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Cameroon: The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis (2021 – 2023)

Query Response [a-12289]

4 January 2024



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ACCORD - Austrian Centre for Country of
Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to ACCORD as well as information provided by experts within time constraints and in accordance with ACCORD's methodological standards and the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI).

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We recommend to directly refer to original materials used in this product.

Original language quotations are provided for reference in the document or upon request.

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1 Introduction and background

1.1 Map of Cameroon



Source: [International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 22](#)

1.2 Introduction

Cameroon is located at the junction of West and Central Africa and shares borders with Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. In the southwest it has a coastline to the Atlantic Gulf of Guinea (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, Introduction & Quick Facts). Today's Cameroon spans 475,440 square kilometres (472,710 square kilometres, 2,730 square kilometres water) and has approximately 30 million inhabitants, according to a CIA World Fact Book estimate of 2023 (CIA, updated 6 Dec 2023).

More than 200 different ethnic groups make Cameroon a highly diverse society, which can be divided into three main linguistic groups: Bantu-speakers of the south, Sudanic-speakers of the north, and semi-Bantu-speakers, who live mainly in the west. Among the Bantu groups are the Maka, Ndjem, Duala, Fang (Pangwe) and Beti. The Sao, the Fulani, and the Kanuri belong to the Sudanic-speaking linguistic group. The Bantu-related Bamileke are a larger semi-Bantu group, the Tikar are another semi-Bantu group and there are furthermore several smaller semi-Bantu groups. In the southern forests live the country's oldest inhabitants, the Pygmies, locally known as the Baguielli and Babinga. They are hunters and gatherers, organised in small hunting bands (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, People).

According to an estimate of 2018 by the CIA World Fact Book, 38.3 percent of the population are Roman Catholic, 25.5 percent Protestant, 6.9 percent Christians of other orientation, 24.4 percent Muslim, 2.2 percent animist, 0.5 percent follow other religious belief systems, and 2.2 percent do not associate themselves with any religion (CIA, updated 6 Dec 2023). In their 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom, the US Department of State (USDOS) presents numbers from 2005 of the most recent census available:

“69.2 percent of the population are Christian, 20.9 percent Muslim, 5.6 percent animist, and 1.0 percent belong to other religions; 3.2 percent report no religious affiliation. Among Christians, 55.5 percent are Roman Catholic, 38 percent Protestant, and 6.5 percent other Christian denominations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Orthodox churches.” (USDOS, 15 May 2023, section I)

Furthermore, according to findings of the 2020 Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, “38.3 percent of Christians are Catholic, and 31.4 percent are Protestant. There is a growing number of Christian revivalist churches” (USDOS, 15 May 2023, section I).

Cameroon's settlement patterns show a general north-south cultural divide. Muslims live in the north of Cameroon, whereas in the south, people adhere to Christianity and traditional African religions (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, People).

After the German colonization in 1884 (BBC News, 9 March 2023), the first official colonial language in Cameroon was German (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, People). After World War One, Cameroon was split into French (80 percent) and British (20 percent) Cameroon (BBC News, 9 March 2023), and the colonial language was replaced accordingly (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, People). In the course of decolonization, forming an independent Southern Cameroon (today's North-West and South-West, remark ACCORD) out of British Cameroon was discussed but not found viable by the United Kingdom, the UN and other countries. In 1961 inhabitants of the two territories that made up British Cameroon were asked to vote for either joining Nigeria or unifying with the

newly independent state of formerly French Cameroon. The southern entity of British Cameroon chose the latter, becoming part of a somewhat decentralised Federal Republic of Cameroon (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 4, see also ECP, 2023, p. 49).

With French and parts of British Cameroon merged, English and French became the two official national languages of the nation state of today (CIA, updated 6 Dec 2023). The linguistic divide into Francophone and Anglophone regions continues to exist: The regions Far-North, North, Adamawa, West, Littoral, Centre, East, and South are Francophone, the North-West and South-West regions, bordering Nigeria and the Atlantic Ocean, are Anglophone (BBC News, 9 January 2022).¹

After independence in 1961, Cameroon's economy prospered, including improvements in agriculture, education, health care and transport. Modest offshore oil deposits were discovered in 1977, accelerating economic growth but also increasing rent-seeking and corruption. In the mid-1980s an economic crisis started. State corruption was rampant. After 2000, several major state-owned enterprises were privatized and competition in the banking and telecom sectors was permitted (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 5). Currently, the economy of Cameroon is significantly reliant on the global market sales of its products, notably petroleum and cocoa (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, Economy).

From its independence until the early 1990s, Cameroon's political situation was for long periods stable, despite the repressive rule of Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon's first president who was in power for 20 years and showed bias towards ethnic groups from northern Cameroon (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 5). In 1966, President Ahidjo took first measures to centralise power:

“[Ahidjo] instituted a one-party system, in a move that sidelined political rivals, though it was ostensibly meant to promote national unity. Six years later, he pushed through a referendum on a new constitution that gave him more powers and renamed the country the United Republic of Cameroon.” (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 4)

In 1982, Paul Biya, who is still in power to this day, succeeded Ahidjo as president in a peaceful transfer of power (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 5). He reinforced centralisation and, in 1984, changed the country's name to the Republic of Cameroon. According to the International Crisis Group's report on Cameroon's Anglophone Special Status, this angered many in the Anglophone regions (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 4).

Civil society agitation, mass protests and international pressure in the 1980s were a driver for democratic transformations and led to the establishment of a multi-party system. Nevertheless, the authorities have been marginalizing and targeting the opposition ever since. In the heavily manipulated first presidential elections in 1992, Paul Biya achieved a narrow victory (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 5). In 2018, then 85-year-old Paul Biya won his seventh term in office in another disputed election, marking his 35th year in power (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 6; DW, 8 November 2018).

¹ For a more detailed overview on administrative divisions and subdivisions in the two Anglophone regions, please refer to UN OCHA's reference maps on the [South-West](#) (UN OCHA, 10 June 2018) and [North-West](#) (UN OCHA, 12 June 2018) regions.

Officially, Cameroon is a presidential republic (CIA, updated 6 Dec 2023), where the prime minister, the cabinet as well as the governors of each of Cameroon's ten regions are appointed by the president (Encyclopaedia Britannica, updated 31 December 2023, Government and society). However, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) states that the political and administrative system under President Paul Biya “is characterised by an authoritarian style of government that focuses on keeping the government in power, clientelism, and corruption” (BMZ, undated). The BMZ further states that “[a]t present, Cameroon is going through a deep domestic crisis”, since conflicts in the English-speaking North-West and South-West regions as well as in the Far-North region “are posing a threat to the country's stability” (BMZ, undated).

2 Political situation

In the Anglophone regions, feelings of being marginalized by the government, which mainly represents the French-speaking majority in the country, have prevailed among the population since the unification of former British and French Cameroon (Fonkwo et al., 16 August 2023; BBC News, 22 August 2022). In 2016, a series of protests led by lawyers and teachers took place, which security forces cracked down on. People demonstrated against the use of French in schools and courts in the Anglophone regions as well as the failure to publish government documents in English, even though it is an official language. Many were arrested (BBC News, 22 August 2022; BBC News, 9 January 2022). Reportedly, the demonstrating Anglophone lawyers and teachers feared that the central state was preparing to overhaul the English-language educational and judicial systems, which followed the British model, to conform with French norms (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 3). In Cameroon, British and French systems of education, law and policy co-exist. As Jaqueline Fonkwo and her co-authors explain in their study, this fact has been a constant argument, which eventually developed into armed conflict in the Anglophone regions (Fonkwo et al., 16 August 2023).

Since 2017, a war for an independent “Federal Republic of Ambazonia” on the territory of the North-West and South-West regions is going on between insurgents and government forces, after leaders of the movement unilaterally declared independence (BBC News, 9 March 2023). According to BBC News, between 2017 and 2022, tens of thousands have been killed in the conflict, more than one million were forced to flee to French-speaking areas, and 80,000 refugees fled to Nigeria (BBC News, 22 August 2022). The International Crisis Group mentions over 6,000 people killed in the North-West and South-West regions and hundreds of thousands displaced between 2017 and 2023 (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 1). In its annual report on protection the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) describes the situation in the North-West and South-West regions in the year 2022 as “worrying and tense”, characterized by “incidents of continuous fighting between State security forces and non-State armed groups, threats to life, targeted attacks, destruction of property, arbitrary arrest, rape, physical assaults, kidnappings for ransom, money extortion, and continued use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)” (DRC, 7 July 2023, p. 5).

Following a Major National Dialogue convened by the government in October 2019, the Anglophone regions were granted a Special Status, which gives them greater autonomy by creating regional assemblies that exceed the powers of their Francophone counterparts. These developments are primarily seen as symbolic, since the assemblies remain weak and are controlled by governors appointed in the capital Yaoundé (International Crisis Group, 31 March

2023, p. 1; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 3, see also RFI, 15 October 2022). In addition, “the government pushed its changes through without consulting Anglophone leaders and separatist activists”, which, according to the International Crisis Group, is a factor hindering successful reconciliation (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 2). The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) similarly argues that the government’s unilaterally initiated measures and lack of prior consultation are responsible for the failure to produce lasting political solutions. In March 2021, the ISS reports that the government's focus on military solutions has likely increased the number of secessionists, overshadowing those who advocate for the establishment of a federal state as a solution (ISS, 23 March 2021).

2.1 Rejection of Canada peace initiative

According to The New Humanitarian (TNH), with time “a lucrative ‘war economy’, typically involving kidnapping and the broader extortion of the civilian population”, has grown and is reducing the incentive to find a negotiated settlement (TNH, 19 July 2022). Raoul Sumo Tayo states in October 2022 that the situation in the English-speaking regions has deteriorated significantly since 2019 (RFI, 15 October 2022). Deep divisions within the separatist movement and the refusal of the government to engage with external mediators have led to a stalemate in negotiation processes. For Cameroon’s government the Anglophone conflict is an internal affair (TNH, 1 June 2021).

In the beginning of 2021, international pressure to find a solution to the conflict in the Anglophone regions has been building, but all initiatives by Canada, France, the United States, and the Vatican as well as efforts by a Swiss-based NGO have been stymied (TNH, 29 March 2021). The International Crisis Group provides the following information:

“In 2019, President Paul Biya ignored a Swiss offer to facilitate talks, instead organising what purported to be a national conference, but without inviting the most influential separatist leaders. In April 2020, Cameroonian officials began talks with imprisoned separatist leaders, only to suddenly call them off after a second encounter in July of that year. In October 2022, while again rejecting Swiss efforts to push forward with their initiative, the government started low-level consultations with Anglophone leaders in the diaspora. This time around, the separatists’ discretion and clear commitment to finding a resolution persuaded some in Yaoundé to participate at senior levels in pre-talks, with Ottawa’s facilitation, leading observers to believe that the government was ready to take the next step and fully engage in formal talks.” (International Crisis Group, 9 February 2023)

Hopes were raised on 20 January 2023, when Canada’s foreign minister, Mélanie Joly, announced that after months of secret “pre-talks” Canada and Cameroon had agreed to start working together for peace in the Anglophone regions. Anglophone leaders confirmed the agreement in a joint statement shortly after. Three days later, the Cameroonian government rejected Canada’s peace initiative “denying that it had asked a ‘foreign party’ to broker a resolution to the conflict”. In response to the government’s statement separatist militias immediately launched a fresh campaign of violence in the North-West and South-West regions. On the other hand, the defence ministry started the recruitment of new soldiers, intensified special forces’ patrols in the Anglophone regions and attacked separatist positions (International Crisis Group, 9 February 2023).

In February 2023, the International Crisis Group assesses the Canada peace initiative as follows:

“Already the Canada-facilitated initiative has yielded clear benefits. Anglophone faith leaders (Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Muslims and Anglicans), as well as civil society and women’s groups, are more supportive of the prospective Canada talks than of previous initiatives. More critically, the facilitation has also persuaded rival separatist movements to form an orderly bloc. Drawing on earlier efforts by Swiss facilitators, Canada managed to bring together four major separatist groups, with a fifth announcing its commitment to the peace process after Joly’s statement. In the past, separatist groups appeared too divided to reach consensus among themselves. This time around, their unity offers the Cameroonian government a clear counterpart in negotiations.” (International Crisis Group, 9 February 2023)

In March 2023, the Canada peace initiative has not gained significant traction and the parties involved have been publicly silent about the status of any talks since the rejection of the idea by government officials (International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 2).

3 Security situation

During the reporting period (2021-2023), the violent conflict between the security and defence forces and armed separatist groups reportedly continued to rage in Cameroon’s North-West and South-West regions (International Crisis Group, as of 20 December 2023; UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, p. 5; AI, July 2023, pp. 12-13). The security situation in the Anglophone regions is reported to be deteriorating (GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023), with the insurgency becoming more structured and the crisis more complex (RFI, 15 October 2022). In a July 2023 report, Amnesty International (AI) explains that

“[a]rmed violence is now a common occurrence, with peaks around symbolic events such as elections, the start of the school year, Cameroon’s national day, the anniversary of ‘Ambazonia’s’ declaration of independence, and sporting events. Such events lead to particularly deadly episodes.” (AI, July 2023, p. 12)

For the period between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023, ACLED² reports 1,144 security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians³ in Cameroon’s North-West and South-West regions (for 2021, 645 incidents; for 2022, 293 incidents; for 2023, 206 incidents). Of these, 586 incidents or 51 percent are coded as incidents with “civilian targeting”, i.e. incidents where civilians are reported to be the main or only target (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023). Figure 1 below depicts the evolution of security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians per quarter as recorded by ACLED.

² For detailed information on ACLED’s methodology, please see their Codebook (ACLED, 2023).

³ ACLED codes security-related incidents as follows: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, riots, protests and strategic developments (ACLED, 2023, p. 10). For the purpose of this report, only the event types of battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians were included in the quantitative analysis and charts.



Figure 1. Evolution of security—related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians per quarter in the North-West and South-West regions, based on ACLED data (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

3.1 Actors and types of violence

The situation in the North-West and South-West regions is characterised by protracted armed conflict which leaves its residents caught between the Cameroonian armed forces, armed separatists and militias composed mainly of members of the Mbororo Fulani ethnic group (AI, July 2023, p. 16). In December 2023, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) states for the period between September and October 2023 that

“[n]umerous incidents of civilians’ abductions, physical assaults, torture, or killings continue to be reported. Civilians were also caught in clashes between the parties to the crisis, with some civilians killed by stray bullets.” (UN OCHA, 12 December 2023, p. 4)

In the reporting period, armed separatist groups reportedly committed killings and abductions of civilians (GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023; AI, July 2023, p. 24; HRW, 27 June 2022; CHRDA, 11 June 2022, pp. 6-19) and were involved in acts of torture and the destruction/burning of homes (AI, July 2023, p. 24). Government forces were also involved in unlawful killings, burning of homes (GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023; AI, July 2023, p. 35; HRW, 27 June 2022; CHRDA, 11 June 2022, pp. 2-6), arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of the civilian population, such as torture and gender-based violence, including rape (GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023; see also AI, July 2023, p. 35; HRW, 27 June 2022). In the North-West region, militias consisting mainly of armed Mbororo Fulani have also carried out killings and destroyed homes, causing displacement (AI, July 2023, p. 32). For more detailed information on human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict, [see section 4](#).

Amnesty International reports in July 2023 that the separatists in the Anglophone region are organized into various armed groups, typically named after geographical features (like “Bui Unity Warriors”, “Mountain Fako Lions”, “Lebialem Red Dragons” etc.). These groups are often led by an “appointed ‘general’” and some show a high level of organization and armament “capable of carrying out deadly guerrilla-style attacks against military positions” (AI, July 2023, p. 13). The separatist groups are marked by internal conflicts and suspicions of infiltration, leading to internal purges and violence. This reportedly reflects the divisions within the

separatist political leadership (AI, July 2023, p. 13; see also International Crisis Group, 7 January 2022).

Anglophone insurgents can be found among multiple political factions and dozens of local militias (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 23 February 2022, p. 3). In January 2023, the Robert Lansing Institute (RLI) reports on seven dominant separatist armed groups, holding strong positions mostly in rural areas. The estimated number of fighters in these armed groups ranges from 2,000 to 4,000. Recruitment is primarily from the local Anglophone community, but also includes members of the security forces and Nigerian mercenaries. These mercenaries, some with backgrounds in military or criminal activities, generally provide their own weapons and serve as trainers or combatants. Additionally, a notable number of Cameroonian police officers and soldiers, including those retired or discharged, have joined these groups. The armed separatist groups also include female combatants, some in local leadership roles (RLI, 20 January 2023).

As of July 2023, the separatists are reported to have notably upgraded their arsenal, incorporating sophisticated equipment. The government acknowledges this advanced armament, indicating a need to adapt military strategies. The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) by armed separatist groups is reported to be increasing (AI, July 2023, p. 14).

According to data recorded by ACLED, armed separatist groups (coded as “Ambazonian Separatists” or “ADF: The Ambazonia Defense Forces”) were involved⁴ in 873 security-related incidents⁵ in the North-West and South-West regions between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023. Of these, 342 incidents or 39 percent were coded as incidents with “civilian targeting” (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

Security-related incidents with armed separatists’ involvement				
Event Type	2021	2022	2023	Total
Battles	320	98	62	480
Explosions/Remote violence	49	9	9	67
Violence against civilians	161	90	75	326
Total	530	197	146	873

Figure 2. Number of security-related incidents with separatists’ involvement by type of incident in North-West and South-West regions for the period between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023, based on ACLED data (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

In its July 2023 report, Amnesty International notes the following on the Cameroonian security forces presence:

“Since the beginning of the armed violence, the Cameroonian authorities have increased the military presence in the Anglophone regions. State media announced the creation of a

⁴ When analysing the involvement of specific actors, ACCORD considered all incidents where ACLED coded the respective actor as either "Actor1" or "Actor2", as according to the ACLED methodology, there is no distinction between these two categories in terms of content/semantics. Please note, that this also applies to figures 3 and 4.

⁵ The analysis only included security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians. Please note that this also applies to figures 3 and 4.

fifth military region on 21 February 2018, covering the West and North-West regions, with headquarters in Bamenda (North-West). These two regions were previously covered by the second military region in Douala, Littoral region.” (AI, July 2023, p. 15)

A lack of transparency in defense spending makes it difficult to assess recent budgetary allocations for military and security operations in the Anglophone regions (AI, July 2023, p. 16). According to the German Foreign Office's (Auswärtiges Amt) report of September 2022, referred to in a ruling by the Austrian Federal Administrative Court (BVwG), the Cameroonian security forces are largely poorly trained, paid and equipped. Arbitrary and disproportionate use of force has been reported. Abuses by the security forces are generally not adequately prosecuted (BVwG, 6 July 2023, p. 8).

According to data recorded by ACLED, Cameroon’s military forces were involved in 692 security-related incidents in the North-West and South-West regions between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023. Of these, 184 incidents or 27 percent were coded as incidents with “civilian targeting” (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

Security-related incidents with involvement of the military forces				
Event Type	2021	2022	2023	Total
Battles	304	98	66	468
Explosions/Remote violence	27	7	7	41
Violence against civilians	108	48	27	183
Total	439	153	100	692

Figure 3. Number of security-related incidents with military forces’ involvement by type of incident in North-West and South-West regions for the period between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023, based on ACLED data (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

In terms of direct confrontations between security forces and armed separatist groups, in May 2022, an article by the political magazine *Jeune Afrique* states that these have decreased significantly (*Jeune Afrique*, 27 May 2022), while Cameroon analyst Arrey Ntui notes in June 2022 that fatal attacks against the Cameroonian army had intensified (TNH, 23 June 2022). In October 2022, an expert in democratization and human rights defender explains to the Belgian COI Unit CEDOCA that although the clashes between the separatists and the governmental forces had decreased, they were causing more victims among the military (CGRS-CEDOCA, 20 February 2023, p. 12). In January 2022 the International Crisis Group reports that “[n]ational security forces have failed to overpower the militias despite heavy deployments” (International Crisis Group, 7 January 2022). In early 2023, VOA reports on increased fighting between Cameroonian security forces and separatists (VOA, 2 January 2023; VOA, 21 February 2023). An outbreak of renewed clashes between Ambazonian separatists and security forces was again reported in May 2023 (ACLED, 7 June 2023; see also ADF, 16 May 2023).

In the North-West region, the Mbororo Fulani herding community reportedly aligned with the Cameroonian governmental forces (AI, July 2023, pp. 20-21; Ifri, June 2022, p. 4). This alliance is reported to be driven by a strategic choice, stemming from their marginalization by local farming communities and ongoing land disputes. “By siding with the government, they hope that the latter will recognise the legitimacy of their sedentarisation and limit the extortionist practices of the regular security forces against them.” (Ifri, June 2022, p. 4).

Reports indicate the presence of “Fulani armed groups” aiding the government, although details about their formation, composition, and “hierarchical links with the defence and security forces and authorities” remain unclear (AI, July 2023, p. 20). A 2022 report by the Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri) suggests these militias provide intelligence and manpower to security forces (Ifri, June 2022, p. 5). The central government, however, has not officially recognized these government-aligned militias or their cooperation with security forces (AI, July 2023, p. 21).

According to data recorded by ACLED, Mbororo Fulani militias (coded as “Mbororo Ethnic Militia” or “Fulani Ethnic Militia”) were involved in 32 security-related incidents in North-West and South-West regions between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023. Of these, 30 incidents or 94 percent were coded as incidents with “civilian targeting” (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

Security-related incidents with involvement of Fulani/Mbororo ethnic militias				
Event Type	2021	2022	2023	Total
Battles	0	1	1	2
Violence against civilians	7	11	12	30
Total	7	12	13	32

Figure 4. Number of security-related incidents with Fulani/Mbororo ethnic militias’ involvement by type of incident in North-West and South-West regions for the period between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023, based on ACLED data (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

3.2 Targets and geographical distribution of violence

The local population of the Anglophone regions continues “to bear the brunt as the warring factions engaged in attacks and counter-attacks” (CHRDA, 26 May 2023) and is continuously either targeted directly or caught in IEDs explosions, crossfire, or military raids. Ghost towns and lockdowns imposed on the population further aggravate the situation (DRC, 7 July 2023, p. 5). Armed separatists kill “civil servants, workers in state-controlled companies”, individuals accused of being traitors and those who disobeyed orders (AI, July 2023, p. 16). Moreover, separatist groups carry out attacks on schools (UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, pp. 5-6; GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023; GPC, 16 November 2023, p. 1) and both separatist groups and government forces are reported to have targeted health facilities and humanitarian workers (GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023; see also UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, pp. 5-6; International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, pp. 1-2). For more detailed information on the impact of the conflict on access to education and healthcare, [see section Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.5.2](#) and [section 5.3](#).

Throughout the reporting period (2021-2023), the International Crisis Group reports on ongoing violence in Anglophone regions, with particular reference to the high civilian casualties in July and November 2023 and rare attacks in Francophone territories in June 2022 and May 2023 (International Crisis Group, as of 20 December 2023). According to AI, armed separatist groups “have maintained their capacity to conduct armed attacks, even beyond the two Anglophone regions” (AI, July 2023, p. 13).

Various sources estimate the death toll resulting from the armed violence in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon at over 6,000 since 2016 (GlobalR2P, 30 November 2023; International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023; HRW, 11 August 2022). According to AI, the overall

number of fatalities is however “difficult to estimate in the absence of governmental data or communications, and due to the difficulty to corroborate data shared by separatist groups” (AI, July 2023, p. 13).

For the period between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023, ACLED data estimated 1,763 fatalities⁶ (for 2021, 908 fatalities were recorded; for 2022, 489; for 2023, 366). Figure 5 below shows the number of fatalities recorded by ACLED during the reporting period for the region North-West and South-West (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

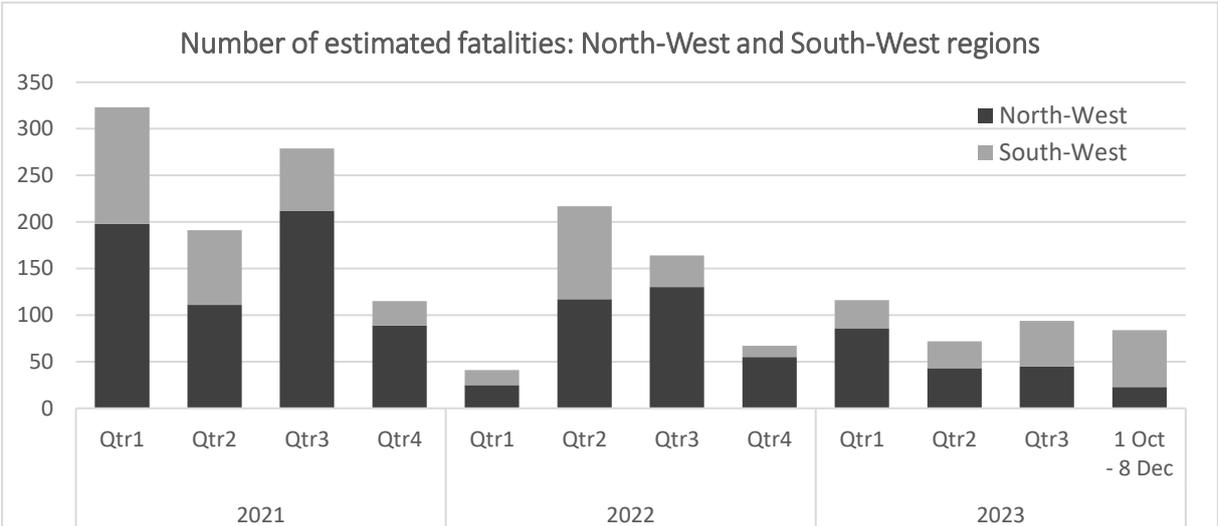


Figure 5. Number of estimated fatalities caused by security-related incidents coded as battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians per quarter in the North-West and South-West regions, based on ACLED data (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

According to ACLED data, there were also 22 security-related incidents causing 61 fatalities in Francophone areas of Cameroon’s Central, Littoral and West regions between 1 January 2021 and 8 December 2023 in which the involvement of Anglophone separatist groups (coded as “Ambazonian Separatists”) was reported (ACLED, as of 12 December 2023).

3.3 Displacement

Various sources report on mass-displacement due to violence and insecurity caused by the crisis in Cameroon’s North-West and South-West (Afrique XXI, 17 July 2023; International Crisis Group, 31 March 2023, p. 1; GenCap, July 2022, p. 15). In more specific terms, UNHCR reported on 638.421 internally displaced persons in the Anglophone regions as of 30 September 2023 (UNHCR, last updated 30 September 2023). As of July 2023, Amnesty International reported on additional “87,000 people [being displaced] to neighbouring Nigeria, representing 20% of the total population of the two Anglophone regions” (AI, July 2023, p. 12).

The crisis has led to a pattern of pendular displacement, where individuals, depending on perceived threats, either move to urban areas or hide in the bush, frequently shifting between their homes and places of refuge (GenCap, July 2022, p. 16). Many of the displaced are reported to seek refuge in Douala, the country’s economic hub. These displaced individuals face

⁶ Please note that in cases where there are conflicting reports, ACLED opts to use the most conservative figures (ACLED, 2023, p. 7). Furthermore, ACLED does not distinguish between civilian and non-civilian fatalities.

numerous challenges in adapting to city life, often staying with relatives or friends while seeking employment and more suitable housing (Afrique XXI, 17 July 2023).

4 Human rights situation

Please [see section 5.2](#) for information on attacks on schools and [section 5.3](#) on attacks on healthcare.

4.1 Freedom of expression and assembly

The 2021 and 2022 annual human rights reports of the US Department of State (USDOS) and Freedom House highlight restrictions on freedom of expression (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 2a; USDOS, 12 April 2022, section 2a; Freedom House, 2023, section D; Freedom House, 24 February 2022, section D). Regarding 2022, the USDOS notes that “government officials denied individuals and organizations the ability to criticize or express” dissenting views, “imposed restrictions on symbolic expressions”, and hindered discussions on certain political matters. Reprisals were common for those publicly or privately criticizing the government, and laws requiring permits for public protests were used to suppress discourse. In the South-West and North-West Regions, armed separatist groups were reported to inhibit freedom of expression, including for the press (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 2a). Similarly, Freedom House reports that public criticism of the government and involvement in opposition parties could negatively impact professional advancement in Cameroon. Overall, Cameroonians reportedly tend to “avoid discussing sensitive political issues”, including the potential return to a federal system granting more autonomy to Anglophone regions, due to fear of reprisals (Freedom House, 2023, section D4).

The government limited and impeded the rights of peaceful assembly and association, and its “failure to investigate or prosecute attacks on human rights defenders and protesters undermined” these freedoms. While the law allows for freedom of peaceful assembly, “the government often restricted this right”, citing security and health concerns. Permits for gatherings were selectively granted, and force was used to suppress unapproved assemblies. Public demonstrations, however, were generally permitted for pro-government groups (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 2b). Freedom House also mentions that freedom of assembly encountered limitations, as authorities prohibited and forcefully dispersed events that were viewed as anti-government, especially those initiated by the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) (Freedom House, 2023, section E1). Academic freedom, while not legally restricted, faced challenges due to state security informants on university campuses. Academics could face repercussions “for criticizing the government or discussing its political opponents”. The crisis in the Anglophone regions further impacted academic freedom, “with separatists enforcing a school boycott and carrying out” violence against teachers and students (Freedom House, 2023, section D3). Please [see section 5.2](#) for information on attacks on schools.

4.1.1 Journalists

Freedom House reports that the “government continued to suppress media coverage of the Anglophone crisis in 2022” (Freedom House, 2023, section D1). A July 2023 report by Afrique XXI notes that the conflict in the Anglophone regions is taking place without international witnesses and most human rights violations are unlikely to be documented. The authorities

have been restricting access to the regions for journalists, non-governmental organisations and international observers (Afrique XXI, 17 July 2023). The USDOS mentions the following regarding the situation of the media and journalists in the year 2022:

“The law provides for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but the government often restricted this right, explicitly or implicitly. Private media were active and expressed a wide spectrum of viewpoints. The media landscape faced constraints on editorial independence, in part due to fear of reprisal from state and nonstate armed actors, including separatists connected to the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions.” (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 2a)

Regarding violence and harassment, the USDOS notes that journalists were arrested, detained, physically assaulted, and subjected to intimidation by police, gendarmes, and other government agents. The lack of investigation or prosecution by the state regarding these attacks resulted in de facto restrictions on the work of journalists. The restrictions on freedom of expression imposed by separatist groups in the North-West and South-West also affected the freedom of the press. Personal security concerns and restrictions imposed by separatists limited press freedom. As reported by Reporters sans frontières (RSF) in September 2023, the challenges faced by journalists in the western region have gained renewed attention, with actions by both authorities and separatists compromising press freedom and exposing journalists to dangers such as murder, kidnapping, and arbitrary arrest (RSF, 7 September 2023).

Examples of documented incidents

The USDOS mentions that on 26 May 2022 in Bamenda, at least six armed separatists attempted to kidnap BBC correspondent Frederic Takang, seizing his belongings. Takang reported that separatist fighters barred journalists from accessing areas under their control, resulting in fewer than 10 journalists working from Bamenda (the capital of North-West region), according to Cameroonian newspaper La Nouvelle Expression (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 2a).

In May 2023, journalist Anye Nde Nsoh was shot dead in Bamenda (Africanews, 8 May 2023; CPJ, 8 May 2023). Despite a promised investigation, progress has stalled four months later, with the Anglophone separatists admitting responsibility. In November 2023, the UN Secretary-General notes that “the Governor of the South-West Region suspended a newspaper for an indefinite period over alleged flagrant violations of professional norms” in September 2023 (UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, p. 8; see also CPJ, 15 September 2023).

4.1.2 Activists/human rights defenders

In an undated Cameroon overview on its website, the World Organisation Against Torture (Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture, OMCT) notes the following:

“Intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders have escalated in recent years, particularly since the beginning of the socio-political crisis in the Anglophone regions, which has led to excessive use of force and arbitrary detention by security forces to repress peaceful demonstrations. The OMCT has also reported several cases of judicial harassment

against defenders denouncing the government’s corruption and opposing land-grabbing in the country.” (OMCT, undated)

In July 2022, Amnesty International calls on Cameroonian authorities to ensure the safety of human rights defenders, emphasizing reports of activists facing death threats while documenting abuses in the North-West and South-West regions (AI, 7 July 2022). In a joint declaration published in November 2023, Amnesty International and different civil society organizations of Cameroon note that numerous efforts have been observed to suppress the voices of human rights defenders, activists, academics, lawyers, and journalists who criticize the atrocities in the Anglophone regions’ armed conflict. Individuals speaking out or documenting abuses, regardless of the conflicting sides involved, face threats to their lives, as well as arbitrary arrests and legal intimidation (AI et al., 13 November 2023, pp. 1-2; see also AI, 27 March 2023). Freedom House reports that the civil society’s impact in Cameroon is weak, with many NGOs dependent on foreign aid and some coopted by the government. Anglophone activists face harassment, violence, and arrests. The government placed restrictions on the activities of international NGOs, including medical operations like Doctors Without Borders ([see also section 5.3](#)), and disputed a Human Rights Watch report on severe abuses allegedly committed by security forces in the North-West Region (Freedom House, 2023, sections E2).

Examples of documented incidents

In November 2021, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) reports on death threats against Felix Agbor Nkongho, also known as Agbor-Balla, a human rights lawyer and advocate for the rights of the Anglophone minority (FIDH, 5 November 2021).

In June 2022, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) mentions that Akem Kelvin Nkwain, a human rights officer at the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA), faced death threats via phone calls and messages containing images of violence. The messages, linked to the Fako Mountain Lions armed group, labelled Nkwain as a “traitor” and “enabler”, threatening harm unless he supported their cause and provided financial assistance (OMCT, 21 June 2022).

In February 2023, Frontline Defenders reports on the six-month arbitrary detention of human rights defender Abdul Karim Ali in the North-West region. Ali was arrested in August 2022 without a warrant and without formal charges (Frontline Defenders, 23 February 2023).

Please also see the following query responses by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) for information on the treatment of pro-Anglophone protesters and activists in the North-West and South-West regions and on the treatment of anti-separatist activists and human rights defenders by separatist groups in the North-West and South-West regions. The query responses also contain information on incidents documented since 2021:

- EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum: Cameroon; Treatment of pro-Anglophone protesters and activists, including students, in Northwest and Southwest regions [Q51-2023], 19 October 2023

https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2099486/2023_10_EUAA_COI_Query_Response_Q51_Cameroon_Treatment+of+pro-Anglophone+protestors+and+activists.pdf

- EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum: Cameroon; Treatment of anti-separatist activists and human rights defenders, including members of the Human Rights Defence Club, by separatist groups in the Northwest and Southwest (Anglophone) regions [Q54-2023], 26 October 2023
https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2099776/2023_10_EUAA_COI_Query_Response_Q54_Cameroon_Treatment+of+anti-separatist+activists+and+HRD.pdf

Information on the legal framework for the protection of human rights defenders can be found in the following article:

- African Liberty: The Vulnerability of Cameroon’s Human Rights Defenders, 8 February 2023
<https://www.africanliberty.org/2023/02/08/the-vulnerability-of-camerouns-human-right-defenders/>

4.1.3 Political opposition members

No information could be found on the situation of opposition members specifically in the Anglophone regions.

For information on the treatment of protesters and activists, please [see section 4.1.2](#) and for information on the situation of people suspected of complicity with armed separatists, please [see section 4.2](#).

The following paragraphs contain information on the situation of members of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (also: Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon, Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun, MRC). In September 2020, the Cameroonian authorities prohibited demonstrations following the encouragement by the MRC for people to protest the government’s decision to schedule regional elections in December 2020. The party insisted that the government should address the electoral law and resolve the crisis in the Anglophone regions, marked by violence since late 2016, where separatists are advocating for independence in the country’s minority Anglophone regions, before proceeding with the elections (HRW, 19 October 2020).

In January 2022, Amnesty International launched a campaign regarding prisoners from the Anglophone regions and the opposition MRC. The organisation reports the following:

“More than a hundred people from Cameroon’s Anglophone regions and its main political opposition party, arrested over the past five years for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, are still languishing in jail, where some have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, [...] As of 15 January 2022, 107 supporters and members of the MRC [Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon] remained in detention after being arrested before, during and after taking part in demonstrations held in September 2020 to denounce the way upcoming regional elections were being organized, especially in relation to the Anglophone crisis. A group of nearly 50 people were sentenced by military courts on 27 December 2021 for ‘insurrection’, ‘rebellion’ and ‘endangering state security’.” (AI, 24 January 2022; see also UN Security Council, 26 May 2022, p. 8)

As of the end of 2022, the USDOS reported no newly identified political prisoners or detainees. However, 94 individuals linked to the 2020 MRC opposition party protests remained in detention, with allegations that the charges, including rebellion and insurrection, were “incommensurate with participating or attempting to participate in peaceful protests” (USDOS,

20 March 2023, section 1d). In the UN Human Rights Council's summary of stakeholder submissions on Cameroon, the NGO Un Monde Avenir highlights a recommendation urging the country to investigate disappearances of political opposition representatives, including from the English-speaking minority, "and take all adequate measures to find them and enable them to return safely to their homes" (HRC, 24 August 2023, p. 9).

4.2 Unlawful killings and arbitrary detention by state forces

In a joint declaration published in November 2023, Amnesty International and different civil society organizations of Cameroon provide the following overview on abuses in the North-West and South-West regions:

"[S]ince 1 October 2017, when separatist movements proclaimed the independence of the North-West and South-West regions as the 'Federal Republic of Ambazonia', violent clashes between the Cameroonian military and armed separatists, known collectively as 'Ambas' (Ambazonians), have not ceased. The populations of the North-West and South-West regions are caught up in the middle. Their testimonies recount how government soldiers, accusing them of complicity with the Ambas, pour petrol on their homes before setting them alight, and how soldiers rape women and girls from local villages in retaliation for separatist attacks against them. They tell us of armed separatists storming villages and abducting people for ransoms to fund their operations; taking their cattle, and killing those accused of collaborating with the Cameroon authorities or of not complying with the new rules they impose." (AI et al., 13 November 2023, p. 1)

Alleged abuses by government forces against civilians in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, including killings and attacks on children were reported in 2021 (UN Security Council, 1 June 2021, p. 9; UN Security Council, 26 November 2021, p. 8). Between December 2021 and May 2022, "hundreds of thousands of civilians continued to live in constant fear of attacks, counter-insurgency operations or reprisals directed at them by all parties for their perceived support for adversaries" (UN Security Council, 26 May 2022, p. 8). Covering the period between 26 May 2022 and 1 December 2022 the UN Secretary-General notes that "the security and defence forces [...] continued to perpetrate human rights violations and abuses" in the North-West and South-West Regions (UN Security Council, 1 December 2022, p. 7). Between 1 December 2022 and 31 May 2023, the UN Secretary-General reported ongoing allegations of human rights violations in Cameroon's North-West and South-West Regions. These abuses, attributed amongst others to security forces, included killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and property destruction (UN Security Council, 31 May 2023, p. 8). Similarly, from 31 May 2023 to 30 November 2023, the UN Secretary-General documented the continuation of human rights violations in the same regions, including incidents of killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions by security forces and separatist groups (UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, pp. 8-9). In its report covering the human rights situation from July to September 2023, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) reports that state security forces "intensified crackdowns on anyone suspected of either being a separatist fighter or having any links with the latter" (CHRDA, 9 December 2023).

Unlawful killings

The USDOS mentions that “there were reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary and unlawful killings through excessive use of force in the course of their official duties” in 2022 (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1a).

Regarding specific incidents, Amnesty International for example notes that the Ministry of Defence acknowledged that the Cameroonian army was responsible for the death of nine individuals in the town of Misong, Menchum department, North-West region, on the evening of 1 June 2022. The acknowledgment described the army's actions as “inappropriate reaction, inadequate to the circumstances and clearly disproportionate to the refusal of the hostile villagers to cooperate” (AI, 27 March 2023).

According to the USDOS, on 9 June 2022, “government forces killed at least two unarmed civilians during a reconnaissance operation in Belo, Boyo division of the Northwest Region” (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g; see also CHRDA, 11 June 2022, p. 2).

Regarding incidents of abuses, including by security forces, in the North-West and South-West regions in 2023, CHRDA provides detailed information in the following reports:

- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The Human Rights Situation Report Of The North West And South West Regions Of Cameroon Between January 2023-March 2023 (First Quarter Report), 26 May 2023
<https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-report-of-the-north-west-and-south-west-regions-of-cameroon-between-january-2023-march-2023-first-quarter-report/>
- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The Human Rights Situation Of The North West And South Regions Of Cameroon Between April 2023-June 2023 (Second Quarter Report), 22 September 2023
<https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-and-south-regions-of-cameroon-between-april-2023-june-2023-second-quarter-report/>
- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The Human Rights Situation Of The North West, South West And Far North Regions Of Cameroon For The Third Quarter (July-September) Of 2023 (Summary Report), 9 December 2023
<https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-south-west-and-far-north-regions-of-cameroon-for-the-third-quarter-july-september-of-2023-summary-report/>

A June 2022 report by CHRDA also provides detailed information on incidents of violence, including killings allegedly committed by security forces in the Anglophone regions:

- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Recent selected incidents of violence committed by elements of the defence and security forces & non-state armed groups, 11 June 2022, 11 June 2022
<https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Recent-Selected-Incidents-of-Violence-Committed-By-Elements-of-the-Defence-and-Security-Forces-and-Non-State-Armed-Groups.pdf>

In July 2023, Amnesty International published a report documenting “crimes under domestic law and human rights violations committed by members of the defence and security forces,

armed separatists and militias since 2020 in the Anglophone North-West region” (AI, July 2023, p. 6). Amongst others, the report provides information on unlawful killings by the Cameroonian defence and security forces (see AI, July 2023, pp. 35-38). Please see the report for further details:

- AI – Amnesty International: With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias [AFR 17/6838/2023], July 2023
<https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2094320/AFR1768382023ENGLISH.pdf>

Arbitrary detention

The USDOS report indicated that police, gendarmes, the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), and other authorities continued to arrest and detain persons arbitrarily, often holding them for extended periods without charge (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1d). The USDOS also notes that “as in the previous year, there were reports of individuals held incommunicado by, or on behalf of government authorities, typically for brief periods of time immediately following arrest” (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1b).

On 24 April 2022, BIR soldiers detained and beat 30 to 40 motorbike riders suspected of collaborating with separatists during a funeral convoy. Despite appearing before the Bamenda Military Court at least twice by June 2022, they had not been formally charged as of December 2022. Some of the motorbike riders were held incommunicado for around three weeks (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1d).

Dr. Punjom Njefi Yves, the chief medical officer of Bafut district hospital in the North-West Region, was reportedly detained by army members on 16 July 2022. He was suspected of aiding separatists. After being invited to a military base, Punjom was detained, taken to an undisclosed location, and later found to be at a BIR camp in Bamenda. The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) confirmed the arrest, stating that Punjom was initially detained on 8 July 2022 for suspicion of financing terrorism, and the investigation continued as of December 2022 (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1b).

As of December 2022, ten separatist leaders, including Julius Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, who were sentenced to life imprisonment by the Yaoundé Military Tribunal in 2019, remained in prison, with the Court of Appeals confirming the sentence in September 2021. In November, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared the imprisonment of these ten individuals to be arbitrary (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1e).

According to the USDOS, numerous organizations reported that BIR soldier Ewome Eboko John, known as 'Moja Moja,' “allegedly arrested civilians in the South-West Region, accused them of being separatists,” and subjected them to harsh treatment to extract confessions (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g).

4.3 Abuses by non-state armed groups

Regarding the human rights situation in the North-West and South-West Regions in 2021 the UN Secretary-General notes that “non-State armed groups continued to attack government forces and civilians, perpetrating killings, torture and ill-treatment against civilians, abducting for ransom” and enforcing lockdowns. Non-State armed groups moreover detonated

improvised explosive devices (UN Security Council, 1 June 2021, p. 9; UN Security Council, 26 November 2021, p. 8) and attacked children and schools (UN Security Council, 26 November 2021, p. 8). Please also [see section 5.2](#) for further information on attacks on schools.

Covering the period between 26 November 2021 and 26 May 2022, the UN Secretary-General notes that attacks by armed groups and inter-ethnic clashes, including in the North-West and South-West regions “resulted in serious human rights violations and abuses against civilians, including children”. The UN Secretary-General also mentions that “hundreds of thousands of civilians continued to live in constant fear of attacks, counter-insurgency operations or reprisals directed at them by all parties for their perceived support for adversaries” (UN Security Council, 26 May 2022, p. 8). Covering the period between 26 May 2022 and 1 December 2022 the UN Secretary-General notes that “the armed separatist groups continued to perpetrate human rights violations and abuses” in the North-West and South-West Regions (UN Security Council, 1 December 2022, p. 7). According to HRW armed separatists had caused the death of a minimum of seven individuals, inflicted injuries on six others, perpetrated the rape of a girl, and engaged in additional severe human rights violations throughout North-West and South-West Regions between January and June 2022 (HRW, 27 June 2022). The USDOS notes that in 2022, credible reports indicated that armed groups in the North-West and South-West Regions were involved in unlawful killings (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1a). The USDOS further notes that in 2022, numerous individuals were reportedly abducted by armed separatists for non-compliance with the lockdown measures imposed by the separatist groups. The hostages, encompassing public officials, political leaders, teachers, schoolchildren, and religious and traditional leaders, were reportedly subjected to physical violence by the separatists (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g).

Between 1 December 2022, and 31 May 2023, the UN Secretary-General reported ongoing allegations of human rights violations and abuses in Cameroon's North-West and South-West Regions, perpetrated amongst others by armed separatist groups. The abuses involved incidents such as killings, property destruction, forced lockdowns, the use of improvised explosive devices, and the kidnapping of civilians (UN Security Council, 31 May 2023, p. 8). Additionally, from 31 May 2023 to 30 November 2023, the UN Secretary-General documented the continuation of human rights violations, including alleged killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and reported extortion by security forces and separatist groups. The latter period also witnessed public executions by armed separatists, accusations of spying, killings during imposed lockdowns, and the burning of vehicles (UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, pp. 8-9). In its report covering the human rights situation from July to September 2023, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) reports that armed separatists escalated their attacks against individuals believed to be cooperating with state security forces (CHRDA, 9 December 2023).

Examples of incidents

On 12 April 2022, in Takija Kikaikelaki near Kumbo in the North-West Region, an armed separatist group reportedly attacked a vehicle killing four prison officials. On 6 September 2022, in Muyuka subdivision of the South-West Region, suspected separatists fired on a public bus from Douala, killing six passengers (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1a).

On 13 January 2022, armed separatists abducted 10 workers from the Cameroon Development Corporation Likomba rubber estate in Tiko, South-West Region, and burned their tractor. The captors handed weapons to the workers, urging them to join in fighting the military in Tiko, and the workers remained in captivity for several weeks (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1b).

In March 2022, suspected separatists ambushed and killed Timothee Aboloa, the divisional officer of Ekondo-Titi in the South-West Region, “detonating at least four improvised explosive devices (IEDs)” before opening fire on the vehicle, resulting in the death of the officer and at least six others. In June 2022, “armed separatists ambushed and decapitated two police officers in Mbuene, a village” in the North-West Region, in a counterattack following a defence forces operation in search of separatist fighters in the same village (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g).

As already mentioned above, Amnesty International published a report documenting “crimes under domestic law and human rights violations committed by members of the defence and security forces, armed separatists and militias since 2020 in the Anglophone North-West region” (AI, July 2023, p. 6). The report includes information on murders and abductions by armed separatists (see AI, July 2023, pp. 26-30), and on crimes committed by militias in Menchum and Donga-Mantung divisions, including murders (see AI, July 2023, pp. 32-35). Please see the report for further details:

- AI – Amnesty International: With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias [AFR 17/6838/2023], July 2023

<https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2094320/AFR1768382023ENGLISH.pdf>

Regarding incidents of abuses, including by non-state armed groups, in the North-West and South-West regions in 2023, CHRDA provides detailed information in the following reports:

- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The Human Rights Situation Report Of The North West And South West Regions Of Cameroon Between January 2023-March 2023 (First Quarter Report), 26 May 2023

<https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-report-of-the-north-west-and-south-west-regions-of-cameroon-between-january-2023-march-2023-first-quarter-report/>

- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The Human Rights Situation Of The North West And South Regions Of Cameroon Between April 2023-June 2023 (Second Quarter Report), 22 September 2023

<https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-and-south-regions-of-cameroon-between-april-2023-june-2023-second-quarter-report/>

- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The Human Rights Situation Of The North West, South West And Far North Regions Of Cameroon For The Third Quarter (July-September) Of 2023 (Summary Report), 9 December 2023

<https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-south-west-and-far-north-regions-of-cameroon-for-the-third-quarter-july-september-of-2023-summary-report/>

A June 2022 report by CHRDA also provides detailed information on incidents of violence, including killings allegedly committed by armed groups in the Anglophone regions:

- CHRDA – Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: Recent selected incidents of violence committed by elements of the defence and security forces & non-state armed groups, 11 June 2022, 11 June 2022
<https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Recent-Selected-Incidents-of-Violence-Committed-By-Elements-of-the-Defence-and-Security-Forces-and-Non-State-Armed-Groups.pdf>

4.4 Due process and fair trial guarantees

Freedom House provides the following overview regarding rule of law in 2022:

“The judiciary is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice, and corruption and political influence weakens the courts. The president appoints judges and can dismiss them at will. Prosecutors have been pressured to stop pursuing corruption cases against certain high-profile officials. [...] Due process rights are poorly upheld. Lengthy pretrial detentions are commonplace. Civilians accused of terrorism are frequently not afforded the right to a fair trial. French legal norms are regularly imposed upon Cameroonians in Anglophone regions. Acts of violence against lawyers continue to be reported. The government has also invoked charges of terrorism and insurrection against opposition leaders and separatist supporters, and they are often detained in the absence of due process and without realistic avenues for challenging their detention.” (Freedom House, 2023, section F1, F2)

According to a November 2023 report by Amnesty International and different civil society organizations of Cameroon, as a reaction to attacks by armed separatists, the government has frequently responded with arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals accused of having connections with armed separatist groups. “Hundreds of people” have been held, prosecuted, or “tried before military tribunals”, despite international human rights standards specifying that such jurisdiction should be limited to military offenses, leading to prolonged imprisonment for many without judicial review. The report further notes:

“At the same time, even though the government has announced investigations into atrocities committed by armed separatists or by their own defence and security forces, there is then a lack of transparency on the judicial process that follows, giving rise to fears of impunity and leaving the majority of victims without justice.” (AI et al., 13 November 2023, p. 1)

The annual report of HRW covering 2022 contains a section on justice and accountability. From January to August 2022, eight court hearings occurred in the trial of three security force members implicated in the deaths of 21 civilians in Ngarbuh village, North-West region, HRW notes. The trial, conducted in a military court in Yaoundé, has extended over 21 months, with no arrest or charges against senior officers potentially responsible, and restricted access for the families of the victims. In June 2022 an army spokesperson acknowledged the military’s responsibility in the killing of nine individuals in Missong village, North-West region, on 1 June 2022. Four soldiers were reportedly arrested, and an investigation was initiated. However, there has been no discernible progress in the investigation as of September 2022. In September

2022, the Ministry of Defense admitted to being responsible for the deaths of two civilians in Momo division, North-West region, on 19 September 2022. The statement notes that members “of the Defence and Security Forces acted in violation of the instructions” (HRW, 12 January 2023).

5 Humanitarian situation

5.1 General

5.1.1 Food Insecurity/Livelihoods/Poverty

In a report to the UN Security Council of 31 May 2023, the UN Secretary-General notes that as of 30 April, some 1.7 million people needed humanitarian aid in the North-West and South-West regions, including around 628,190 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UN Security Council, 31 May 2023, p. 7; for more information on displacement, [see section 3.3](#)).

UN OCHA notes that “[s]everal divisions in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions, which are affected by insecurity and climatic shocks, are the hardest hit by food insecurity and malnutrition” (UN OCHA, updated 22 December 2023).

The World Food Programme (WFP) explains that 29 percent of the population in the North-West region and 17 percent in the South-West region were estimated to be severely food insecure at the beginning of 2022 (WFP, 31 March 2023, p. 8). UN OCHA notes that of 16,503 children screened for malnutrition in the two regions in November 2023 by humanitarian partner organisations, 234 children were identified with moderate acute malnutrition and 91 with severe acute malnutrition (UN OCHA, 27 December 2023, p. 3).

The World Bank points to differences in terms of poverty between the North-West and South-West regions before the beginning of the crisis (as of 2014, the poverty rate was 55 percent in the North-West region and 18 percent in the South-West region) but notes that the crisis has increased poverty levels in both regions (The World Bank, January 2021, pp. 18, 38).

In June 2023, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) explains that conflict and insecurity “continue to disrupt livelihood activities, trade flows, market access, and market functioning to varying degrees” in the North-West and South-West regions, which leads to “below-normal access to food and income and significantly above-average staple food prices” (FEWS NET, June 2023, p. 2), while UN OCHA notes in May 2023 that “the disruption to supply chains, regular roadblocks and associated increases in transportation costs have contributed to the fluctuation of consumer prices” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 18). UN OCHA also points to other factors that limit the population’s access to markets and employment:

“Passing roadblocks is often subject to paying a tax to NSAGs [Non-State Armed Groups], with goods and material at risk to be confiscated or destroyed. Smallholder farmers and people working in rural areas seem to be disproportionately affected by the restrictions on movement as they are unable to transport their products to urban markets, customers are less likely to travel to buy their products, and they are unable to supply themselves with raw materials or inputs. Meanwhile, jobseekers are also finding it harder to find a job. On one hand, this can be explained by the shortage of local jobs, as businesses are forced to close temporarily/permanently or reduce their workforce as a direct consequence of

violent lockdowns and ‘Monday ghost towns’⁷. On the other hand, movement restriction, and roadblocks imposed by NSAGs contribute to local populations’ reluctance to seek employment in unstable areas or in Government-run companies.” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 18)

The FEWS NET explains that for poor households in the conflict-affected North-West and South-West regions labour opportunities are decreasing due to a reduction of the areas cultivated by wealthier households, insecurity-related movement restrictions in cropping areas and the abandonment of cocoa and coffee farms. Moreover, the scaling down or closure of state-owned enterprises in the South-West region further reduces agricultural-related job opportunities (FEWS NET, June 2023, p. 3). For example, according to the World Bank report of January 2021, all banana plantations owned by the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in the South-West region and half of its palm oil plantation have been abandoned and over 5,000 employees have lost their jobs (The World Bank, January 2021, p. 44).

However, also demand for non-agricultural, casual labour is “below normal levels” in the North-West and South-West regions, due to the conflict-related decrease in economic activities, according to the FEWS NET (FEWS NET, June 2023, p. 3). The FEWS NET further notes that important livestock markets in Bui and Donga Mantung in the North-West region remain closed and that many herders in conflict-affected areas are reluctant to make large transactions for fear of being attacked or abducted for ransom (FEWS NET, June 2023, p. 5).

UN OCHA describes the negative coping mechanisms applied by the affected population, including “survival sex and exploitation, child marriage, and child labour” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 31). The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) notes in its quarterly protection monitoring report for the South-West region covering the period January to March 2023, that child labour has remained “consistently high” for the last two monitoring quarters and that children continued to actively engage in hazardous work “driven by poverty due to parental loss of livelihood” (DRC, 7 July 2023, p. 14). In a report of July 2022, the Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) explains that some young men, without access to education and job prospects, also resort to negative coping mechanisms such as theft and banditry. They are reportedly at greater risk of being abducted and trafficked (GenCap, July 2022, p. 15).

The Cameroonian newspaper The Guardian Post quotes in November 2023 local officials who explain that due to the “ghost towns” and lockdowns the municipalities have lower tax and (market) rent revenues and subsequently face difficulties in providing public services (The Guardian Post, 3 November 2023).

5.1.2 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

UNICEF notes in August 2023 that “[l]ack of access to clean water, sanitation and health services is the leading cause of cholera and other diseases in Cameroon” and that “Cholera and Mpox

⁷ According to the Cameroonian newspaper The Guardian Post, “ghost towns” are stay-at-home days. On such days, shops and businesses are closed, there is no traffic in the streets and security patrols are reinforced. Mondays have been observed as “ghost town” days for many years. At the beginning of the Anglophone crisis, they have been introduced as a form of civil disobedience against the government. However, the concept was later taken over by separatist fighters, who increased the number of “ghost town” days and also introduced lockdowns of one or more weeks (The Guardian Post, 3 November 2023).

epidemics have emerged as significant health threats, especially in the Far North, South-West, North-West, and Littoral regions” (UNICEF, 22 August 2023, p. 2). A cholera outbreak was officially declared in the South-West region on 29 October 2021 (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 14) and cases of Mpox were confirmed in October 2022 (IFRC, 27 November 2023, p. 2). As of November 2023, 142 cholera cases and eight deaths were reported from the Buea, Tiko and Tombel health districts in the South-West region (UN OCHA, 27 December 2023, p. 2).

UN OCHA notes that according to the August 2022 Multisectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA)⁸, 55 percent of assessed villages faced challenges in terms of access to (clean) water:

“The August 2022 MSNA reveals that 55 per cent of the assessed villages collect water from an unimproved water point. In some divisions of the North-West (Menchum and Ngo-Ketunjia) and South-West (Ndian and Manyu), at least 75 per cent of assessed localities collect water from an unimproved water point. The three main challenges relative to water are the insufficient number of improved water points, the long distance covered to and from water points (due to the insufficient number of safe drinking water points) and the lack of containers to collect and store water.” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 78)

5.1.3 Humanitarian Access

According to UN OCHA, humanitarian access to the North-West and South-West regions remains “challenging” and the main security threats for humanitarian staff include (attempted) kidnapping (see also GPC, 16 November 2023, p. 1; HRW, 12 January 2023) for ransom, aid diversion and extortion/blackmail. Moreover, “[r]oadblocks and demands for payment by all parties, despite having received assurances and all required authorizations, cause delays and affect the safety of transported humanitarian goods”. In addition, the UN and partners reportedly continue to be accused by NSAGs of working for or supporting the government (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 21).

5.2 Access to education

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) notes that non-State armed groups (NSAGs) in the North-West and South-West regions “have banned Government-administered education since September 2017” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 28). The boycott has been “violently enforced” ever since by separatist fighters who continue to attack school buildings, students, and teachers, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) (HRW, 12 January 2023). Similarly, UN OCHA points to a “continuous chain of violent attacks on education since 2017” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 14).

As of November 2023, 38.5 per cent of schools were not operational in the North-West and South-West regions, according to UN OCHA (UN OCHA, 27 December 2023, p. 1).

The USDOS notes that separatists ordered boycotts and attacked schools throughout 2021, killing or abducting several teachers. In January 2021, a school principal was allegedly shot in the village of Ossing (Mamfe subdivision) in the South-West region (USDOS, 12 April 2022, section 6; UN Security Council, 1 June 2021, p. 5). In June 2021, NSAGs abducted three girls between 8 and 14 years of age from the residence of a school principal in Elak-Oku village (Bui

⁸ In the context of the August 2022 MSNA, 1,849 locations were assessed through interviews with 9,025 key informants, according to UN OCHA (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 87).

division) in the South-West region (UN Security Council, 26 November 2021, p. 8; UN OCHA, updated 5 August 2021, p. 3). A seven-year-old pupil was killed by a stray bullet in Kumbo in the North-West region during an armed exchange between security forces and NSAGs near a school in August 2021 (ACI Africa, 20 August 2021; see also UN Security Council, 26 November 2021, p. 8), and in November 2021, four students and a teacher were reportedly shot in the Government Bilingual High School in Ekondi-Titi (Ndian division) in the South-West region by suspected separatist attackers (USDOS, 12 April 2022, section 6). An unconfirmed number of students and teachers were injured in the same attack (UN OCHA, updated 14 January 2022 p. 3).

In September 2021, separatists ordered a two week-long lockdown from 15 September to 1 October, threatening to punish everyone who failed to comply. The USDOS notes that according to media reports, “schools closed on September 16 following the declaration” (USDOS, 12 April 2022, section 2d). Similar lockdowns at the beginning of the school year were introduced in 2022 (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 28) and 2023 (UN OCHA, 12 December 2023, p. 1) (see below for further details).

HRW explains that attacks on education continued during the year 2022 and included physical assaults on students and teachers, threats, abductions for ransom and arson attacks on educational buildings (HRW, 12 January 2023). In January 2022, separatist fighters reportedly assaulted and threatened a group of students, including at least four girls. The students, aged 14 to 18, were on their way to Bokova high school in Buea town (South-West region), when they were stopped by separatist fighters, who forced them to take off their school uniforms, beat them and threatened to kill them. One of the students was reportedly shot in the leg and the student’s school materials were destroyed (HRW, 27 June 2022). In the same month, according to HRW, five teachers, including two women, were abducted from a government high school in Weh in the North-West region by a group of separatist fighters, allegedly for not complying with a school boycott ordered by the separatists and for not financially supporting the separatist movement. They were released after a ransom had been paid. In the same attack, two students were injured (HRW, 27 June 2022). Reportedly also for failing to observe a lockdown order, separatist fighters attacked the campus of the Bamenda University in the North-West region in April 2022 (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g). In July 2022, separatist fighters attacked the faculty of engineering and technology of the University of Buea (South-West region). They disrupted ongoing exams (UN OCHA, 19 July 2022; USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g), harassed students and abducted the lecturer (UN OCHA, 19 July 2022).

Arson attacks by separatist fighters on educational facilities included the burning down of dormitories and administrative buildings of the Queen of the Rosary College Okoyong, a girls-only Catholic boarding school in Mamfe town (South-West region) in February 2022, allegedly because the school planned to participate in government-organised National Youth Day activities (VOA, 12 February 2022). In the same month, a classroom in a government primary school in the village of Molyko/Buea (South-West region) was burned by suspected separatist fighters, according to HRW (HRW, 27 June 2022; see also UN Security Council, 26 May 2022, p. 8), and in April 2022, two schools were set on fire by armed men in Buea (South-West region) (UN OCHA, 19 July 2022).

In September 2022, separatists imposed a two week-long lockdown to prevent the official opening of schools for the new academic year, which reportedly led to violent incidents (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 28; UN Security Council, 1 December 2022, p. 1). The USDOS explains

in its country report on human rights practices for 2022 that separatists wanted schools to start only in October – threatening those who did not act accordingly – and allowed the reopening only for selected schools:

“The separatists expressed their opposition to the resumption of classes in state-owned schools and declared private, denominational, and community-run schools could reopen, provided they did not use school uniforms, sing the national anthem, or teach French.” (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 6)

On the other hand, UN OCHA notes that some local authorities rejected non-formal education initiatives:

“Formal education facilities, staff and students continued to be targeted and attacked in 2022. Meanwhile, some local authorities oppose non-formal education initiatives, which led to the forced closure of several community schools. [...] The August 2022 MSNA [Multisectoral Needs Assessment⁹] found that in 83 per cent of the assessed villages, no alternative learning options were available when schools are closed.” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 14)

Attacks on education continued in 2023: According to UN OCHA, at least 13 violent incidents have been reported in the North-West and South-West regions in the period January to July 2023, including the abduction of children and teachers (UN OCHA, 26 October 2023, p. 3).

Due to another two-week long lockdown enforced by non-state armed groups in the South-West and North-West regions at the beginning of the academic year in September 2023, only 61.5 percent of schools in these regions (3,900 schools out of 6,351) reopened amid attacks on educational facilities and teachers. Less than half (46.8 percent) of the expected number of students (438,134 students of 936,183) enrolled in schools, according to UN OCHA (UN OCHA, 12 December 2023, p. 1).

In the North-West region, two teachers were reportedly killed by separatist fighters in Belo (Boyo Division) after attending a preparatory meeting for the start of the new school year (UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, p. 5; see also Mimi Mefo Info, 4 September 2023). In the South-West region, three teachers and one priest were shot (GPC, 16 November 2023, p. 1) and injured in Kembong village in the Manyu division, where the teachers were reportedly working at the Kembong Catholic School. The Cameroon News Agency (CNA) notes that armed men identifying themselves as separatists claimed to enforce the school boycott in the area (CNA, 26 September 2023). In the same area, numerous community heads were abducted (GPC, 16 November 2023, p. 1; CNA, 26 September 2023), similarly for allegedly promoting the re-opening of schools (CNA, 26 September 2023).

5.3 Access to healthcare

The UN Secretary-General mentions attacks on health care facilities and personnel in the North-West and South-West regions in several reports to the UN Security Council, including, for example, in June 2021 (UN Security Council, 1 June 2021, p. 8), May 2022 (UN Security Council,

⁹ In the context of the August 2022 MSNA, 1,849 locations were assessed through interviews with 9,025 key informants, according to UN OCHA (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 87).

26 May 2022, pp. 4, 7), December 2022 (UN Security Council, 1 December 2022, p. 5), May 2023 (UN Security Council, 12 May 2023, p. 4) and November 2023 (UN Security Council, 30 November 2023, p. 5).

Similarly, UN OCHA describes attacks on health care staff and facilities and their impact on the civilian population:

“Health care facilities, supplies and workers also continued to be targeted in the North-West and South-West, while civilians in need of medical services continued to be affected by attacks and movement restrictions. Three health workers were killed in 2022. Ambulances are caught in crossfire, searched by SSF [State Security Forces], or carjacked with patients and medical staff by NSAGs [Non-State Armed Groups]. Reports of hospitals and health posts being occupied by security forces, armed incursions by security forces into hospitals, abductions of health workers by NSAGs, attacks and threats to health personnel as well as the detention of health workers continue to be registered on a regular basis.” (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 14)

According to UN OCHA, more than 210 health facilities in these two regions are no longer functional as of August 2022, either because they have been destroyed or have been abandoned by the health personnel (UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 51 and FN 114). Between April and July 2023, around 18 percent of health care facilities have reportedly been forced to close, and “a number of operational ones are struggling to function adequately” (UN OCHA, 11 July 2023).

One such case is the Mamfe hospital situated in the Manyu division of the South-West region, that was burned down by suspected separatist fighters in the night of 8 June 2022. The hospital was the largest health facility in the region, according to the USDOS, and reportedly covered more than 80,000 people (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1g; see also UN OCHA, 10 June 2022).

UNICEF notes that many in the crisis-affected areas find it difficult to access healthcare and that mobile clinics attempt “to bridge this gap, offering essential health services to remote areas and hard-to-reach communities” (UNICEF, 22 August 2023, p. 2).

Roadblocks, lockdowns, and stay-at-home orders (“ghost town” days) imposed by separatists further restrict the population’s access to health care (see for example, MSF, 29 July 2021; FI & Denis Hurley Peace Institute, 30 March 2023, pp. 11-12; UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 51; HumAngle, 13 September 2023; GPC, 16 November 2023, p. 1).

In their joint report on violence against health care in conflict in 2022, the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) and Insecurity Insight state that a total number of 25 incidents have been reported in the North-West and South-West regions in 2022, compared to seven in 2021 and 11 in 2020. Most of the incidents in this three-year period (2020-2022) were reported from the North-West region, according to the SHCC and Insecurity Insight (SHCC & Insecurity Insight, 28 June 2023, p. 4).

The SHCC and Insecurity Insight further explain that the rising number of incidents in 2022 was mostly due to cases where health care personnel was accused of collaborating with either government forces or separatists, especially in the period before the so-called Independence Day of self-proclaimed Ambazonia on 1 October. Similar accusations, although to a lesser extent, had already been made in 2021, causing an international NGO to withdraw its team

from the North-West region in August 2021 (see below), according to the report (SHCC & Insecurity Insight, 28 June 2023, p. 3).

The SHCC and Insecurity Insight mention that at least three health care workers were killed in the North-West and South-West regions in 2022 (SHCC & Insecurity Insight, 28 June 2023, p. 7; see also UN OCHA, 11 May 2023, p. 14) by separatist fighters, armed groups, and militia, including a pharmacy owner and two nurses. According to the report, the two nurses were killed in two shooting attacks on ambulances in February and October 2022, respectively (SHCC, 28 June 2023, p. 7 and Endnote 12).

UN OCHA reports on health care staff being injured in shooting attacks on medical vehicles in 2021 (in Mbalangi village, South-West region) (UN OCHA, 28 February 2021, p. 2) and 2022 (near Bamenda town, North-West region) (UN OCHA, 28 February 2022).

Other health care-related incidents in 2022 include the kidnapping of health workers (in some cases for ransom or to provide medical aid to injured fighters or to communities) and the looting of medical supplies from hospital or ambulances by separatist fighters, armed groups and militia (SHCC & Insecurity Insight, 28 June 2023, pp. 5-7).

Moreover, the SHCC and Insecurity Insight note that at least 12 health workers were detained by the police and members of the Cameroonian Armed Forces (CAF) in 2022 (SHCC & Insecurity Insight, 28 June 2023, p. 7).

In April 2022, the medical humanitarian NGO Doctors without Borders (Médecins sans Frontières, MSF) suspended its activities in Kumba and Mamfe in the South-West region (and eventually closed them in August 2022 (MSF, 15 July 2022)), following the detention of four of its staff members by government forces in December 2021 and January 2022, respectively. The staff members were accused of cooperating with regional separatists (VOA, 6 April 2022). Already in August 2021, MSF had announced the withdrawal of its team from the North-West region, noting that it has not been allowed to operate in the region since December 2020, when its activities were suspended by the regional authorities over allegations that MSF was providing support to local armed groups (MSF, 3 August 2021; see also Actu Cameroun, 15 December 2020, UN Security Council, 26 November 2021, p. 7). In May 2022, two of the detained staff members were provisionally released. In November and December 2022, all five MSF staff members – one had been tried in absentia – were acquitted by a military tribunal (MSF, 10 January 2023).

The SHCC and Insecurity Insight note that staff of the Bansa Baptist Hospital in Kumbo (North-West region) – an institution operated by the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services, a UN/UNICEF implementing partner (UNICEF, 17 November 2022, p. 2) – faced threats and violence from separatists and state forces at four occasions in September 2022, with both sides accusing hospital staff of collaborating with the respective other side. State forces reportedly shot separatist fighters who were receiving treatment at the hospital and detained hospital staff they accused of having ties to separatists. On 25 September, separatists abducted three health workers, a security guard, and a pastor from the hospital, claiming they were collaborating with military forces (SHCC & Insecurity Insight, 28 June 2023, p. 4). According to the Cameroon News Agency (CNA), the five staff members abducted by the separatist fighters

were released two days later, while three staff members who had been detained earlier¹⁰ by the military remained in custody (CNA, 28 September 2022).

In a report of July 2022, the Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) notes that since the beginning of hostilities in the North-West and South-West regions, male persons are often suspected by the respective parties to the conflict of belonging to the opposite side and that this affects their access to services, including health services:

“Adolescent boys and men’s presumed affiliation with or membership in the parties to the crisis affects their mobility and access to services. Being in a health centre, injured, in the aftermath of a violent incident, often leads to assumptions regarding the affiliation of the harmed person, with grave risks for the latter. As a result, wounded men often resort to informal or unprofessional care for fear of travelling to or being treated in health centres.”
(GenCap, July 2022, p. 11)

Attacks on health care infrastructures and personnel reportedly continued in 2023: UN OCHA notes that in the North-West and South-West regions at least 12 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care were reported in the period January to June 2023. These incidents included threats, violence, and abductions by various parties and most of them affected “national health care providers operating in health structures”, according to UN OCHA (UN OCHA, 26 October 2023, p. 6).

¹⁰ According to the CNA, two nurses and the hospital’s administrator had been detained by the military on 22 September 2022 for allegedly treating injured separatist fighters (CNA, 23 September 2022).

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