

Model United Nations of Hamburg 2015, 1st Committee, Main Chair

Forum: 1st Committee of the General Assembly

Issue: Finding measures to fight Islamic militant groups in West Africa

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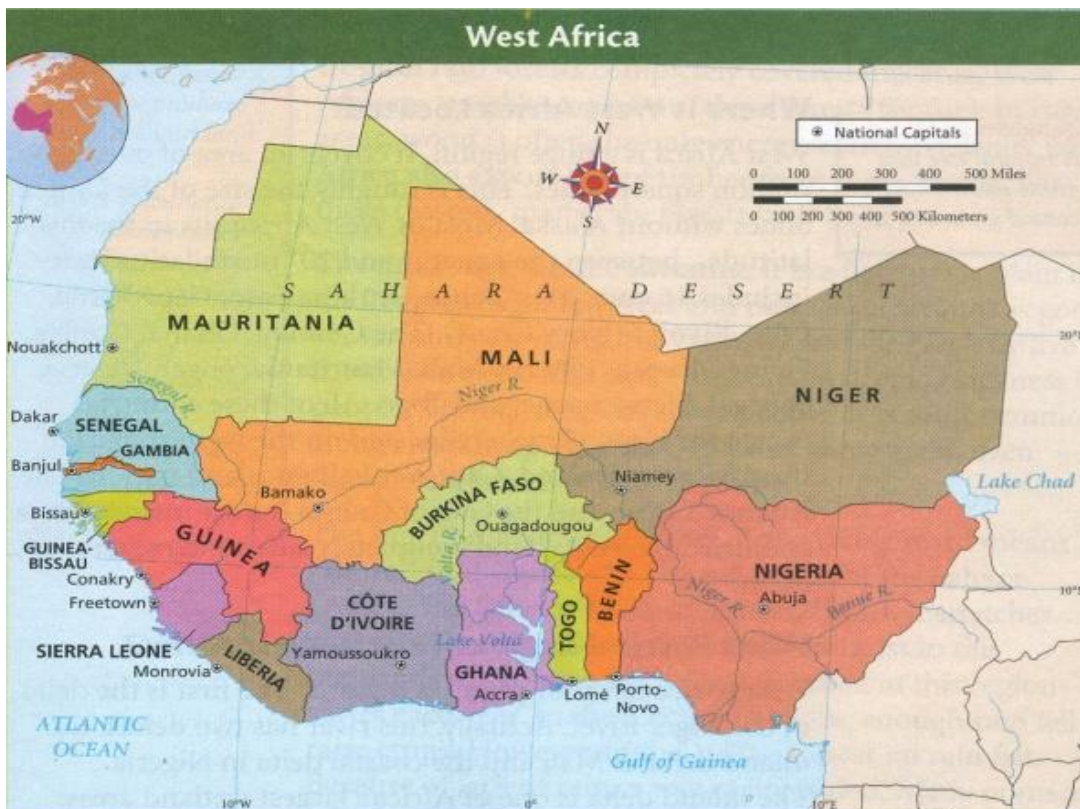
Definition of the Issue:

Most of the countries in West Africa belong to the poorest countries in the world. They lack e.g. a good infrastructure, enough drinkable water or enough food, so it's obvious that they have to deal with many problems. But one of the biggest problems is terrorism.

Terrorism is a serious threat to peace and security because it aims to cause the death of innocent civilians, the destruction of property and much more. There is hardly a week without any news reporting about a new terrorist attack somewhere in the world. So the question that needs to be asked is "Are we safe?"

Terrorism is a problem that does not only affect one country. It affects the whole world. So in order to fight Islamic militant groups in West Africa all member states of the United Nations have to work together.

Background information:



<http://healthnewsng.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/West-Africa.jpg>

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West Africa is located in the western part of the African continent, between the longitudes 20° west and 15° east and between the latitudes 05° north and 25° north. In the north it is limited by the Sahara Desert and in the east it is adjacent to Chad and Cameroun. The Atlantic Ocean is the southern as well as the western border.

According to the UN 16 countries and a few islands belong to West Africa. The countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Most of these countries were colonized by Great Britain and France. Nowadays France still cares for its former colonies and sends troops to fight Islamic groups.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) emerged from the Algerian Salafi *Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)* in 2005 and announced its faithfulness to Osama Bin Laden. The objectives of *AQIM* include protecting North Africa from Western influence, overthrowing apostate governments and installing fundamentalist regimes based on sharia. The group has around one thousand members in Algeria and smaller numbers in Chad, Mali and Mauritania. Further cells can be found in Libya, Nigeria and Tunisia. Some of the fighters defected to set up their own groups (splinter groups of *AQIM*) which was a serious setback for *AQIM*.

MUJAO

The Movement for Monotheism and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) was formed in late 2011 and is an offshoot of *AQIM*. Maybe because of that most of its founding members derive from *AQIM*'s Mauritanian contingent. Its leader is Hammad Ould Mohammed al-Khayri who promotes jihad and wants to establish the rule of sharia in West Africa. *MUJAO* became prominent in April 2012, when it joined the *National Movement for Liberation of Azawad (MNLA)* and *Ansar al-Din*.

Boko Haram

Since the area around Nigeria, Niger and southern Cameroon fell under British control in 1903 there has been resistance among some of the area's Muslims to Western education and they still refuse sending their children to government-run "Western schools". Because of this background Muslim cleric Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf formed *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lid-da'awati wal-Jihad* which means *People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad* in 2002. But the citizens in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri (Nigeria), where the group had its headquarters, called it *Boko Haram* which can be translated as *Western education is forbidden*. Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf set up a religious complex, which included a mosque and an Islamic school where many poor Muslim families send their children.

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But the purpose of *Boko Haram* is to overthrow the Nigerian government and to create an Islamic State. They support a version of Islam in which it is forbidden for Muslims to take part in political and social activities associated with Western society. This implicates that voting in elections, wearing shirts and trousers or receiving a secular education is not allowed.

Boko Haram carried out a spate of attacks in 2009. Most of the attacks were targeted at police stations, churches, schools and other educational institutions. This led to shoot-outs on Maiduguri's streets and the leader Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf came into police custody where he was shot. The hard-line cleric Abubakar Shekau took over the leadership. Some sources say that he has been killed by now, too, but this hasn't been proved yet.

Boko Haram drew international condemnation by kidnapping more than 200 schoolgirls from Chibok town in Borno state in April 2014. *Boko Haram* said they would treat the girls as slaves and marry them off.



In August 2014 Boko Haram declared a caliphate. "We are in an Islamic caliphate. We have nothing to do with Nigeria. We do not believe in this name", said Mr Shekau, flanked by masked fighters and carrying a machine gun. In 2015 a regional coalition made up of troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger was formed to fight Boko Haram. In March in the same year Boko Haram had lost the entire towns under its control, so the caliphate failed. After that Boko Haram withdraw to the Sambisa forest where the Nigerian military tacked it and freed hundreds of captives. But according to Amnesty International 2000 children were in captivity so many more are still to be freed.

Although a lot of fighters were killed some experts say it is too early to write off *Boko Haram*. The attacks at the beginning of June in Maiduguri, a city in the northeast of Nigeria, are the best examples.

Definition of important key terms

To marry someone off

Reference to an ancient Islamic belief that

	woman captured in conflict are considered war booty
Sharia / sharia law	Sharia law is the law of Islam. It is cast from the actions and words of Muhammad, which are called " <i>Sunnah</i> ," and the Quran, which he authored.
cleric	A priest or religious leader, especially a Christian or Muslim one.
caliphate	A caliphate is a form of Islamic government led by a caliph, a person considered a political and religious successor to the prophet Muhammad and a leader of the entire Muslim community.
<i>Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)</i>	A regional group of 15 West African countries, set up to foster the ideal of collective self-sufficiency for its member states, as a trading union, it is also meant to create a single, large trading bloc through economic cooperation.
Al-Qaeda Sanctions List	A list of the United Nations which contains data such as but not limited to name, nationality, passport number and address of individuals, entities and groups which sympathize with Al-Qaeda

Action Taken

The United Nations Security Council authorized a military peacekeeping mission in Mali in December 2012. Therefore the regional coalition *Economic Community of West African States* committed thousands of soldiers. However, in January 2013 a rebel advance southward, prior to the deployment of African forces, prompted Bamako to request immediate military assistance from France. French forces retook Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu, pushing *AQIM* militants northward into the mountains. From September 2014 to January 2015 22 peacekeepers were killed according to a UNSC report, highlighting the insecurity that remains in the north of Mali.

“The best strategy for dealing with *AQIM* remains working with regional governments to increase their capability, foster regional cooperation, and counter violent extremism”, stated the U.S. State Department. The UNSC adopted resolution 2161 on 17 June 2014 to fight against *Al-Qaeda* and other individuals, groups such as but not limited to MUJAO, undertakings and entities associated with it. Among other things the members of the Security Council decided that all Member States shall freeze the funds and other financial assets or economic resources of the terroristic groups. Further all member states shall exchange information expeditiously with other member states, in particular concerning state of origin, destination and transit, if they capture the travel of individuals on the Al-Qaeda Sanctions List.

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Since month the Nigerian army has been able to extricate many hostages in military attacks against Boko Haram. But unfortunately they have not found all hostages yet and Boko Haram continues to hijack especially girls and woman.

Questions for the delegates:

- Has your country been directly affected by any Islamic militant group from West Africa?
- Does your country take any action to fight Islamic militant groups in West Africa? If so what kind of action? Has it been successful?
- Has your country sent troops for any UN peacekeeping mission?

Sources:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24587491>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>
- <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim/p12717>
- <http://answersafrica.com/west-african-countries-list.html>
- [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2161\(2014\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2161(2014))

Useful links:

- <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/al-qaeda-lands-islamic-maghreb-aqim-salafist-group-preaching-and-fighting-see-separate-entry>
- <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/boko-haram>
- <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/>
- [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2161\(2014\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2161(2014))
- http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq_sanctions_list.shtml
- <http://rt.com/op-edge/180996-africa-outpost-islamic-terrorism/>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20991719>
- <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=West+Africa&sa.x=0&sa.y=0>
- <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/boko-haram-30-killed-twin-female-suicide-bomb-attacks-busy-fish-market-maiduguri-1507583>