

2.12. Muslims in areas where they are a minority

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Nigeria’s Muslim population accounts for 56.1 %, predominantly residing in the northern regions of the country, whereas Christians are primarily concentrated in the south699 (see Christians in areas where they are a minority).

Within the context of intercommunal violence,700 various incidents targeting Fulani Muslims have been reported during the reference period, including killings.701

1. In 2024, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) launched a campaign against Fulani and criminal groups in South-East forests, reportedly dislodging more than 70 settlements. While many Igbos hailed the operation, it has faced criticism for targeting Muslim Fulani communities indiscriminately.702 See for more information the EUAA COI Report - Nigeria Security Situation November 2025. A Nigerian senior security advisor told the EUAA that many Igbos view the cultural and religious differences between the predominantly Christian South-East and the largely Muslim north as irreconcilable, and that a ‘united Nigeria is unachievable.’ The same source noted that Igbos also view increasing southward migration of Fulani herders, driven by climate change and conflicts in the North, and ‘their deadly attacks on farming communities, as an existential threat.’703

In January 2025, sources reported that intentions to establish ‘Sharia panels’704 in Ekiti and Oyo, South-West,705 were met with resistance.706 Vanguard reported that, according to Muslim leaders, these panels are part of their ‘right to self-determination’, while non-Muslim groups have expressed concerns about the ‘potential implications’.707 The governor of Oyo, for example, indicated that the state will ‘uphold the laws and the Constitution of Nigeria’ and that the establishment of a sharia court in Oyo would require a bill by the House of the Assembly.708 The Ekiti state Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice indicated that the state did not recognise sharia law and that the current legal system based on customary law already handles legal issues in the state, including Islamic, Christian, and customary marriages.709

Punch reported that, according to the chief imam of Imo state, ‘activities of bandits and Boko Haram insurgents in the north are influencing various misconceptions held by the Igbo about Muslims’ in the South-East and that instances of discrimination in employment with state institutions reportedly occur.710 The chief imam also indicated, without providing further

details, that '"[t]he Igbo don't like marrying Muslims and they discourage anyone who wants to marry Muslims"'.711 The chief imam, however, 'praised' the governor of Imo state for sponsoring the trip to Mecca for 200 people for the 2023 *Hajj* pilgrimage.712

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  Nigerian senior security advisor, online interview with EUAA, 30 July 2025

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  Daily Trust, Sharia panels: Discrimination against southern Muslims worries NSCIA, 30 January 2025, url

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