

**Review: Helon Habila, *The Chibok Girls*, Penguin Books, UK, 2016**

Pages: 127

**Nigeria Under Jihad Threat**

The author uses an all-too-common event under Islam to describe the Nigerian politico-religious situation of constant jihad threat and violence, not only in the north east, but which casts a long shadow over the whole region.

To Western media the capture of 276 Christian girls from Chibok by Boko Haram seemed like a sudden, isolated event, but jihad in the country is centuries old, and reports of murders, kidnappings and intimidation are daily events.

Material is very concise but dense enough to inform, with the hostage drama interspersed by local town history and politics.

As to caring about what happens in remote northern Nigeria, Boko Haram shows what Islam will do in any location on earth when it is in power, or threatening to impose Sharia. The chances that the West will learn any lessons though are sadly remote.

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**I) Professor Americana (pp. 1-31)**

Sand in northern Nigeria goes into facial orifices, dehydrates skin, cracks lips and induces coughing fits.

The Nigerian government recruits Joint Task Force troops as locals to fight Boko Haram (BH). These believe certain charms and medicines make them invulnerable to bullets, even invisible.

Checkpoints are a regular feature of Nigerian roads which have devolved into extortion and tax-collection points at gunpoint. They are also a favourite target of BH suicide bombers.

Government troops carry pictures of the top hundred most wanted BH members

The northeast had been under emergency rule since 2013.

Borno and Yobe states are Boko Haram epicenters.

BH members believe ID cards are haram; one way for soldiers to identify them.

In 2015, President Buhari declared a “technical” victory over BH.

BH was founded by Salafist Muhammad Yusuf who called for overthrow of the Nigerian government. He was executed by the army.

The next BH leader was Abubakar Shekau (2013): “I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams.” [p24]

Shekau married Yusuf’s widow and adopted his children.

In 2011, BH targeted the Nigerian Police Headquarters in Abuja with a businessman suicide bomber, Mohammed Manga, who drove 500mi overnight from BH territory.

BH policy was to announce terrorist attack time and place beforehand as proof of their cause and Allah’s omnipotence.

At its height, BH controlled 70% of Borno state, which has a population of 66,000.

BH killed the emir of Gwoza sect.

On 25/2/14, fifty BH terrorists invaded a Federal Government College in Buni Yadi, murdering 59 boys in cold blood.

BH policy is to capture women and children as slaves, kill old men as useless, and young men as threats.

Chibok is a predominantly Christian town in a Muslim state.

BH fighters prefer the motorbike.

## **II) The Day They Took the Girls (pp. 32-47)**

The largest church in northern Nigeria is the pacifist Brethren with 100,000, who are most affected by BH.

The hostage attack started 2300 and lasted till 0200. Some abductees jumped out of the truck and escaped. Later, four captured girls escaped into the bush using the excuse of needing to go to the toilet in private.

## **III) A History of Violence (pp. 48-62)**

200M Nigerians exist in 400 ethnic groups.

The national GDP is \$500B, and the country is the seventh largest oil exporter.

Nigeria gained independence in 1960, and in 1967, southeastern Nigeria attempted to secede as the Republic of Biafra, leading to a civil war which killed over a million.

State governors keep private armies to guarantee their power and reelection.

The poor don't believe justice can be had, and the elites know the system is rigged in their favour (since they designed it).

Government services are kept *intentionally* in a state of disrepair, so as to instil a sense of undeservedness and dependence in the public.

Pre-colonial 'education' in Nigeria under the Sokoto Caliphate was rote Koran learning only.

Charismatic Christianity experienced a revival in Lagos in 1999 as the economy went into decline.

## **IV) Gombe (pp. 63-71)**

Gombe has seen a refugee influx due to BH terror.

Usman dan Fodio established the Sokoto Caliphate and Gobe Emirate in 1804 and began a Fulani Jihad against the Hausas. They were enslaved so that, “the area became a virtual slave farm”.

Nigerians are Muslim or Christian first, ethnics second, and citizens third.

In the 1990s, education from primary school to university was free.

By 2012, all twelve northern states declared Sharia as official state law.

#### **V) Maiduguri (pp. 72-87)**

By May, the city is so hot shower water turns into sweat, and tap water is almost boiling.

BH setup their base in Sambisa Forest which has thick-barked and thorny trees.

One translation of “Boko Haram” is “Western education is abhorrent”.

The Nigerian Railway Corporation went bankrupt in 1988 due to corruption.

Chad, Cameroon, and Niger closed borders with Nigeria due to the BH threat which damaged trade.

#### **VI) Waiting for the Girls (pp. 88-99)**

Damboa was one the hardest hit towns by BH. One one occasion, three suicide bombers dressed as women on bicycles killed thirteen.

It is said Goodluck Jonathan lost the election due in part to the BH problem.

#### **VII) America (pp. 100-104)**

#### **VIII) The Day They Took Us (pp. 105-110)**

“They said they were there to protect us from Boko Haram, who were attacking the town. Then some of them started saying, ‘Allahu Akhbar’.

That was when we realised they were not soldiers. They were Boko Haram.” [p107]

### **IX) Is This the Downfall of Boko Haram? (pp. 125-127)**

In 2015, Shekau [now deceased] pledged allegiance to ISIS, who in 2016 said they had ousted him in favour of Abu Musab al-Barnawi.

Shekau believed in *takfir*; denouncing and killing non-Muslims as well as Muslims who disagree with Islam as per his interpretation.

Over 10,000 hostages are said to remain in BH custody.