

## SECURITY (TERRORISM) CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA AND PROSPECTS FOR REFORMS- A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW

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### Abstract

This paper examined the scourge of terrorism in Nigeria and the devastating effects it has on the legal, social and economic spheres of activities in Nigeria. The paper established that there are many constitutional and other statutory provisions guaranteeing welfare and security of citizens but these are obeyed more in breaches than observances because of poor implementation and enforcement mechanism. To stem the tide of terrorism, it was recommended that Government must equip security agencies with modern investigative tools to enable them operate within a centralized intelligence-sharing framework. On the other hand, it was further recommended that security agencies must adopt a balanced approach that strengthens the rule of law, enhances institutional capacity, secures borders, and protects fundamental rights of citizens as these are indispensable for sustainable counter-terrorism.

**Keywords:** Conviction, integration, insecurity, reform, terrorism

### 1. Introduction

Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to Nigeria's national security, constitutional order, and socio-economic stability. The activities of Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province,<sup>1</sup> armed bandits, and other violent extremist groups have resulted in widespread loss of lives, internal displacement, and the erosion of public confidence in the state's ability to guarantee security.<sup>1</sup> Despite the enactment of counter-terrorism legislation and the deployment of military operations, terrorist violence persists, raising fundamental questions about the adequacy of Nigeria's legal frameworks, institutional capacity, enforcement mechanisms, and respect for human rights. It is against this background that this paper addresses the security challenges with a view to making pragmatic recommendations for its reduction if not complete eradication in Nigeria.

### 2. Nigeria's Legal Frameworks for combating terrorism

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended<sup>2</sup> is the supreme law, the *fons et origo* and the *grundnorm*. Hence, it prioritizes the need for welfare and security of the people to

<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter abbreviated and referred to as "ISWAP".

<sup>2</sup> Cap. C23 LFN 2004 hereinafter abbreviated and referred to as "CFRN".

be the primary purpose of government. The principle of the supremacy of the Nigerian Constitution is traceable to *section 1(1) and (3)* of the CFRN, 1999 as amended As reiterated in *CBN v Ochife & Ors*,<sup>3</sup> the Constitution is the grundnorm, the basic law of the land. It stands head and shoulders above any other law or instrument enacted by the National Assembly, State House of Assembly or any other person or authority empowered in that regard. It is from the Constitution that every other enactment or instrument derives their validity and binding force. Consistent with the concept of separation of powers, under the Nigerian Constitution, the three arms of government, being the legislature, executive and judiciary, in both the Federation and the State levels, are distinct and separate, and each has its functions and powers clearly set out. The CFRN, 1999 as amended provides the foundational legal framework for addressing terrorism within Nigeria. Expressly, *section 4* of the CFRN 1999 as amended confers on the National Assembly the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria. This power or authority has led to the enactment of a specific counter terrorism legislations, such as the Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011, as amended in 2013 now repealed by the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

In addition, the Nigerian Constitution empowers the Federal Government to maintain law and order, primarily through the Police and Armed Forces.<sup>4</sup> In the case of *Fawehinmi v Inspector General of Police*,<sup>5</sup> the Supreme Court underscored the importance of police powers in maintaining national security and public order, which extends to counter-terrorism activities. The Constitution also enshrines fundamental rights such as the right to life, personal liberty and dignity.<sup>6</sup> These rights must be respected in all counter-terrorism activities. The case of *Ogugu v State*,<sup>7</sup> highlighted the role of the judiciary in protecting human rights against executive excesses and in ensuring that counter-terrorism measures do not violate constitutional right. The Federal structure of Nigeria allocates specific responsibilities to Federal and State Governments.<sup>8</sup> In the case of *Attorney General of Lagos State v Attorney General of Federation*,<sup>9</sup> the Supreme Court emphasised the need for co-operation between Federal and State governments in matters of security, including counter-terrorism efforts. An independent judiciary as established by the Constitution, is responsible for interpreting laws and ensuring justice.<sup>10</sup>

By reason of the provisions of *section 6* of the CFRN, 1999 as amended, the Courts adjudicate cases related to terrorism, ensuring that counter-terrorism measures comply within constitutional provisions as well as protect citizens' rights against potential abuses. In *Liman v Nigerian Army*,<sup>11</sup> the court reinforced the importance of the judiciary over rights in security matters to prevent the abuse of power. The Constitution allows the President to declare a state of emergency in response to significant threats, including terrorism.<sup>12</sup> This grants the government temporary special powers to address the crisis but is subject to legislative approval and judicial review to prevent misuse. The

<sup>3</sup> (2025) LPELR-80220(SC).

<sup>4</sup> *Sections 214 to 220* of the CFRN 1999 as amended.

<sup>5</sup> (2002) 7 NWLR (Pt. 76) 606.

<sup>6</sup> *Sections 33 to 45* of the CFRN 1999 as amended.

<sup>7</sup> (1994) 9 NWLR (Pt. 366) 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Sections 4 and 5* of the CFRN 1999 as amended and the Second Schedule thereunder.

<sup>9</sup> (2003) 12 NWLR (Pt. 833) 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Sections 6, 230-296* of the CFRN 1999 as amended.

<sup>11</sup> (2005) 10 NWLR (Pt. 934) 60.

<sup>12</sup> *Section 305* of the CFRN 1999 as amended.

scope and limitation of executive powers during a state of emergency was highlighted in the case of *Dokubo -Asari v Federal Republic of Nigeria*.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, under *section 12* of the CFRN, 1999 as amended, the Federal Government is permitted to enter into treaties and international agreements, facilitating co-operation with other countries and international organisations on all issues including combating terrorism. In the case of *Abacha v Fawehinmi*,<sup>14</sup> the Supreme Court recognised the binding nature of international treaties on Nigeria, underscoring the importance of international cooperation in counter-terrorism. The Nigerian Constitution also provides the foundational legal framework for combating terrorism, balancing the need for security with the protection of human rights and democratic principles. The practical application of these constitutional provisions involves complex interactions between various governmental levels and institutions, often under challenging circumstances of terrorist threats.

Aside the Constitution, Nigeria's primary or statutory response to terrorism was embodied in the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011, as amended in 2013, now repealed and subsequently consolidated in the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.<sup>15</sup> The TPPA, 2022 represents Nigeria's commitment to addressing terrorism through a legal and institutional framework consistent with international standards. It criminalizes a wide range of terrorism-related activities, including terrorist acts, conspiracy, financing of terrorism, hostage-taking, recruitment, and the provision of logistical support to terrorist organizations. It further empowers law enforcement and security agencies to investigate, prosecute, and collaborate with international partners in counter-terrorism efforts.

The TPPA, 2022 reflects Nigeria's obligations under various United Nations counter-terrorism conventions, including measures relating to terrorist financing, mutual legal assistance, and extradition.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, it provides a comprehensive statutory basis for counter-terrorism operations and places Nigeria within the global legal regime against terrorism. On paper, therefore, Nigeria appears to possess a robust legal framework capable of responding to the evolving nature of terrorist threats. However, the adequacy of this framework has been widely questioned by scholars and practitioners due to significant structural and operational deficiencies. One of the most critical challenges is the existence of overlapping and fragmented legal provisions governing terrorism-related offences.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the Terrorism Prevention Act, 2022, offences connected to terrorism are also addressed under the Criminal Code, Penal Code, and Firearms Act.<sup>18</sup> The coexistence of these statutes, without clear harmonization, often creates confusion regarding applicable laws, prosecutorial jurisdiction, and appropriate penalties. This fragmentation weakens legal coherence and complicates enforcement, particularly in cases involving joint military and civilian operations. Jurisdictional ambiguities frequently arise between civilian courts and military authorities, especially where suspects are apprehended during armed counter-insurgency

<sup>13</sup> (2007) 12 NWLR (Pt. 1048) 320.

<sup>14</sup> (2000) 6 NWLR (Pt. 660) 228.

<sup>15</sup> Hereinafter abbreviated and referred to as "TPPA".

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism* (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Y Duru, 'Legal Framework for Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria' (2020) 12 Nigerian Journal of Public Law 88

<sup>18</sup> Criminal Code Act Cap C38 LFN 2004; Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act Cap P3 LFN 2004; Firearms Act Cap F28 LFN 2004.

operations.<sup>19</sup> In practice, this has led to delays in prosecution, prolonged detention without trial, and, in some instances, the abandonment of cases due to procedural uncertainties. Such outcomes undermine the deterrent effect of the law and erode public confidence in the justice system.

Furthermore, the Terrorism Prevention Act, 2022 grants broad discretionary powers to security agencies, particularly in relation to arrest, detention, and surveillance.<sup>20</sup> While these powers are intended to enhance operational effectiveness, their vague formulation raises concerns about legal certainty and constitutional safeguards.<sup>21</sup> The lack of clearly defined limits and oversight mechanisms creates room for abuse, arbitrary enforcement, and violations of fundamental human rights. These shortcomings not only expose the framework to constitutional challenges but also risk fuelling grievances that extremist groups exploit for recruitment. Although Nigeria possesses a formal and comprehensive legal framework for combating terrorism, its practical adequacy remains questionable. The persistence of overlapping laws, enforcement ambiguities, and insufficient harmonization significantly undermines the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts. Without legal clarity, institutional coordination, and stronger safeguards for due process, the existing framework cannot fully respond to the complex and evolving threat of terrorism in Nigeria.

### 3. Effectiveness of Implementation and Enforcement Mechanisms

Having established the legal architecture for combating terrorism in Nigeria in the immediate past segment of this paper, it is will be apposite to interrogate the effectiveness of these laws. Without much ado, a major challenge confronting Nigeria's counter-terrorism regime lies not in the absence of legal frameworks, but in the **weakness of implementation and enforcement mechanisms**. Despite the existence of comprehensive statutory provisions under the Terrorism Prevention Act and related laws, the practical enforcement of these provisions has remained inconsistent and largely ineffective. This enforcement deficit significantly undermines Nigeria's ability to deter, disrupt, and prosecute terrorist activities.<sup>22</sup>

One recurring problem is the **handling of terrorism suspects after arrest**. In many cases, arrests are followed by prolonged detention without trial, often justified on grounds of national security. While preventive detention may be permissible under exceptional circumstances, its routine use in counter-terrorism operations raises serious legal and constitutional concerns. Poor investigation, lack of forensic capacity, and weak evidentiary foundations frequently result in the inability of prosecuting authorities to secure convictions. Consequently, suspects are either released without trial or remain in indefinite detention, both of which weaken the credibility of the justice system and the deterrent value of counter-terrorism laws.<sup>23</sup>

Low conviction rates further expose deficiencies in investigative and prosecutorial capacity. Effective counter-terrorism enforcement requires specialized skills in intelligence gathering, digital

<sup>19</sup> C Okorie, 'Military Involvement and Civilian Jurisdiction in Counter-Terrorism Operations in Nigeria' (2019) 6 *Law and Security Review* 54.

<sup>20</sup> Sections 25 to 38 of the TPPA, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Sections 35 and 36 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended.

<sup>22</sup> Y Duru, 'Legal and Institutional Challenges of Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria' (2020) 12 *Nigerian Journal of Public Law* 88.

<sup>23</sup> Sections 35 and 36 of the CFRN, 1999 as amended. Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Human Rights Violations in Counter-Terrorism Operations* (2022).

forensics, financial tracking, and inter-agency cooperation. However, many law enforcement agencies in Nigeria lack the technical expertise and resources necessary to meet these demands. Terrorism cases often collapse in court due to procedural irregularities, violation of suspects' rights, or failure to meet the burden of proof required under criminal law.<sup>24</sup> These shortcomings not only embolden terrorist groups but also signal institutional weakness.

Another significant challenge is the **lack of coordination among security agencies**. The Nigerian Police Force, the State Security Services (otherwise called "DSS"), the Armed Forces, and other intelligence units often operate in silos, with limited information sharing and unclear operational boundaries. This fragmented approach leads to intelligence failures, duplication of efforts, and operational inefficiencies.<sup>25</sup> In some instances, rivalry and competition among agencies hinder collaboration, thereby compromising national security objectives. Corruption further undermines enforcement mechanisms. Allegations of bribery, diversion of security funds, compromise of intelligence, and collusion with criminal networks continue to plague security institutions.<sup>26</sup> Corruption weakens operational effectiveness by eroding discipline, accountability, and public trust. Where security personnel are perceived as compromised, communities become reluctant to cooperate or provide intelligence, thereby depriving the state of crucial local support in counter-terrorism efforts.

Inadequate funding and poor training also constitute serious enforcement challenges. Counter-terrorism operations are resource-intensive, requiring advanced technology, surveillance systems, logistical support, and continuous training. However, insufficient budgetary allocation, mismanagement of funds, and lack of transparency limit the capacity of security agencies to respond effectively to evolving terrorist tactics. Without sustained investment in human and institutional capacity, legal frameworks alone cannot translate into effective enforcement. The cumulative effect of these weaknesses is a **significant enforcement gap** that undermines deterrence. Terrorist groups exploit institutional lapses, slow judicial processes, and weak accountability structures to regroup, recruit, and carry out attacks. Thus, while Nigeria's counter-terrorism laws may appear adequate on paper, their effectiveness is severely constrained by flawed implementation and enforcement mechanisms.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4. Institutional and operational challenges

**The institutional and operational challenges that bedevil the security ecosystem in Nigeria include but are not limited to the following namely:**

**(a) Integration or "Rehabilitation" of Terrorists**

One of the most controversial aspects of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy is the **rehabilitation and reintegration of former terrorists**, particularly through initiatives such as Operation Safe Corridor. The programme is designed to deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate repentant insurgents into society. In principle, this approach aligns with international best practices, which

<sup>24</sup>C Okorie, 'Prosecution of Terrorism Offences in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects' (2019) 6 *Law and Security Review* 61.

<sup>25</sup> I Oche, *Governance and National Security in Nigeria* (Spectrum Books 2017) 132.

<sup>26</sup> T Falola, *Corruption and National Security in Nigeria* (London, Routledge 2016) 97.

<sup>27</sup> ECOWAS, *Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (2019) 22.

increasingly recognize that military force alone cannot defeat terrorism.<sup>28</sup> However, the implementation of rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria raises serious **legal, ethical, and security concerns**. A central issue is the absence of a clear and comprehensive statutory framework governing the process. There is limited legal guidance on eligibility criteria, procedural safeguards, victims' rights, monitoring mechanisms, and post-reintegration accountability.<sup>29</sup> This legal vacuum creates uncertainty and undermines transparency, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness and legitimacy of such programmes.

The lack of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also increases the risk of **re-radicalization**. Without sustained oversight, rehabilitated individuals may return to extremist networks or engage in criminal activities.<sup>30</sup> There are also concerns about the potential **infiltration of security institutions** or sensitive civilian spaces by former combatants who have not been fully deradicalized. Another critical concern relates to **justice and victims' rights**. Rehabilitation programmes often prioritize the reintegration of former terrorists without adequately addressing the grievances of victims and affected communities. Many victims perceive the reintegration of former insurgents as a form of injustice, particularly where perpetrators are rehabilitated without prosecution, compensation, or public acknowledgment of harm.<sup>31</sup> This perception undermines confidence in the justice system and fuels resentment.

Public resentment toward perceived preferential treatment of former terrorists also raises broader questions about **equality before the law**. Where individuals who have committed serious crimes are reintegrated without trial, while ordinary citizens face harsh penalties for lesser offences, the legitimacy of the legal system is called into question.<sup>32</sup> Such perceptions weaken the rule of law and may inadvertently encourage criminal behavior. From an institutional perspective, rehabilitation programmes highlight the tension between **security pragmatism and legal accountability**. While deradicalization may offer strategic benefits, its success depends on clear legal foundations, transparency, and alignment with constitutional principles. Without these safeguards, rehabilitation risks becoming a politically expedient but legally fragile strategy.<sup>33</sup>

### **(b) Porous Borders and Cross-Border Infiltration**

Nigeria's porous borders significantly contribute to the persistence of terrorism. Terrorist groups exploit weak border control to move fighters, arms, and finances across neighbouring states within the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel region.<sup>7</sup> Poor surveillance infrastructure and limited regional intelligence-sharing hinder effective response, making border insecurity a major legal and security challenge.

### **(c) Corruption and Institutional Weakness**

<sup>28</sup> A Adamu, 'Deradicalization and Reintegration of Boko Haram Fighters' (2021) 9 *African Security Studies* 104.

<sup>29</sup> Y Ibrahim, 'Legal Gaps in Nigeria's Deradicalization Framework' (2020) 14 *Journal of African Law* 211.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners* (2016).

<sup>31</sup> M Okoye, 'Victims of Terrorism and Transitional Justice in Nigeria' (2018) 10 *African Human Rights Law Journal* 256.

<sup>32</sup> O Fagbemi, 'Equality Before the Law and Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria' (2019) 7 *Nigerian Bar Journal* 44.

<sup>33</sup> B Onuoha, *Security Sector Reform and Accountability in Nigeria* (Palgrave Macmillan 2018) 183.

Corruption within security and judicial institutions remains a major impediment to counter-terrorism. Bribery, diversion of security funds, and compromised prosecutions weaken the credibility of state institutions and facilitate terrorist activities.<sup>8</sup> Scholars note that corruption not only undermines enforcement but also fuels grievances that terrorists exploit for recruitment.

## 5. Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism

Nigeria's counter-terrorism operations have attracted sustained criticism for alleged human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, unlawful and prolonged detention, torture, enforced disappearances, and forced displacement of civilians.<sup>34</sup> These violations have been particularly associated with counter-insurgency operations in the North-East, where military campaigns against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups have often blurred the distinction between combatants and civilians. Such practices directly contravene the provisions of *sections 33, 34, 35 and 36* of the CFRN, as amended where the rights to life, dignity of the human person, personal liberty, and fair hearing respectively are guaranteed. In addition to domestic constitutional obligations, Nigeria is bound by several international and regional human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>35</sup> 1948; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>36</sup> 1966 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,<sup>37</sup> 1981 both of which require state parties to respect and protect fundamental rights even during public emergencies and armed conflict.<sup>38</sup> Although international law acknowledges the legitimacy of counter-terrorism measures, it consistently emphasizes that such measures must comply with the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and accountability.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most contentious dimensions of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy is the excessive use of force, which has resulted in civilian casualties and allegations of extrajudicial killings by security forces. Reports by international human rights organizations indicate that lethal force has, in some cases, been deployed without due process, investigation, or accountability.<sup>40</sup> Such actions undermine the rule of law and weaken the legitimacy of counter-terrorism operations, particularly in affected communities.

Another major concern is the practice of arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention without trial. Terrorism suspects are frequently detained for extended periods without being charged or brought before a competent court, often in military detention facilities rather than recognized correctional centres.<sup>41</sup> This practice violates constitutional guarantees of personal liberty and fair hearing and reflects systemic weaknesses in investigative capacity and prosecutorial effectiveness. The reliance on preventive detention as a counter-terrorism tool erodes public confidence in the justice system and diminishes the deterrent value of criminal prosecution. Reports of torture and inhuman or

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders, Blood on Their Hands: War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military* (2015).

<sup>35</sup> Hereinafter abbreviated and referred to as "UDHR".

<sup>36</sup> Hereinafter abbreviated and referred to as "ICCPR".

<sup>37</sup> Hereinafter abbreviated and referred to as "ACHPR".

<sup>38</sup> African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act Cap A9 LFN 2004; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Human Rights and Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism* (2014) 17.

<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Security Forces Abuses in Counter-Terrorism Operations* (2020).

<sup>41</sup> A O Oba, 'Preventive Detention and the Nigerian Constitution' (2018) 9 *Nigerian Law and Practice Journal* 41.

degrading treatment during interrogation further exacerbate these concerns.<sup>42</sup> Torture is absolutely prohibited under Nigerian law and international human rights conventions, including the Convention Against Torture, to which Nigeria is a party.<sup>43</sup> Evidence obtained through torture is legally inadmissible, making such practices both unlawful and counterproductive to successful prosecution.

Additionally, counter-terrorism operations have resulted in forced displacement of civilian populations, destruction of property, and forms of collective punishment against communities suspected of harbouring terrorists.<sup>44</sup> These actions violate principles of international humanitarian law and intensify humanitarian crises, thereby creating grievances that terrorist groups exploit for recruitment and radicalization. Sustainable counter-terrorism must therefore reconcile security imperatives with constitutional guarantees and human rights obligations.

## 6. Prospects for reforms

Nigeria is facing serious internal and external aggression. Thus, Nigeria must undertake comprehensive legal reforms to harmonize its counter-terrorism framework and eliminate overlaps between the Terrorism Prevention Act, the Criminal Code, the Penal Code, and other security-related statutes.<sup>45</sup> The lack of legal coherence creates enforcement ambiguities and jurisdictional conflicts. The establishment of specialized counter-terrorism courts would enhance procedural efficiency, judicial expertise, and timely adjudication while safeguarding constitutional rights.<sup>46</sup> Clear statutory guidelines are also required to regulate rehabilitation and reintegration programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor, including eligibility criteria, victims' participation, monitoring mechanisms, and post-reintegration accountability.<sup>47</sup> Without a clear legal framework, such programmes risk undermining justice, public confidence, and national security.

Effective counter-terrorism enforcement requires improved training, adequate funding, and enhanced intelligence capacity. Security agencies must be equipped with modern investigative tools and operate within a centralized intelligence-sharing framework.<sup>48</sup> Corruption and lack of accountability within security institutions continue to undermine operational effectiveness and public trust.<sup>49</sup> Independent oversight mechanisms, judicial review, and transparent disciplinary processes are essential for addressing abuses and restoring legitimacy.

The transnational nature of terrorism necessitates strengthened border control and regional cooperation. Nigeria's porous borders facilitate the movement of terrorists, arms, and illicit funds across national boundaries.<sup>50</sup> Enhanced collaboration under ECOWAS and African Union counter-

<sup>42</sup> Amnesty International, *Stars on Their Shoulders, Blood on Their Hands: War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military* (2015).

<sup>43</sup> Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1984.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Nigeria Situation Report* (2021).

<sup>45</sup> Y Duru, 'Legal Framework for Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria' (2020) 12 *Nigerian Journal of Public Law* 88.

<sup>46</sup> C Okorie, 'Specialized Courts and Terrorism Trials in Nigeria' (2019) 6 *Law and Security Review* 72.

<sup>47</sup> M Onuoha, 'Deradicalization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Nigeria' (2021) 15 *African Security Review* 113.

<sup>48</sup> E Eze, 'Inter-Agency Coordination and Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria' (2020) 8 *Journal of International Security Law* 59.

<sup>49</sup> T Akinwale, 'Corruption and National Security in Nigeria' (2019) 5 *Nigerian Journal of Criminal Law* 101.

<sup>50</sup> A Adebayo, 'Border Security and Terrorism in West Africa' (2018) 4 *ECOWAS Law Journal* 33.

terrorism frameworks is therefore essential for intelligence-sharing, joint operations, and harmonized legal responses.<sup>51</sup> Balancing effective counter-terrorism with the protection of human rights is both a constitutional obligation and a strategic necessity. Judicial oversight, adherence to due process, and accountability for abuses must be integrated into counter-terrorism operations.<sup>52</sup> A rights-based approach enhances legitimacy, strengthens community cooperation, and reduces the risk of radicalization.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, respect for human rights reinforces the long-term effectiveness of Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework.

## 7. Conclusion

Terrorism in Nigeria persists due to weaknesses in legal frameworks, poor enforcement, institutional corruption, porous borders, and human rights violations. While Nigeria has made legislative and operational efforts, these remain insufficient without comprehensive reforms. A balanced approach that strengthens the rule of law, enhances institutional capacity, secures borders, and protects fundamental rights is indispensable for sustainable counter-terrorism.

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### Authors' contributions

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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<sup>51</sup> ECOWAS, *Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan* (2013).

<sup>52</sup> ICCPR art 2; Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) s 46.

<sup>53</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism* (2019).

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