



Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War

By Mike Smith

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An insurgency in Nigeria by the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram has left thousands dead, shaken Africa's biggest nation and worried the world. Yet they remain a mysterious-almost unknowable-organization. Through extensive on-the-ground reporting, Smith takes readers inside the violence and provides the first in-depth account of the conflict. He traces Boko Haram from its beginnings in Nigeria's remote northeast to its transformation into a hydra-headed monster, deploying suicide bombers and abducting schoolgirls. Much of the book is told from the perspective of Nigerians who have found themselves caught between the violence of insurgents, brutal security forces and an inept government. It includes the stories of a police officer left paralyzed, women whose husbands have been murdered and a sword-wielding vigilante using charms to fend off insurgent bullets. Smith questions whether there can be any end to the violence and the ways in which this might be achieved. Interspersed with Nigerian history, this book delves into the roots of the unholy war being waged against the backdrop of an evolving extremist threat worldwide.

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Review

"Meticulously reported" -*The New York Review of Books*

"Perceptive and fair-minded...eminently readable" -*The Telegraph*

"A commendable first draft of history" -*The Economist*

"What shines through is (Smith's) measured anger, shared by many Nigerians" -*Financial Times*

'There is certainly an urgent need for a comprehensive yet accessible account of Boko Haram about which much is written but yet little understood. The author is eminently well qualified, especially from his connection with AFP, who have been at the forefront of reportage on the situation of Northern Nigeria, to tackle this subject. The book should find a ready readership among the policy and diplomatic community as well as academics and interested lay readers.' - Richard Reid, Professor of the History of Africa, SOAS, University of London 'I enjoyed [this book] very much - its a good read. It's much the best account I have read, and offers a real sense of place - and crisis. Mike Smith's book will be widely read and cited.' - Murray Last, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University College London 'Mike Smith has written an unsparing study of both Boko Haram's cruelty and the failure of the Nigerian state to defeat the movement. In this timely book he tells a demoralising but necessary story, of the violence and negligence that is rapidly undermining the stability of sub-Saharan Africa's most important country'. - Barnaby Phillips, author of Another Man's War: The Story of A Burma Boy in Britain's Forgotten African Army. 'provides detailed accounts...gripping.' Ulrich von Schwerin, Qantara.

About the Author

Mike Smith is news editor for Israel and the Palestinian territories for Agence France-Presse. He was based in Lagos from 2010-13 as AFP's bureau chief for part of West Africa.

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