

Boko Haram Using More Child Suicide Bombers

[VOA](#) ABUJA, NIGERIA—

Nigeria's Boko Haram militants are increasingly using children to carry out suicide bombings, the United Nations Children's Fund reported Tuesday.

The report said 44 children were involved in Boko Haram suicide attacks in 2015, a tenfold increase from just four children used a year earlier.

Over the past two years, one in five Boko Haram suicide bombers was a child and 75 percent of those children were girls, according to the report.

'Appalling statistic'

UNICEF Nigeria spokeswoman Doune Porter said those children are victims, not perpetrators.

"It's an appalling statistic," Porter said. "Deceiving children and forcing them to carry out these horrific acts is one of the worst aspects of the violence in Nigeria and neighboring countries."

Nearly all of those attacks have been in Cameroon and Nigeria.

The terror group has sent the children, who are sometimes unaware they are carrying explosives, into crowded markets and mosques where they are rarely perceived as a threat.

'Calculated use'

"The calculated use of children who may have been coerced into carrying bombs, has created an atmosphere of fear and

suspicion that has devastating consequences for girls who have survived captivity and sexual violence by Boko Haram in North East Nigeria,” UNICEF said.

Nigeria’s defense spokesman General Rabe Abubakar said using children is just one of the group’s strategies.

“Some people will even come disguising as mad men. You see them trying to gain access to a crowd in order to blow up themselves,” Abubakar said.

“There was a situation where some people came looking for water for absolution. But they blew themselves up as soon as they gained access to the crowd,” he said. “We have seen men disguise[d] as women and women disguise[d] as men, wearing turbans, just so they can get into the mosque and detonate their bombs.”