

Where Did Boko Haram Come From?
Human Rights and Governance in Nigeria

TLHRC Briefing
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Opening Remarks by Rep. McGovern

Good afternoon. Thank you all for attending today's briefing, *Where Did Boko Haram Come From? Human Rights and Governance in Nigeria*. We have a great panel today, and I look forward to hearing constructive recommendations on the crisis unfolding in Nigeria.

We are here today because we are troubled by Boko Haram's growing campaign of terror in Nigeria. For the past five years, Boko Haram has launched brutal attacks on government personnel, religious leaders, teachers and young students, and crowded mosques, churches, and marketplaces. Since mid-2014, Boko Haram has sought to seize and hold territory, including the town of Baga in northeast Nigeria, where the group reportedly slaughtered hundreds of people.

The rise of Boko Haram is indeed a serious security threat to Nigeria and the West African region. But I'd like to emphasize that Boko Haram is not only a military problem. Underlying Boko Haram's escalating attacks are Nigeria's chronic problems of poor governance, rampant corruption, and systemic human rights abuses. These real grievances do not justify the tactics used by extremist groups like Boko Haram, but they can fuel their rise. Yet to date, the Nigerian government has failed to address these root issues. Instead, the government has responded largely through military means, and in the process its security forces have reportedly committed some very serious human rights violations of their own. This creates a challenge as we try to determine how best to help Nigeria address the extremist threat.

Today's briefing seeks to examine the rise of Boko Haram and its relation to the broader human rights and governance situation in Nigeria. Our panelists will also discuss how the Boko Haram crisis is affecting Nigeria's already contentious elections coming up next week. I look forward to discussing solutions that would address the root causes of the growing crisis in Nigeria.

With that, I would like to turn over to our expert panelists. Thank you.