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Background

Nine out of 10 regions were affected by three major humanitarian crises: the armed conflict in the Lake Chad basin involving Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) armed groups; the armed violence in the North-West and South-West anglophone regions; and the 335,000 refugees from the Central African Republic with limited access to jobs, food, education, water, sanitation and hygiene services. In the Far North region, more than 380,000 internally displaced people were affected by flooding and a cholera outbreak. More than 630,000 people were internally displaced due to armed violence in the anglophone regions.

Freedom of expression

Journalists faced attacks in the course of carrying out their professional duties.¹

Martinez Zogo, a journalist and head of privately-owned radio station Amplitude FM, was abducted by unidentified men on 17 January and his mutilated body found five days later in the suburbs of Yaoundé. He had been investigating and reporting on the alleged embezzlement of hundreds of billions of CFA francs by political and business figures close to the government. The head of the General Directorate for External Research (Cameroon's counter-intelligence agency), and a prominent media mogul and business tycoon were arrested and charged with complicity in Martinez Zogo's torture and remanded in custody. On 3 February, the body of Jean-Jacques Ola Bébé, a priest and radio presenter and former colleague of Martinez Zogo's, was found near his home in Mimboman, a suburb of Yaoundé. Shortly before his death he had made public comments about Martinez Zogo's murder. There was no official communication about the launch of an investigation into this murder.

Arbitrary detention

In March, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that the detention of anglophone journalist Thomas Awah Junior was arbitrary, and asked the Cameroonian authorities to "release [him] immediately and grant him the right to obtain compensation." He had been sentenced by a military court in May 2018 to 11 years in prison on charges of "terrorism, hostility to the fatherland, secession, revolution, insurrection, spreading false news, and contempt for civil authority".

Dozens of other anglophone people, including protest leaders Mancho Bibixy, Tsi Conrad and Penn Terence Khan, were still arbitrarily detained. They had been sentenced by a military court in Yaoundé to 15 years in prison, following their convictions in 2017 and 2018 for "acts of terrorism, secession, spreading false information, and contempt for public bodies and officials" in the context of the armed violence in the North-West and South-West anglophone regions.

Anglophone activist Abdul Karim Ali was still in pretrial detention since his arrest on 11 August 2022, after he appeared in a video accusing the Cameroonian military of torture. He was charged by a military tribunal alongside two of his colleagues for "hostility towards the homeland", "failure to report", "secession" and "rebellion".

At the end of the year, 43 activists and opposition leaders were still arbitrarily detained after being sentenced by a military court for taking part in a march on 22 September 2022, organized by the Cameroon Renaissance Movement opposition party.

Right to life

North-West and South-West regions

In the two anglophone regions, both defence and security forces – sometimes in collaboration with local militias – and armed separatists carried out unlawful killings and murders.²

In June, at least 25 people were killed, 20 houses burnt down, and 2,500 people displaced due to armed violence in the village of Kedjom Keku, North-West region, according to the OCHA. Armed separatists targeted people they accused of not siding with them, collaborating with the army, or not paying the “liberation tax”.

On 6 August, the authorities exhumed the bodies of nine people, including five government officials, who had been abducted by armed separatist groups in June 2021.

On 4 October, armed separatists gathered inhabitants of the town of Guzang, North-West region together and shot dead two men.³

On 6 November, 25 people were reportedly killed in Egbekaw Village near Mamfe, South-West region by suspected armed separatists.

Abuses by armed groups

Far North region

Armed groups affiliated to ISWAP and JAS, descended from Boko Haram, continued to carry out attacks on villages along the border with Nigeria and on islands in Lake Chad. According to the OCHA, between 1 December 2022 and 30 November 2023, more than 280 civilians were killed by armed groups and more than 210 abducted.

Right to education

Between January and July, at least 13 violent incidents against educational establishments were reported in the North-West and South-West regions, including the abduction of children and teachers, allegedly by armed separatist groups. In September, armed separatists forced schools to close for two weeks, and killed, abducted or physically assaulted several people for not obeying the lockdown, according to the OCHA. In both regions 2,245 schools remained closed due to the armed violence.

Right to a healthy environment

On 9 September, a French court ordered the rubber plantation company Société Financière des Caoutchoucs – of which palm oil producer Société Camerounaise de Palmeraies is a subsidiary – to pay €140,000 to 145 villagers who were deprived of their land and suffered environmental pollution.

LGBTI people's rights

On 12 June, the National Communication Council threatened to suspend media outlets if they continued to broadcast “programmes promoting homosexual practices”. The same month, the French ambassador for LGBTQ+ rights cancelled his visit to Cameroon after the authorities opposed the planned programme of activities.
