



IT'S COMING

SOUTH

RISING VIOLENCE IN KWARA





DISCLAIMER

The data contained in this report is only up-to-date as at Wednesday, 2nd of February 2022. Some of it is subject to change during the natural course of events. SB Morgen cannot accept liability with respect to any errors or omissions that may follow such events that may invalidate the data contained herein.

Our researchers employed methods such as one-on-one interviews and desk research to collate the available data. Our editors sifted through the data and prepared the report, using various proprietary tools to fact-check and copy edit the information gathered.

Our publicly released reports are formatted for easy and quick reading, and may not necessarily contain all the data that SB Morgen gathered during a given survey. Complete datasets can be made available on request.

All forecasts were built using data from a variety of sources. A baseline of accurate and comprehensive historic data was collected from respondents and publicly available information; this includes regulators, trade associations, research partners, newspapers and government agencies.

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INTRODUCTION

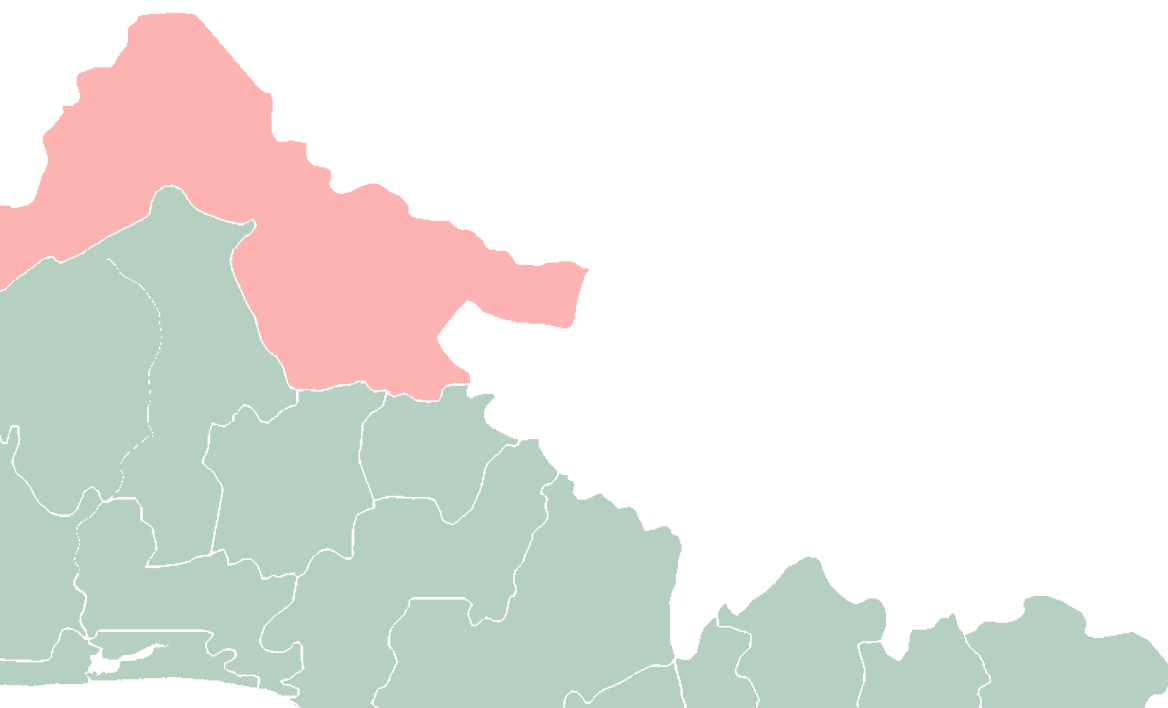
Over the past year, banditry has become widespread in the North-Western states of Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto and Kaduna. As the Nigerian government increases its efforts to combat this rise in crime through military operations, it has forced these disparate armed gangs southwards to parts of Niger and Kogi States and the Federal Capital Territory. This is evident in the increase in attacks on communities and kidnappings, albeit at a lesser rate than in the heavily affected states.

As this violence expands across the North-Central, it has begun to metastasize in Kwara State with non-state armed actors taking advantage of ungoverned spaces. On one hand, this is as a result of bandit groups seeking refuge from military operations while looking to continue their operations such as kidnapping for ransoms and cattle rustling. On the other hand, there has also been a rise of violent crimes in the state arising from conflicts between local communities over land and water resources, as well as gang clashes in the more urban areas of the state.

The escalating violence in Kwara State bears a resemblance to that of other states in the region with Fulani militants being accused of being at the heart of the violence. They have not only been accused by other ethnic groups, but also by local Fulani communities that these militants have tried to blend in to so as to take advantage of them.

¹PWC (2021) Nigeria's Q4 2020 GDP: Are we out of the woods yet...? Nigeria Economic Alert. pg 2
²GSM Arena. (2018) Spotlight on Nigeria: Delivering a digital future. pg 3

These ongoing issues only evidences the failure of the Nigerian government to contain the violence from other states and implement far-reaching security sector reforms that will ensure that the remote and immediate factors enabling the violence are checked. While the Kwara State Government has begun to take proactive steps to forestall a further escalation in the violence through engaging with local communities, there are still a number of loopholes that need to be closed in order to prevent the state from becoming the next epicentre of insecurity in Nigeria.



SETTING A CONTEXT

Nigeria's North Central states have witnessed some of the worst violence by organised armed groups in recent years, with security challenges ranging from cattle rustling to the onset of a full-on jihadist insurgency¹. This has also had a spillover effect on the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) which shares boundaries with the two North-Central states of Kogi and Niger, as well as the North-West state of Kaduna, all of which are experiencing high levels of violence.

In the FCT's Gurdi ward in Abaji Area Council, communities such as Gulida, Paikon-Bassa and Rafindaji which share boundaries with Niger State, through the River Gurara, have come under attack. In a recent incident², some villagers were abducted and two vigilantes killed by bandits. This, and other such attacks have been attributed to armed militants from the Fulani ethnic group.

So far, violence purportedly carried out by armed Fulani tribesmen in the region have seen their ethnic kinfolk at the receiving end of their viciousness. In late August 2021, suspected Fulani gunmen attacked a Fulani camp³ behind LEA Nomadic School, near Gwako village, Gwagwalada area council in the FCT and killed one herder, identified as Goma Haruna. About a week before, a Fulani group had invaded another Fulani settlement in Dogon-Ruwa community, Kwali Area Council and abducted four herders and injured one other.

¹Dahiru, A. (2020) Boko Haram Satellite Bases In Niger, Zamfara Boasts 400 Active Fighters. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3uk74xm> [Accessed 2/2/22].

²Sahara Reporters (2022) 13 Abuja Communities Under Threat As Bandits Take Over Farmlands. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3s6WdEK> [Accessed 2/2/22].

³Ochogwu, S. (2021) Unknown gunmen attack Fulani camp in Abuja, kill one, injure scores. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3lXQTKg> [Accessed 2/2/22].

However, nowhere is this pattern more pronounced than in Kwara state where Fulani communities in both Yoruba and non-Yoruba speaking areas have been victims of an increasing number of attacks by these gangs. Kwara State has 16 Local Government Areas and Yoruba is the dominant language in about 11. Only Edu and Pategi are predominantly Nupe speaking, while Ba-ruten in the North Central part of the state which shares a border with the Republic of Benin speaks Baatonum and Bokobaru, languages it shares with Kaiama LGA. The local Fulani population is, however, dispersed across the state and is the dominant population in the Ilorin South Local Government Area, which makes part of the Ilorin city.

Lately, criminal groups, mainly from Zamfara, seeking fresh territory have taken refuge in the state, launching coordinated and sometimes random attacks on the predominantly agrarian and pastoral communities. At the height of the conflict in Igaagan in Ibarapa Local Government Areas of Oyo which shares a land boundary with Kwara, the latter began to witness a creeping rise in the spate of insecurity.

The crisis in Ibarapa erupted in late December 2020 and lasted well into the first half of 2021. In that period, Kwara experienced a surge in the activities of kidnapers. There were, at least five recorded kidnap incidents in the state, before the first reported pastoral conflict-related clash in the same period made the news on 18th May, when two persons were killed and several others seriously injured in a bloody clash⁴ between Fulanis and Nupe youths of Pada village in the Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State.

The clash occurred following an attack on a Fulani settlement in the village. Chairman of the Gaa Allah Fulani Development Association of Nigeria (GAF-

⁴Adebayo, A. (2021) Two feared dead as Fulani, Nupe youths clash in Kwara. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3IXQTtu> [Accessed 2/2/22].

DAN) in the state, Ali Mohammed Jonwuro, identified the deceased as Sanda Watanko, while one of the injured persons was hospitalized. The cause of the clash remained sketchy at the time of this report, but locals say that a rice farm was invaded by some cows which angered the owners and resulted in the bloody clash.

About two weeks later, there was another incident in the state. Unknown gunmen killed the son of a village head. The suspected gunmen stormed Reke Community⁵, Eyenkorin/Afon road in Asa Local Government Area and killed their victim. It was reported that the gang of the armed men invaded the community at midnight, headed straight to the house of Alhaji Abdullahi Jimoh, the Magaji of the community and opened fire on his eldest son whose name was given as Abiodun.

Since that time, there have been no less than three clashes reported in the state, which have left five people dead.

There has been a pattern of militant Fulani herdsmen going into new territories in the country, and while trying to blend with the existing Fulani community in the area, they turn the tide of attack on the resident Fulanis before they begin to launch a full scale attack on the native residents.

One of the most prominent of such cases happened on 2nd June, 2021 when the head of the Fulani Bororo community in Oro-Ago, Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Alhaji Sheidu Madawaki, was murdered⁶ by unidentified gunmen. Mr Madawaki had paid a courtesy visit to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) office a few days before “to establish

⁵Asinde (2021). Gunmen kill village head's son in Kwara. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3sbicF7> [Accessed 2/2/22].

⁶Azeez, B. (2021). Gunmen Kill Bororo Community Head In Kwara. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3lWccf7> [Accessed 2/2/22].

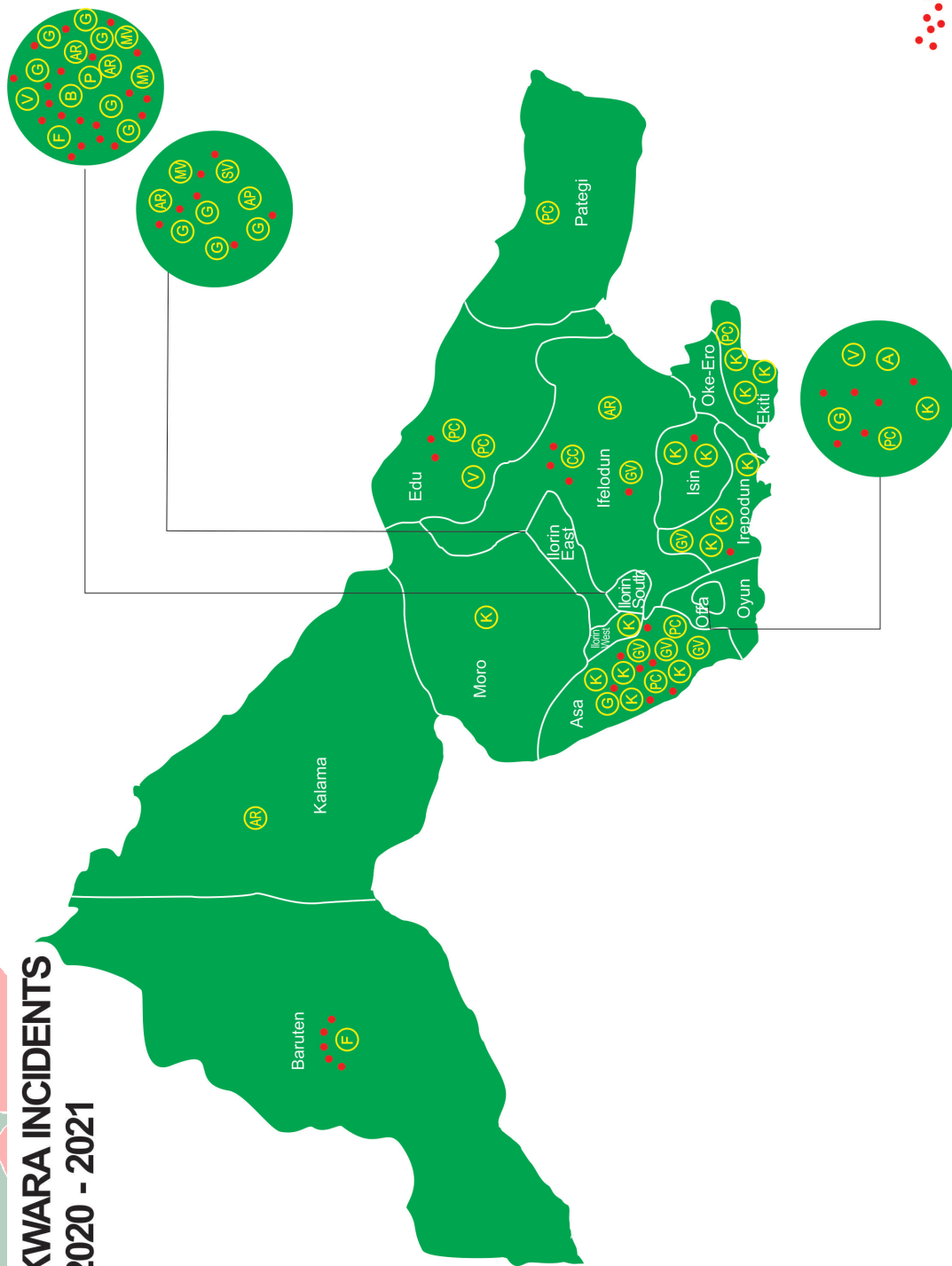
a synergy on how to improve and sustain the existing peaceful coexistence in the kingdom". Madawaki's cordial relationship with local law enforcement may have put a target on his back by criminal groups who viewed him as an informant for the government.

At the start of 2022, news broke⁷ that prominent terror kingpin, Kachalla Turji, a Fulani who operates in rural Zamfara, had relocated to the forests of Kwara state. Although the Kwara State Command of the Nigeria Police Force swiftly refuted that claim, the damage to the psyche of some Kwara residents had already been done.

From the average resident's perspective, it is also not hard to take the police's damage control with a pinch of salt given how much it has struggled to prevent and successfully investigate insecurity in the state. 60 people were killed in the state between 2020 and 2021, although that is a relatively low number compared with its more violent neighbours Kogi and Niger at 154 and 1144 respectively.

⁷Azeez, B. (2022). Fears In Kwara Over Influx Of Bandits From Zamfara. Available online: <https://bit.ly/3sa1Q4r> [Accessed 2/2/22].

KWARA INCIDENTS 2020 - 2021



- CASUALTIES
- FORCE BRUTALITY ● GUN VIOLENCE ● MOB VIOLENCE ● KIDNAP ● PROTEST ● GANG CLASHES ● PASTORAL CONFLICTS ● SEXUAL VIOLENCE ● ARSON ● VIOLENCE ● ATTACKS ON POLICE ● COMMUNAL CLASH

Denouement

The situation has also become a source of worry to the state government which had sought to prevent further breakdown of peace by engaging in a tradeoff. Kwara governor, Abdulfatah Ahmed, met with Fulani leaders⁸ in August 2021, promising them that like other communities in the state, they would receive government's protection and patronage in terms of infrastructure projects and social security programmes in exchange for continued cooperation with the government in fishing out criminal groups among them.

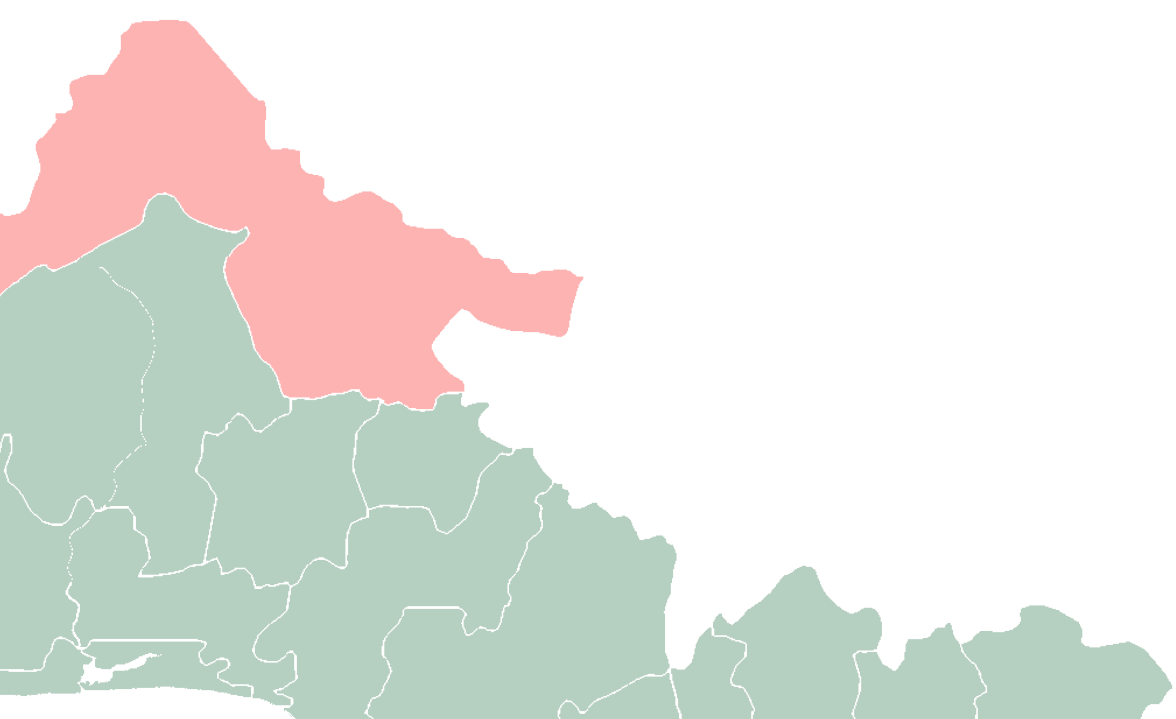
While this looks quite routine on paper, a terror gang led by Mr Turji would view this as a threat to their activities. Mr Turji has demonstrated a capacity for orchestrating large scale atrocities in areas he controls, developments which had forced the Zamfara state government and the security forces to make concessions to him.

Turji who is originally from Shinkafi in Zamfara is the mastermind of the death of at least 30 passengers who were burnt beyond recognition. On 7th December 2021, militants loyal to Turji opened fire on a vehicle conveying travellers from Sabon Birni to Rijiyar Ladan village in Sabon Birni local government area of Sokoto State. A few months before that, in July, his gang abducted 150 villagers and travellers in Shinkafi Local Government Area in Zamfara in reaction to the arrest of his father by security forces in Kano.

Ugbodaga, K. (2021) AbdulRazaq meets Fulani leaders over insecurity, seeks partnership. Available online: <https://bit.ly/35jbHGY> [Accessed 2/2/22].

At a time when inter ethnic relations between the Fulanis and other ethnic groups that make up Nigeria are at an all time low, no thanks to attacks on farmers and kidnap attacks on others by militant Fulani pastoralists, the situation in Kwara risks to boil over to Oyo levels if improperly managed, and this is not hard to envision given the hotly contested nature of the modern history of the state.

This means it is important for the Kwara State Government and security agencies in the state to become proactive in managing the emerging conflicts in the state and nipping them in the bud before they metastasize into bigger problems. This will require buy-in of traditional rulers and community leaders on resolving these conflict causes, more intense intelligence-gathering and more proactive policing to prevent attacks and clashes, as well as to adequately apprehend and prosecute criminals.





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