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COI QUERY

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Title

Treatment of former members of Cameroon's armed forces, including of the Gendarmerie Nationale, and of their relatives by separatists in Northwest and Southwest (Anglophone) regions

Reference period

January 2020 – 29 December 2023

Topic(s)

1. [Brief background information](#)
2. [Treatment of former members of Cameroon's armed forces and of their relatives](#)
3. [Treatment of former members of the Gendarmerie Nationale and of their relatives](#)

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Cameroon

Treatment of former members of Cameroon’s armed forces, including of the Gendarmerie Nationale, and of their relatives by separatists in Northwest and Southwest (Anglophone) regions

1. Brief background information

Additional information on the events that led to the conflict between armed separatists and Cameroonian security forces in the Anglophone regions (Northwest and Southwest of Cameroon) can be found in the [EUAA Query response on treatment of anti-separatist activists and human rights defenders in the Northwest and Southwest regions in Cameroon](#), published on 26 October 2023.

Additional information on the security situation in the Anglophone regions in the period of January 2023 - 30 September 2023 can be found in the [EUAA Query response on security situation in the Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions](#), published on 11 October 2023.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) World Factbook, the Cameroonian Armed Forces consist of:

- Army (L’Armee de Terre),
- Navy (Marine Nationale Republique, MNR, includes naval infantry),
- Air Force (Armee de l’Air du Cameroun, AAC),
- Rapid Intervention Battalion (Bataillons d’Intervention Rapide, BIR),
- National Gendarmerie, and
- Presidential Guard.¹

The National Gendarmerie, together with the national police, are responsible for the internal security in Cameroon.² According to the US Department of State (USDOS), ‘the National Gendarmerie is responsible for maintaining public order and safety within the country, specifically in rural areas’.³ The Law on Use of Police Force Worldwide, a website providing an overview of the national policing laws in the world, described the gendarmerie as one of the ‘two main bodies of police’ in Cameroon, and as a ‘paramilitary police force’.⁴ The National Gendarmerie comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense.⁵

¹ US, CIA, The World Factbook - Cameroon, last updated 6 December 2023, [url](#)

² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

³ USDOS, 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 11 March 2020, [url](#) p. 7

⁴ Law on Use of Police Force Worldwide (The), Cameroon, last updated 2022, [url](#)

⁵ HRW, Cameroon: Rising Violence Against LGBTI People, 11 May 2022, [url](#); Law on Use of Police Force Worldwide (The), Cameroon, last updated 2022, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

2. Treatment of former members of Cameroon's armed forces and of their relatives

No information on the treatment of former members of Cameroon's armed forces and of their relatives by separatists in Northwest and Southwest (Anglophone) regions could be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

A report by Amnesty International on human rights violations in the Anglophone Northwest region of Cameroon published in July 2023 reported that armed separatists 'have been responsible for numerous crimes against the population in the Anglophone region, ranging from murders, abductions, torture and the destruction of homes. They have targeted people suspected of collaborating with the defence and security forces [...].'⁶ The same report added that in the Northwest region, separatists killed, abducted, and burned homes of people perceived as collaborating with the authorities and the military forces.⁷ Similarly, the newspaper African Observer reported in May 2023 that 'armed groups frequently stand accused of kidnapping, killing, or injuring civilians whom they accuse of collaborating with Cameroonian authorities.'⁸

Some indicative examples of incidents involving civilians accused of collaborating with the government and military forces include:

- On 4 October 2023, two unarmed men were publicly executed by separatist fighters in Guzang, Northwest region, after they were accused of cooperating with the government.⁹
- In July 2023, 12 armed fighters in uniforms shot civilians in Bamenda. According to the governor of the Northwest region, the men were separatist fighters and wanted to 'create panic' among civilians who cooperate with the military.¹⁰
- On 20 February 2023, a woman was found beheaded on a road in Bali Nyonga, Northwest region of Cameroon. According to media sources, as reported by Amnesty International (AI), 'the victim was reportedly killed because armed separatists accused her of being an informer for the authorities'.¹¹
- On 24 December 2022, Voice of America (VOA) News reported that according to the human rights groups, government forces have burned houses of the separatist

⁶ AI, Cameroon: With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias, 4 July 2023, [url](#), p. 24

⁷ AI, Cameroon: With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias, 4 July 2023, [url](#), p. 56

⁸ African Observer (The), 30 women freed after abduction by separatists in Cameroon's Anglophone Region, 28 May 2023, [url](#)

⁹ HRW, Cameroon: Video Shows Killing by Armed Separatists, 13 October 2023, [url](#); GCR2P, Cameroon – Population at risk, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰ VOA News, Cameroon Military, Separatists Trade Accusations of Civilian Killings, 18 July 2023, [url](#); AP, Separatist attack kills 10 in northwestern Cameroon, regional governor says, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

¹¹ AI, Cameroon: With or against us: People of the North-West region of Cameroon caught between the army, armed separatists and militias, 4 July 2023, [url](#), p. 17

supporters in the Northwest region. However, according to the government, the separatists 'set fire to the houses of people who the separatists accuse of collaborating with government troops'.¹² Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints.

- On 25 September 2022, 'three health workers, a security guard, and a pastor were kidnapped by separatists who accused them of collaborating with military forces' in Kumbo, Northwest region.¹³
- On 6 July 2020, separatist fighters killed an employee of Doctors Without Borders who worked in the Southwest region after being accused of collaborating with the military.¹⁴
- In August 2020, separatists beat and killed a woman in Muyuka, Southwest region. The video shared on social media showed the fighter accusing her of collaborating with the government.¹⁵

3. Treatment of former members of the Gendarmerie Nationale and of their relatives

No information on the treatment of former members of the Gendarmerie Nationale and of their relatives by separatists in Northwest and Southwest (Anglophone) regions could be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

¹² VOA News, Cameroon Military Denies Involvement in House Burnings in Northwest Region, 23 December 2022, [url](#)

¹³ Insecurity Insight, Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, Cameroon: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022, 28 June 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁴ HRW, World Report 2021 – Cameroon events of 2020, 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵ HRW, World Report 2021 – Cameroon events of 2020, 2021, [url](#)

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