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## Women as Victims of Insurgency: A Study of Female Suicide Bombers in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Terrorism, which has systematically crept into Nigerian lexicon has gained currency and drawn increasing attention. Boko Haram is an extremist Islamic group in Nigeria that has engaged in guerrilla warfare across the north-eastern {Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Gombe) states of Nigeria since 2002. The increasing international character of Boko Haram particularly the use of teenage girls and women in their suicide operation has become a focus of analysis. The sect is known for bombing, using explosives to kill, and to cause massive destruction, hence a threat to national security. This paper undertakes a descriptive and qualitative method of inquiry to examine the Boko Haram instrumental use of women as suicide bombers. Many of the information presented in this study were based on some media interviews with the victims, the availability of high quality secondary sources as primary interviews were not possible.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Suicide Bombers, Terrorism, Women.

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### 1. Introduction

Act of terrorism has become a frequent occurrence in contemporary world and Nigeria too has joined the clique of terrorist countries. The December 25, 2009 attempt by Farouk Abdulmutalib to blow up a US Delta airline en route to Detroit from Amsterdam drew condemnation and Nigeria was blacklisted among terrorist countries. The four terrorist groups responsible for the most destructive acts are *Taliban*, *Boko Haram*, *ISIS*, and *Al-Qaeda*. Although there have been series of terrorist activities by some groups in Nigeria, that of *Boko Haram* has been more deadly, and more devastating in the history of terrorism in Nigeria<sup>2</sup>. According to Lucy (2012) the sect: (1) pursues political goals (2) is a non-state actor (3) systematically uses violence against civilians, and (4) aims to spread terror in a target audience. Comparison of *Boko Haram* with contemporary terrorist organizations supports this assessment as such *Boko Haram* should thus, be understood within the context of modern terrorism.

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<sup>2</sup> Joshua S. and F. Chidozie, "Terrorism in Nigeria" in R. Ajayi (ed) Understanding Government and Politics in Nigeria, Department of Political Science and International Relation, Kwara, 2014.

In the last two years, Nigeria has witnessed increasing feminisation of terror by *Boko Haram* in two paradoxical ways – involving young girls as both the victims of terror in the form of abductees their fate has received the greatest international condemnation. The group has abducted at least 2000 women and girls in north-eastern Nigeria since 2009. The abduction of 276 teenage girls from Chibok in April 2014 by the group has been the largest campaign to “Bring Back our Girls”. As vanguards of terror, *Boko Haram* has graduated from using young girls as carriers of arms, foodstuff as well as recruiters to increasing deployment of them as suicide bombers. Female suicide attacks are considered shocking since such actions violate the gender norms of the societies from which the attackers emerge. According to O’rourke (2009), women are remarkably effective attackers. Given their strategic value, terrorist organizations-first secular ones, then religious groups- have recruited women to perform suicide missions. In order to achieve their strategic goals more effectively, these organizations have developed recruitment tactics aimed at women, employing gender specific and religious rhetoric. Terrorists are viewed to have use suicide because they are low cost, as opposed to buying arms, require low technology, and are a low risk weapon. They also require little training, leave no trace behind, have accessibility to targeted populations as well as soft targets and strike fear into the general population.<sup>3</sup> Female suicide bombers have exploited male assumptions about the innocent woman as a way to evade search and detection by predominantly male military forces. They sometimes revert to voluminous traditional dress, using fictive pregnancies or even real infants to hide explosive equipment.

Like any other suicide attacks, female suicide bombings have also been viewed to be inspired by religious-cultural tradition. As such, Islam has been the centre of attention, and often times blamed for a number of attacks.<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, quite a number of female suicide attacks happen to be originated from Muslim communities. However, a significant number of women suicide bombers have also come from non-Muslim areas of the world. For instance, the LTTE’s (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) female black tigers are from secular Marxist group, not Muslim.

## 2. Suicide bombing: Conceptual clarification

According to Tambiah, there are four ways that women specifically, are victims in a conflict. First, women are victims of being rape, injured or death. Secondly, they are dislocated within their own country. Thirdly, in a way which is unique to women, is the loss of male relatives, which is an emotional and social, economic loss, and finally they are victims of being used as weapon of war in suicide attacks.<sup>5</sup> The use of the term “suicide bombing” dates back to at least 1940. A New York Times article mentioned the term in relation to German tactics. The Times of London, on April 15, 1947, referred to a new pilot-less radio controlled rocketed missile thus: designed originally as a counter measure to Japanese suicide bombers: it is now a potent weapon for defence or offence.<sup>6</sup>

Suicide bombing is defined as a violent politically motivated attack, carried out in a deliberate state of awareness by a person who blew himself or herself up together with a chosen target. The premeditated certain death of the perpetrator is the precondition for the success of the attack.<sup>7</sup> Altran defined suicide bombing as:

A tactic encompasses attacks of military targets that are immune via ordinary insurgent strategies, the assassination of prominent leaders (who would ordinarily not be accessible by any other means) and the attack of the large numbers of civilians. Although a suicide attacks aims to physically destroy an initial target, its primary use is typically as a weapon of psychological war

<sup>3</sup> Lucy P.L., “The Emergence of Boko Haram: An Analysis of Terrorist Characteristic” 3rd Australian Counter Terrorism Conference Novotel Langley Hotel, Perth, Western Australia 3-5 December, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Nolem E., “Female Suicide Bombers: Coerced or Committed? Global Security Studies” Issue 2, pp- 30-40. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Laura S. and E.G. Canon, Women, Gender and Terrorism (ed.), USA, The University of Georgia Press, 2011. P.4.

<sup>6</sup> Mia B., Bombshell: women and terrorism, USA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> Frazier L., “Abandon Weeping for Weapons: Palestinian Women Suicide Bomber. <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/keefer/joe/frazier> accessed 11/21/2014.

fare intended to affect a larger public audience. The primary targets not those actually killed or injured in the attack, but those made to witness it".<sup>8</sup>

Islamist often calls the act as *istihad* (meaning martyrdom operation) and the suicide bomber a *shahid* (translated as martyr). The term denotes one who died in order to testify his faith in God. For example those who die while waging jihad *bis saif*, it is applied to suicide bombers by the Palestinian authority among others. The Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) defined suicide bombing as an 'operational method in which the very act of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator. The terrorist is fully aware that if she/he does not kill herself/himself, the planned attack will not be implemented', suicide bomber is an emotionally-laden term. Some describe these individuals, as homicide bombers or suicide terrorist to emphasise the murder and terror brought about by this act.<sup>9</sup>

Bukay on the other hand argues that suicide bombing is created by religious beliefs. He claims that Islam in particular has a clear theological foundation for suicide attacks, and that this foundation is vital factor in explaining why suicide attacks occur.<sup>10</sup>

For the purpose of this paper a suicide bomber is defined as a politically motivated violent attack perpetrated by an individual (or individuals) who actively and purposely causes his own death through blowing herself/himself up along with her/his chosen target.

### 3. Global and historical purview of suicide bombing

The number of attacks using suicide tactics has grown from an average of fewer than five per year during the 1980s to 180 per year between 2000 and 2005. These attacks have been aimed at diverse military and civilian targets, including in Sri-Lanka, in Israeli since July 6, 1989, in Iraq since the US-led invasion of the country in 2003, in Pakistan since 2001, in Afghanistan since 2005, in Somalia since 2006 and in Nigeria since 2011.

A long view of history reveals that suicide bombings are a very old *modus operandi*. In ancient times two notorious sects, the Jewish *Sicairis* and the Islamic *Hashishiyun* became infamous for such attacks. In the 18th century, suicide tactics were used on the Malabao Coast of south-western India, in Atjeh in Northern Sumatra and in Mindanao and Sulu in southern Philippines. In all of these places, Muslims carried out suicide attacks in their fight against western hegemony and colonial rule.

Japanese Kamikaze pilots similarly undertook an organised, planned and persistent programme of suicide attacks against American military troops during World War II.<sup>11</sup> Between July 1944 and August 1945, 3843 Japanese pilots gave their lives sinking at least 375 US naval vessels, killing 12,300 service men, and wounding another 36,400.<sup>12</sup>

April 1983, proved to be a historical watershed in the modern usage of suicide terrorism. It was on this day suicide terror attacks started in Lebanon. A small - and until then unknown group by the name of *Hezbollah* directed a number of suicide attacks against western targets. The first attack was directed at the American embassy in Beirut followed by attacks on the US marines headquarters and the French Multinational Force in October 1983. The last two were executed simultaneously and resulted in 300 casualties and dozens wounded. This attack encouraged terrorist groups from *Hamas* to the liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to *al-Qaeda* to adopt this method of attack.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Onuoha F.O. and T.A. George, "Boko Haram's use of Female Suicide Bombing in Nigeria", Aljazeera Centre for Studies, 2015, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Segeman M., "The Normality of global Jihadi Terrorism" *The Journal of International Security Affairs*. 8, 1-10. 2005.P.8.

<sup>10</sup> Tambiah Y., "Turncoat Bodies: Sexuality and Sex Work under Militization in Sri Lanka", *Feminist Analysis*, 19 (2): 243-261.2005.p.249.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.p.250.

<sup>12</sup> Atran S., "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism" *Journal of Science*, 2003. 1534-1539. P.1535.

<sup>13</sup> Schweitzer Y., *The Age of Non-Conventional Terrorism*. The RUST Journal. Vol.148. No.3. 2003, pp 82-86. P.83.

One of the groups that followed Hezbollah even exceeding it in both execution and number of incident was the LTTE, the Tamil Separatist groups in Sri-Lanka. Between July 1987 and February 2000 it carried out 168 suicide terror attacks in Sri-Lanka and India, leaving thousands of innocent bystanders dead or wounded. The LTTE has directed its attacks primarily against the highest Sri Lankan and Indian political and military personnel. Since 1991 the LTTE have used female suicide operatives in their civil war with Sri Lankan government. It is the only organization that succeeded in assassinating two heads of states, former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri-Lanka president Prendesa.<sup>14</sup>

In Israel, the Hamas (*Harkat-el-Mukawma el Islamiya* or the Islamic Resistance Movement) and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) had carried out about 30 suicide terror attacks which caused about 120 fatalities and wounded hundreds. Hamas and the PIJ were also inspired and assisted by *Hezbollah*. The PIJ leadership maintained close relationships with Iran and Hezbollah from the early 80s. The relationship between Hamas with *Hezbollah* gained momentum after Israel departed a few hundred operatives to Lebanon in 1992 where they established a close liaison with *Hezbollah* and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Both groups learned suicide techniques in Lebanon.<sup>15</sup>

Another group that has used suicide terror attacks in the past is the *Kurdistan worker's Party* (PKK). The PKK has carried out a total of 21 suicide attacks or attempted attacks. Its suicide campaign started on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1996 which caused relatively low casualties: 19 were killed and 138 were wounded.<sup>16</sup> The PKK resorted to suicide terrorism at a time when it was facing heavy military setbacks in south east Turkey, which had an adverse effect on the morale of its members. Since the groups military activities between 1994 to 1996 had declined, the organization was seeking an effective means to reverse this trend, and to boost the morale of its fighters. Suicide missions were therefore chosen to demonstrate a martyr's death. The attacks demonstrated the supreme willingness to sacrifice everything, including one's life, for the Kurdish national goals for some time, such attacks were used for retaliatory purposes.

In al-Qaeda's tactical arsenal, suicide attacks play a pivotal role. No other tactics symbolizes al-Qaeda's tenaciousness and ability to inspire a large number of Muslims worldwide as much as "Martyrdom operation". Al-Qaeda has all but perfect this tactical and institutionalized it to an extent not seen in other terrorist group. More than any other individual, Azzam persuaded jihadist in Afghanistan and beyond that those who die for the sake of God (*Fi sabil Allah*) will be rewarded in paradise.<sup>17</sup> The group resorted to suicide attacks and was responsible for two simultaneous attacks against the American embassies in Nairobi and in Dar-e-Salam in August 1998 resulted in 300 fatalities and five thousands wounded most of them innocent local by-standers. The Al-Qaeda's decision to engage in suicide attacks was influenced by the Egyptian group al-jihad under.

Women have played an important role in the terrorist activity of some of the prominent groups that use suicide terrorism. Terrorist groups which have publicised their use of females includes the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP/PRS), the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Chechen rebels, Al-Aqsa martyrs, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and most recently, Hamas.

Suicide attacks are done for effect, and the more dramatic the effect, the stronger the message, thus a potential interest on the part of some groups in recruiting women. A growing number of insurgent organisations have adopted suicide bombing, not only because of its superiority over traditional guerrilla warfare but also because it garners significant media attention especially when perpetrated by women and young girls.

Although women make up roughly 15% of the suicide bombers within groups which utilize females, they were responsible for 65% of assassinations,<sup>18</sup> 20% of women who committed a suicide attacks did so with the purpose of assassinating a specific individual, compared with 4% of male attackers. There are

<sup>14</sup> Bukay D., "The Religious Foundations of Suicide Bombings Islamist Ideology" Middle East Quarterly, 2006.p.145.

<sup>15</sup> Zedalis D.D., Female Suicide Bombers. Hawaii, University of the Pacific Honolulu, 2004. P.3.

<sup>16</sup> Kassim S.H., The Role of Religion in the Generation of Suicide Bombers. UK, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.205.

<sup>17</sup> Atran S., Genesis of suicide terrorism Journal of Science, 2003, 1536-1539, p.1537.

<sup>18</sup> Pape R., Dying to win: The Strategic Logic of suicide Bombing. New York, Random House, 2005.

significant differences in the reasons for using female suicide bombers. In groups such as Hamas, the Tamil Tigers or the PKK, women are usually engaged in violence only out of necessity or a case of last resort. For instance, Hamas first suicide bombing (male) occurred in 1993, but it was not until 2002 that it used first female suicide bomber.<sup>19</sup> This change was prompted by the increasing difficulties that male suicide bombers faced in their attempts to reach their targets.

In January, 2004 Sheikh Ahmad Yassin the spiritual leader of Hamas, categorically renounced the use of women as “a significant evolution of our fight, the male fighters face many obstacles, so women can more easily reach the targets. Women are like the reserve army, where there is necessity, we use them.”<sup>20</sup> ISIS has also become so desperate for suicide bombers, they have now started to train up anal-women battalion of bombers in Syria.

#### 4. An overview of Boko Haram

The islamist terrorist group known as Boko Haram but whose formal name in Arabic is *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’u wati wal-Jihad* or people committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and jihad, has been active in Nigeria since 2002. It was founded by its leader Mohammad Yusuf in Maiduguri the capital of Borno in northeast.<sup>21</sup> Prior to 2009, it was a fringe group who had not fully committed to violence.

In 2009, the police clamped down on sect members who were ignoring a law requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets through subtle and open harassment, Boko Haram was grounded into an open confrontation with the government: Yusuf was captured and short dead in police custody.<sup>22</sup> The group aims to establish a full Islamic state in Nigeria including the implementation of criminal *sharia* courts across the country its ideology is based on extreme Islamic teaching which rejects most western ideas and institutions as un-Islamic. Since stepping up its activities in 2009, Boko Haram has killed over 13,000 people and as many as 1.5 million displaced by the insurgency.<sup>23</sup>

In the last five years Boko Haram has created widespread insecurity across northern Nigeria, increased tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupted development activities, frightened off investors, and generated concerns among Nigerian’s northern neighbours. The group employed diverse violent tactics such as assassinations, ambush, drive-by shootings and suicide bombings among others in its attacks against security agents, religious and traditional rulers.<sup>24</sup>

The Nigerian government has violently opposed Boko Haram. As the military crackdown intensifies, they became desperate and more militant, thereby resorting to more desperate measures such as burning school buildings, killing and kidnapping of foreigners, as well as random shooting of pupils and teachers at schools.<sup>25</sup>

As old members are lost and security forces close in on them, Boko Haram changed its style to the use of teenage girls and women for suicide bombings.

Table 1: Showing fatalities in Boko Haram attacks 2009-2012

S/No	Date	State	Casualties
	27/7/09	Yobe	Potiskum division police, 3 policemen and one fire service officer died
	8/9/10	Bauchi	Bauchi central prison was set ablaze and members of the sect freed

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Yesavi C.G., “Female Terrorism” European Scientific Journal. Vol. i. No.14. 579-574, 2014, p.584.

<sup>21</sup> Moghadam A., *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.p.60.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Knop K.V., “The Female Jihad: Al-Qaeda’s Women” *Studies in conflict of Terrorism*, 30, 397-414. P.399.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Mia B., *Bomshell: Women and Terrorism, USA*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, p.25.

13/3/10	Plateau State	Northern part of Jos, 300 people died
1/10/10	Abuja	Explosions near Eagle Square, Abuja, claimed 12 lives, many injured
24/12/10	Plateau	A bomb attack in Barkin Ladi, Jos, killed eight people
31/12/10	Abuja	Explosions at Mogadishu Mammy market, Abuja, claimed 10 lives.
21/1/11	Borno	ANPP governorship candidate killed by sect alongside six others in Maiduguri
2/3/11	Kaduna	2 killed at Rigasa area Kaduna
30/3/11	Yobe State	Bomb exploded in Damaturu injured a police officer
8/4/11	Niger	Bomb at INEC office Suleja, claimed lives of eight corps members and a suicide bomber
9/4/11	Borno	Bomb explosion at a polling unit in Unguwar Doki Maidugiri, killing the suicide bomber respectively
29/4/11	Bauchi	Army barracks in Bauchi bombed
30/5/11	Borno	Bombs exploded on Baga road Maiduguri, 13 dead and 40 injuries
7/6/11	Borno	Series of bomb blasts occurred in Maiduguri, claiming five lives and several others injured
16/6/11	Abuja	Nigeria police headquarters, bombed by a suicide bomber, three killed and many vehicles damaged
16/6/11	Borno	Four children killed in a bomb blast at Damboa town, Maiduguri, Borno State
20/6/11	Katsina	Kankara police station, seven policemen killed and two security men guarding a bank opposite were also killed
9/7/11	Borno & Niger	A clash between Boko haram and the military left about 31 people dead in Maiduguri, and in Suleja a bomb targeted at a church killed four and injured many others.
23/7/11	Borno	An explosion close to the palace of the Shehu of Borno, injured three soldiers.
25/7/11	Borno	Bomb explosion near the palace of traditional ruler in Maiduguri
12/9/11	Bauchi	Misau, police station, seven people killed including four policemen
3/10/11	Borno	Baga market attacked three people killed
4/11/11	Yobe	About 150 killed in Damaturu
27/11/11	Yobe	Seven people killed in Geida

Source: see A. Okpaga, U.S. Chijioko and O.L. Eme, Activities of Boko Haram and Insecurity Question in Nigeria *Arabian journal of Business Management Review* Vol.1, p.9 2012.

## 5. Boko Haram instrumentalization of women in its operation

The year 2013 marked a significant change in the activities of Boko Haram's tactics. As the Nigerian military has bolstered its counter-insurgency operations with the formation of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Maiduguri in June 2013 affected the operation of Boko Haram. Male supporters of Boko Haram therefore became uniquely vulnerable to detention and abuse. Since then, a series of unusual arrests in Maiduguri, suggests an immediate and gendered responsive shift in Boko Haram tactics. Women and girls become the new weapon of war for the Boko Haram.<sup>26</sup>

This change occurred on 8 June 2014 when a reportedly middle-aged woman carried out a suicide attack in Gombe military barracks. The tactical use of women in war has been evident in the history of Islamist violence. Although it is not a new phenomenon, it is a pattern seen in liberation campaigns such as the Algerian resistance against the French, in which women were initially ordered to smuggle weapons, later, recognising the vital role they could play, female supporters of the resistance became willing volunteers for such tasks. The armed struggle waged by African nationalists against the white

<sup>26</sup> Zenn J. and E. Pearson, "Women, Gender and the evolving tactics of Boko Haram", *Journal of Terrorism Research* Vol.5 No.1 2014: 46-57, p.46.

minority government in Zimbabwe women had formed a large part of the fighting forces. Similarly, significant numbers of girls participated in both the FRELIMO government force and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) force. From 1975, girls were recruited by FRELIMO; others were press-ganged into service. In RENAMO, girls came predominantly from rural families, and were conscripted or kidnapped. In these forces, girls were fighters, spies, domestic servants, medics, and, in RENAMO, the wives of captor-husbands.<sup>27</sup>

In these cases women were targeted both for their assets, and as 'assets' in themselves. Their value was reproductive and productive as such were sexually abused, raped, and forced into marriage when they are abducted. In the north-eastern Nigeria, almost daily one hears of insurgents kidnapping of women and girls. Some victims have lived to talk about their ordeals, many have not. The silent against pains and tribulation some women and girls pass through in the hands of Boko haram has, until now only been left to imagination.

Many a number of innocent women and girls are today silently mourning their abused pride and womanhood because it is a "shame" for them to discuss it. In an interview with Asabe Vilita, she confirm that

Women and children in the north-east region have suffered untold hardship as a result of the ongoing war against the Boko Haram militants. According to her, some of the women have been abused by the insurgents many others are now rendered widows.<sup>28</sup>

The most disheartening is that the first wave of female suicide bomb attacks came a few months after Boko haram kidnapped some 273 school girls from Chibok.<sup>29</sup> The fate of the Chibok girls was a source of great fear and anxiety in Nigeria and there was much speculation as to whether they were being used in suicide attacks. There is no evidence of this, but it generated a flurry of media attention. Since that time, the rate of suicide bombings carried out by women has steadily increased. In July 2014, there were four instances of female suicide bombings within one week of each other in Kano state, an area which has been heavily affected by the Boko haram insurgency.

In 2014 as the Nigerian military intensified efforts in reclaiming territories occupied by Boko Haram, the terrorist diverse a new strategy. Women and girls as young as 11 years were subjected to systematic organised sexual violence. It is not completely clear what the motivation is behind Boko haram's use of female suicide bombers. Mia stressed that:

Using women to carry out these missions could be a strategy to increase their success, as women are less likely to be suspected of carrying a bomb, less likely to be searched and are able to be better concealing their equipment. This makes female suicide bombers especially dangerous in crowded markets, transportation hubs, and religious sites, all of which are common targets.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, security agents and indeed Nigerians have become well accustomed to the use of male suicide bombers. Thus, strange men or boys attract such suspicion and can easily gain access to places without raising attention.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding how they are recruited into suicide operations shows that majority of the girls and women are victims of kidnappings according to the testimony of escapees. Some abducted women and girls described forced labour and participation in military operations. A 19-year-old said:

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<sup>27</sup> Mohammed K., "The message and methods of Boko Haram" in M.P. de Montclos (ed) Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security, and the State in Nigeria African Studies Centre, Leiden , 2014, p.9.

<sup>28</sup> Onuoha F.O. and T.A. George, "Boko Haram's use of Female Suicide Bombing in Nigeria", Aljazeera Centre for Studies, 2015, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Adesoji A., The Boko Haram uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria, Africa Spectrum, Vol.45 No.2 pp 95-108, 2010, p.96.

<sup>31</sup> Wilson K.B., "Cults of Violence and Counter-Violence in Mozambique" Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.18. no.3. 2007.pp-527-582.p.527.

I was told to approach a group of five men we saw in a nearby village and lure them to where the insurgents were hiding. She told the young men that she needed help. When they followed me for a short distance, the insurgents swooped on them. Once we got back to the camp, they tied the legs and hands of the captives and slit the throats of four of them as they shouted "Allahu Akbar". Then I was handed a knife to kill the last man. I was shaking with horror and couldn't do it. The camp leader's wife took the knife and killed him.<sup>32</sup>

In documentary realised by the Human Right Watch on abducted girls, Hauwa told how she was abducted and trained on how to shoot. Human rights groups have reported that some girls and women appear to have been 'brain washed'. Moreover, some female bombers are children as young as seven- incapable of granting informed consent to participate in such act.<sup>33</sup>

Table 2: Female suicide activities 2014-2016

S/No	Date	State/town	Place	No. of female	Casualties
	8/6/14	Gombe	301 battalion barracks of Nigerian army	1	Kill 2 and injured 3
	25/6/14	Lagos	Energy deport	1	
	18/11/15	Kano (twin blast)	Mobile phone market farm centre market	4	Killing 15 including 2 suicide bombers, injured 57
	10/2/16	Dikwa (Borno)	IDP camp	2	60 killed and 76 injured
	July 2015	Kano	Mosque	1	1 suicide bomber, injured 1
	12/11/14	Niger (Kontagora)	FCE	1	1 suicide & 1 injured.
	Nov. 2014	Yobe (Potiskum)	GCSSES	1	48 killed, 79 injured
	11/1/15	Yobe (Potiskum)	GSM market	1	Killed 5 and wounded many
	2/7/14	Borno	Zabarmari village	6	Killing themselves, 1 soldier and injured more than 100
	2/7/15	Borno	Malaria village mosque	1	12 died and 7 injured
	1/7/15	Borno	Malai Gen. Hospital	1 male & female	2 suicide bombers
	22/6/15	Borno (Maiduguri)	Fish market	2	30 killed and many injured
	6/7/15	Kano	Mosque	1	1 female suicide bomber
	24/10/15	Maiduguri	Yazare	2	1 blew herself the other was arrested

Source: Compiled from the Nigerian National Dailies 2014-2016).

## 6. Conclusion

The paper revealed that Nigeria is confronted with security challenges. This is made manifest in the Boko Haram use of female operatives. The sect is becoming a threat to Nigerian national security. This article focussed on women as victim of circumstances, with the aim of shedding light on a neglected but developing aspect of Boko Haram's operations; use of female as suicide bombers. The conclusions that can be drawn from these actions are threefold; firstly, the use of female in arm conflict is not new other nationalist and Islamic organizations have employed women and girls in their militarization. Secondly, that Boko Haram resort to the use of young girls and women as operatives when they are

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Hon.Asabe Vilita Bashir, Member o the House of Representatives representing, Gwoza and Damboa Federal Constituency. Abuja, 5th November, 2015

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*



experiencing difficulty recruiting young, uneducated, unemployed men; women and girls do not attract suspicion or attention.

Thirdly, Abducted women are targeted for instrumental reasons; they do not appear to be actively and willing in violence to a significant extent.

In conclusion, the motivation of female suicide bombers in Nigeria is hard to figure out if the women acted under duress or they were ideologically motivated enough to volunteer themselves, existing evidence suggests that most have acted under duress considering that many of them teenagers, some as young as seven.

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