

**NATIONAL FESTIVE PERIOD SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA:
COMMUNITY-CENTRED POLICING, INTELLIGENCE-LED RESPONSE, AND PUBLIC
SAFETY RESILIENCE DURING EID-EL-KABIR AND OTHER RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS**

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Abstract

Nigeria's religious festivals, particularly Eid-el-Kabir and Christmas, generate mass gatherings across all 36 states and the FCT, creating complex public safety challenges. The Sokoto State Police Command's 2026 Eid-el-Kabir advisory provides a model of proactive, community-centred policing that integrates intelligence-led patrols, clear public rules, and partnership with traditional and religious authorities.

This paper expands the analysis to other states where large-scale celebrations occur, including Kano, Katsina, Borno, Kaduna, Lagos, Oyo, and the FCT. Drawing on Security and Safety In Places of Worship and Fundamentals of Infrastructure Protection, it examines the legal framework, operational tactics, risk communication, and interagency coordination required for safe festivities. Comparative insights from the UK, USA, Canada, and India inform recommendations for a National Festive Period Security Framework.

The paper concludes that Nigeria must institutionalize intelligence fusion, technology-enabled monitoring, and community participation to shift from reactive policing to preventive resilience.

Keywords: Community Policing, Intelligence-Led Policing, Festive Security, Crowd Management, Eid-el-Kabir, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Religious festivals are integral to Nigeria's social and cultural life. Eid-el-Kabir, Eid-el-Fitr, Christmas, and Easter bring millions of Nigerians into public spaces for worship, sacrifice, and celebration. These gatherings enhance social cohesion but also create vulnerabilities to stampedes, terrorism, road accidents, hooliganism, and opportunistic crime.

The Sokoto State Police Command's 26th May 2026 advisory for Eid-el-Kabir illustrates how a state command can pre-emptively manage these risks through intelligence-led patrols, public communication, and collaboration with traditional and religious leaders. Similar challenges and responses occur in Kano, Katsina, Borno, Kaduna, Lagos, Oyo, and the FCT, where mass gatherings are routine.

This paper analyzes the Sokoto model, expands it to other states, and proposes a national framework for festive period security management grounded in law, intelligence, technology, and community participation.

2. Context Across Nigerian States

2.1 Northern States: Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Borno, Kaduna

These states host some of the largest Eid congregations in West Africa. Sokoto's advisory focuses on prayer grounds, markets, and routes like Arkilla-Polytechnic. Kano and Katsina face similar challenges with high-density gatherings at Eid grounds and markets like Kurmi and Katsina Central Market. Borno and Kaduna must also manage terrorism risk alongside crowd safety.

Common issues:

- Uncontrolled vehicular access to prayer grounds
- Celebratory gunfire and illegal fireworks
- Poor waste disposal from animal sacrifice
- Traffic congestion and road accidents

2.2 South-West and South-South: Lagos, Oyo, Rivers

Lagos and Oyo host large Muslim and Christian gatherings at Eid and Christmas. Lekki, Ikeja, and Ibadan experience heavy traffic and crowd pressure. The risk profile shifts toward traffic management, pickpocketing, and stampedes at worship centres.

2.3 Federal Capital Territory

Abuja's National Eid Ground and major churches require federal-level coordination between FCT Police Command, NSCDC, FRSC, and FEMA.

3. Problem Statement

While state commands issue advisories, Nigeria lacks a standardized national framework for festive period security. Challenges include:

1. Fragmented intelligence and lack of fusion across agencies
2. Inconsistent use of technology for crowd monitoring
3. Low public compliance due to weak risk communication
4. Inadequate legal enforcement of public order offences
5. Poor coordination of waste management and traffic control

4. Theoretical and Legal Framework

4.1 Community-Oriented Policing

COP builds trust and information flow between police and communities. It is essential where police-to-population ratios are low.

4.2 Intelligence-Led Policing

ILP uses data to predict, prevent, and disrupt threats. The 3i model – interpret, influence, impact – applies to festive period planning.

4.3 Legal Basis

- 1999 Constitution: Section 45 permits restrictions on rights for public safety.
- Nigeria Police Act 2020: Sections 4, 5, 81 authorize public order management.
- Criminal Code/Penal Code: Cover public nuisance, unlawful assembly, and assault.
- NSCDC Act 2007: Protects critical infrastructure around event venues.

5. Analysis of the Sokoto Model and Replication to Other States

5.1 Strengths

- Early Communication: Gives citizens time to adjust behaviour
- Specific Rules: Reduces ambiguity on prohibited acts
- Partnership with Leaders: Traditional rulers and imams increase compliance
- Hotline Provision: Enables public reporting

5.2 Gaps Requiring National Response

1. No Intelligence Fusion: Data remains siloed within commands
2. Limited Technology: Few states use drones, CCTV, or crowd analytics
3. Weak Post-Event Enforcement: Few arrests lead to prosecution
4. No Standard Template: Advisories vary widely in quality and detail

5.3 Replication in Other States

Kano, Katsina, and Kaduna can adopt Sokoto’s structure but must add:

- Intelligence fusion with DSS and NSCDC
- Traffic diversion plans with FRSC
- Medical and emergency response staging with NEMA and state health services
- Designated waste disposal with local governments

6. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Technology Integration

6.1 Intelligence Collection

- HUMINT: Use community leaders and market associations for early warning
- SIGINT/OSINT: Monitor social media for threats of disruption
- Financial Intelligence: Track suspicious cash movements around festivals

6.2 Surveillance Systems

Deploy mobile CCTV, drones, and body cameras at prayer grounds and major roads. Use AI for crowd density and anomaly detection.

6.3 Undercover Operations

Statutory authorization for undercover operations against groups planning to exploit festivals for crime or terrorism.

7. Crowd Management and Safety in Places of Worship

As detailed in Security and Safety In Places of Worship, effective crowd management requires:

1. Entry/Exit Control: Separate entry and exit routes, avoid bottlenecks
2. Flow Management: Use barriers and marshals to regulate movement
3. Emergency Planning: Pre-position medical teams and evacuation routes
4. Communication: Use public address systems for clear instructions
5. Training: Train ushers and volunteers in basic crowd safety

8. Interagency Collaboration and Public Engagement

8.1 Interagency Architecture

Establish a National Festive Period Security Coordination Centre under ONSA with representatives from NPF, NSCDC, DSS, FRSC, NEMA, FEMA, and local governments. Functions include intelligence fusion, resource allocation, and real-time incident management.

8.2 Public Engagement

- Launch “Safe Festivity” campaigns via radio, TV, and social media
- Use religious leaders for risk communication
- Deploy mobile apps for reporting suspicious activity and traffic incidents

9. Comparative Insights

9.1 United Kingdom

UK police use Public Space Protection Orders, detailed event plans, and the College of Policing's event safety guidance. CCTV and ANPR are standard.

9.2 United States

DHS provides guidance for houses of worship. Joint Information Centres manage public communication. ShotSpotter detects gunfire.

9.3 Canada and India

Canada emphasizes community liaison officers. India deploys Rapid Action Force and uses interfaith committees to prevent communal violence during festivals.

10. Recommendations

10.1 Federal Government

1. Pass a National Festive Period Security Framework Act to standardize planning and responsibilities
2. Fund a National Intelligence Fusion Centre for festive periods
3. Mandate digital reporting platforms in all state commands

10.2 Nigeria Police Force and NSCDC

1. Adopt a standardized advisory template for all states
2. Train officers on crowd dynamics, de-escalation, and human rights
3. Integrate NFIU financial intelligence into festival policing

10.3 State Governments and LGAs

1. Pre-identify and prepare abattoirs and waste disposal sites
2. Fund traffic diversion and road maintenance before festivals
3. Recognize and train community watch groups

10.4 Public and Religious Institutions

1. Conduct safety audits of worship centres before major events
2. Train volunteers in first aid and evacuation procedures
3. Cooperate with police on access control and reporting

11. Prospects and Future Generations

Future festive security will rely on predictive analytics, AI-assisted video monitoring, and blockchain-based incident reporting. Youth engagement through civic education and digital literacy will reduce hooliganism. Nigeria should pilot smart surveillance on Eid grounds in Sokoto, Kano, and Abuja by 2027.

12. Conclusion

Festive periods test Nigeria's capacity for public safety governance. The Sokoto advisory shows that proactive, communicative, and partnership-based policing works. Scaling this model nationally requires legal reform, intelligence fusion, technology investment, and sustained community engagement. When done right, festivals become showcases of national unity and state competence.

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