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**2014 Nigeria: The Hunt for Boko Haram. Surrey, UK:
Journeyman Pictures.**

Notes: Streaming video, 52 minutes

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Medium: *Film/Video*

Subject *Nigeria*

Keywords: *Terrorism - Islamic Terrorism - Jihad
Counter-terrorism*

*Boko Haram - Terrorist organizations
Human Rights Abuses*

ABSTRACT: Partly in response to the kidnapping of 200 schoolgirls, Nigeria has mobilized a massive campaign of counter-terrorism to root out Boko Haram support and sympathizers. Unfortunately, in the name of the struggle against Islamic fundamentalism there have been reported human rights abuses, from torture-induced confessions to execution-style murder.

Evan Williams is a television producer and reporter for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. He has considerable experience as a journalist in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. This journalistic piece covers the activities of Nigeria's anti-terrorism campaign against the Sunni fundamental Islamist group Boko Haram. While Boko Haram has made international news for their armed struggle, they have become a huge story through the kidnapping of 200 schoolgirls. This has resulted in global attention to the Boko Haram threat and support for policing acts that will bring Boko Haram insurgents to justice.

It is the issue of justice that has become problematic in Nigeria's 'War on Terror.' Boko Haram is absolutely opposed to the Nigerian state and in this sense is seeking an armed revolution that aims to displace the state (Azumah 2015). In the counter-terrorism reaction by the Nigerian state there have emerged some troubling events. If the funding of

Nigeria's counter-terrorism operation is a variable, it is important that Boko Haram suspects become a constant in that equation.

The film is centered around interviews with a former militia member who worked on the counter-terrorism task force. At first he discusses the techniques of spotting Boko Haram through signs such as thorns in sandals or bruises on the body caused by the firing of weapons. Checkpoints are established wherein the authority to charge a person with being Boko Haram is left to individuals who wield this power in arbitrary ways. The harassments and browbeating interrogations, often becoming trials by ordeal, can become quite menacing. Personal vendettas are often mixed with impersonal judgment. Counter-terrorism forces invade entire villages. The villagers are marched out of their homes and gathered together. Then under the fear and terror of these conditions people are accused being Boko Haram. In the end suspects are rounded up and moved to camps where more heinous crimes occur.

It is in these camps that atrocities such as beatings and executions have taken place. In terms of beatings there is a particularly damning piece of video evidence that is shown and analyzed. The uniforms of the guards show that they are Nigerian soldiers, but the authorities state that they are not official members of the counter-terrorism forces. As difficult as these beatings are to watch, and as indicting as they are as evidence, they are nothing compared to a video that has emerged showing Nigerian soldiers slitting the throats of Boko Haram suspects and pushing their bodies into a mass grave. When the Nigerian government was confronted with this video they claimed that it was a piece of propaganda that was created by Boko Haram in an effort to delegitimize the Nigerian government. Careful analysis of the video has shown that the participants are in fact connected with the Nigerian army.

Some of the content of this report is quite difficult to watch, but it is of vital importance if we are to measure the actions of counter-terrorism operations in regards to their respect for human rights. It is important that, in actions to contain armed terrorists, the state actors maintain human rights and civil order. It is of critical importance, when trying to contain political violence, that respect for innocence is maintained. In the case of Nigeria the endorsement and complicity of a broad *posse comitatus*, and the violence that is being practiced in its name, is an essential recruitment tool of Boko Haram and a justifying point in their ideology that the Nigerian state is not only illegitimate, but infidel (Elden 2014).

This is an important film for understanding the interaction of Islamist terrorism and state counter-terrorism. Often it is the actions of the state against suspected terrorist sympathizers that become an essential recruiting tool of armed revolutions. While this film is critical of the Nigerian counter-terrorism project, by no means is it supportive of Boko Haram. As we are faced with the praxis of the 'global war on terror' it is essential that state actors are held accountable for human rights abuses that emerge.

References cited:

Azumah, John 2015 Boko Haram in Retrospect. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26 (1): 33-52.

Elden, Stuart 2014 The Geopolitics of Boko Haram and Nigeria's "War on Terror". *The Geographical Journal* 180 (4): 414-25.