

Responses to Information Requests - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Nigeria: Badoo cult, including areas of operation and activities; state response to the group; treatment of Badoo members or alleged members (2016-December 2019)

1. Overview

Nigerian media sources have reported on the following:

- "Badoo Boys" (*The Sun* 27 Aug. 2019);
- "Badoo cult" (*Vanguard* with NAN 2 Jan. 2018; *This Day* 22 Jan. 2019);
- "Badoo gang" (*Business Day* 9 July 2017);
- "Badoo" (*Vanguard* with NAN 2 Jan. 2018).

A July 2017 article in the Nigerian newspaper *Business Day* describes Badoo as "[a] band of rapists and ritual murderers that has been wreaking havoc on residents of Ikorodu area" of Lagos state (*Business Day* 9 July 2017). The article adds that

[t]he Badoo gang's reign of terror has reportedly spread throughout Lasunwon, Odogunyan, Ogiyo, Ibeshe Tutun, Eruwen, Olopomeji and other communities in Ikorodu. Their underlying motivation seems to be ritualistic in nature. The gang members are reported to wipe their victims' private part[s] with a white handkerchief after each rape for onward delivery to their alleged sponsors; slain victims have also been said to have had their heads smashed with a grinding stone and their blood and brain soaked with white handkerchiefs for ritual purposes. Latest reports quoted an arrested member of the gang to have told the police that each blood-soaked handkerchief is sold for N500,000 [Nigerian Naira, NGN] [approximately C\$2,000]. (*Business Day* 9 July 2017)

A 2 January 2018 report in the Nigerian newspaper *Vanguard* provided the following context:

It all started after a suspect, described by some residents of Ikorodu area as a "serial rapist and ritual killer," was arrested at Ibeshe. His name was given simply as "Badoo". The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) gathered that after every attack, the perpetrators would write "I am Badoo" and paste on the door of victims. This continued in a seemingly invincible manner until he was caught after he raped and killed a 27-year-old woman and her nine-month-old child. The suspect was arrested by the community, allegedly after some rituals were performed. (*Vanguard* with NAN 2 Jan. 2018)

The arrest in Ibeshe of "a suspected serial rapist identified as Badoo" after the rape and murder of a 27-year-old woman named Grace Obinna Jubreel in the presence of her baby was also reported in the Nigerian newspaper *The Nation* on 13 June 2016 (*The Nation* 13 June 2016). According to the Nigerian newspaper *The Punch*, Obinna was murdered on 5 June 2016, and that was when the community first heard of "Badoo" (*The Punch* 30 June 2017). In January 2018, *Vanguard* reported the following:

Many had believed that the arrest of the suspect would bring an end to [B]adoo operations. But that did not happen as it marked the beginning [of] a journey into [a] new dimension of ritual killings in the area as many more family members were murdered at night.

For several months, Badoo operations in Ikorodu area reverberated across the state and created fear among Lagosians at large. The police appeared overwhelmed. Human and vehicular movements in parts of Ikorodu were restricted during the period. Many communities imposed [a] dusk-to-dawn curfew while some residents moved out to other areas for safety. ...

According to NAN findings, Badoo members carried no guns or machetes. Their weapons are primarily stones, preferably household grinding stones and mortar, clubs and pestle. They carried out their operations by sneaking into targets' homes at night and smash[ing] their heads with grinding stones or mortars, then collect[ing] their blood with handkerchiefs, which were sold for ritual purposes. (*Vanguard* with NAN 2 Jan. 2018)

1.1 Areas of Operation

Nigerian media sources indicate that alleged Badoo activity and arrests in connection with alleged Badoo activity have taken place in: Ikorodu, Lagos state (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *The Sun* 2 Nov. 2019; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017), or "Ikorodu and its environs" (*Business Day* 7 July 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017). In addition to reports about Badoo activity and Badoo-related arrests in Ikorodu or the Ikorodu area generally, the following specific places are also mentioned in reports of Badoo activity or arrests, which are identified as being within Ikorodu:

- Adamo, Imota (*The Punch* 30 June 2017);
- Aga (*Business Day* 9 July 2017);
- Agbowo (*The Punch* 30 June 2017; *Vanguard* 1 Aug. 2017);
- Bayekun (*Vanguard* 12 July 2017);
- Erunwen (*The Punch* 30 June 2017);
- Eruwen (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017);
- Ibeshe (*The Punch* 30 June 2017; *Vanguard* 31 July 2017);
- Ibeshe Tutun [or Tuntun] (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *The Punch* 30 June 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017);
- Igbogbo (*Vanguard* 12 July 2017);
- Itesiwaju (*The Punch* 30 June 2017);
- Lasunwon (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *The Punch* 30 June 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017);
- Majidun (*Vanguard* 12 July 2017);
- Odogunyan [or Odonguyan] (*Business Day* 7 July 2017; *Business Day* 9 July 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017);
- Ogijo (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017);
- Ojogbe (*Business Day* 9 July 2017);
- Oke-Ota [part of Ibeshe] (*Vanguard* 3 July 2017; *The Punch* 30 June 2017; *Vanguard* 31 July 2017);
- Olopomeji [part of Odogunyan] (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *Vanguard* 3 July 2017; *The Punch* 30 June 2017);
- Oluwoye (*The Punch* 30 June 2017);
- Owode-Ibeshe (*The Punch* 30 June 2017);
- Owutu (*Business Day* 7 July 2017).

In addition to the Ikorodu area, reports have also indicated an alleged Badoo presence in:

- the "Agarawu area of Lagos Island" (*Vanguard* 14 July 2017);
- "Imosan Village, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State" (*Vanguard* with NAN 2 Jan. 2018); and
- Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state (*The Sun* 27 Aug. 2019).

According to the *Sun*, a Nigerian newspaper, crimes allegedly committed by people "operating like the 'Badoo Boys'" were reported in Akinyele, Ibadan, Oyo state, with "at least six persons" killed in three incidents in July and August 2019 (*The Sun* 27 Aug. 2019). The same source further reports that "[t]he killers are reported to have used grinding stones to smash the heads of their victims, wiping their blood with handkerchiefs, and dumping the corpses without stealing anything from them" (*The Sun* 27 Aug. 2019).

1.2 Numbers of Badoo Victims

The Nigeria Watch online database of violent incidents [1] contains 19 events of killings by Badoo or alleged Badoo members, the first of which occurred on 5 June 2016 and the last on 11 September 2019, with a total of 47 deaths reported in connection to all those incidents (Nigeria Watch n.d.c). Of the 19 events, 14 occurred in Lagos state, 3 in Oyo, and 2 in Ogun (Nigeria Watch n.d.c). Three events were recorded in 2016, accounting for 6 deaths; 13 events were recorded in 2017, accounting for 34 deaths; no event was recorded in 2018; and 3 events were recorded in 2019, accounting for 7 deaths (Nigeria Watch n.d.c).

2. State Response

2.1 Arrests in Connection with Badoo

Business Day and the *Punch* report that on 1 July 2017, the police arrested over 100 suspected Badoo members in Ikorodu (*Business Day* 9 July 2017; *The Punch* 3 July 2017). *Business Day* states that the arrests were carried out in collaboration with "Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and local vigilante groups" and quoted Assistant Superintendent of Police Olarinde Famous-Cole as saying "[s]creening has commenced. A total of 138 suspects were raided. Those found to be innocent would be released but those who are suspected of criminality would be charged to court. We have not arrested anyone in connection with the killings. Investigation is ongoing" (*Business Day* 9 July 2017). On 3 July 2017, *Vanguard* quoted Olarinde Famous-Cole as stating that "[w]e can confirm the arrest of 100 suspected members of the dreaded cult group, Badoo, and they are helping with on-going investigations into the activities of the gang" (*Vanguard* 3 July 2017). *Business Day* reported that

Ikorodu residents on Monday [3 July 2017] faulted the police over the raid, saying most of those arrested were innocent people going about their lawful businesses, even as they accused security forces of shielding those behind the ritual killings. Before now, it has been alleged that some bigwigs in Ikorodu were behind the Badoo gang, making arrest and prosecution of culprits almost impossible. (*Business Day* 9 July 2017)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Soon afterwards, the Nigerian press reported the arrest of 87 suspected Badoo members in Ikorodu (*Business Day* 7 July 2017; *Vanguard* 8 July 2017). *Vanguard* reported that these arrests brought the total number of Badoo suspects arrested to 225, including the 138 who had been arrested the previous weekend (*Vanguard* 8 July 2017).

A raid was conducted in Ikorodu on 11 July during which 131 (*Vanguard* 12 July 2017) or 133 Badoo suspects were arrested (*The Nation* 12 July 2017). On 13 July 2017, over 300 Badoo suspects were arrested in Agarawu in Lagos Island, where they had reportedly relocated after police raids in Ikorodu (*Vanguard* 14 July 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

On 1 August 2017, it was reported that four people, including a "traditional ruler," were arrested in Ikorodu in connection with Badoo activity after Badoo shrines were raided following the murder of a family of four on 30 July (*Vanguard* 1 Aug. 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A January 2018 article in *Vanguard* reported that "[i]n joint operations between Oodua People's Congress (OPC), men of the Onyabo, a local vigilante group and the police, led by the then Lagos Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations, (now Commissioner of Police), Edgal Imohimi, many of the suspected members of the cult group were caught," and that "[b]y the end of last year, over 500 suspected [B]adoo cult members have been arrested. Many were charged to court while others were still under investigation, thus bringing their heinous crime to the lowest ebb" (*Vanguard* with NAN 2 Jan. 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Without providing further details, Nigerian media sources report that 13 Badoo suspects were reportedly arrested in Ilorin, Kwara state in September 2018 (*The Punch* 9 Sept. 2018; *Vanguard* 4 Sept. 2018).

2.2 Current Situation

Speaking on 9 April 2018, the Lagos police commissioner stated that thanks to "community-based policing and security partnership," the activities of the Badoo cult had been brought to an end, including through the destruction of Badoo shrines in Ikorodu and its surroundings (*Business Day* 10 Apr. 2018).

A January 2019 article in *This Day* on the career of the outgoing Lagos Commissioner of Police Imohimi Edgal states that "Badoo cultists have been degraded in Lagos, while [the] crime rate has also gone down significantly" after a campaign led by Commissioner Edgal against the cult, which included the destruction of Badoo shrines "both in Lagos and even outside the state, especially neighbouring villages in Ogun State" and the flight from Lagos state of the alleged "ring leader" of Badoo, Alhaji Abayomi Kamal Alaka, after he was declared wanted by police (*This Day* 22 Jan. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

However, on 27 August 2019, it was reported that at least six ritual murders reminiscent of the style of the Badoo boys had taken place in Ibadan, Oyo state in

the previous month (*The Sun* 27 Aug. 2019). A 2 November 2019 report on the apparent ritual murder of a 14-year-old boy in Ikorodu stated that although the residents of Ikorodu "had enjoyed relative safety and calm in the last two years after the killing spree of Badoo Boys, the murder of the teenager was a wake-up call that some ritualists are still prowling in the outskirts town. The victim's body was found mutilated with missing parts, the unmistakable imprints of ritual killing" (*The Sun* 2 Nov. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Treatment of Suspected Badoo Members

Media sources report that due to a lack of faith in the police, residents of areas affected by Badoo activities resorted to keeping vigil and lynching (AFP 11 July 2017; *Business Day* 9 July 2017). According to "locals" interviewed by AFP, "[a]nyone caught on suspicion of being a member of the [Badoo] gang is immediately lynched" (AFP 11 July 2017).

Information in the Nigeria Watch database indicates that 12 suspected Badoo members were killed by vigilantes between 12 May 2017 and 5 July 2017, with 10 in Lagos and 1 in Ogun (Nigeria Watch n.d.c). Similarly, on 11 July 2017, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that according to Nigerian police, 10 people had been killed by vigilantes in the preceding month on suspicion of being Badoo members (AFP 11 July 2017).

On 12 July 2017, it was reported that Deputy Commissioner of Police Edgal Imohimi had said at a meeting in Ikorodu that several innocent people had died due to "continuous lynching" by local residents of suspected Badoo members, and urged residents to hand over Badoo suspects to the authorities in the future, warning that traditional leaders in Ikorodu who allowed the lynching of Badoo suspects in their communities would be prosecuted (*Vanguard* 12 July 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The Deputy Commissioner added that "[i]f the vigilante group or members of the community are not comfortable in handing over any arrested suspects to the police, they should hand over such suspects to other security agencies working with the police," including, among others, the Army, the Navy, and the intelligence agency of Nigeria, which were said to be carrying joint patrol in Ikorodu and its surroundings (*Vanguard* 12 July 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Note

[1] Nigeria Watch is a "research project [that] monitors lethal violence, conflicts, and human security in Nigeria" (Nigeria Watch n.d.a). It maintains a database that provides information on violent events causing death in Nigeria starting from 1 June 2006, compiled from "the police, the judiciary, hospitals, human rights organisations (mainly Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International), other

sources (private security firms, companies, embassies)" as well as 10 Nigerian newspapers (Nigeria Watch n.d.b). Nigeria Watch is hosted by the French Institute for Research in Africa at the University of Ibadan and receives support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the British Council's Managing Conflict in North East Nigeria (MCN) Programme, the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta, the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD), and others (Nigeria Watch n.d.a).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; EU – European Asylum Support Office; France – Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides; Human Rights Watch; UK – Home Office; UN – Refworld; US – Overseas Security Advisory Council.