

Beat: Health

UN: Islamist violence in northeast Nigeria killed 1,200 since May

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USPA News - Violence related to the Islamist group Boko Haram has killed more than 1,200 people in northeastern Nigeria since May, when a state of emergency was declared in the region, the United Nations (UN) said Monday. It includes insurgents, soldiers and civilians.

The UN's humanitarian agency OCHA said the humanitarian situation in northeast Nigeria has become "increasingly worrisome" over the course of the year due to both Boko Haram attacks and counter-insurgency operations. A state of emergency (SOE) was declared in the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa in May. "Since the state of emergency became effective, some 1,224 people have been killed in Boko Haram-related attacks in the SOE states," OCHA said. "A Joint Assessment Mission conducted in September by national authorities, the UN and the Nigerian Red Cross, reported that of the 11 million Nigerians living in the SOE states, up to 6 million have been affected by the insecurity, four million of whom live in Borno State." The worst period of attacks since May was in September when at least 491 people - including militants - were killed in nine attacks. The most recent attack happened on December 2 when Boko Haram militants attacked an air force base and military barracks in the city of Maiduguri in Borno State, prompting a 24-hour curfew and a total ban of movements in the area. At least nine people were killed. OCHA said the scope of the displacements in Nigeria's northeastern states remains hard to gauge due to limited access and difficult communication, but tens of thousands of people have fled to neighboring countries Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Most international agencies have now withdrawn from the area due to security threats. The Boko Haram is seeking the imposition of an extremist stance of the Shariah law, which is a Muslim code of conduct. The group's name, in the local language of Hausa, roughly translates as 'Western religion is sacrilegious' or 'non-Islamic religion is a sin.' The U.S. government in November formally designated the group a foreign terrorist organization.

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