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Freedoms of expression, association and assembly were still restricted. Dozens of opposition party supporters and anglophone leaders remained arbitrarily detained. In the Northwest and Southwest regions, separatist groups committed serious crimes and the army committed human rights violations. In the Far North region, armed groups continued to carry out deadly raids on villages. Humanitarian access was hampered.

Background

Armed violence between the army and armed separatist groups continued in the Northwest and Southwest anglophone regions. The armed conflict in the Far North region continued to rage with the active presence of the armed groups Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province. In May, inhabitants of Tourou in Mayo-Tsanaga department held a demonstration at the sub-prefecture of Mokolo to denounce the insecurity and demand more protection from the authorities.

As of 30 November, 385,000 people were internally displaced because of the armed conflict in the Far North, and as of December, more than 620,000 people were internally displaced because of the armed violence in the Southwest and Northwest, and 87,000 were refugees in Nigeria.

Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Human rights defenders and activists from several organizations were targeted with death threats, harassment and intimidation for exposing human rights violations and abuses in the two anglophone regions.¹ On 22 April, four UN Special Rapporteurs focusing on human rights defenders, extrajudicial executions, the right to freedom of expression and the right to association wrote to President Paul Biya raising concerns over repeated death threats since 2015 against the president and the lawyer of the NGO Organic Farming for Gorillas (OFFGO). OFFGO had exposed abuses by businesses in the Northwest region.

On 27, 28 and 30 June, peaceful protests organized by visually impaired people were violently dispersed by the police in the capital Yaoundé, according to reports from the Collectif des Aveugles et Malvoyants Indignés du Cameroun and the media. Twenty-seven demonstrators were locked up for several hours in Yaoundé's central police station before being released. Others were beaten, insulted, loaded onto vehicles and abandoned in various places far from the centre of Yaoundé.

On 1 August, Mohamadou Bouba Sarki, president of the Confédération des associations des jeunes solidaires du Cameroun, was arrested in Garoua city, North region, by police officers and gendarmes and detained for one night. He had tried to organize a peaceful march to demand the release of several detainees.

Arbitrary detention

Mancho Bibixy Tse and Tsi Conrad, protest leaders from the Northwest and Southwest anglophone regions and arrested for taking part in peaceful protests in 2016 and 2017, were still arbitrarily detained after being sentenced by a military court in Yaoundé to 15 years in prison, following their conviction for “acts of terrorism, secession, spreading false information, and contempt for public bodies and officials”. In 2019 and 2021 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for the release of the two men.

As of December, at least 62 Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) members and supporters remained in arbitrary detention in Yaoundé and Douala after they were sentenced by military courts for attempted revolution, rebellion, aggravated assembly or participation in the organization of an undeclared public meeting, in relation to their activism or their participation in banned protests in September 2020.² Among them were Olivier Bibou Nissack, the spokesperson for MRC leader Maurice Kamto, and Alain Fogué Tedom, national treasurer of the MRC, both sentenced to seven years in prison, and Dorgelesse Nguessan, sentenced to five years for having participated in a protest.

Former director of the public broadcaster Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV), Amadou Vamouké, whose pretrial detention for six years had been considered arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, was sentenced on 20 December to 12 years in prison, after more than 130 adjournments.

Detainees' rights

While a report by the Ministry of Public Health recorded almost 15,000 notified cases of cholera and 298 deaths in several regions, the New Bell prison in Douala was affected by two cholera epidemics. In the first outbreak starting in February, at least six inmates at the prison died of cholera. One of them, Rodrigue Ndagueho Koufet, who died on 7 April, had been arbitrarily detained since September 2020 for having participated in a peaceful protest. According to non-governmental media, the second outbreak from August onwards caused the deaths of at least 10 prisoners. The prison administration carried out disinfection and reinforced existing hygiene measures. The regional health delegation for the Littoral region provided vaccines and supported the care of patients evacuated to public hospitals.

Unlawful killings

The Ministry of Defence acknowledged on 7 June that the Cameroonian army killed nine people on the evening of 1 June in the town of Missong, Menchum department, Northwest region, “in an inappropriate reaction, inadequate to the circumstances and clearly disproportionate to the refusal of the hostile villagers to cooperate”.

Right to life

Northwest and Southwest regions

Separatist groups committed serious crimes in the Northwest and Southwest regions, targeting people, healthcare facilities and schools, which did not receive adequate protection from the authorities. On 8 and 11 February, these groups burned down Molyko primary school in Buea and Queen of Rosary Catholic college in Mamfe, both in Southwest region.

On 26 February, a nurse from a medical NGO was killed and two other medical staff injured when their car was shot at by a separatist group at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Bamenda, Northwest region.

On 13 April, the government reported the killing of the Northwest regional prison delegate and three of his staff in an attack on their vehicle on 12 April.

According to reports by OCHA, 13 students and three teachers were abducted in four separate incidents and released after payment of a ransom. On 4 and 6 April, two schools in Buea suffered arson attacks by unknown armed men.

Abuses by armed groups

Far North region

Armed groups continued to carry out deadly raids on villages, killing and abducting dozens of civilians. The Mada hospital in Logone-et-Chari department was forced to close for several months – preventing thousands of people from accessing health services – after an attack on 2 July that killed two civilians.

Denial of humanitarian access

On 5 April, Doctors Without Borders (DWB) announced the suspension of all medical activities in the Southwest region after four of their colleagues were arrested and detained after being “investigated for complicity with secessionism simply for carrying out their medical duties”, according to DWB. Humanitarian operations were suspended from 15 to 21 May in the Northwest and Southwest regions after armed separatist groups called for lockdowns.

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1. [“Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions”, 7 July](#)
 2. [“Cameroon: More than a hundred detainees from Anglophone regions and opposition party languishing in jail for speaking out”, 24 January](#)

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