

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Title

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

Reference period

January 2021 to 24 October 2023

Topics

1. [Brief background information](#)
2. [Treatment by separatist groups](#)

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – 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.

1. Brief background information

In October 2017, English-speaking separatist armed groups proclaimed independence, establishing an interim government called the ‘Republic of Ambazonia’ in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, areas populated by the country’s Anglophone minority.¹ These events led to violent confrontations between armed separatists and Cameroonian security forces, ‘resulting in atrocities against civilians by both sides’.²

In 2022, Human Rights Watch (HRW) denounced that, since 2016, armed groups committed abuses against the population in the Anglophone regions, including kidnappings and killings of people and intimidation of human rights defenders.³

For more information on the security situation in the Anglophone regions, see the [EUAA Query response](#) published on 11 October 2023.

2. Treatment by separatist groups

According to an associate professor from the University of Bamenda in Cameroon, the ‘Amba Boys’ is the name given to the different groups of radical armed militias engaged in various armed activities seeking to separate Cameroon between French and English-speaking people.⁴ The same source explained that, from 2017, those armed separatist militias, known as Amba boys, resorted to ‘violence and extremism’ threatening peace and development in the area.⁵

In a September 2023 report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Cameroon investigates ‘all reported cases of killings, enforced disappearance, intimidation and harassment of, and threats and reprisals against, human rights defenders, journalists and

¹ GCR2P, Cameroon: Population at risk, 31 August 2023, [url](#); HRW, Cameroon: Killings, Destruction in Anglophone Regions, 19 July 2018, [url](#)

² GCR2P, Cameroon: Population at risk, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

³ HRW, Cameroon: Separatist Abuses in Anglophone Regions, 27 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴ Ngam, C., Their Spirits are High and Willing but That is Not Enough: Profiling the Cameroon Separatist Anglophone Radical Militia (Amba Boys), 2020, [url](#), p. 211

⁵ Ngam, C., Their Spirits are High and Willing but That is Not Enough: Profiling the Cameroon Separatist Anglophone Radical Militia (Amba Boys), 2020, [url](#), p. 210

members of civil society organizations.⁶ According to the Amnesty International (AI) report on human rights in Cameroon covering 2022, ‘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’.⁷ In a report published in 2022 on the role of women in the Anglophone Conflict, including as being involved in the conflict and as peaceful activists, the International Crisis Group indicated that activists ‘face reprisals by separatists in areas where they operate’.⁸ The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) reported human rights abuses against human rights defenders in its Human Rights Report between October 2021 and March 2022. For instance, in November 2021, slander and death threats were directed at human rights defenders attending a conference on dialogue and negotiation in Canada.⁹

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

- In June 2022, a human rights officer from the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA), an organization documenting human rights violations and abuses by all parties to the conflict, reported to AI that he received multiple death threats from ‘alleged armed separatists’. In one of the messages, the group said that the human rights officer and his family were ‘declared as traitors and enemies to the Ambazonian fighters’.¹⁰ According to the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the death threats against the human rights defender started after he announced on Twitter the launch of a report documenting incidents of violence committed by defence and security forces and non-state armed groups.¹¹
- In 2021, a human rights lawyer, well-known for defending the rights of the Anglophone minority and advocating for a peaceful resolution to the crisis, received multiple death threats from armed separatists.¹² The intimidation occurred via phone and on social media between 29 October and 1 November 2021, following the lawyer's participation

⁶ UNHRC, Cameroon: Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 4 September 2023, available at: [url](#), para. 24

⁷ AI, The State of the World's Human Rights: Cameroon 2022, 27 March 2023, [url](#)

⁸ International Crisis Group, Rebels, Victims, Peacebuilders: Women in Cameroon's Anglophone Conflict, 23 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹ CHRDA, Human Rights Report between October 2021 and March 2022: There was an Increase in Human Rights Violations and Abuses by the State Defense and Security Forces and Non-state Armed Groups in Cameroon, 9 December 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰ AI, Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions, 7 July 2022, [url](#)

¹¹ FIDH, Cameroon: Death threats against human rights defender Akem Kelvin Nkwain, 21 June 2022, [url](#)

¹² European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2021 on the human rights situation in Cameroon, 25 November 2021, [url](#)



in a conference in Canada organised by the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations, a US-based NGO focusing on the conflict in Cameroon.¹³

- Between May 2020 and December 2021, a human rights defender working for the Cameroonian NGO Conscience Africaine received multiple death threats.¹⁴ According to AI, he received the threats 'after he published a report on abductions allegedly committed by armed separatists.'¹⁵

Information on the treatment of members of the Human Rights Defence Club by separatists could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

Information on the treatment of anti-separatist activists by separatists was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

Incidents concerning people protesting against Anglophone Cameroonian separatists in Northwest and Southwest regions, as reported by sources, include:

- On 6 April 2022, Anglophone separatists kidnapped between at least ten to twelve people who participated in an anti-separatist protest in Oku, Northwest region.¹⁶ Mimi Mefo Info, an online news reporting network, reported that the people kidnapped had 'signs of torture and being stripped naked'. The same source added that anti-separatist protests were held in reaction to 'constant kidnapping, torture, extortion and imposition of lockdowns every now and then'. Similar anti-separatist protests took place in Kedjom-Ketinguh, in the Northwest region. The protesters were later attacked by separatists, resulting in some fatalities.¹⁷
- On 8 April 2022, armed separatists killed a 60-year-old woman who had reportedly participated in the mentioned anti-separatist protest in Oku.¹⁸

¹³ FIDH, Cameroon: Death threats against human rights defender Akem Kelvin Nkwain, 21 June 2022, [url](#); AI, Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions, 7 July 2022, [url](#);

¹⁴ CIVICUS, HRDS Exposing Rights Violations in Anglophone Regions Subjected to Death Threats, 16 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵ AI, Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions, 7 July 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶ VOA, Cameroon Says Separatists Abduct Women Protesting Fighters' Abuses, 8 April 2022, [url](#); Mimi Mefo Info, Separatists illegally holding Anti-Amba Protesters in Oku, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷ Mimi Mefo Info, Separatists illegally holding Anti-Amba Protesters in Oku, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸ Mimi Mefo Info, Anti-Amba Protester killed In Oku, 8 April 2022, [url](#)

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