. For Shekau, apostasy is rather about inaction against the Nigerian state, or not joining the jihad.

In August 2016, having been dethroned as leader of ISWAP and replaced by the new leader,

57 See Ani and Mahmood, pp. 12-14 and Kassim, Nwankpa, and Nur, '72. Exposé: An Open Letter to Abubakar Shekau by Mamman Nur.'
58 'Boko Haram Is Becoming Even More Extreme,' Economist, 24 November 2018. See, for example, the case of Malim Omar, among others, in Aymenn al-Tamimi, 'The Islamic State West Africa Province vs. Abu Bakr Shekau: Full Text, Translation and Analysis,' aymennjawad.org, 5 August 2018.

Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Shekau revived Boko Haram, which had been inactive in name since Shekau's March 2015 loyalty pledge to then Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Al-Barnawi and Shekau became rivals with differing approaches to the treatment of Muslim civilians. In a first interview as leader of ISWAP, Abu Musab al-Barnawi told the Islamic State's Al-Naba magazine that:

> The [Islamic] State has prohibited targeting the masses of people belonging to Islam, and is innocent of such actions. Anyone who does this, does it by himself, and not in the name of the Caliphate – may God empower it – and it does not accept responsibility for this sort of action.... Rather, whomever manifests Islam and does not manifest any of the things violating [Islam], we do not call him an unbeliever, let alone declare his blood permissible. We have fought against this extremism very much and we persist in fighting it.[59]

ISWAP, in sum, in its public statements considers any Muslim who 'manifests' Islam to be Muslim, whether a man or a woman, unless in ISWAP's judgment they 'violate' Islam, such as by supporting the Nigerian state and especially the military or Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF). Shekau, however, clearly understood this interview as a critique of him, and he responded with an audio message within hours, asserting, 'I stated it clearly that I am against the principle where someone dwelling in society with infidels without making public his opposition or anger against those infidels, as is stated in the Quran, can be a real Muslim ...'[60] Shekau, therefore, considers as infidels anyone 'living among the unbelievers' without opposing those 'unbelievers' or anyone not fighting jihad, whether or not they claim to be Muslim.[61]

Mostly, the discussion between ISWAP and Boko Haram has focused on the treatment of Muslim civilians, however, gendered difference is a key in inter-factional competition: ISWAP and Boko Haram do not justify the victimisation of Muslim women in the same ways. When the Islamic State removed Shekau as ISWAP leader in August 2016 and promoted Abu Musab al-Barnawi to the leadership position, ISWAP specifically derided, among other positions, Shekau's mistreatment of women, including his abductions the several dozen Muslim Chibok girls among the over 200 other Christian girls.[62] The day before Shekau's demotion from ISWAP a portion of an audio sermon also surfaced which had been recorded by then senior ISWAP ideologue and 'mentor' to Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Mamman Nur. He accused Shekau of 'fighting people [who] are not supposed to be fought' and not respecting Muslim civilians.

In addition, Nur asserted Shekau neither obeyed the Quran nor the Islamic State. Nur cited the Chibok example, saying, 'Let us even assume that taking slaves is permissible. They [Islamic State] gave you a command, but you refused to follow it.... Even if it is a woman, and she becomes an apostate, you can only tell her to repent, but you cannot capture an apostate as a slave.'[63] Nur claimed Shekau defied that order by continuing to enslave Muslim women,

59 Islamic State, Al Naba, Issue 41, 3 August 2016.
60 'Boko Haram: Abubakar Shekau Reappears Again After ISIS Named His Successor, Claims He Was Deceived,' Sahara Reporters, 3 August 2016.
61 See Kassim, Nwankpa, and Nur, 'Exposé: An Open Letter to Abubakar Shekau by Mamman Nur,' pp. 445-467; Audu Bulama Bukarti, 'The Battle for Hearts and Minds in the Lake Chad Basin,' Institute for Global Change, May 24, 2018; and Ani and Mahmood. Shekau's targeting of Muslim civilians had previously drawn critique from another jihadi group in West Africa, Ansaru. See Kassim and Nwankpa, '36. Disassociation of the Jammat Ansar Al-Muslimin from Targeting Muslim Innocents,' pp. 275-283.
62 Kassim, Nwankpa, and Nur, 'Exposé: An Open Letter to Abubakar Shekau by Mamman Nur,' pp. 445-467.
63 Ibid, p. 459.

including the several dozen Muslim Chibok girls. Shekau considered these Muslim Chibok girls 'apostates' for living among 'unbelievers' and receiving Western education, but Nur considered the girls to be Muslims and not deserving of either abduction or enslavement.[64] Nur uses the gendered actions of Boko Haram to critique Shekau's relationship to Islamic State.

During the roughly thirty months from the August 2016 ISWAP leadership split until at least March 2019, ISWAP and Boko Haram had different approaches to violence against women and also to civilian populations generally. As Abu Musab al-Barnawi explicitly sought to win 'hearts and minds' of local populations alienated by Shekau's violence,[65] ISWAP focused more on attacking military targets.[66] ISWAP also halted female suicide bombings immediately after August 2016. Shekau-led Boko Haram, in contrast, continued female suicide bombings.[67] Shekau's group also targeted civilians with bombings and raids, and continued what ISWAP considered excessive takfir [declaring Muslims to be apostates].[68]

By definition, neither ISWAP nor Boko Haram support abducting women that they consider to be Muslims. However, both groups have abducted Muslim women they consider to be apostates. The difference between the groups is that Boko Haram has taken a much more expansive view as to what constitutes apostasy and has therefore captured far more Muslim women, including women civilians. ISWAP, in contrast, has taken a different position which it has sought to propagandise as relatively less hardline and has generally avoided abducting Muslim women from local communities. It has only acknowledged two abductions of Muslim women who, in the group's view, had apostatised from Islam. In one of those instances—the February 2018 Dapchi kidnapping (see Table 1)—it made a public display of providing the 'apostate' girls it had abducted the chance to repent and ultimately released them. Both factions carry out violence against women, yet each chooses to justify this violence in different ways. For ISWAP, it is important to project an appearance of theological justification to the execution of particular women; for Boko Haram, such justifications have been less apparent, and a wider group of Muslim women abused, with abduction or coerced suicide attack. The groups' constructions of gender in their ideologies enable contrasting practices.

64 Abdulbasit Kassim, Michael Nwankpa, and Abubakar Shekau, '41. Message About the Chibok Girls, 12 May 2014,' in David Cook ed., Abdulbasit Kassim trans. The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 315; Abdulbasit Kassim, Michael Nwankpa, and Abubakar Shekau, '74. Shekau Responds to His Critics, 18 December 2016,' in David Cook ed., Abdulbasit Kassim trans. The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 472.

65 Abu Musab al-Barnawi was the head of ISWAP's media team, which reported to the Islamic State in November 2014 its desire to win 'hearts and minds.' Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa, The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State, ed. David Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 345.

66 See Fergus Kelly, 'Islamic State Enforced Leadership Change in West Africa Province, Audio Reveals,' Defense Post, March 15, 2019; Ani and Mahmood, p. 3; and Jacob Zenn, 'Confronting Jihadist Factions in Nigeria: An Antidote to Defeatism,' War on the Rocks, 17 July 2019.

67 Pearson notes some 138 incidents of female suicide bombings by the end of September 2016. After the ISWAP-Shekau split, female suicide bombings became more sporadic and less effective.

68 See Ani and Mahmood, pp.12-14 for the importance of Shekau's targeting of Muslim civilians in the ISWAP-Shekau split. Additionally, in a conversation with Pearson in September 2019, analyst Chitra Nagarajan noted unconfirmed reports of ISWAP fighters returning women and girls abducted by Boko Haram to their communities.

The Dapchi Kidnapping

The Dapchi kidnapping occurred on 19 February 2018, when ISWAP fighters entered Dapchi, Yobe State, Nigeria, and abducted 110 girls from a school. The young women were all local Muslims, except for one Christian girl, Leah Sharibu.[69] This abduction may therefore have been an unauthorised operation carried out by ISWAP members unaware of, or initially not adhering to, then ISWAP leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi's commands to avoid harming Muslim civilians. Al-Barnawi's reported reassurances to the girls that they would be released while they were still in captivity raises the possibility he may not have been fully on board with their abduction in the first place. According to accounts given to The Guardian newspaper, some of the Dapchi girls stated after their release that al-Barnawi did not do anything more than lecture them about the importance of living in an 'Islamic caliphate' after they were taken from Dapchi to al-Barnawi's base in Lake Chad.[70] It should also be noted al-Barnawi never commented publicly on the abduction.

The Dapchi abduction ultimately enabled ISWAP to achieve a number of objectives. ISWAP subsequently released the girls several weeks after the abduction because the girls did not actively support those helping to fight ISWAP.[71] ISWAP also claimed the girls had repented for their 'apostasy' in receiving Western education, and that the Islamic State had told ISWAP the abduction would hurt ISWAP's image by 'casting the group in bad light.'[72] This suggests the ISWAP brand was perhaps more important than belief. The girls' repentance also is relevant because Abu Musab al-Barnawi's media team claimed to an Islamic State media representative in late 2014 before Shekau's March 2015 pledge to the Islamic State that the group abducted women and children in Bama who 'refused' to repent after the group 'asked them to repent and to stop associating with the unbelievers.'[73]

ISWAP attempted to portray itself in a favorable light through releasing the Dapchi girls. On 22 March 2018, ISWAP returned 104 of the girls to a cheering crowd in Dapchi, for example. They then warned the girls not to attend school again.[74] Only 15-year-old Leah Sharibu, however, was declared a 'slave' and not returned (five other girls also died from suffocation during the abduction itself). Sharibu's schoolmates reported ISWAP did not release her because she refused to convert to Islam and abandon Christianity.[75] Nigerian officials denied a ransom had been paid for ISWAP's returning the other girls and Sharibu was in ISWAP custody and reported to be alive, to have 'accepted' Islam, and to have given birth to an

69 For details, see Jacob Zenn, 'The Terrorist Calculus in Kidnapping Girls in Nigeria: Cases from Chibok and Dapchi,' CTC Sentinel 11:3 (2018); Ruth MacLean, 'Boko Haram kept one Dapchi girl who refused to deny her Christianity,' Guardian, 24 March 2018.
70 Ruth Maclean and Isaac Abrak, 'Schoolgirls seized by Boko Haram tell of Christian friend's escape bid,' Guardian, 30 March 2018.
71 'Boko Haram Gives Reason For Release Of Dapchi Girls, Denies Ceasefire Talks With FG,' Sahara Reporters, 9 April 2018.
72 Ibid.
73 See Michael Nwankpa, and Abdulbasit Kassim, 'Boko Haram Communiques with African Media (18 November 2014 - 9 February 2015),' in David Cook trans. The Boko Haram Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 343-352.
74 'Dapchi Girls: Freed Nigerian Girls Tell of Kidnap Ordeal,' BCC, 22 March 2018; 'DAPCHI YOUTH CHEERING, PRAYING AS BOKO HARAM LEFT AFTER DROPPING OFF THE ABDUCTED #DAPCHIGIRLS,' Daily Nigerian YouTube, 24 March 2018.
75 'Dapchi Girls: Freed Nigerian Girls Tell of Kidnap Ordeal.' Five other girls reportedly died during their captivity.

ISWAP commander's baby by the time of this report's publication.[76] ISWAP through what it portrayed as an 'act of mercy', exploited gender differences between it and Shekau-led Boko Haram in the release of the Muslim Dapchi schoolgirls.

The Rann Executions

In Rann, ISWAP again employed a gendered ideology to justify violence. Less than two weeks after the Dapchi abduction, on 1 March 2018 ISWAP attacked Nigerian soldiers guarding a camp for more than 50,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Rann, Borno, which is also home to an adjacent military base. During the attack, ISWAP killed several soldiers and abducted two midwives working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Hauwa Liman and Saifura Khorsa, who are both Muslim. ISWAP further abducted one aid worker for UNICEF, Alice Ngaddah, who is a Christian.[77] It is notable that rather than enslave the Muslim women, ISWAP shot and killed Saifura Khorsa and Hauwa Liman, in September and October 2018, respectively, following ISWAP threats that they would execute them.[78] ISWAP then attempted to justify the executions of these two female Muslim ICRC aid workers by arguing their aid work in a military facility signified actively supporting the military, who were 'taking up arms against us [ISWAP].'[79] Meanwhile, Alice Ngaddah, like the Dapchi abductee, Sharibu, was declared a 'slave' because she was Christian, and she has remained in ISWAP custody working as a 'nurse' as of this writing.[80] Not all of the Muslim women ISWAP held for alleged apostasy were given a 'second chance.' It, therefore, could be concluded based on these cases that ISWAP may view any cooperation by Muslim women with the Nigerian military as irredeemable.

Understanding Niger, Gender, and Evolving Jihadist Allegiances

The foregoing gender analysis of ISWAP's and Boko Haram's track records and ideologies

76 Jacob Zenn interview with European negotiators, November 2018. They suggest expenses of $5000 only were paid. See also BBC News, 'Kidnapped Dapchi Schoolgirls Freed in Nigeria - BBC News', 22 March 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-43484146; Goodness Adaoyichie, 'Leah Sharibu 'converted' to Islam, Gives Birth to Baby Boy for Boko Haram Commander [ARTICLE] - Pulse Nigeria', Pulse Nigeria, 25 January 2020, https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/leah-sharibu-converted-to-islam-gives-birth-to-baby-boy-for-boko-haram-commander/nhtke26.

77 'Nigeria Militants Kill Second Midwife,' BBC, 16 October 2018; Felix Onuah, 'Aid Worker Killed in Nigeria after Islamists' Deadline Expires,' Reuters, 15 October 2018.

78 'Boko Haram Kills Health Worker Abducted in Borno, Threatens Leah Sharibu,' The Cable, 17 September 2018; 'EXCLUSIVE: Leah Sharibu Speaks from Captivity, Asks Buhari to Pity Her (Audio),' The Cable, 27 August 2018. Jacob Zenn was shown a video of the Rann killing by an intermediary to ISWAP in Maiduguri in November 2018. The video was not released publicly, however, perhaps because killing women and releasing the footage as propaganda is not permitted by the Islamic State's centralized media team. At the very least, women have extremely rarely been shown in Islamic State execution videos.

79 On the accusation of apostasy, see 'Boko Haram Gives Reason For Release Of Dapchi Girls, Denies Ceasefire Talks With FG.' ISWAP also blamed the lack of federal government response to its request for communication on the matter. 'Boko Haram Executes Another Red Cross Worker, Says Leah Will Live as Slave,' The Cable, 15 October 2018.

80 'Boko Haram Murders Aid Worker, Says Leah Sharibu Will Be Enslaved,' Christian Today, 16 October 2018; 'Breaking: Boko Haram Executes Aid Worker Hauwa Liman,' Sahara Reporters, 15 October 2018.

regarding the abduction of women means it is unlikely that ISWAP is responsible for the abductions of Muslim women civilians in southeastern Niger since 2019. On the contrary, it would be more consistent that Boko Haram would be responsible for the uptick in abductions of Muslim civilian women as well as men in southeastern Niger from March 2019 until the end of April 2020. This section considers this possibility, alongside other plausible explanations for the abductions of Muslim women among the civilians abducted in Niger from March 2019 until the end of April 2020.

The possibilities outlined here represent hypotheses based on the authors' knowledge of Niger and ISWAP-Boko Haram factional dynamics; the empirical finding that the uptick in abductions of women in southeastern Niger began in March 2019 and appears to have ended in April 2020; and the observation that the tactic of abductions was not prevalent there before this time. The possibilities are also not exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive, and a combination may apply.

Possibility One: Boko Haram's Bakura-led Fighters

The first and most plausible explanation for the abductions, based on gendered analysis, is the emergence of a new sub-faction of Boko Haram. Nigerian security officials have reported on and spoken to analysts, including, among others, author Jacob Zenn about this sub-faction, which has been led by a militant named Bakura.[81] Bakura's sub-faction has operated in several of the same areas as ISWAP, and especially in southeastern Niger and around Lake Chad. However, Bakura's ideological position resembles Boko Haram much more than ISWAP.[82] After the August 2016 leadership split, analyst Vincent Foucher believes Bakura began switching allegiance from ISWAP to Boko Haram and contributed to Boko Haram's establishing a presence around Lake Chad, which is Bakura's native region (he is reportedly from either Niger or Nigeria, bordering Lake Chad) and allowed Boko Haram to contest and even harass ISWAP around Lake Chad.[83]

Having found ISWAP to be too moderate compared to Shekau, Bakura began formalising his loyalty to Shekau and rejoining of Boko Haram in 2019. Hence, one day after Shekau released a Boko Haram video offering 'glad tidings' to 'mujahideen in Lake Chad' in September 2019, another Boko Haram video featuring fighters claiming to be commanded by Bakura and declaring loyalty to Shekau surfaced.[84] Moreover, Boko Haram's first formal attack claim

81 Vincent Foucher, 'The Jihadi Proto-State in the Lake Chad Basin', Text, ISPI, 19 March 2020, https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/jihadi-proto-state-lake-chad-basin-25441; International Crisis Group, 'Behind the Jihadist Attack in Chad', Crisis Group, 6 April 2020, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/derriere-lattaque-jihadiste-au-tchad.

82 Jacob Zenn, personal communication, Nigerian army official about Bakura, November 2019.

83 'Vincent Foucher on Twitter: '#BokoHaram Mysteries... a Bit More on Bakura (Sub)Faction Thanks to Recent Interviews. Bakura Doro Was a BH Commander on the Lake and Refused to Follow as Abakar Mainok Welcomed Nur and Abu Musab in 2016. He Thus Left, Settled in the Area of Nguigmi and Started Harassing #ISWAP.' / Twitter', Twitter, accessed 12 June 2020, https://twitter.com/VincentFoucher/status/1234538210874843138. See also Behind the Jihadist Attack in Chad, International Crisis Group, April 2020, Behind the Jihadist Attack in Chad

84 Jacob Zenn, Unmasking Boko Haram, 1 edition (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2020), 309–10; Jacob Zenn, 'Boko Haram – Abubakar Shekau's Message of Glad Tidings and Advice to My Brothers in Allah in Lake Chad and Glad Tidings Message from Mujahideen in Lake Chad – September 23-24, 2019', Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria (blog), 24 September 2019, https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2019/09/24/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-message-of-glad-tidings-and-advice-to-my-brothers-in-allah-

since the August 2016 split 'on Lake Chad' was made in July 2019.[85] In addition, the fact that the imam in Boko Haram's September 2019 video declaring loyalty to Shekau also claimed a June 2019 attack in Darak, Cameroon in that video and then appeared in another November 2019 Boko Haram video claiming an attack in southeastern Niger both indicated Bakura's fighters had begun formally carrying out attacks in Boko Haram's name around Lake Chad at least by mid-2019.[86]

The timing of these events is important. The September 2019 video declaring loyalty to Shekau was not the Bakura sub-faction's original loyalty pledge (bayah) to Shekau, which came earlier. The increase in women being abducted in Niger in March 2019 is consistent with the hypothesis that Bakura was already emulating Shekau in the abduction of civilians, among them women, months before the September 2019 loyalty video emerged. Shekau himself had emulated Islamic State in declaring a dawla in Nigeria in 2015, ahead of the pledge in 2016.[87] Further, in September 2019, analyst Bulama Bukarti stated that he accessed a Nigerian security report, which identified the abduction of women as wives and hostages for ransom as a tactic of Bakura's sub-faction and noted that his sub-faction was clashing with ISWAP. This would be consistent with ISWAP's opposing, among other tactics, Bakura's fighters' abducting Muslim civilian women.[88] Such clashes were also mentioned in Bakura's fighters' September 2019 loyalty video, which claimed the 'filthy murjites (postponers of declaring takfir)' in ISWAP tried to kill them 'ten times.'[89] Bakura's fighters are, therefore, most likely the ones responsible for abducting women in ISWAP operational areas, especially in southeastern Niger, between March 2019 and the end of April 2020 and possibly even attracting ISWAP defectors or hardliners who were displeased with ISWAP's relative moderation. This would also explain why in February 2020 ISWAP for the first time publicly accused Shekau of 'factionalising the mujahidin.'[90]

This assessment has another important implication. Considering Bakura was no longer allied with ISWAP by 2017-2018 and joined Boko Haram in 2019, it is possible that he masterminded the 2 July 2017 Nguéléwa abduction, which neither was claimed by nor attributed to ISWAP or Boko Haram. Bakura would have later employed similar tactics, especially abducting women, from March 2019 through his beginning the process of joining Boko Haram later in 2019, including with Bakura-commanded fighters' public video declaration of loyalty to Shekau in September 2019. Indeed, one reason for the decline and near halt in female abductions since April 2020 in southeastern Niger could be Bakura's reported, but unconfirmed, death

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in-lake-chad-september-23-2019/.

85 Boko Haram has carried out and claimed fewer attacks than ISWAP since August 2016. Nevertheless, the fact that Boko Haram claimed no attacks near Lake Chad until July 2019 indicates the group did not activate cells near Lake Chad until several months before July 2019. This would make March 2019 a reasonable approximation for when Boko Haram cells arrived in or activated near Lake Chad, including southeast Niger. 'Boko Haram Claims Repelling Attack in Lake Chad Region,' Site Intelligence Group, 20 July 2019.

86 Zenn, Unmasking Boko Haram.

87 'New Video: Abubakar Shekau Announces Boko Haram 'Islamic State' Caliphate in Nigeria - The Global Dispatch', accessed 13 February 2016, http://www.theglobaldispatch.com/new-video-abubakar-shekau-announces-boko-haram-islamic-state-caliphate-in-nigeria-20666/.

88 See Audu Bulama Bukarti, 'On the Same Day, ISWAP and BKF Clashed in Maida, a Village 20km South of Baga Sola Also in Chad …,' Twitter, 3 September 2019.

89 Boko Haram, 'Greetings from Mujahideen in Lake Chad.' Telegram, September 24, 2019. Video, 11:51. https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2019/09/24/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-message -of-glad-tidings-and-advice-to-my-brothers-in-allah-in-lake-chad-september-23-2019/.

90 'Part 2: Slay Them Wherever You Catch Them.' Telegram, February 14, 2020. Video, 18:53. https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/02/15/iswap-slay-them-wherever-you-catch -them-video-part-2-february-14-2020/.

in March 2020 at the hands of Niger's security forces, aided by US forces.[91] This occurred just before Bakura's fighters killed 92 Chadian soldiers in Boko Haram's name on March 23, 2020, including through a Shekau audio and a Boko Haram video of the massacre.[92] Chadian president Idris Déby subsequently launched a major counter-offensive in response to the massacre against both Bakura-commanded fighters and ISWAP around Lake Chad. This halted Bakura's fighters momentum and likely reduced his fighters' mobility to conduct further raids and abductions of women in southeastern Niger whether or not Bakura had been killed.[93]

The data in Appendix 1, in conjunction with a consideration of the importance of the specific stances on women in the stated aims of the factions is therefore consistent with, and provides evidence of, the integration of Bakura's sub-faction with Boko Haram in 2019. This alliance in effect gave leverage to Shekau in the previous ISWAP stronghold of the Lake Chad Basin region, and demonstrates the fluctuating dominance of factions in different regions.

Possibility Two: ISWAP Leadership Changes

It is also possible that the abductions of civilians including Muslim women in southeastern Niger relate to ISWAP leadership changes in March 2019. These changes may well have impacted operational attitudes towards female abduction and the treatment of women. The leadership changes have not been confirmed by the Islamic State, but ISWAP announced a new leader in an audio released on its own, and not official Islamic State, media channels in March 2019, which was just days before the surge of abductions in southeastern Niger commenced.[94] The newly anointed ISWAP leader was a Nigerian known as Ba Idrissa,[95] who pledged loyalty to then Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. ISWAP simultaneously announced via the audio statement that it had demoted Abu Musab al-Barnawi, who originally replaced Shekau as ISWAP leader in August 2016, to 'shura member' status.[96] However,

91 Olivier Mathieu, 'Boko Haram : qui est Ibrahim Bakoura, le chef jihadiste que l'armée nigérienne affirme avoir tué ? – Jeune Afrique', JeuneAfrique.com (blog), 20 March 2020, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/913785/politique/boko-haram-qui-etait-ibrahim-bakoura-le-chef-jihadiste-tue-par-larmee-nigerienne/.
92 Jacob Zenn, 'Boko Haram – Abubakar Shekau Special Message to Chadian President Idris Deby Audio – April 1, 2020', Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria (blog), 2 April 2020, https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/04/02/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-special-message-to-chadian-president-idris-deby-audio-april-1-2020/; Jacob Zenn, 'Boko Haram – And That Our Hosts! They Verily Would Be Victors Video on Bohoma, Chad Operation – 8 May 2020', Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria (blog), 10 May 2020, https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/05/10/boko-haram-and-that-our-hosts-they-verily-would-be-the-victors-video-on-bohoma-chad-operation-may-8-2020/.
93 Jacob Zenn, 'Counter-Boko Haram Offensives in Chad, Niger, and Nigeria under the Specter of Coronavirus: Public Relations or Permanent Destruction?', Jamestown (blog), 2020, https://jamestown.org/program/counter-boko-haram-offensives-in-chad-niger-and-nigeria-under-the-specter-of-coronavirus-public-relations-or-permanent-destruction/; AFP, 'Chad Army Says 52 Troops, 1,000 Jihadists Killed in Offensive', France 24, 9 April 2020, https://www.france24.com/en/20200409-chad-army-says-52-troops-1-000-jihadists-killed-in-offensive.
94 For a translation see Abdulbasit Kassim, 'When @A_Salkida Reported the Leadership Change in #ISWAP on 4 March, Albeit the Skepticism Attributed to the Report, I Was CERTAIN the Report Was TRUE Because of Salkida's Antecedents. #ISWAP Has Released the Audio in Hausa from Their Encrypted Channel. Here Is the Translation', Tweet, @scholarakassi1 (blog), 11 March 2019, https://twitter.com/scholarakassi1/status/1105162677968502784.
95 Ba Idrissa's is also known by the kunya Abu Abdullah ibn Umar al-Barnawi. This indicates that he is from Borno state in Nigeria.
96 Kelly; Robert Postings, 'Islamic State Puts the Sahel in West Africa – for Now,' Defense Post, 30 May 2019.

neither the Islamic State nor Shekau has elaborated further on Ba Idrissa or Abu Musab al-Barnawi or ISWAP leadership status more generally since March 2019 and at the time of this publication both were killed or injured by more hard-line and Islamic State-committed ISWAP members in ISWAP infighting.[97]

It is possible figures with more hawkish – and less theologically justified – views on abductions of Muslim women gained influence within ISWAP as a result of the leadership changes. Supporting this hypothesis is the claim in late 2018 by a spokesman for the Lake Chad-based Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) that 'Shekau type' leaders were rising in ISWAP in the Lake Chad area.[98] If these rising 'Shekau type' leaders were involved in installing Ba Idrissa as leader, then this might explain why after March 2019 women began to increasingly be abducted in southeastern Niger (where 99 percent of the population is Muslim). ISWAP might not have formally tolerated the abductions, but fringe members may have collaborated with Bakura's fighters, especially since, like Bakura, they had a history of operating with each other in previous phases of their jihad.[99]

Further evidence that 'Shekau type' hardliners began taking over ISWAP's leadership reins comes from the October 2018 ISWAP execution of Mamman Nur. According to an ISWAP shura audio and information from a source knowledgeable about the Dapchi exchange, the Islamic State ordered Nur's execution because it suspected Nur of engaging in side deals with Nigeria's government surrounding the release of the Dapchi girls.[100] Nur and Abu Musab al-Barnawi were the two most influential ISWAP leaders opposed to Shekau's ideology and stance on the treatment of Muslim civilians. With Nur's murder, and al-Barnawi demoted to 'shura member' and reportedly eventually killed or injured in ISWAP infighting, there may have been a path for 'Shekau type' ISWAP members to rise in the group and collaborate with Bakura's hardline fighters even though the latter had become loyal to Shekau.

Possibility Three: Command-and-Control Issues and Criminality

Kidnappings and abductions are prevalent and increasing in certain parts of Niger and Nigeria, and not just by jihadists.[101] Therefore, it is possible ISWAP members in southeastern

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See also Abdulbasit Kassim, '@A_Salkida reported the appointment of Abu Abdullah Idrissa as the new Wali of #ISWAP ...,' Twitter, 7 March 2019.

97 Al-Hussaini, Bassim. 'ISWAP, Terror Group in Nigeria, Rebrands, Reversing Tradition.' Premium Times, 27 February 2020. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines /379362-iswap-terror-group-in-nigeria-rebrands-reversing-tradition.html. See also Jacob Zenn, Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2020, pg. 309.

98 Kelly. See also Jacob Zenn, 'Boko Haram Factionalization: Who Are Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) Fighters in Niger and Chad?' Terrorism Monitor 17:12 (2019); Timothy Antigha, 'Armed Forces Radio 107.7,' 7 October 2018.

99 'Vincent Foucher on Twitter: '#BokoHaram Mysteries... a Bit More on Bakura (Sub)Faction Thanks to Recent Interviews. Bakura Doro Was a BH Commander on the Lake and Refused to Follow as Abakar Mainok Welcomed Nur and Abu Musab in 2016. He Thus Left, Settled in the Area of Nguigmi and Started Harassing #ISWAP.' / Twitter', Twitter, accessed 12 June 2020, https://twitter.com/VincentFoucher/status/1234538210874843138.

100 Audu Bulama Bukarti, 'New Audio Offers Potential Window Into ISWA Decision-Making,' Council on Foreign Relations, 13 June 2019; Jacob Zenn, personal communication, European diplomat about the Dapchi exchange, November 2018.

101 Independent, 'Kidnappings Soar in Niger amid Boko Haram Insurgency'; Kabir Adejubo, 'ANALYSIS: 353 Killed, 60 Kidnapped In Violent Attacks across Nigeria in June', Premium Times Nigeria, 1 July 2019, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/338188-analysis-353-killed-60-kidnapped-in-violent-attacks-

Niger are acting independently, perhaps for financial gain in abducting women for ransom and not under ISWAP leadership's command-and-control. This would explain why ISWAP has claimed no abductions of women on either Islamic State or its own media channels. Previous research by scholars on jihadist groups in the Lake Chad region has found a range of motives for attacks against women, not all theological.[102] Atta Barkindo et al found that greed, desire to take land, misogyny, long-held rivalries and criminality have all factored in Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks on women.[103] It is possible that some abductions of women not ideologically motivated. Here it is crucial to distinguish between the carefully managed propaganda of groups, and what some fighters aligned with groups actually do.[104] Nevertheless, the evident uptick in abductions of civilians, including women, in southeastern Niger after March 2019 suggests an organized effort to abduct them. This would be consistent with a jihadist group, or Boko Haram sub-faction like Bakura's fighters, conducting the abductions.

Future Conflict and The Importance of a Gender Lens

This report has provided data to indicate a surge of abductions of Muslim civilians in southeastern Niger, including women, from March 2019 until April 2020.[105] This is important because these behaviors were not consistent with this region as an ISWAP territory. This piece analysed possible explanations for this surge of abductions and suggested three possible reasons: the emergence of a new jihadist sub-faction commanded by Bakura and loyal to Shekau; leadership changes removing more 'moderate' voices from ISWAP and empowering 'Shekau type' hardliners; and non-theological motivations by jihadist actors operating outside formal ISWAP leadership authority.

A combination of all of these possibilities cannot be ruled out; nor can other explanations based on data the authors are unaware of. However, what is important here is that in first of all assessing the presence of women in the conflict in southeastern Niger and then in a gendered analysis of the proclamations of the factions involved, one hypothesis emerges as most probable: that a new sub-faction loyal to Shekau is responsible. A gendered analysis is vital here in assessing and evidencing factional shifts, and the ways in which gender enables and constructs them.

In jihadist terms, Boko Haram's abductions of Muslim civilian women, including by Bakura's sub-faction, are, however, an outlier. The Islamic State has not approved or claimed any such abductions and ISWAP has distanced itself from them. These abductions, therefore, do not indicate any broader Islamic State policy whereby its 'provinces' will engage in mass abduction, including of Muslim civilian women. Moreover, although the Islamic State has recognised ISWAP's abduction of some Christian women for 'enslavement,' these were isolated cases; they do not necessarily signal a broader shift towards the enslavement

across-nigeria-in-june.html; Neil Munshi, 'Threat of Abduction Makes Nigeria a High-Risk Business', 22 November 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/99d6aaea-e394-11e9-9743-db5a370481bc; Chiemelie Ezeobi, Sunday Ehegiator, and Chiamaka Ozulumba, 'The Kidnappers Are Back', THISDAYLIVE (blog), 9 February 2020, https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/02/10/the-kidnappers-are-back/.

102 See Barkindo, Wesley, and Gudaku for a range of motivations for attacks against women.

103 Ibid.

104 Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, 'The False Islamization of Female Suicide Bombers,' Gender Issues 28:1-2 (2011): pp. 50-65.

105 The authors maintained data to the end of 2020. From May onwards they note one abduction of a male trader in Niger on 20-21 December 2020, reported by Mamane Kaka Touda.

of women within other Islamic State provinces. Thus, jihadist ideology can encompass 'enslavement' of Muslim civilian women, but it does not appear that Islamic State or the relatively more 'moderate' al-Qaeda will approve or engage in the tactic.

Another important point to recognise for both those with an interest in gender and for policy makers, is that the treatment of women – particularly Muslim women – has been something of a litmus test for the strength of ISWAP versus Shekau-led Boko Haram, including its Bakura sub-faction. In part, Shekau's explicit targeting of Muslim women contributed to his removal as leader of ISWAP. Since then, ISWAP has sought to present itself as the more considerate of Muslim civilians and doctrinally correct in its treatment of Muslim women. ISWAP has been careful to differentiate between how it treats Muslim and Christian women. It is unlikely that this is changing. More likely is that new independent jihadist actors under Bakura may be contributing to the conflict in the Lake Chad region. ISWAP may be fragmenting between 'moderates' and 'hardliners', some of whom are cooperating with Boko Haram.

No matter the faction, jihadists are known to target women. Crucially, state protections for women – Muslim and Christian – in northeast Nigeria, southeast Niger, Cameroon and the Lake Chad Basin region must be prioritised. Five years after the abductions in Chibok, and more than two years after the abductions in Nguéléwa, the data this article presents shows there is no room for complacency on women's security. Many countries have been slow to acknowledge the importance of gender in their counter-terrorism strategies. Niger's National Action Plan on the Women Peace and Security Agenda, which should inform its counter-terrorism approaches, notes the challenge of terrorist actors, but has no detailed gender assessment of what these are.[106] Nigeria is little different. Since 2017 it has a comprehensive National Action Plan to enact the Women Peace and Security agenda, and women civil society actors and activists are fundamental to its successful implementation.[107] Yet Nigeria has still not fully engaged with the gendered differences in jihadist factional politics and practice on the ground, nor with the complexities of women's roles as victims, activists, protestors, humanitarians, security actors, and agents of violent extremism.[108] As in other countries, military and security institutions can embody patriarchal norms, and neglect women and gender.[109] It is crucial to count the ways in which women's bodies are present in this conflict, and gaining information on this is hard. However, Nigeria's policies must go beyond this. So far, there is a narrow understanding of the roles of women in this conflict and the ways in which they differ from men's, and between groups. As is clear, the roles differ between factions, as factions use gender to compete and differentiate their behaviors. The next Nigerian National Action Plan must account for and anticipate the complexities of the jihadist factions in its northeast. It is also clear that Nigeria cannot stand alone in this task - Niger, Chad and Cameroon are also implicated. As the Multinational Joint Task Force incorporates these countries and Benin, they must coordinate their gendered responses to the jihadist factions they are fighting, and document and contend with the nuance and difference in each faction's gendered approach.

106 Niger, 'National Action Plan: Niger | PeaceWomen', 2016, http://peacewomen.org/action-plan/national-action-plan-niger.
107 See Chikodiri Nwangwu & Christian Ezeibe (2019) Femininity is not inferiority: women-led civil society organizations and "countering violent extremism" in Nigeria, International Feminist Journal of Politics, 21:2, 168-193, DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2018.1554410
108 Pearson and Nagarajan, 'Gendered Security Harms'. Nwangwu and Ezeibe, 'Femininity is not inferiority'.
109 See Chikodiri Nwangwu & Christian Ezeibe, 'Femininity is not inferiority'.

Appendix 1

Open-source media reported abductions in Nigeria and the borderlands around Lake Chad of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, 2 July 2017– 30 April 2020

No.	Date	Country	State/Region	Claimed	Female	Male	Gender Unclear[110]
1	2 July 2017	Niger	Nguéléwa, Diffa	N/A	33		6
2	25 July 2017[111]	Nigeria	Jilli and Bornoyesu villages between Magumeri and Gubio Local Government Area	Oil workers attack		3	7
3	24 August 2017[112]	Cameroon	Gakara, Kolofata	N/A	8		
4	28 August 2017	Nigeria	Konduga	N/A		4	
5	29 August 2017[113]	Nigeria	Dikwa, Borno	N/A	5		
6	31 August 2017[114]	Nigeria	Bama, Borno	N/A			12
7	4 September 2017[115]	Nigeria	Banki, Borno	N/A		4	
8	6 September 2017[116]	Nigeria	Jere, Maiduguri Farm	N/A		5	
9	7 September 2017[117]	Nigeria	Jere, Maiduguri Farm	N/A		4	
10	24 October 2017[118]	Nigeria	Madagali, Adamawa	N/A	3		
11	19 November 2017[119]	Nigeria	Dimge, Mafa LGA	N/A		7	
12	18 December 2017[120]	Nigeria	Musuni, Borno	N/A		3	
13	3 January 2018[121]	Nigeria	Gamboru, Ngala LGA, Borno State	N/A		31	

110 This refers to abduction cases where reports provided too little indication of the professions, backgrounds, and especially genders of the abductees in order for the authors to determine the gender of the abductees.
111 'Boko Haram Ambushes Oil Convoy in Nigeria, Killing Soldiers | Voice of America - English', accessed 31 May 2020, https://www.voanews.com/africa/boko-haram-ambushes-oil-convoy-nigeria-killing-soldiers.
112 AfricaNews, 'Cameroun : 15 personnes abattues par Boko Haram', Africanews, 25 August 2017, https://fr.africanews.com/2017/08/25/cameroun-15-personnes-abattues-par-boko-haram/.
113 'Boko Haram Kidnaps Nine in Nigeria: Vigilantes', News24, accessed 31 May 2020, https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/boko-haram-kidnaps-nine-in-nigeria-vigilantes-20170830.
114 See Nigeria Security Tracker
115 admin, '11 Killed in IDP Camp in Borno', THISDAYLIVE (blog), 4 September 2017, https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/09/04/11-killed-in-idp-camp-in-borno/.
116 'Suspected Boko Haram Fighters Kill 9 Farmers in Nigeria | Fox News', 9, accessed 31 May 2020, https://www.foxnews.com/world/suspected-boko-haram-fighters-kill-9-farmers-in-nigeria.
117 Ibid.
118 Reported by BBC Monitoring.
119 'Boko Haram Beheads Six Farmers and Forces the Seventh One to Watch the Slaughter', accessed 31 May 2020, https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/boko-haram-beheads-six-farmers-forces-seventh-one-watch-slaughter-1648193.
120 admin, 'Boko Haram Kills Four Truck Drivers, Abducts Three Others Carrying Food for IDPs in Borno', THISDAYLIVE (blog), 18 December 2017, https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/12/18/boko-haram-kills-four-truck-drivers-abducts-three-others-carrying-food-for-idps-in-borno/.
121 AFP, 'Over 30 Loggers 'abducted by Boko Haram' in Nigeria: Sources', Business Standard India, 4 January 2018, 30, https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/over-30-loggers-abducted-by-boko-

14	8 January 2018[122]	Nigeria	Kaje, Maiduguri region, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A		15	
15	10-11 January 2018[123]	Cameroon	Kolofata, Far North (BH Territory)	N/A			2
16	15 January 2018[124]	Nigeria	Ngala, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	5		
17	15-16 January 2018[125]	Nigeria	Madagali, Adamawa (BH Territory)	N/A		3	
18	26 January 2018[126]	Nigeria	Madagali, Adamawa (BH Territory)	N/A			3
19	17 February 2018[127]	Nigeria	Damboa, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A			'Dozens'
20	20 February 2018	Nigeria	Dapchi, Yobe (ISWAP Territory)	ISWAP	110		
21	1 March 2018[128]	Nigeria	Madagali, Adamawa (BH Territory)	N/A			3
22	1 March 2018[129]	Nigeria	Rann, Borno (Mutual Territory)	ISWAP	3		
23	19 July 2018[130]	Chad	Daboua, Lake Chad Basin, (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	10		
24	10 August 2018[131]	Cameroon	Far North (BH Territory)	N/A			1
25	4 September 2018[132]	Nigeria	Gwoza, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	12	13	
26	31 October 2018[133]	Nigeria	Maiduguri, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	'several'		
27	14 November 2018[134]	Nigeria	Bama, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	3		

haram-in-nigeria-sources-118010400073_1.html.

122 The authors presume the 'loggers' were men since that is a profession in which men are most commonly employed in Nigeria. 'Boko Haram Kills 20 Loggers in NE Nigeria: Militia, Residents,' News24, 12 January 2018.

123 'Four Dead in Two Boko Haram Attacks in Cameroon: Sources,' News24, 12 January 2018.

124 Rushin Daniel, 'Boko Haram Kills Nine in NE Nigeria,' News24, 17 January 2018.

125 The source indicates 'some' were abducted, which the authors estimate to 'three', and notes they were 'mostly men'. Iro Dan Fulani, 'Many Feared Dead, Kidnapped in Adamawa as Boko Haram Strikes Again,' Premium Times Nigeria, 16 January 2018.

126 Kabiru Anwar, 'Nigeria: Boko Haram Kill Three, Abduct 3 Others in Madagali,' Daily Trust, 28 January 2018.

127 Samson Toromade, 'Terrorists Kidnap Dozens in Borno Ambush,' pulse.ng, 19 February 2018.

128 Iro Dan Fulani, 'Boko Haram Attacks Adamawa Villages, Abducts Three,' Premium Times Nigeria, 2 March 2018.

129 Ahmad Salkida, 'Fate Of Nurse And Two Midwives Abducted In Rann Attack Remain Uncertain By Ahmad Salkida,' Sahara Reporters, 6 May 2018.

130 'Boko Haram Kills 18, Abducts 10 in Chad,' Al Jazeera, 22 July 2018.

131 The authors presume the 'chief medical worker' was a man because more often than not men are employed in such positions. 'Boko Haram Terrorists Carry out a Strange Kidnap: A Chief Medical Worker in Cameroon,' Today News Africa USA, 11 August 2018.

132 'Nigeria: Boko Haram Kill 2, Abduct 25 in Bus Ambush,' Defense Post, 6 September 2018.

133 Solomon Fowowe, 'UN Condemns Boko Haram IDP Attack,' Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News, 2 November 2018.

134 Abdulkareem Haruna, 'Tension in Borno as Boko Haram Abducts Nine Women, Kills Man,' Premium Times Nigeria, 16 November 2018.

28	15 November 2018[135]	Nigeria	Bama, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	6		
29	15 November 2018[136]	Nigeria	Korori, Bama,Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	13		
30	16 November 2018[137]	Nigeria	Maiduguri, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A	10		
31	17 November 2018[138]	Nigeria	Gamboru, Borno (Mutual Territory)	N/A		50	
32	19 November 2018[139]	Nigeria	Mammanti, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A		12	
33	19 November 2018[140]	Nigeria	Bama, Borno	N/A	7		
34	24 November 2018[141]	Niger	Bague, Toumour, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	7		
35	24 November 2018[142]	Niger	Blahardé, Toumour, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	9		
36	20 January 2019[143]	Nigeria	Kukawa, Borno (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			Unknown
37	23 January 2019[144]	Nigeria	Gaidam, Yobe (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			'Some'
38	28 January 2019[145]	Nigeria	Molai, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A		2	
39	1 February 2019[146]	Nigeria	Damaturu-Biu Road, Borno (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			'Several'
40	12 February 2019[147]	Nigeria	Gamboru Road, Borno (ISWAP Territory)	ISWAP Claim on Governor Shettima's convoy	'Many'		'Scores'

135 Ibid.
136 Via BBC Monitoring
137 Via BBC Monitoring.
138 'Over 50 Loggers Abducted in Borno,' Vanguard News, 23 November 2018.
139 'Borno: Boko Haram Kills 9 Farmers, Abducts 12 in Latest Attack,' Sun Nigeria, 21 November 2018.
140 Staff Writer, 'Boko Haram Kills 53 in Fresh Attacks', Punch Newspapers (blog), 20 November 2018, https://punchng.com/boko-haram-kills-53-in-fresh-attacks/.
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42	20 February 2019[149]	Chad	Ngasia, Lake Chad region, Western Chad (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	6	3	
43	21 February 2019[150]	Chad	Ngasia, Lake Chad region, Western Chad (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			7
44	5 March 2019[151]	Niger	N'Guagam, Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	4		
45	13 March 2019[152]	Nigeria	Askira Uba, Borno State	N/A	2		
46	19-20 March 2019[153]	Niger	Tchoungowa, Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	2		
47	23 March 2019[154]	Niger	Diffa, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	2		
48	10 April 2019[155]	Nigeria	Maiduguri-Chibok Road, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A		2	
49	4 May 2019[156]	Niger	Toumour, Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	2		
50	11 May 2019[157]	Nigeria	Maiduguri, Borno (BH Territory)	N/A		5	
51	29 May 2019[158]	Niger	Toumour, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	8	3	2
52	9/10 June 2019[159]	Niger	Ala N'Gaïri, near d'Ari Koukouri, N'Guigmi, Diffa (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	9	4	
53	18 July 2019[160]	Nigeria	Damasak, Borno (ISWAP Territory)	ISWAP Claim	1	5	
54	23 July 2019[161]	Nigeria	Dikwa, Borno (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	5		

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56	26 July 2019[163]	Niger	N'Guigmi, Southeast (ISWAP Territory)	N/A		1	
57	29 July 2019[164]	Cameroon	Kalagari Far North & Christian area (BH Territory)	N/A	8		
58	20 August 2019[165]	Cameroon	Logone Birni, Far North (BH Territory)	N/A			18
59	22 August 2019[166]	Cameroon	Krawa-Mafa, Mayo-Tsanaga, Far North (BH Territory)	N/A			3 (children)
60	22 August 2019[167]	Niger	Bagué, Bosso, Diffa, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			1
61	22-3 August 2019[168]	Niger	N'Gayami, near Gueskerou, Diffa, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			2
62	24 August 2019[169]	Nigeria	Gajiram, Nganzai, Borno State (ISWAP Territory)	N/A	(12)		21
63	25-6 August 2019[170]	Niger	Toumour, Diffa, Southeast Niger (ISWAP Territory)	N/A			3
64	30 August 2019[171]	Cameroon	Brouvaré, near Kolofata, Far North (BH Territory)	N/A	4	4	
65	31 August 2019[172]	Nigeria	Balumri, Borno State (BH Territory)	N/A		2	
66	19 September 2019[173]	Nigeria	Dikwa, Borno State (BH Territory)	N/A			5

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68	19 October 2019[175]	Niger	Kablewa, N'Guigmi	N/A	1	1	
69	21 October 2019[176]	Niger	Kolorimi, Mainé Soroa	N/A		1	
70	23 October 2019[177]	Niger	Near Diffa	N/A			3
71	30 October 2019[178]	Chad	Tchoukouliya	N/A	3		
72	3 November 2019[179]	Nigeria	Rann, Borno State	N/A	6		
73	25 November 2019[180]	Cameroon	Amchide-Guederou road	N/A	3		
74	27 November 2019[181]	Nigeria	Yobe State	ISWAP		1	
75	3 December 2019[182]	Cameroon	Mbreche, Far north	N/A			21 (children)
76	4 December 2019[183]	Nigeria	Maiduguri-Damaturu Road, Borno State	ISWAP			14
77	6 December 2019[184]	Cameroon	Bornori, Far North	N/A			2
78	7 December 7, 2019[185]	Cameroon	Kolofata, Far North	N/A	3	1	
79	9/10 December 2019[186]	Niger	Diffa	N/A	3		
80	16 December 2019[187]	Chad	Ngouboua, Lake Chad	N/A	6		4
81	17 December 2019[188]	Chad	Kaiga Ngouboua, Lake Chad	N/A		13	
82	19 December 2019[189]	Nigeria	Chibok, Borno State	N/A			17

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84	22 December 2019[191]	Nigeria	Nganzai, Borno State	ISWAP			5
85	22 December 2019[192]	Nigeria	Monguno-Maiduguri Road, Maiduguri, Borno State	N/A	2		
86	24 December 2019[193]	Nigeria	Chibok, Borno State	N/A	2	3	
87	26 December 2019	Nigeria	Bama, Kolofata	N/A			2
88	29 December 2019[194]	Nigeria	Biu, Borno State	N/A			2
89	3 January 2020[195]	Nigeria	Michika, Adamawa State	ISWAP		1	
90	9 January 2020[196]	Niger	N'Guigmi, Diffa Region	N/A		2 (boys)	
91	10 January 2020[197]	Nigeria	Auno, Borno State	N/A	1	1	5
92	11 January 2020[198]	Chad	Alom, Lake Chad Region	N/A	4		
93	23 January 2020[199]	Nigeria	Dikwa, Borno State	N/A			6
94	26 January 2020[200]	Niger	N'Guigmi	N/A	3		
95	27 Janury 2020[201]	Niger	Chanel, Toumour	N/A	1	2	
96	3 February 2020[202]	Niger	Makintari & Kangouri, Diffa	N/A			2
97	9 February 2020[203]	Nigeria	Madamari, Magumeri - Gubio Road, Borno State	N/A			6
98	9 February 2020[204]	Nigeria	Auno, Borno State	N/A	'Many'		

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100	15 February 2020[206]	Cameroon	Ouzal, Hitere and Mandoussa, Mayo Tsanaga	N/A			8 (children)
101	21/22 February 2020[207]	Nigeria	Garkida, Adamwa State	N/A			5
102	26 February 2020[208]	Nigeria	Bambula, Chibok, Borno State	ISWAP		1	5
103	26 February 2020[209]	Niger	N'Guigmi, Diffa Region	N/A	3	10	
104	7 March 2020[210]	Cameroon	Galim	N/A			4
105	28 March 2020[211]	Nigeria	Maiduguri, Borno State	N/A	7		
106	9 April 2020[212]	Niger	Tam, Diffa Region	N/A	1	1	
107	12 April 2020[213]	Nigeria	Auno, Borno State	N/A			13
108	27 April 2020[214]	Cameroon	Kirawa, Mayo Moskota	N/A	5		

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Appendix 2

Year and Country Breakdown of open-source media reported abductions in Nigeria and the borderlands around Lake Chad of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, 2 July 2017– 30 April 2020

Year	Total	Nigeria	Cameroon	Chad	Niger
2017 from 2 July	12	10	1	0	1
2018	23	18	2	1	2
2019	53	24	10	5	14
2020	20	10	3	1	6
Total	108	62	16	7	23

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