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AI – Amnesty International

Cameroon: End threats against activists who exposed violations and abuses in Anglophone regions

The Cameroonian authorities must ensure that human rights defenders are able to work free of intimidation and reprisals, Amnesty International said today after receiving reports that activists are being targeted with death threats for exposing human rights violations and abuses in Anglophone regions.

The individuals targeted include seven human rights defenders and a cyber-activist, all of whom had been documenting human rights violations and abuses in the English-speaking regions of North-West and South-West Cameroon, which are facing clashes between army forces and armed separatist groups.

“The authorities must urgently launch a thorough, independent and effective investigation into these threats and other abuses committed against human rights defenders”.

Unrelenting death threats

Akem Kelvin Nkwain, a human rights officer at the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRNA), an organization that has documented human rights violations and abuses by all parties to the conflict, told Amnesty International he received several death threats from alleged armed separatists.

The first threat came on 24 May 2022, shortly after Nkwain wrote on Twitter about a child killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) allegedly planted by separatist fighters in Kumbo in North-West Cameroon.

On 16 June 2022, he received calls and messages featuring photos of a captured policeman, dead civilians, bullets, guns, armed group members, and an image of himself being marked for killing.

One of the messages said: “We declare you and your whole entire family as traitors and enemies to the Ambazonian fighters. Until we reach your house, let that money bring you back to life when you get shot and kill.”

Felix Agbor Nkongho, a human rights lawyer and founder of the CHRNA, also received multiple death threats from alleged armed separatists by phone and on social media in reaction to his participation in a conference in Toronto organized by the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations, a US-based NGO focusing on the conflict in Cameroon, between 29 October and 1 November 2021.

Abductions

On 22 April 2022, 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 concern over repeated death threats sent since 2015 to the president and the lawyer of the Organic Farming for Gorillas (OFFGO). OFFGO has exposed abuses by businesses in the North-West regions of Cameroon.

In May 2021, the lawyer received death threats by phone, and on 6 November 2021, he escaped an abduction attempt at his home in Bamenda. He was also reportedly abducted from his home and released two hours later on 19 February 2019. In a report released in January 2021, [Final warning: death threats and killings of human rights defenders](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders detailed the threats against him.

In addition, his brother was also abducted and tortured on 16 May 2019 and on 27 March 2020 as a way to intimidate him. His brother-in-law was also shot twice in the leg by unknown individuals in his presence. Several complaints have been filed in previous years by OFFGO lawyer, but according to OFFGO officials, the authorities have failed to launch an investigation.

In May 2022, N’Zui Manto, a cyber-activist working from outside Cameroon was forced to leave the African country where he was living after the Cameroonian authorities identified him following information shared by the local police that raised fears of repatriation.

N’Zui Mantotold Amnesty International he started receiving death threats on social media at the beginning of 2019 since he publishes information about the Cameroonian army’s losses in Anglophone regions. On 28 May 2022, he received a message from a fake Facebook profile saying: “One day you will come across me. I will kill you like nothing.”

Tarnteh Amadu Ngangpanweh, a human rights defender for [Conscience Africaine](#), a Cameroon-based NGO, told Amnesty International he began receiving death threats after attending a press conference in Yaoundé on 18 May 2020. The event, which was organized by a coalition of civil society organizations, shared findings from a report on the Ngarbuh massacre, in which more than 20 civilians were killed during a military operation on 13 and 14 February 2020.

Two days later, after Tarnteh published the report on Facebook, an unknown person messaged him on Facebook saying he “better stop such activities, because this is obviously the first and last time, I am warning you on conspiring to publish false information, the next time you will be sorry for yourself.”

Tarnteh received several other threatening calls in late 2020, July 2021 and December 2021 after he documented alleged detentions for ransom by security forces in North-West region, and after he published a report on abductions allegedly committed by armed separatists.

The apparent inaction of the Cameroonian authorities amid reports of abductions, intimidations, and repeated death threats is deeply concerning. Cameroon must urgently meet its obligations under international human rights law by supporting and protecting human rights defenders and their crucial work.”

Samira Daoud

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targeted with death threats for exposing
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