

Ansaru



OVERVIEW

AS OF JUNE 2025

Ansaru, a.k.a. Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan—the arm of al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Nigeria—aspires to expel secular and foreign influences from Nigeria and possibly Benin to establish a Salafi-Islamist state. Originally intended to act as a specialized kidnap-for-ransom wing of Boko Haram, Ansaru split off in January 2012 to align with al-Qa’ida, largely in protest of Boko Haram’s use of indiscriminate attacks against Muslim civilians.

Operating Area

Northwest Nigeria; the Benin-Niger-Nigeria triborder area

Members

Unknown

Tactics And Targets

Ansaru primarily attacks civilians, local militias, and criminal elements using small arms. The group’s fighters were possibly trained by AQIM and by AQIM’s Sahel-based affiliate, Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). Ansaru’s kidnapping operations have targeted local and politically connected individuals, although the group has opportunistically kidnapped Westerners in 2011 and 2013. In 2013, Ansaru executed several hostages—including Europeans—the group had intended to ransom, because it mistakenly thought a military aircraft landing in the country was part of a rescue mission. The group recruits from local populations by providing services and protection in areas underserved by national governments.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated Ansaru as a foreign terrorist organization in November 2013.

KEY LEADERS



Abu Barra

Possibly Ansaru’s overall leader, although the group has publicly disputed this characterization



Ansaru *(continued)*

NOTABLE ATTACKS

20 August 2020

Kaduna state, Nigeria

Ansaru fighters overrun a Nigerian army base, killing 35 soldiers.

14 January 2020

Kaduna state, Nigeria

Ansaru operatives disguised as soldiers conduct a small-arms attack against a Nigerian army convoy and a senior local religious figure, killing up to 30 troops and four of the leader's aides.

May 2019

Katsina state, Nigeria

Ansaru kidnaps a family member of the Nigerian president's top aide, who reportedly is rescued by security forces two months later.

16 February 2013

Bauchi state, Nigeria

Ansaru kidnaps seven foreign construction workers and kills a security guard. The group executes the hostages the next month.

May 2011

Kebbi state, Nigeria

Ansaru kidnaps one British and one Italian construction worker, demanding ransom payments and releases of prisoners in Nigerian Government detention. Ansaru kills both of the hostages during a UK-Nigerian rescue attempt.

