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(Author)

Journalists in danger in Cameroon's Anglophone western region

Four months after a reporter was murdered in western Cameroon's troubled Anglophone region, journalists there are still threatened by both its armed separatists and the central government's security forces. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on all the parties to respect the right to report the news without risk of reprisals and to establish effective measures to protect journalists.

The Advocate weekly newspaper's bureau chief in the western city of Bamenda, **Anye Nde Nsoh** was gunned down on 7 May. His murder was condemned by fellow journalists, press freedom defenders and by the central government, which announced an [investigation](#) aimed at arresting those responsible.

But four months later, the investigation has clearly stalled. The authorities seem to have contented themselves with an acknowledgement by the “Ambazonian forces” – the region's armed Anglophone separatists – that they were responsible. The separatists themselves blame the shooting on [“a case of mistaken identity.”](#)

The death of this journalist, who was only 26 years old, has drawn renewed attention to the scale of the challenges that reporters face in the western region, whose mostly English-speaking residents consider themselves marginalised and the victims of discrimination in comparison with Cameroon's French-speaking majority.

Since 2016, the west has seen many protests that have been violently suppressed by the security forces. Journalism has become difficult because actions taken by both the Cameroonian authorities and armed

separatists compromise press freedom. Murder, kidnapping, arbitrary arrest and detention have become permanent dangers for journalists there.

Anye Nde Nsoh's murder has highlighted the extent of the dangers to which journalists in Cameroon's Anglophone regions are exposed, caught between the hammer of the separatist armed groups and the anvil of the Cameroonian armed forces. Many of them have told RSF that their daily lives are overshadowed by threats, arbitrary detention and persecution. We call on the authorities to establish effective measures to protect journalists in order to prevent these regions from becoming no-news zones.

Sadibou Marong

Director of RSF's sub-Saharan Africa bureau

Caught in the conflict between the government's forces and armed separatist groups, journalists have to be on their guard all the time.

*"Even when we strive to be balanced and objective, the police accuse us of being the ones sending information to separatists," said **Sah Terence Animbom**, a Bamenda-based freelance investigative reporter who often works for the *Sun Newspaper*. "The separatists harass us and accuse us of working for the government, and we are obliged to pay exorbitant sums to pass through their barriers."*

When discussing abuses against media personnel in the southwest, journalists often cite the case of **Samuel Wazizi**, a presenter for *Chillen Media Television (CMTV)*, a regional broadcaster, who **died** in detention in 2019 after being accused of making critical remarks about the central government's management of the crisis in the Anglophone regions. The circumstances of his death have **never been clarified**.

Wawa Jackson Nfor, an independent journalist based in Bamenda, is a former victim of arbitrary detention. He was arrested on 15 May 2018 after reporting that gendarmes had confiscated satellite dishes from residents in the nearby city of Nkambe, because they had used them to watch a separatist TV channel broadcasting from outside the country. Nfor was finally released 33 months later, in 2021, without ever being brought to trial.

Five years later, he still seems traumatised when describing his arrest: *"I was held incommunicado in a tiny cell for three days during which I was denied food, tortured, mocked and threatened with death. The divisional officer for Nkambe visited me in the cell and told me it was the end of the road for me because I had written unfavourable things about him."*

Other journalists in the region, including freelancer **Kingsley Fumunyuy Njoka**, *Abakwa FM* radio presenter **Akumbom Elvis McCarthy** and *Lifetime* editor **Tim Finnian** were also arrested between 2018 and 2020, detained

arbitrarily and finally released after spending several months in prison on charges of "secessionist propaganda."

"Anything can happen to me"

Journalists also report threats and physical attacks. Animbom, the Bamenda-based investigative reporter, was badly beaten with rifle butts and bundled into a military truck when he filmed a protest in January 2017. Six years later, he told RSF that he still does not feel safe. *"Anything can happen to me in the region,"* he said.

Attacks can also come from local government officials, RSF learned from **Andrew Nsoseka**, a journalist based in the western city of Buea who works for *The Post Newspaper*. He described how he was in a group of journalists who were attacked by the city's mayor during a peaceful demonstration on 14 May 2019.

"At one point [the mayor] was about to beat a female colleague, and when I pulled her away, he turned on me," Nsoseka said. *"I tried to defend myself and the soldiers guarding him turned on me too. They threatened to shoot me."*

Journalists have also been the victims of kidnappings, which are mostly carried out by armed separatist groups. **Nimpa Francis**, editor-in-chief of *Radio Hot Cocoa* in Bamenda, a seasoned journalist with 16 years of experience, was kidnapped in 2019 but managed to be released the same day by his captors.

"Armed separatist Ambazonia fighters have also been hostile towards journalists, and several journalists have been kidnapped, harassed and attacked by them," Francis said, citing the cases of the Secretary General of the North West Chapter of the Cameroon Journalists' Trade Union, **Ambe Macmillan**, of *Ndefcam Radio* journalist **Fung John** and *Horizon* correspondent **Etoh George**.

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