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COI QUERY RESPONSE – CAMEROON

Treatment of pro-Anglophone protesters and activists, including students, in Northwest and Southwest Cameroon

1. Treatment by the State and other actors

According to the annual Freedom House report, covering 2022, Anglophone activists ‘have faced harassment, violence, and arrest for their activities.’¹ Amnesty International has reported on cases where human rights defenders and cyber-activists have received death threats and faced intimidation for documenting human rights violations committed by security forces and armed separatist groups in the Anglophone regions.² In an article published in June 2021, The New Humanitarian also noted that both government forces and separatist groups committed human rights abuses, including against human rights activists.³

In an article published in July 2022, Human Rights Watch indicated concerning the Cameroonian authorities’ response to the exercise of right to peaceful assembly, that military courts in several occasions have used the 2014 anti-terrorism law to convict ‘tens of residents of the Anglophone regions.’⁴ A 2022 report by International Crisis Group, focusing on women’s role in the Anglophone conflict, noted that women peace activists have also faced ‘increasing pressure, including hostile rhetoric, arrests and threats of violence’ from state security forces and separatist groups.⁵ Deutsche Welle (DW) in October 2020 reported that ‘activists, politicians and academics from Cameroon’s Anglophone regions’ who were arrested in relation to the Anglophone crisis remained imprisoned.⁶

Incidents concerning activists in Northwest and Southwest regions, as reported by sources, include:

- Two protest leaders from the Northwest and Southwest Anglophone regions, who were arrested in 2016 and 2017 for participating in demonstrations, were sentenced by a military court in Yaoundé to 15 years in prison under the charge of “acts of terrorism, secession, spreading false information, and contempt for public bodies and officials”.⁷

¹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 - Cameroon, 2023, [url](#)

² AI, With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias, July 2023, [url](#), p. 44

³ New Humanitarian (The), Caught in the middle: Peace activists in Cameroon try to end a brutal war, 1 June 2021, [url](#)

⁴ HRW, France/Cameroon: Macron to meet Biya amid human rights violations and increased repression, 22 July 2022, [url](#)

⁵ International Crisis Group, Rebels, Victims, Peacebuilders: Women in Cameroon’s Anglophone Conflict, 23 February 2023, [url](#), p. 26

⁶ DW, Cameroon’s habit of arbitrary detention, 12 October 2020, [url](#)

⁷ AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/23, The State of the World’s Human Rights, Cameroon 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)



The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for their release in 2019 and 2021, but as of 2022, the two individuals remained in prison.⁸

- In August 2022, a Cameroonian Anglophone peace activist was arrested in Bamenda, Northwest region, without an official charge⁹ after he denounced alleged human rights abuses committed by the leader of a pro-government militia in the Southwest region.¹⁰ In August and November 2022, two other persons were arrested on allegations ‘that they work as his drivers’ and, as of 27 February 2023, all three remained in detention.¹¹ The peace activist had been arrested in September 2019 with accusations including ‘terrorism and secession’¹², and released the month after.¹³
- A human rights officer for the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRNA) received death threats from alleged separatists in May and June 2022, after reporting on a violent incident committed by separatists in Kumbo, Northwest region.¹⁴
- US Department of State (USDOS) reported that, as of the end of 2021, no actions had been taken by the government concerning the disappearance of a human rights activist and president of NGO Frontline Fighters for Citizen Interests who had disappeared in 2018 in Kumba, Southwest Region, during a mission to document human rights abuses in the area. According to the same source, the human rights activist criticized human rights abuses linked to persons related to the government and was detained several times by the authorities.¹⁵
- A human rights lawyer reported that he received multiple death threats in October and November 2021 due to his work,¹⁶ allegedly by armed separatists.¹⁷
- A Buea-based journalist died under detention in August 2019 after he was arrested the same month by authorities under the accusation of ‘having connections with armed Anglophone separatists.’¹⁸ His death was officially confirmed by the Defence Ministry in June 2020, indicating that he had died of sepsis in August 2019 after his arrest.¹⁹ According to USDOS, as of December 2021, there were no developments in the investigation around his death.²⁰

⁸ AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/23, The State of the World's Human Rights, Cameroon 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁹ HRW, World Report 2023 - Cameroon, 12 January 2023, [url](#); AI, Cameroon: Amnesty International urges release of Abdul Karim Ali, a peace activist detained without charge for more than four months, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰ AI, Cameroon: Amnesty International urges release of Abdul Karim Ali, a peace activist detained without charge for more than four months, 22 December 2022, [url](#)

¹¹ AI, Urgent Action: Activist held without charge for 200 days, 27 February 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹² Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020 - Cameroon, 4 March 2020, [url](#)

¹³ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020 - Cameroon, 4 March 2020, [url](#); HRW, World Report 2020 - Cameroon, 14 January 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴ AI, Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions, 7 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 - Cameroon, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷ AI, Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions, 7 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸ USDOS, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 30 March 2021, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁹ AI, Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights, Cameroon 2020, 7 April 2021, [url](#), p. 110

²⁰ USDOS, 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 12 April 2022, [url](#), p. 7

- A Buea-based lawyer reportedly received threats and was assaulted by security forces due to his work representing ‘specific clients,’ including the ‘trial of the “Nera 10” separatist leaders.’ The lawyer was also reportedly arrested in Yaoundé in May 2021 by members of the national gendarmerie and detained for 10 days.²¹

Other incidents, as reported by sources, include:

- In April 2022, separatists attacked the campus of the Bamenda university, Northwest region, ‘for not observing a “lockdown,” or stay-at-home order, that they had declared across the area’. During the incident 5 people were injured.²²
- In November 2021, an explosive device reportedly detonated by separatists at the University of Buea injured at least 11 students.²³
- In February 2019, VOA reported an incident where ‘hundreds of students’ at the University of Buea were forcibly removed from their dormitories by the military and detained for several hours. According to the article, the military told students that ‘by staying at home, they were following the separatists instead of obeying government instructions to continue with their activities.’²⁴

According to Freedom House, academics ‘can face negative repercussions for criticizing the government or discussing its political opponents.’²⁵ The same source provided the example of a law lecturer at the University of Buea who was dismissed in May 2020 ‘over an exam question probing the causes of the Anglophone crisis that authorities considered “seditious”’.²⁶ Sources reported that separatist groups targeted educational facilities, students, and teachers in the Anglophone regions.²⁷

Treatment by state and non-state actors in the context of protests

According to a 2022 report by Bertelsmann Stiftung, covering the period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2021, ‘throughout the Anglophone crisis, the government has resorted to severe violence to counter peaceful demonstrations and used emergency declarations to impose curfews.’²⁸

Incidents, as reported by sources, include:

- Le Monde reported that, in May 2023, alleged separatists abused and kidnapped approximately 30 women at the Kedjom Keku village, Northwest region, and that

²¹ AI, With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias, July 2023, [url](#), p. 46

²² HRW, World Report 2023 - Cameroon, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

²³ Reuters, Explosive attack on Cameroon university lecture hall wounds 11, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

²⁴ VOA, Nearly 70 Killed in Cameroon as Separatists Stop Youth Week Activities, 9 February 2019, [url](#)

²⁵ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021 - Cameroon, 3 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021 - Cameroon, 3 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁷ AI, With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias, July 2023, [url](#), p. 17; USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 42; HRW, World Report 2023 - Cameroon, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

²⁸ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2022 Country Report Cameroon, 23 February 2022, [url](#), p. 11

according to CHRDA, the day before the incident, the women had organized a protest against the actions of separatists, particularly on a tax obligation imposed to civilians.²⁹

- Radio France Internationale (RFI) reported that according to a press release from the Minister of Communication of Cameroon, on 8 March 2023, during the International Women's Rights Day parades in Bamenda, a group of suspected separatists detonated an explosive device, resulting in the death of a military officer and the serious injury of seven people.³⁰
- In a report covering incidents of violence committed by the security forces and non-state armed groups between March and June 2022, CHRDA noted that in March and April 2022 people in Oku Subdivision, Northwest region, organized different protests against human rights violations committed by separatists in the area, including the abduction of civilians. According to the same report, separatists violently suppressed the protests, including by beating and abducting civilians that participated in the protests. On one occasion, separatist opened fire at the protesters, resulting in the death of two persons and the injury of nine others.³¹
- Sources reported that in November 2021, protests erupted in Bamenda, Northwest region, when a young girl was killed, according to the police, by a stray bullet fired by a police officer.³² The Cameroonian military responded to the protests with violence, including the use of live ammunition against protesters, resulting in the injury of at least 7 persons.³³
- Jeune Afrique reported that in October 2021, after a six-year-old girl was killed by a gendarme in Buea, local residents lynched the gendarme and violent protests erupted. Security forces dispersed the protests by using gunfire.³⁴

Further information on the treatment of protesters by state and non-state actors could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

²⁹ Le Monde, Au Cameroun, une trentaine de femmes enlevées par des séparatistes anglophones [In Cameroon, about thirty women kidnapped by English-speaking separatists], 24 May 2023, [url](#)

³⁰ RFI, Cameroun: série d'attentats meurtriers dans le nord-ouest du pays [Cameroon: a series of deadly attacks in the Northwest of the country], 9 March 2023, [url](#)

³¹ CHRDA, Recent selected incidents of violence committed by elements of the defence and security forces & non-state armed groups, 2022, [url](#), pp. 16 – 19

³² HRW, Cameroon: Lethal Force Against Protesters, 19 November 2021, [url](#); Germany, BAMF, Briefing Notes, 15 November 2021, [url](#), p. 3

³³ HRW, Cameroon: Lethal Force Against Protesters, 19 November 2021, [url](#)

³⁴ Jeune Afrique, Crise anglophone au Cameroun : scènes d'émeutes à Buea après le décès d'une écolière [Anglophone crisis in Cameroon: scenes of unrest in Buea after the death of a schoolgirl], 15 October 2021, [url](#)

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