



HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

“They Are Destroying Our Future”

Armed Separatist Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools
in Cameroon’s Anglophone



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in Cameroon’s Anglophone Regions**

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Summary

Sara was a 17-year-old high school student when separatist fighters occupied her school, causing her to flee her hometown in Cameroon's North-West region out of fear. She decided to move to the capital, Yaoundé, to finish her education. On the way, she was stopped by armed separatists, who searched for items she had relating to education, tore up her schoolbooks and notebooks, and warned her that worse would befall her if she was found with such materials again. In Yaoundé, she could not afford the school fees, and had to seek work, which she found at a pineapple company. After working for two years, she abandoned her dream of finishing school.

In the South-West region, Clara the head teacher at a government school, refused to abide by the separatist-ordered education boycott. When separatist fighters broke into her home in March 2019 to extort and punish her, she paid 30,000 CFA (US\$56) and more in blood: they inflicted wounds all over her body, cutting her right hand so severely it had to be medically amputated, and losing the use of her left hand.

The stories of Sara and Clara are unfortunately all too common experiences for students and teachers in Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions who, since 2017, have become victims of attacks by armed separatists on education.

These attacks have become a hallmark of the crisis in the country's Anglophone regions, which has resulted from the post-independence political, economic, cultural, and social marginalization felt by the Anglophone minority, who live in Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions. Although Cameroon is a bilingual and bijural country, many Anglophones believe the government is trying to sideline and assimilate their education and legal systems into the dominant Francophone system.

Tensions escalated in October and November 2016 and again in September and October 2017 when Cameroonian security forces used excessive force against peaceful protests led by teachers and lawyers. Different Anglophone armed separatist groups have since emerged and grown, and education soon became a primary battleground.

Separatist fighters began to order and enforce school boycotts, including by attacking scores of schools across the Anglophone regions. They have also used school buildings, such as Sara's school, as bases for storing weapons and ammunition as well as holding and torturing hostages. Separatist fighters have also attacked, intimidated, or threatened thousands of students, education professionals, and parents in their attempts to keep children out of school. These attacks, the resulting fear, and the deteriorating security situation have caused school closures across the Anglophone regions, denying students access to education.

While armed separatists bear full responsibility for their targeted attacks on education, the response by the Cameroonian government and security forces has been insufficient and is hampered by the fact that they have conducted many abusive counterinsurgency operations in the English-speaking regions which sowed deep distrust among the civilian population victimized in those operations. Sometimes the abusive operations have also had a direct impact on education. For example, the report documents security forces burning at least one school which was being used by armed separatists as a base. Therefore, while enhanced security should offer protection to students and teachers, in practice many students and teachers also fear abuses from the security forces.

Based on telephone interviews conducted between November 2020 and November 2021 with 155 people, including 29 current and former students as well as 47 teachers and education professionals, this report documents attacks on students, teachers, and schools, as well as the use of schools by armed separatist groups, in the North-West and South-West regions between March 2017 and November 2021. It also examines the impact of those attacks, which have denied approximately 700,000 students an education. After describing the Cameroonian government's responses, it highlights gaps and, more importantly, potential solutions that the Cameroonian authorities, in collaboration with their international partners, should implement to stop and address attacks on education.

Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools

Separatist fighters have killed, kidnapped, assaulted, threatened, or extorted hundreds of students and teachers while at school, on the way to or from school, or at home. Human Rights Watch does not claim to have documented all or even the majority of such attacks, but believes what it has documented indicates the scope of the problem, and disproves

any claims that these are isolated problems. Human Rights Watch documented the killings of eleven students and five teachers: seven students were killed during an attack on their school in Kumba, South-West region, three students and one teacher were killed during an attack on their school in Ekondo-Titi, South-West region, while the eleventh student and the other teachers were killed while they were at home or on their way to or from school. Human Rights Watch also documented the death of two schoolgirls caused respectively by a gendarme and a police officer shooting at vehicles which failed to stop at checkpoints. Human Rights Watch documented the kidnapping of at least 268 students and education professionals by armed separatists between January 2017 and August 2021. In two incidents alone, one in 2018 and another in 2019, fighters kidnapped 78 and 170 students, respectively, from their schools in the North-West region. Most of the victims (255) were students, while nine were teachers and four were principals. Victims said that the separatist fighters targeted them because they were going to school.

At least 70 schools have been attacked in the Anglophone regions since 2017, according to reports from United Nations agencies, the World Bank, Cameroonian and international civil society organizations, and media outlets. Human Rights Watch documented in detail 15 attacks on schools by separatist fighters between January 2017 and November 2021. Armed separatists visited schools, ordering their closure, threatening and terrorizing students and teachers, and destroyed school infrastructure and property, including with fire.

Human Rights Watch documented the occupation, between early 2017 and March 2019, of at least five schools by separatist fighters in the North-West region. They used schools as bases, and also held hostages and stored weapons and ammunitions in them. Some moved from school to school, like the ones who took over Sara's school. In one case, evidence suggests Cameroonian security forces burned a school building that had been used by separatist groups.

Government Response

The Cameroonian authorities have taken steps to respond to attacks on education, including by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration – an intergovernmental political agreement to protect students, teachers, and schools during armed conflicts – in September 2018. In line with its commitments to ensure that students are able to continue

their education, the government has conducted more robust back-to-school campaigns in the Anglophone regions. It has also stationed security forces in or outside schools, mainly in major urban centers, to increase safety. However, there is almost no such security presence in rural areas or on roads leading to and from schools. More importantly, students and teachers have had mixed reactions to the deployment of security forces in or outside schools, as some believe their presence increases the risk of being targeted by armed separatists. There is also an urgent need for the government to address the lack of resources and overcrowding in schools whose populations have doubled, or even tripled, due to the need to accommodate internally displaced students.

By signing up to the Safe Schools Declaration, the Cameroonian government agreed to protect education, including by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of attacks on students, teachers, and schools. Clara, unlike the vast majority of victims of attacks on education, has experienced a degree of justice, as at least one of her alleged assailants was arrested and is currently facing trial. This is not the norm: in addition to the arrest made in her case, Human Rights Watch is aware of only two sets of arrests for attacks on schools since 2017 – one set involves the arrest of 10 persons after a 2019 attack on a university, the other involves the arrest of 12 persons following the October 24, 2020 attack on the school in Kumba. The fate of the 10 suspects arrested in 2019 is unknown, and the trial of those arrested in connection with the Kumba school massacre, held before a military tribunal, failed to meet basic fair trial standards. This suggests that the separatists have enjoyed almost absolute impunity for their attacks on education.

Consequences of Attacks on Education

School closures because of the boycott orders or attacks on schools by separatist fighters, fear of being targeted for studying, and economic challenges have all caused students to drop out of school, robbing young people in the Anglophone regions of their right to education. This has only been exacerbated by further school closures related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The trauma of experiencing or witnessing an attack, which is exacerbated by the lack of psychosocial support services, has affected students' ability to learn and caused many teachers to change professions. This will have longer term effects on their economic and social mobility as individuals and on the development of the regions and Cameroon as a whole. This report describes not only the emotional harms, such as those experienced by Sara and Clara, but also the resilience of the students and teachers who

struggled to continue their studies and work, respectively, which sometimes required choosing to relocate.

Nearly 600,000 people have been displaced by the crisis unfolding in the two English-speaking regions—a figure which likely includes thousands of teachers and students—and were forced to flee and begin a new life elsewhere. This report also documents the experiences of displaced students and teachers, highlighting the specific hardships faced by older teachers.

Ensuring the Right to Education in Cameroon

International human rights law obligates the Cameroonian government to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to education, and in signing up to the Safe Schools Declaration the government committed to take steps to prevent attacks on schools and mitigate their impacts. Unfortunately, the attacks by armed separatists have continued, largely unabated, causing students, parents, and teachers to suffer enormously. Absent urgent action to address the lack of access to education caused by separatist attacks, many students will lose out on an education, and may face a bleak future with reduced socioeconomic opportunities.

The government of Cameroon which bears the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the right to education should promptly provide access to alternative forms of education, including community education, distance learning, radio learning, and temporary learning spaces to students who are out of school because of the crisis, including rural and displaced students. Those responsible for attacks should be arrested and prosecuted, and an accessible reparations program, including physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support services, should be made available to victims and their families. The Cameroonian government should consider establishing two special task forces, one to assess and make recommendations regarding investigations and prosecutions of attacks on schools and the other to support the re-establishment and continuation of access to safe education for all.

Cameroon's international partners, such as Canada, France, Italy, Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Commission, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the African Union,

should provide financial and technical support to ensure that the special task forces and reparations program are adequately resourced and sustainable.

During times of crisis, ensuring access to education is crucial because safe and protective environments like schools can provide a sense of normalcy essential to children's development and psychological well-being. All stakeholders in the Anglophone crisis should take immediate action to prevent yet another generation in Cameroon from losing out on an education. Leaders of separatist groups should immediately announce an end to the school boycott and instruct fighters to cease all attacks on students, teachers, and schools.

Key Recommendations

To Leaders of Separatist Groups

- End the school boycott as well as attacks and threats against students, teachers, education officials, and schools, publicly announcing that this policy and tactics have been ended.
- Issue statements and disseminate pamphlets, leaflets, and instructions among members and fighters explaining and endorsing the need to comply with international human rights law.

To Armed Separatist Groups' Fighters

- Cease all human rights abuses, including killing, torturing, kidnapping, extorting, and threatening civilians, including students and teachers.
- Immediately cease all recruitment of children under 18 years old.
- Immediately release all kidnapped civilians, including students and teachers.
- Immediately cease using schools for any purpose, including for bases, storage, and detaining individuals.

To the Cameroonian Government

- Ensure students deprived of educational facilities because of the crisis are promptly given access to alternative accessible forms of education, such as community education, distance learning, and temporary learning schools or spaces, with suitable equipment and adequately trained teachers. Education should be accessible to children with disabilities.
- Establish a credible and inclusive reparations program, through a transparent and participatory process, to support victims of attacks on education and their families. Such a program should be sensitive to the needs of women and men, boys and girls, and address the needs of students and families living with disabilities and those in hard-to-reach areas.
- Consider establishing two special task forces, one to assess and make recommendations regarding investigations into attacks on education and prosecutions of perpetrators; the second to further the re-establishment and

protection of access to education for all on an equal basis (see Section XI: “The Way Forward.”)

To the Cameroonian Police and Gendarmerie

- Effectively investigate, for the purpose of prosecuting, government agents, members of the security forces, separatist leaders, and fighters responsible for human rights crimes committed in the Anglophone regions, including attacks on students, teachers, and schools.

To the Cameroonian Judicial Authorities

- Ensure victims of human rights crimes by all sides have access to effective and accessible remedies, including complaint mechanisms, witness protection, and the opportunity to participate in a transparent judicial process.

To the Cameroonian Ministers of Basic, Secondary, and Higher Education

- Effectively implement the Safe Schools Declaration, and work with relevant authorities, community leaders, and parents to ensure better security for schools in the Anglophone regions.
- Ensure teachers and administrators are not pressured to reopen schools in insecure zones without appropriate, effective security measures.
- Expand and improve efforts to collect data on attacks on students, teachers, and schools and the use of schools by armed separatist groups, including the dates and locations of attacks, types of school attacked, disaggregated information about victims and suspected perpetrators, and the number of students and teachers affected.

To the Cameroonian Security Forces

- Ensure security operations in the Anglophone regions respect and protect human rights, including by abiding by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) resolution on the Prohibition of Excessive Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officers in African States and the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Firearms, respecting principles of necessity and proportionality, and deploying military judicial police officers on operations to monitor the conduct of

security forces, report abusive members to commanding officers, and advise commanding officers on human rights issues.

- Ensure that, if armed forces personnel are engaged in security tasks related to schools, their presence within school grounds or buildings be avoided if at all possible, including for accommodation. Where necessary, establish wider security perimeters in neighborhoods around schools, rather than directly outside schools, to minimize disruption to children’s education and avoid compromising the school’s civilian status.

To the African Union (AU)

- Advocate for more comprehensive and sustained measures to protect education from attack in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions by calling on the Cameroonian government to prioritize security of schools, students, and teachers, including the assessment of any security risks for schools which are currently open.
- Engage proactively with the Cameroonian government and support its efforts to expand and strengthen monitoring and reporting on attacks on education and military use of schools, including by collecting and reporting disaggregated data.
- Encourage and support the Cameroonian government to implement fully the commitments contained in the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.

To the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)

- Call on the Cameroonian government to conduct impartial, transparent, and independent investigations into attacks against students and teachers, including physical assaults, killings, abductions, threats, and attacks against school buildings. Urge Cameroonian authorities to publicize the findings of these investigations, prosecute those responsible in fair trials, and incorporate lessons learned into future protection measures and strategies to prevent attacks against education.

To the AU Peace and Security Council

- Include the situation in Cameroon's Anglophone regions as a priority item on the AU peace and security agenda, request a briefing by the ACHPR and the ACERWC on the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Anglophone regions, and demand an end to human rights abuses.
- Unequivocally condemn attacks against education in Cameroon's Anglophone regions and play a more assertive role, including by applying coercive political and diplomatic tools at its disposal, such as imposing targeted sanctions on separatist leaders and fighters responsible for attacks against students, teachers, and schools.

To the United Nations (UN)

To the UN Secretary-General

- Continue to include Cameroon as a situation of concern in the annual report on children and armed conflict to the UN Security Council. Include in the annex of the report any parties engaging in violations against children. Ensure voices and experiences of children with disabilities are included.

To the UN Security Council

- Formally include Cameroon as a priority item on its agenda, request a briefing by the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Cameroon, and demand an end to human rights abuses.
- Establish a sanctions regime in Cameroon, including targeted sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes, against individuals credibly implicated in serious abuses, including attacks on education.

To the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

- Ensure accurate, public monitoring and reporting on threats and attacks on students, teachers, and schools as well as the military use of schools and use of schools by armed separatist groups.

To the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- Improve its mechanism in cooperation with NGOs and other UN agencies to monitor and report threats and attacks on students, teachers, and schools, and the use of schools by armed groups and other grave violations against children committed in the context of the Anglophone crisis.

To the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- Make publicly available the findings of its 2019 investigations and any future investigations into the Anglophone crisis.
- Actively monitor the situation in the Anglophone regions.

To the UN Country Team in Cameroon

- Under the formal Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on children and armed conflict, actively document and verify incidents of grave violations against children, including threats and attacks on students, teachers, and schools, and the use of schools by armed groups, and provide this information to the UN Special Representative to the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict.

To Cameroon's International Bilateral Partners, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union

- Privately and publicly urge the Cameroonian government and security forces to adopt and support the implementation of the above recommendations.
- Urge the national authorities to empower the investigative police, including its forensic criminal evidence gathering, judicial investigation, prosecutorial, and trial capacity and provide targeted and specifically monitored support.
- If established, provide technical and financial support to the special task forces on attacks on education and to reparations program to support victims of attacks on education and their families.
- Ensure any support to the Cameroonian security forces does not contribute to or facilitate human rights abuses.

- Implement targeted sanctions, such as travel bans and asset freezes, against individuals credibly implicated in serious abuses, including attacks against education.

To The World Bank

- Ensure that a significant amount of the US \$97 million provided to Cameroon's government in support of education sector reform is used to improve access to safe schools in the Anglophone regions, including by assisting displaced students and teachers, rebuilding and repairing damaged or destroyed school buildings, supporting, if established, the special task forces on attacks on education and the reparations program to support victims of attacks on education and their families.

Glossary

Amba boys: terms used by some Cameroonians to refer to armed separatist fighters in the North-West and South-West regions.

Ambazonia (or Republic of Ambazonia): term used by some people from the North-West and South-West regions to refer to a self-declared state announced by pro-separatist groups and constituting the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

Anglophone regions: the North-West and South-West regions, Cameroon’s two minority English-speaking regions among the country’s 10 administrative regions.

Attacks against education: Human Rights Watch uses the following definition of “attacks against education” provided by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack: “Attacks on education are any intentional threat or use of force—carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious, or criminal reasons—against students, educators, and education institutions.”

CFA: refers to the Central African CFA franc, Cameroon’s currency (CFA stands for *Communauté Financière Africaine*, African Financial Community).

Child: In accordance with international law, Human Rights Watch defines “child” as a person below the age of 18 years.

Education professional: Teachers, principals, school administrators, members of teachers’ unions, or local education officials.

Francophone regions: Cameroon’s eight French-speaking administrative regions: the Centre, Littoral, West, North, Far North, Adamawa, East, and South regions.

Student: A “student” may refer to a child (under age 18) or an adult (18 or older).

Methodology

This report is based on 155 telephone interviews between November 2020 and November 2021, including with 29 current and former students, 47 teachers and other education professionals, and 15 relatives of students. The current and former students included 4 children (2 girls and 2 boys) and 25 young adults (9 women and 16 men). We also interviewed 64 others, including witnesses to human rights abuses, former separatist fighters, healthcare, social and humanitarian workers, lawyers, journalists, civil society representatives, United Nations officials, and diplomats. Interviewees included residents of Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions.

Human Rights Watch conducted the interviews with the support of an extensive network of contacts in Cameroon. Interviews were conducted in French, English, Pidgin English, and local dialects, with the support of trusted interpreters who were physically with the interviewees for those interviews conducted in Pidgin English and local dialects.

Human Rights Watch informed all interviewees of the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, and how the information would be used, and we obtained oral or written consent for all interviews. We told all interviewees that they could decline to answer questions and end the interview at any time. Interviewees did not receive financial incentives or other benefits for speaking with Human Rights Watch beyond the reimbursement of their travel expenses, where applicable.

Nearly all victims of attacks and witnesses expressed serious concerns and fears of reprisals for speaking with us. Human Rights Watch has thus used pseudonyms and withheld identifying information of most of the victims and witnesses. We have withheld or replaced all children's names with pseudonyms. Unless otherwise specified, we have noted interviewees' ages at the time of the interview.

Human Rights Watch sought to address the limitations of telephone interviews by using secondary sources to corroborate findings. We examined reports by Cameroonian and international human rights and humanitarian organizations, national and international media, and government bodies in addition to photographs, video footage, medical records, and court documents.

Due to ongoing violence, challenges accessing the country and collecting information from remote areas, Human Rights Watch sometimes faced difficulties confirming the exact numbers of victims, circumstances, and alleged perpetrators of specific attacks.

In a July 27, 2021, telephone call with Felix Mbayu, Minister Delegate at the Ministry of External Relations in charge of relations with the Commonwealth, Human Rights Watch shared its preliminary findings for this report. Human Rights Watch also sent a letter, with its findings and a list of questions, to Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute and Mbayu on September 21, 2021. The Prime Minister had yet to reply at time of writing. The letter is available in Appendix II.

Human Rights Watch also shared its preliminary findings on September 22 with the leaders of four major separatist groups: the president of the Ambazonia Interim Government (Sisiku), Sisiku Ayuk Tabe; the spokesperson of the Ambazonia Interim Government (Sako), Christopher Anu; the president of the Ambazonia Governing Council, Cho Lucas Ayaba; and the chairman of the African People's Liberation Movement, Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga. The letters sent to the leaders of the four major separatist groups are available in Appendix IV.

On September 27, 2021, Anu responded to Human Rights Watch during a Zoom call.

On September 29, 2021, Dr. Jonathan Levy, the legal representative of Akwanga, responded via email to Human Rights Watch and his full response is available in Appendix III.

On September 30, 2021, Akoson Raymond, secretary of the Department of Human Rights & Humanitarian Services of the Ambazonia Governing Council, responded via email to Human Rights Watch. His full response is available in Appendix VII. On October 10, 2021, Akoson also shared with Human Rights Watch via email a code of conduct of the Ambazonia Defense Forces, the armed wing of the Ambazonia Governing Council. The code of conduct is available in Appendix VI.

On December 6, 2021, Human Rights Watch received a letter dated November 29, 2021 signed by the “Leadership of the Ambazonia in prison”, headed by Sisiku, with a “Freedom

Protocol” attached as an annex in response to Human Rights Watch’s request for information. Both the letter and the protocol are available in Appendix IX.

I. Background

Roots of the Anglophone Crisis and Separatism

Cameroon's Anglophone crisis and separatist struggle are rooted in the country's colonial history, tensions surrounding its independence, and Anglophones' feelings of marginalization and concerns about assimilation into the Francophone system and culture.

The geographical area of modern Cameroon was originally a German colony, Kamerun, divided into French and British mandates after World War I. After gaining independence in 1961, Cameroon was a federation from February 1961 to May 1972, when Cameroonians voted to adopt a unitary government. Following decades of what they saw as marginalization by the Francophone-dominated government, in 1993, an "All-Anglophone Conference" convened in Buea, the former capital of the British territory, calling for a return to federalism. In response, the government pledged to adopt some reforms to decentralize power. The following year, a second "All-Anglophone Conference" issued the Bamenda declaration, recommending a two-state federal system or secession. However, the government maintained its support for the unitary system, causing Anglophone groups to begin calling for secession, including through diplomatic campaigns.¹

The current crisis began after the government violently repressed peaceful strikes by Anglophone lawyers and teachers in October and November 2016. They were protesting what they perceived as the central government's attempts to marginalize and assimilate Anglophone courts and schools into the Francophone system. Similar heavy-handed responses by security forces against peaceful protests to celebrate the symbolic independence of "Ambazonia," the name given by secessionists to their self-proclaimed independent state comprising the North-West and South-West regions, occurred again between September 22 and October 2, 2017.²

¹ For more detailed information on Cameroon's colonial and post-independence history, please see Human Rights Watch, *"These Killings Can Be Stopped" Government and Separatist Groups Abuses in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2018), https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/cameroon0718_web2.pdf pp. 12-15.

² This is a summary of the situation through 2017. For more detailed information on Cameroon's colonial, post-independence, and recent history, please see Human Rights Watch, "These Killings Can Be Stopped."

Moderate voices began to fade, as armed separatists, many of whom are known locally as “amba boys” or “amba,” grew in number, profile, and support, both nationally and internationally. They began to attack security forces and government officials as well as order and enforce school boycotts and lockdown strikes (or “ghost towns”), requiring people to stay at home and not go to work in the North-West and South-West regions to pressure the government into granting greater political recognition to that area.³

Escalation of the Crisis in 2018 and 2019

In 2018, thousands of security forces were deployed to the Anglophone regions, where they conducted often abusive large-scale operations to locate and drive out armed separatists.⁴ Armed separatists took control of some rural and urban periphery areas,⁵ erecting roadblocks and checkpoints.⁶ Separatists also continued to enforce school boycotts as well as weekly lockdown strikes.⁷ Several upticks in the violence occurred from January 2018 to December 2019, including around presidential elections;⁸ the arrest, detention, and trials of separatist leaders;⁹ and lockdowns imposed by armed separatists.¹⁰

Ongoing Violence Since 2020

Around the February 2020 legislative and municipal elections, armed separatist groups

³ Amnesty International, “Cameroon: A turn for the worse: Violence and human rights violations in Anglophone Cameroon,” June 12, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/8481/2018/en/> (accessed July 2021).

⁴ Human Rights Watch, “These Killings Can Be Stopped.”

⁵ International Crisis Group, “Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?” May 2, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-comment-arriver-aux-pourparlers> (accessed July 2021).

⁶ Amnesty International, “Cameroon: A turn for the worse: Violence and human rights violations in Anglophone Cameroon.”

⁷ “Cameroon: Video Shows Separatists Torturing Man,” Human Rights Watch news release, June 24, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/24/cameroon-video-shows-separatists-torturing-man>.

⁸ “Cameroon: New Attacks on Civilians By Troops, Separatists,” Human Rights Watch news release, March 28, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/28/cameroon-new-attacks-civilians-troops-separatists>.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, “These Killings Can Be Stopped”; Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Thousands Flee Violence in Cameroon’s English-Speaking Regions,” *VoA*, August 26, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/thousands-flee-violence-camerouns-english-speaking-regions> (accessed December 4, 2021); “Cameroon: Separatist Leaders Appeal Conviction,” Human Rights Watch news release, September 3, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/03/cameroon-separatist-leaders-appeal-conviction>.

¹⁰ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Nearly 70 Killed in Cameroon as Separatists Stop Youth Week Activities,” *VoA*, February 9, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/nearly-70-killed-cameroon-separatists-stop-youth-week-activities> (accessed July 2021); Peter Tah, “Cameroon’s conflict keeps schools shut,” *BBC*, September 3, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49529774> (accessed August 2021).

kidnapped over 100 people, burned public and private property, and threatened voters in the period before the elections. Security forces did not adequately protect civilians; instead, they committed retaliatory abuses during the same period.¹¹

In March 2020, the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF), an armed separatist group, unilaterally called for a ceasefire because of Covid-19.¹² Notably, neither the government nor the other armed separatist groups have called for a ceasefire despite the rising toll of the pandemic.¹³ Instead, after separatist fighters killed a police officer in September 2020, the government launched “Operation Bamenda Clean” to weed out separatists,¹⁴ during which the security forces also abused civilians.¹⁵

In December 2020, separatist fighters marred Cameroon’s first regional elections¹⁶ through boycotts, threats, and violent attacks.¹⁷ Attacks by both separatists—on civilians,¹⁸

¹¹ “Cameroon: Election Violence in Anglophone Regions,” Human Rights Watch news release, February 12, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/12/cameroon-election-violence-anglophone-regions>.

¹² “Cameroon rebels declare coronavirus ceasefire,” *BBC*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52053738> (accessed August 2021).

¹³ Daniel Finnan, Mixed reception to call for Covid-19 ceasefire in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions, *RFI*, March 27, 2020, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20200327-mixed-reception-to-call-for-coronavirus-ceasefire-in-cameroon-s-anglophone-regions> (accessed August 2021).

¹⁴ Tweet, Cameroon Radio Télévision, September 9, 2020, https://twitter.com/CRTV_web/status/1303453310951845889?s=20 (accessed August 2021); Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Military Sweeps Northwest City to Weed Out Separatists,” *VoA*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-military-sweeps-northwest-city-weed-out-separatists> (accessed August 2021).

¹⁵ “Cameroon Military Accused of “Severe Human Rights Abuses” in Operation “Clean Bamenda,”” *Mimi Mefo Info*, October 8, 2020, <https://mimimefoinfos.com/cameroon-military-accused-of-severe-human-rights-abuses-in-operation-clean-bamenda/> (accessed August 2021); Tweet, Ilaria Allegrozzi, September 12, 2020, <https://twitter.com/ilariallegro/status/1304691181616607232?s=20> (accessed December 4, 2021).

¹⁶ In December 2020, a 24,000-strong electoral college made up of regional delegates and traditional rulers voted to fill the posts of 900 regional councilors – 90 for each of the country’s 10 regions – putting into action a 1996 law that promised decentralized government but was never enacted.

“Cameroon holds first regional election amid opposition boycott,” *Aljazeera*, December 6, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/6/cameroon-holds-first-regional-election-amid-opposition-boycott> (accessed October 2021).

¹⁷ “1 Killed, Others Wounded as Cameroon Holds First Regional Elections,” *VoA*, December 6, 2020, https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_1-killed-others-wounded-cameroon-holds-first-regional-elections/6199252.html (accessed August 2021).

¹⁸ Ilaria Allegrozzi, “Armed Separatists’ Abuse Rife in Cameroon’s Anglophone Regions,” Human Rights Watch dispatch, March 12, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/12/armed-separatists-abuse-rife-cameroons-anglophone-regions#>.

government forces and authorities,¹⁹ and the UN²⁰—and by the army against civilians continued into 2021.²¹ September 2021 marked a new escalation of violence with separatist fighters killing at least 15 soldiers and several civilians in two separate attacks in the North-West region using improvised explosive devices and an anti-tank rocket launcher.²²

On October 5, Cameroonian Prime Minister Dion Ngute visited Bamenda, the capital of the North-West region, to follow up on the implementation of recommendations formulated during a national dialogue.²³ The same day, his public speech was interrupted by sustained gunfire, allegedly coming from separatist fighters. Ahead of Ngute's visit to Bamenda, the Ambazonian Defence Forces (ADF), one of the main armed separatist groups, had ordered residents to stay at home, saying that anyone participating in meetings with Ngute could be at risk.²⁴

Humanitarian Crisis

As a result of the Anglophone crisis, there are 573,900 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Anglophone regions as well as in the Francophone Littoral, West, and Centre regions.²⁵ In the Anglophone regions, 2.2 million people need humanitarian assistance.²⁶

¹⁹ "Cameroon: Attack On Sdo's Convoy in Mbengwi - Investigation Opens to Uncover Culprits," *All Africa*, January 8, 2021, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202101080575.html> (accessed August 2021).

²⁰ "The Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon strongly condemns the attack on a United Nations convoy in the South-West region of Cameroon," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) press release, April 3, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/humanitarian-coordinator-cameroon-strongly-condemns-attack-united-nations-convoy> (accessed August 2021).

²¹ "Cameroon: Nine Killed in Army Attack," Human Rights Watch news release, February 4, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/04/cameroon-nine-killed-army-attack>.

²² "Rebel attacks kill 15 soldiers, civilians in western Cameroon," Al Jazeera, September 20, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/20/rebel-attacks-kill-15-soldiers-in-troubled-cameroon> (accessed October 2021).

²³ "Cameroon: PM Dion Ngute embarks on 'peace mission' to Bamenda," *Journal du Cameroun*, October 3, 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-pm-dion-ngute-in-bamenda-for-peace-mission/> (accessed October 2021).

²⁴ "Gunfire disrupts Cameroon prime minister's visit to separatist region," *Reuters*, October 5, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gunfire-disrupts-cameroon-prime-ministers-visit-separatist-region-2021-10-05/> (accessed October 2021).

²⁵ "CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35," UNOCHA situation report, November 5, 2021, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/cameroon/document/cameroon-north-west-and-south-west-situation-report-no-35-30-september> (accessed November 2021).

²⁶ "CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35," UNOCHA situation report.

The provision of basic services, including education and health care, has been disrupted.²⁷ Humanitarian access remains a challenge due to the volatile security situation and the targeting, by armed separatist groups, of humanitarian personnel,²⁸ with the UN recording at least 19 incidents of abductions involving humanitarian staff between April 2020 and August 2021.²⁹ Due to insecurity and separatist roadblocks across the Anglophone regions in August 2021 alone, 40,000 people could not receive humanitarian aid, according to UNOCHA.³⁰

By 2021, more than 1.2 million school-aged children were in need of humanitarian assistance in the two Anglophone regions, and approximately 700,000 of them needed urgent access to education services.³¹

Since late 2016, up to 66,000 people from Cameroon have also fled to Nigeria.³² Thousands more have left the continent for Europe or the United States.³³

At least 4,000 civilians have been killed by armed separatist fighters or government forces in the Anglophone regions since late 2016.³⁴

²⁷ “Healthcare in the community, by the community in Cameroon,” *Médecins Sans Frontières*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.msf.org/community-based-healthcare-lifeline-displaced-people-cameroon> (accessed August 2021).

²⁸ Ilaria Allegrozzi, “Renewed Attacks on Aid Workers in Cameroon,” Human Rights Watch dispatch, June 4, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/04/renewed-attacks-aid-workers-cameroon>.

²⁹ “Cameroon Humanitarian Bulletin Issue N°23,” UNOCHA, August 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cameroon%20Humanitarian%20Bulletin%20Issue%20N%C2%B023%20-%20August%202021.pdf> (accessed on October 2021).

³⁰ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 34,” UNOCHA situation report, August 31, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-north-west-and-south-west-situation-report-no-34-31-august-2021> (accessed December 2021).

³¹ UNOCHA, “Cameroon: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021,” April 7, 2021, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/cameroon/document/cameroon-humanitarian-needs-overview-2021> (accessed August 2021).

³² “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 29,” UNOCHA situation report, March 31, 2021, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/cameroon/document/cameroon-north-west-and-south-west-situation-report-no29> (accessed August 2021).

³³ International Organization for Migration, “Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean - Compilation of Available Data and Information,” August 31, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/mixed-migration-flows-mediterranean-compilation-available-data-and-information-august-1> (accessed December 2021); “Cyprus Fact Sheet,” UNHCR, February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/605b506d19.pdf> (accessed December 2021); “US: Protect Cameroonians From Deportation,” Human Rights Watch news release, December 18, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/18/us-protect-cameroonians-deportation>.

³⁴ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Data on Cameroon, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/> (accessed December 2021); “Cameroon,” International Crisis Group, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon> (accessed December 4, 2021); Human Rights Watch monitoring.

Economic Impact

The crisis has resulted in a significant contraction of the economies of the North-West and South-West regions, also seriously affecting the whole country's economy.³⁵ According to the World Bank, "given the extent of destruction of productive assets, as well as the adverse effects of the crisis on the local credit market, the impacts may be lasting."³⁶

In the Anglophone regions, heads of households have been killed,³⁷ business have closed, and people have lost their jobs.³⁸ Displaced families have lost their livelihoods, so struggle to pay for food, housing, and their children's school fees.³⁹ The violence has impacted thousands of farmers by displacing them,⁴⁰ thus increasing their risk of hunger and poverty as well as challenges providing for their children. Some parents in the Anglophone regions told Human Rights Watch they had to pull their children out of school because they could not afford the school fees and the associated costs of education, including books, uniforms, supplies, and transportation.⁴¹

The World Bank has estimated that "the combined effects of lower income due to reduced employment and increases in consumption prices due to supply chain disruptions inflicted a heavy toll on household welfare," and that in 2019 "household welfare in the South-West and in the North-West regions was lower by 13.2 % and 21.2 %, respectively" compared to prior to the crisis.⁴²

³⁵ International Crisis Group, "Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads," August 2, 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/250-camerouns-anglophone-crisis-crossroads> (accessed August 2021).

³⁶ World Bank Group, "La crise sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun : Évaluation de l'impact économique et social," January 2021 (accessed September 2021).

³⁷ Delphine Brun, "A failure to address the vulnerability of men and boys," Norwegian Refugee Council, March 30, 2021, <https://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/2016/2021/a-failure-to-address-the-vulnerability-of-men-and-boys/> (accessed August 2021).

³⁸ "Cameroon economy hard hit by anglophone unrest, jihadist attacks," *France24*, October 5, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20181005-cameroon-economy-hard-hit-anglophone-unrest-jihadist-attacks> (accessed August 2021).

³⁹ ACAPS, "ACAPS Thematic Report: Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions," February 19, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/acaps-thematic-report-cameroon-education-crisis-northwest-and-southwest-regions-19> (accessed August 2021).

⁴⁰ Elias Ntungwe Ngalame, "Cameroon conflict turns climate-stressed farmers into 'food beggars,'" *Thomas Reuters Foundation*, July 30, 2019, <https://news.trust.org/item/20190730063859-9uxv7/> (accessed August 2021).

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with a single mother of four children in the North-West region, April 2021, and with a father of two children in the North-West region, April 2021.

⁴² World Bank Group, "La crise sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun : Évaluation de l'impact économique et social."

Responses to the Anglophone Crisis

The Cameroonian government and members of the international community began to respond strongly to the crisis in 2019, approximately three years after it started.

Cameroon's Response

Amid increasing violence and sustained international pressure, President Paul Biya held a national dialogue, from September 30 to October 4, 2019, to address the Anglophone crisis. The dialogue, led by Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute, was attended by more than 1,000 delegates including government officials, clergy, teachers, and representatives of civil society.⁴³ However, main separatist groups, as well as major political opposition parties,⁴⁴ did not attend, and some opposition political leaders walked out in protest.⁴⁵

The dialogue did not include victims of human rights abuses in the Anglophone regions.⁴⁶

The dialogue resulted in a special status for the two Anglophone regions to re-enforce the autonomy of administrative areas.⁴⁷ The dialogue's final report did not address human rights and accountability issues.⁴⁸

⁴³ "National Dialogue in Cameroon goes on without the Separatists," Vatican News, October 2, 2019, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/africa/news/2019-10/national-dialogue-in-cameroon-goes-on-without-the-separatists.html> (accessed September 2021); Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Separatist Leaders Shun Cameroon's 'National Dialogue,'" *VoA*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/separatist-leaders-shun-camerouns-national-dialogue> (accessed September 2021).

⁴⁴ "Cameroon's MRC says no to Biya dialogue until Kamto is released," *Africa Times*, September 19, 2019, <https://africatimes.com/2019/09/19/camerouns-mrc-says-no-to-biya-dialogue-until-kamto-is-released/> (accessed August 2021).

⁴⁵ Ngala Killian Chimtom, "Cameroon's conflict: Will the National Dialogue make any difference?" *BBC*, October 5, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-49931662> (accessed August 2021).

⁴⁶ "Crise au Cameroun anglophone: ouverture du «grand dialogue national,»" RFI, September 30, 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190930-crise-anglophone-cameroun-ouverture-grand-dialogue-national> (accessed August 2021); "Ouverture du "grand dialogue national" pour régler la crise séparatiste au Cameroun," *France24*, September 30, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/fr/20190930-cameroun-ouverture-grand-dialogue-national-crise-separatiste-yaounde> (accessed August 2021).

⁴⁷ Ngala Killian Chimtom, "Cameroon's conflict: Will the National Dialogue make any difference?"

⁴⁸ Open Letter from Human Rights Watch to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to Address Serious and Systematic Human Rights Violations in Cameroon, October 28, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/28/open-letter-urges-african-commission-human-and-peoples-rights-address-serious-and>.

The government held peace talks with detained leaders of the Ambazonia Interim Government (Sisiku) separatist group in April and July 2020.⁴⁹

In a September 20, 2021, press release, Col. Cyrille Atonfack Nguemo, the army spokesperson, said that attacks carried out by separatist groups in September 2021 with the use of weapons that included improvised explosive devices and rocket launchers are “largely the result of” separatists “joining forces with other terrorist entities operating outside the country’s borders” and announced a “paradigm change” in ongoing military operations.⁵⁰ Contacted by the BBC, Atonfack refused to provide more information about any groups allegedly collaborating with and supporting the Anglophone separatist fighters.⁵¹

Addressing the general debate of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2021, Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister for Foreign Affairs, speaking on behalf of President Paul Biya, said Cameroon is “maintaining efforts in the North-West and South-West regions to end the socio-political tensions fueled by armed groups.” He added that measures taken by the government following the national dialogue, including the creation of a commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism, the granting of a special status to the Anglophone regions, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program, a humanitarian assistance plan and a reconstruction plan, are already making “tangible results with a gradual return to peace, that “despite some isolated acts of banditry perpetrated by armed gangs, the situation is improving,” and that “our defense and security forces have been deployed on the ground to protect the population and their property with professionalism and respect for human rights.”⁵²

⁴⁹ R. Maxwell Bone, “Cameroon’s elusive peace: Rivals, rifts, and secret talks,” *The New Humanitarian*, March 29, 2021, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2021/3/29/camerouns-elusive-peace-rivals-rifts-and-secret-talks> (accessed August 2021).

⁵⁰ Tweet, Cameroon Radio Télévision, September 20, 2021, https://twitter.com/CRTV_web/status/1440020035808997376?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwttrm%5E1440020035808997376%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5E%5E1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.crtv.cm%2F2021%2F09%2Fnord-ouest-et-sud-ouest-changement-de-strategie-au-front%2F (accessed October 2021).

⁵¹ Armand Mouko Boudombo, “Crise Anglophone : comment les groupes armés étrangers changent la donne au Cameroun?” *BBC*, September 23, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-58672333> (accessed October 2021). In an April 9 2021 press conference, Ayaba Cho Lucas, leader of Anglophone separatist group, Ambazonia Governing Council, and Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a separatist group in Nigeria, announced to have joined forces and formed a cross-border alliance. “Separatists in Cameroon and Nigeria join forces,” *Deutsche Welle*, July 31, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/separatists-in-cameroon-and-nigeria-join-forces/av-58713657> (accessed October 2021).

⁵² “Cameroon - Minister for Foreign Affairs Addresses General Debate, 76th Session,” United Nations, September 27, 2021, <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1h/k1h2cmi88y> (accessed October 2021).

Response of Regional and International Actors

The key actions of UN, European, and US actors are highlighted below.

March 2019: Thirty-eight members of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) expressed deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation in Anglophone regions and called on Cameroon to engage fully with the OHCHR.⁵³

April 2019: The European Parliament passed a resolution condemning violence in the Anglophone regions, expressing concern at the government's failure to hold security forces accountable.⁵⁴

May 2019: The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) visited Cameroon, met national authorities, and raised concerns over human rights abuses in the Anglophone regions as well as the lack of access for human rights workers.⁵⁵ The UN Security Council organized an informal session on the humanitarian situation in Cameroon,⁵⁶ putting the situation in Cameroon on Council members' radars.⁵⁷

July 2019: Switzerland agreed to mediate talks between Cameroonian authorities and separatists.⁵⁸

October 2019: The US cut Cameroon's trade privileges, citing persistent human rights violations in the country, including in the Anglophone regions.⁵⁹

⁵³ Statement from the UK Mission to the United Nations Geneva, "Human Rights Council 40: Cameroon," March 21, 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/human-rights-council-40-cameroon> (accessed August 2021).

⁵⁴ European Parliament, "European Parliament resolution on Cameroon," April 17, 2019, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2019-0245_EN.html (accessed August 2021).

⁵⁵ "Bachelet welcomes Cameroon's willingness to cooperate to tackle human rights crises," UNHCR news release, May 6, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24565&LangID=E> (accessed August 2021).

⁵⁶ "Arria-Formula Meeting of the UN Security Council," UN Web-TV, May 13, 2019, <http://webtv.un.org/live-now/watch/arria-formula-meeting-of-the-un-security-council/6036271424001/?term=> (accessed August 2021).

⁵⁷ Mausí Segun (Human Rights Watch), "Africa Should Not Fail Cameroon", Op-ed, *Jeune Afrique*, June 28, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/28/africa-should-not-fail-cameroon>.

⁵⁸ "Swiss government to mediate Cameroon peace talks," *Reuters*, June 27, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cameroon-separatists-swiss/swiss-government-to-mediate-cameroon-peace-talks-idUSKCN1TS2Fo> (accessed August 2021).

⁵⁹ Ilaria Allegrozzi, "US Cuts Cameroon Trade Privileges Over Rights Abuses," Human Rights Watch dispatch, November 5, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/05/us-cuts-cameroon-trade-privileges-over-rights-abuses>. In February 2019, the United States had already scaled down its military assistance to Cameroon over allegations of human rights violations by the Cameroonian security forces. Dionne Searcey, Eric Schmitt, and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "U.S. Reduces Military Aid to Cameroon Over Human Rights Abuses," *New York Times*, February 7, 2019,

February 2020: The UN Secretary-General, his special advisers, and the UNHCHR raised concerns over human rights abuses.⁶⁰

January 2021: The Vatican's secretary of state visited Cameroon and expressed the Roman Catholic Church's willingness to facilitate dialogue between the government and separatists.⁶¹

May 2021: For the first time, the UN Secretary-General included the situation in Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions as a "situation of concern" in his annual report to the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict.

June 2021: The UN Secretary-General condemned the violence against civilians, schools, and UN and humanitarian personnel and property in the Anglophone regions. He encouraged Cameroonian authorities "to prioritize and promote inclusive dialogue and reconciliation."⁶²

June 2021: The US secretary of state announced visa restrictions "on individuals who are believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon." He also condemned human rights violations and threats against advocates and humanitarian workers.⁶³

On November 25, 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning rights abuses in Cameroon and urging the EU to work with regional actors including the AU and ECOWAS to facilitate dialogue. The Parliament urged, among others, the

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/07/world/africa/cameroon-military-abuses-united-states-aid.html> (accessed August 2021).

⁶⁰ "Guterres 'deeply concerned' over deadly assault in north-west Cameroon," *UN News*, February 18, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1057571> (accessed December 5, 2021); Rupert Colville, "Press briefing note on Cameroon," Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, February 18, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25566&LangID=E> (accessed August 2021); "UN officials call for enhanced protection of civilians facing escalating violence in Cameroon," United Nations press release, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/2020.shtml> (accessed August 2021).

⁶¹ Daniel Finnan, "Can Vatican visit to Cameroon break the Anglophone crisis stalemate?" *RFI*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20210205-can-vatican-visit-to-cameroon-break-anglophone-crisis-stalemate-diplomacy-africa-paul-biya-bamenda-armed-separatists-attacks> (accessed August 2021).

⁶² United Nations Security Council, "The situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa," *S/2021/517*, June 1, 2021, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/517> (accessed August 2021).

⁶³ Antony J. Blinken, Announcement of Visa Restrictions on Those Undermining the Peaceful Resolution of the Crisis in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon, June 7, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/announcement-of-visa-restrictions-on-those-undermining-the-peaceful-resolution-of-the-crisis-in-the-anglophone-regions-of-cameroon/> (accessed August 2021).

Cameroonian government and the leaders of separatist groups “to agree on a humanitarian ceasefire” and encouraged both parties “to agree on confidence-building measures, such as freeing non-violent political prisoners and lifting school boycotts.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ European Parliament, “Joint Motion for a Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Cameroon,” November 25, 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0553_EN.html (accessed November 2021).

II. School Boycotts

They [the amba boys] say: “Don’t send your children to school. It’s not safe.” They tell us there’s too much insecurity and soldiers cannot be trusted. “If they get shot, it will be your fault. When Ambazonia will be freed, we’ll run the schools and you will send your children there.” That’s what they have told parents.

— Parent of two primary school children in the South-West region, May 2021⁶⁵

At the beginning of the crisis in late 2016, as part of a civil disobedience campaign to create a new Anglophone nation called “Ambazonia,” Anglophone activist groups viewed a school boycott as a means to protest the perceived breakdown of the Anglophone regions’ separate education system and its assimilation into the French-speaking system.⁶⁶ However, by the end of 2017, separatist leaders started using school boycotts to disrupt normal life in the Anglophone regions, as leverage in negotiations with the Cameroonian government, and to mobilize international attention to the crisis unfolding in the North-West and South-West regions.⁶⁷

Since 2017, armed separatists have consistently targeted school buildings and killed, kidnapped, assaulted, harassed, and threatened education officials and students for failing to comply with separatists’ demands to boycott education.⁶⁸

According to Peter, a 24-year-old former separatist fighter affiliated with a group known as Asawana: “[Our generals] made us think it was nice and important to shut down schools...

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with a parent of two primary school children in the South-West region, May 3, 2021.

⁶⁶ R. Maxwell Bone & Akem Kelvin Nkwain, “After the Kumba massacre: Schools in Cameroon’s Anglophone crisis,” *African Arguments*, November 3, 2020, <https://africanarguments.org/2020/11/after-the-kumba-massacre-schools-in-cameroons-anglophone-crisis/> (accessed August 2021); Mbom Sixtus, “In Cameroon, education has become a victim of war,” *The New Humanitarian*, July 24, 2019, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/07/24/cameroon-education-has-become-victim-war> (accessed August 2021).

⁶⁷ R. Maxwell Bone & Akem Kelvin Nkwain, “After the Kumba massacre: Schools in Cameroon’s Anglophone crisis,” Ilaria Allegrozzi, “Targeted for Going to School in Cameroon,” Human Rights Watch dispatch, March 12, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/12/targeted-going-school-cameroon>; ACAPS, “Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions.”

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, “*These Killings Can Be Stopped.*”

They said that if schools are going on, the world will think that there is no crisis in the Anglophone regions.”⁶⁹

Anglophone Separatist Groups at a Glance

Most Anglophone separatists are organized around three main political bodies that have armed wings operating in both the North-West and South-West regions:

- Ambazonia Interim Government (Sisiku), led by Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, who is serving a life sentence for terrorism and secession charges at a high-security prison in Yaoundé;⁷⁰
- Ambazonia Interim Government (Sako), a splinter faction led by Samuel Ikome Sako, a pastor based in the US;⁷¹ and
- Ambazonia Governing Council, led by Norway-based Ayaba Cho Lucas.⁷²

The armed factions linked to the two “Interim Governments” are known as the Ambazonia Restoration Forces, which do not have a clear command structure and consist of various groups, such as the Terminators of Ambazonia, the Bui Warriors, the Red Dragons, and the Buffaloes of Bali, etc.⁷³ The armed wing of the Ambazonia Governing Council is the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF), headed by Benedict Kuah.

There are also several other smaller separatist groups that do not fall under the three main groups, including:

- African People’s Liberation Movement, which is led by US-based Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga and whose armed wing is the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF);⁷⁴
- British Southern Cameroons Resistance Forces, headed by “General RK”; and

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Peter, April 27, 2021.

⁷⁰ “Cameroon: Separatist Leaders Appeal Conviction,” Human Rights Watch news release.

⁷¹ The split in the movement followed the arrest of Sisiku in Nigeria in January 2018, along with nine other leaders and their extradition to Cameroon. See also: “Who We are?” Interim Government Official Site Federal Republic of Ambazonia, <https://www.ambazoniagov.org/index.php/about-us/who-we-are> (accessed August 2021).

⁷² International Crisis Group, “Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?”

⁷³ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with separatist leaders and activists in June, July, August, and September 2021.

⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch conversation with Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga, leader of the African People’s Liberation Movement (APLM), May and September 2021.

- Tigers of Ambazonia, headed by Chia Martin aka “Tiger 1.”⁷⁵

As of 2019, there were approximately 2,000 to 4,000 separatist fighters in the Anglophone regions.⁷⁶

Separatist Groups’ Positions on School Resumption

In public statements and communications with Human Rights Watch, most separatist groups provided two main reasons for the school boycott: it is not safe for students to go to school due to violence, and the education provided in government schools is substandard and biased.

The Ambazonia Governing Council and its senior leadership have repeatedly stated that it will not allow schools managed by the Cameroonian government to function in the English-speaking regions.⁷⁷ In a May 26, 2021 official letter in response to Human Rights Watch’s questions about the Ambazonia Governing Council’s position on school resumption, its leader, Ayaba Cho Lucas, wrote:

Schools will remain closed in Ambazonia because of insecurity created by the failure of Cameroon to respect its obligations under international humanitarian law to respect schools and teachers as civilian objects and, most importantly, because of our opposition to the introduction or continuous usage of any colonial curriculum of education as the basis of knowledge in Ambazonia. The Ambazonia Governing Council has however facilitated, permitted, and opened community schools within areas of control of the Ambazonia Defence Forces and other sister forces.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with separatist leaders and activists in June, July, August, and September 2021.

⁷⁶ International Crisis Group, “Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?”

⁷⁷ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “In Cameroon’s Anglophone Regions, Some Schools Reopen After 4-Year Closure,” October 9, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroons-anglophone-regions-some-schools-reopen-after-4-year-closure> (accessed August 2021). See also Ayaba Cho Lucas explaining the concept of ‘Ambazonia Education Board’: “We did not simply reject its enslaving curriculum of education; we have created ours and modelled it on a study of more than 10 of the best educational systems in the world. We did not only reject its GCE Board. We have established the Ambazonia Education Board that currently oversees Community schools.” “Back To School: Ambazonia Leaders Maintain Boycott, Activists Advocate For Resumption,” Cameroon News Agency, October 4, 2020, <https://cameroonnewsagency.com/back-to-school-ambazonia-leaders-maintain-boycott-activists-advocate-for-resumption/> (accessed August 2021).

⁷⁸ Ambazonia Governing Council, Executive Office, “Statement on Education,” May 25, 2021, available in Appendix VIII.

In a September 30, 2021 official letter in response to a request for information by Human Rights Watch, Akoson Raymond, secretary of the Department of Human Rights & Humanitarian Services of the Ambazonia Governing Council, said:

The People of Ambazonia have collectively rejected Cameroun’s colonial educational system. The Ambazonia Governing Council [AGovC] champions for the resumption of classes under an Ambazonian educational system. That is why, following the call of school boycott, the AGovC presented an alternative learning system under community schools run and managed by Ambazonians. Currently, Ambazonia boasts of fifty-four community schools throughout its territory.⁷⁹

On May 19, 2021, Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga, chairman of the African People’s Liberation Movement and head of its armed wing (the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces), disapproved the resumption of government schools: “We support the education of our people, but we do not support a brain-wash educational system that has been imposed on our people for more than 60 years.”⁸⁰

In a September 29, 2021, official letter in response to a request for information by Human Rights Watch, Dr. Jonathan Levy, Akwanga’s legal representative, said:

The respondents want to stress they support education [...]. The situation in Ambazonia is a tragedy, children are not only insecure in their schools but even more so in their homes, towns, and villages. This appalling situation which is going on for more than four years now is the responsibility of the Republic of Cameroon.⁸¹

On May 18, 2021, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, the jailed president of the Ambazonia Interim Government,⁸² told Human Rights Watch: “We wish to see peace return to Southern

⁷⁹ Letter sent via email by Akoson Raymond, Secretary of the Department of Human Rights & Humanitarian Services of the Ambazonia Governing Council, on September 30, 2021, available in Appendix VII.

⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch e-messages with Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga in May 2021.

⁸¹ Letter sent via email by Dr. Jonathan Levy, legal representative of Akwanga, on September 29, 2021. The letter is available in Appendix III.

⁸² “Cameroon: Separatist Leaders Appeal Conviction,” Human Rights Watch news release.

Ambazonia so that our children can attend school in a nation that can guarantee their safety, security, and prospects for unadulterated and good quality education within a meritocratic and prosperous nation.”⁸³

In a letter dated November 29, 2021, Sisiku vociferously objected to Human Rights Watch’s attribution of responsibility for many of the attacks on education to armed separatist groups, and among other things, stated:

I share your horror at the brutal attacks on minors, schools and educational professionals. These attacks are inconsistent with the principled political campaign for rights and self-determination of Ambazonians of which I am a part. One of the reasons we must work vigilantly to end this war by addressing the root causes is because of how war distorts the human spirit and draws out horrific behavior. [...] We are unequivocally and vigorously against all actions that harm students and educational professionals, and we stand firm in asserting that the primary perpetrator of such harm is the Cameroon military and paramilitary forces, and that they must be called to account for this.⁸⁴

On September 30, 2020, the president of the splinter faction of the Interim Government, Samuel Ikome Sako, tweeted that school resumption can only take place after the establishment of a “negotiated ceasefire or safe school zones supervised by the United Nations.”⁸⁵

In a September 27, 2021 Zoom call with Human Rights Watch, Christopher Anu, the spokesperson of the Ambazonia Interim Government (Sako), said:

It was our policy from the beginning of this struggle [...] that schools be shut down, that courts be shut down... That was the policy we had [...] We

⁸³ Human Rights Watch exchanges with Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, May 2021.

⁸⁴ Letter from the “Leadership of Ambazonia in Prison,” signed by Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, Barrister Eyambe Elias, Professor Augustine Awasum, Dr Egbe Ogork, Barrister Shufai Blaise S. Berinyuy, DR. H. T. Kimeng, Dr Nfor N. Nfor, Dr Cornelius N. Kwanga, Dr Fidelis Ndeh-Che, November 28, 2021, available in Appendix IX

⁸⁵ Tweet, Sael Sako, September 30, 2020, <https://twitter.com/SamuelSako/status/1311082525092126720?s=20> (accessed August 2021).

revised the policy, taking cognizance of the insecurity and the safety situation on the ground. We said to the parents and the schools: “the decision to send your kids to school will be yours, not that of the interim government.” [The] decision to open will be that of the proprietors of the school, not that of the interim government.⁸⁶

On November 12, 2021, Anu announced a renewed ban on all schools across the Anglophone regions, threatening violence against teachers, students, and school owners who violate the order.⁸⁷

At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, activists in different separatist groups, including Eric Tataw and Mark Bareta, changed their positions from opposing to supporting school resumption.⁸⁸ On September 28, 2020, Tataw urged the reopening of schools on Twitter: “I’m unapologetically asking all Ambazonian fighters & activists [to] join me in the crusade to allow school resumption.”⁸⁹ On September 29, 2020, Bareta tweeted: “School boycott is no longer a weapon of our struggle for independence. Thus, where possible, Ambazonia Forces should allow education and even encourage [going to] schools.”⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Human Rights Zoom interview with Christopher Anu, September 27, 2021.

⁸⁷ E-Messages by Christopher Anu to Human Rights Watch in November 2021.

⁸⁸ Atia T. Azohnwi, “Cameroon - Anglophone Crisis: Eric Tataw, Mark Bareta drum calls for effective school resumption in North West, South West,” *Cameroon-Info.net*, September 30, 2020, <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroon-anglophone-crisis-eric-tataw-mark-bareta-drum-calls-for-effective-school-resumption-in-383841.html> (accessed August 2021); Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “In Cameroon’s Anglophone Regions, Some Schools Reopen After 4-Year Closure.”

⁸⁹ Tweet, Eric Tataw, September 28, 2020, <https://twitter.com/EricTataw/status/1310647798698774532?s=20> (accessed August 2021).

⁹⁰ Tweet, Mark Bareta, September 29, 2020, <https://twitter.com/MarkBareta/status/1310864066110521347?s=20> (accessed August 2021).

III. Attacks on Students by Armed Separatists

Many of my students do not wear school uniforms on their way to and back from school. If they wear them, they can be at risk of being spotted by the separatist fighters on the road and attacked. Also, they don't use school bags. They put their books and notebooks in shopping bags like those we use to go to the market to buy food. Some also prefer to leave their books in my office. These are some of the coping strategies students have developed to keep safe.

— A 36-year-old chemistry teacher in Buea, June 2021⁹¹

Over 500 students have been attacked in the Anglophone regions by separatist fighters since 2017, according to reports from the UN and other credible organizations, as well as Human Rights Watch research. Human Rights Watch documented in detail 20 of those attacks which involved threats, intimidation, harassment, physical assaults, kidnapping, and even killings of students to force them to stop attending school. Human Rights Watch documented the kidnapping by separatist fighters of 255 students, including 78 who were taken from their school in Nkwen, North-West region, in November 2018, and 170 from their boarding school in Kumbo, North-West region, in February 2019.⁹² In some cases, both in and outside of schools, attackers destroyed or seized students' books, documents, or notebooks. Many students told Human Rights Watch that they go to school without wearing their uniforms for fear of being spotted and attacked by separatist fighters.

Students Human Rights Watch interviewed believed their attackers were separatist fighters because of their clothing (plainclothes or just military pants or camouflage t-shirts as opposed to full uniforms), accessories (including amulets), types of weapons (such as hunting guns and machetes), language (Pidgin English, English, and local dialects), statements that students should not go to school and schools should be closed, and extortion tactics commonly used by separatist fighters. When kidnappings occurred, the perpetrators took their victims to camps in often remote areas—as opposed to police,

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a chemistry teacher from the South-West region on June 7, 2021.

⁹² Lewis Mudge, "Residents Caught in Outbreak of Violence in Cameroon," Human Rights Watch dispatch, February 20, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/20/residents-caught-outbreak-violence-cameroon>.

gendarmerie, or military stations or barracks—one of the common tactics used by armed separatists.



Screenshot of an October 9, 2019 Facebook video posted by Anglophone activist, Erick Tataw, showing two students and their father kidnapped by armed separatist fighters. Cameroon-Info.Net, Cameroon – Anglophone Crisis: Separatists Kidnap Students, Parent In Fresh Efforts Against Education, October 10, 2019, <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroon-anglophone-crisis-separatists-kidnap-students-parent-in-fresh-efforts-against-education-353859.html>

Attacks in the South-West Region

Five Public High School Students Kidnapped and Beaten, Bafia (September 22, 2018)

A 25-year-old high school student, Steve, said that five separatist fighters, armed with guns and machetes, kidnapped him and four other students, between 21 and 22 years old, including one woman, early in the morning on their way to school:

They beat me up, they hit me and my friends with sticks and machetes on the soles of our feet, in the arms, and in the back.... They cut my right hand. I had a serious wound, and I was bleeding.... They demanded a ransom of 500,000 CFA [\$933]. My mom didn't have that amount. She pleaded with them in tears and eventually gave them a sum of 200,000 CFA [US\$373] for my release.⁹³

Steve was released after two weeks. He said he was too afraid to return to school and hid in the bush for four months before relocating to Limbe, South-West region, where he now works as a driver and lives with a relative.⁹⁴

Public University Football Team Kidnapped, Buea (March 20, 2019)

Suspected separatist fighters carried out an assault at the University of Buea's football field and kidnapped at least 15 male football players from the university's team.⁹⁵ Prior to the incident, on social media, suspected separatists had warned Anglophone teams to stay out of competitions organized by the Cameroonian government.⁹⁶ The students, some of whom were beaten, were released the following day, and the military arrested at least 10 suspects about a week later.⁹⁷ It is unclear whether a ransom was paid to secure the

⁹³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Steve, April 1, 2021.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Steve, April 1, 2021, and with his relative, June 30, 2021.

⁹⁵ "Crise anglophone: 15 joueurs de l'équipe de football de l'Université de Buea kidnappés," *Journal du Cameroun*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/crise-anglophone-15-joueurs-de-lequipe-de-football-de-luniversite-de-buea-kidnappes/> (accessed August 2021); "Student football team abducted in Anglophone Cameroon," *BBC*, March 20, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/21/africa/cameroon-university-football-team-abducted-intl/index.html> (accessed August 2021); Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Cameroon Football Teams Move After Kidnapping of Players, Coaches," *VoA*, March 29, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-football-teams-move-after-kidnapping-of-players-coaches-/4842843.html> (accessed August 2021).

⁹⁶ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Cameroon Football Teams Move After Kidnapping of Players, Coaches."

⁹⁷ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Cameroon Football Teams Move After Kidnapping of Players, Coaches."

students' freedom.⁹⁸ The fate of the 10 suspects is also unknown, although Human Rights Watch has sought information on their fate from the government.

Female Public University Student Kidnapped and Sexually Assaulted, Buea (June 13, 2019)

Six separatist fighters kidnapped Veronica, a 23-year-old University of Buea student, at about 3:30 p.m. They took her to an abandoned school in Bomaka neighborhood and sexually assaulted her before taking her to their camp in the bush, where they threatened her with death. They released her the next day following a ransom payment of 500,000 CFA (US\$933). Veronica said:

On the road, I saw six amba boys following me. They were armed: two had guns. They stopped me and ordered me to follow them. They asked me to give them my school bag, which I happened to have with me, with my laptop and a book inside. I got scared and walked with them till the roundabout, when I pretended to collapse, just to call for attention. But no one came to rescue me, and [the separatist fighters] carried me. They took me first to an abandoned school, the Government Secondary School Bomaka, where they kept me for a few hours before taking me to their camp in the bush. In the school, one of them sexually assaulted me. They told me I was being kidnapped because I was a student, because I was going to school.⁹⁹

Following the incident, she relocated to Limbe, South-West region for safety. She later returned to Buea to resume her studies in January 2020.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Meme Dominic and Bukola Adebayo, Kidnapped university football team freed in Cameroon, *CNN*, March 22, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/21/africa/cameroon-university-football-team-abducted-intl/index.html> (accessed August 2021).

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 23-year-old University of Buea student, April 5, 2021

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 23-year-old University of Buea student, April 5, 2021

Secondary School Student Kidnapped, Buea (January 30, 2020)

On January 30, 2020, armed separatists kidnapped Marie, a 19-year-old secondary school student, in Buea, in Cameroon's Anglophone South-West region, on her way back from school. Three days later, they chopped her finger off with a machete.¹⁰¹

They were armed with machetes and knives. They found schoolbooks in my bag and seized it. They blindfolded me so I could not see where they were taking me. We had to walk for few hours. I was not given food. I slept on the ground outside for three days. The amba called my father and asked him to pay money for my release. On the third day, when I was about to be released, at 10 am, they cut my finger with a machete. One of the boys did it. They punished me because they found schoolbooks in my bag. They wanted to cut a finger of my right hand to prevent me from writing again. I begged them [not to], and then they chopped the forefinger of my left hand.¹⁰²

Marie said the separatists also maimed a 19-year-old man who was held with her and also accused of attending school. Both students were released on February 3, after a ransom payment.

Human Rights Watch also reviewed photographs showing Marie's finger wrapped in a bandage after medical treatment.

¹⁰¹ Ilaria Allegrozzi, "Targeted for Going to School in Cameroon."

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Marie, February 12, 2020.



Marie shows her finger wrapped in a bandage after she received medical treatment at a health facility in Buea, South-West region © Private, January 2020, Buea, South-West region, Cameroon

11 University Students Wounded in Explosive Attack, Buea (November 10, 2021)

According to media reports, an explosive device thrown on to the roof of a lecture hall at the University of Buea wounded at least 11 students.¹⁰³

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but media quoted “two security sources” as saying that the authorities suspected it was carried out by separatist groups,¹⁰⁴ while Horace Manga Ngomo, the University vice-chancellor, said that “an investigation will tell us who the perpetrators are.”¹⁰⁵

Attacks in the North-West Region

Public High School Student Threatened and Assaulted, Kumbo (late 2017)

Separatist fighters assaulted Tim, a 21-year-old student, on his way to school in Kumbo.¹⁰⁶ He recounted his experience: “They beat me up near my head. They punched me. They told me, ‘Why are you going to school? Schools should be shut. Why are you stubborn?’ I still

¹⁰³ “Explosive attack on Cameroon university lecture hall wounds 11,” *Reuters*, November 11, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/explosion-injures-nine-university-students-suspected-cameroon-attack-2021-11-10/> (accessed November 2021); “Bomb Wounds 11 University Students in Cameroon,” *VoA*, November 10, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/bomb-wounds-11-university-students-in-cameroon/6308195.html> (accessed November 2021).

¹⁰⁴ “Explosive attack on Cameroon university lecture hall wounds 11,” *Reuters*.

¹⁰⁵ “Explosive attack on Cameroon university lecture hall wounds 11,” *Reuters*.

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tim, April 6, 2021.

have a scar on the back of my head as a result of the beatings.”¹⁰⁷ His mother knew about her son’s beating and independently informed Human Rights Watch about this incident.¹⁰⁸

Public High School Student Harassed and Threatened, Mangu (January 2018)

Sara, 21, dropped out of school and fled Ndu town in 2017 because separatist fighters had occupied her school and increased their threats against teachers and students. While moving to Yaoundé to continue her education in January 2018, separatist fighters targeted her:

I rented a motorbike with a driver to go to Yaoundé and on my way to Yaoundé, in Mangu, four amba boys armed with guns stopped the motorbike, searched my bag, and found my school documents, including my school card, my [General Certificate of Education Examination Ordinary Level], and my books. They snatched and ripped them up in front of me. They said that they did not want to see any such documents around.... They said all schools should be closed and if they saw me again with my school materials, they would harm me.¹⁰⁹

Public University Student Kidnapped and Threatened, Njinikejem (December 2018)

Carl, a 24-year-old former University of Bamenda student, said armed separatists who identified themselves as fighters from the group SOCADEF kidnapped, threatened, and tried to recruit him in Njinikejem. They held him in their camp for three days. He believed separatist fighters targeted him not only because of his studies, but also because his uncle is a government official.¹¹⁰

Less than a month later, on January 2, 2019, four SOCADEF fighters went to his house, did not find him, and threatened his mother. Carl said, “She told me that they left a very clear message that if I didn’t join their group, there would be

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tim, April 6, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tim’s mother, March 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Sara, April 7, 2021.

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch in-person interview with Carl, Nicosia, Cyprus, August 16, 2019.

consequences.” For his safety and because he wanted to study, he and his mother decided he needed to leave Cameroon.¹¹¹

Public High School Student Threatened, Bamenda (February 2019)

Sam, now 15, described how three separatist fighters with guns and knives stopped him on his way back from school, the Government Bilingual High School Bamenda:

I was walking home from school alone when the amba boys stopped me at around 4 p.m. and threatened to cut off parts of my body if they ever saw me going to school. They pushed me with their motorbike.... Although I was dressed in plain clothes at the time, not wearing my school uniform for safety, I was caught. I was surprised that they knew I was a student. In fact, I did not even have my school bag.... The amba boys said that if I dared again violate their orders not to go to school, they would come for me and my family. They said they were giving me a last warning. They said that schools should be shut, that they were fighting for us. “We are in the bush fighting for you and you go to school, how do you dare?” they said.¹¹²

Public High School Student Kidnapped and Tortured, Bamenda (March 2019)

Six separatist fighters who had guns and said they belonged to the group known as 7Kata, kidnapped an 18-year-old student on his way to the Government Bilingual High School Bamenda. He said they took him to their camp, tied him up, tortured him, and held him captive for four days:

I was on my way to school dressed in plainclothes.... I realized a group of amba boys were behind me, so I started running. They caught me. They warned me at gunpoint that if I moved a single step, I will be shot. They asked me, “Where are you going? Where’s your bag?” If I told them I was going to school, they would shoot me. So, I said I was just walking. But they told me they knew I was going to school. They said I am not supposed to go to school while they fight. “All schools should be shut down,” they said. I

¹¹¹ Human Rights Watch in person interview with Carl, Nicosia, Cyprus, August 16, 2019.

¹¹² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Sam, April 8, 2021.

finally showed them my bag. They found my books and my school uniform in it.... They took me to their camp on a motorbike at a very high speed. They blindfolded me before entering the camp. There, they beat me with machetes and wooden planks on my buttocks and the soles of my feet. They tied me up, my hands and legs from behind, and kept me in that uncomfortable position for three hours.¹¹³

They released him following a ransom payment of 70,000 CFA (\$130), but they first cut off the part of his national identity card bearing Cameroon's national flag. One of his classmates witnessed the kidnapping but managed to run away.¹¹⁴

Three Female Public High School Students Kidnapped and Beaten, Bamenda (November 4, 2019)

Armed separatists kidnapped three female students in Bamenda's Ntarikon neighborhood on their way home from school. The students, who were 14, 18, and 20 years old at that time, attended Government Bilingual High School Ntamulung, about one kilometer from where they were kidnapped. The armed separatists blindfolded the students, took them to a separatist camp in Ntanka village, and beat them.

Human Rights Watch spoke with one of the students, Maria, her parents¹¹⁵ and a witness to the kidnapping.¹¹⁶ Maria recounted her experience:

At the camp, we were handed over to a group of 10 fighters who asked us why we were going to school, and before we could say a word, they started beating us furiously. They used cutlasses and planks to beat us on our buttocks and under our feet as well as on our thighs and faces. The beating lasted some 30 minutes and left us with bruises on our bodies.... The pain was unbearable. I cried all through the first night in their camp.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with an 18-year-old student from the North-West region, April 3, 2021, and April 9, 2021.

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a student from the North-West region, June 2021.

¹¹⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with Maria's parents, November 2019.

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 27-year-old man, November 2019.

¹¹⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Maria, November 2019.

The students were released on November 7, 2019, following a ransom payment of 1,130,000 CFA (\$2,100).

Nine Public University Students Kidnapped and Beaten, Bamenda (May 20, 2020)

Jim, a 24-year-old University of Bamenda student, said that separatist fighters stormed his university residence in Bambili, Bamenda, and kidnapped him and at least eight other students. Because May 20 commemorates the 1972 presidential decision to abolish the federal system and form one nation state, separatists declared it a ghost town day. Jim said:

It was about 4:30 p.m. when four amba boys, one with a gun, the other three with machetes or knives, came on foot. They stopped all students who were in front of the hostel and threatened us with death. Some bailed their way out with money. Others, like me, who were poor and had no money were kidnapped. So, the amba took about nine of us, including four or five girls. We walked for about three or four hours in the bush.¹¹⁸

The armed separatists took the students to two camps, the first of which was an abandoned school, and kicked, slapped, and beat the soles of the students' feet with machetes. The fighters released the students after five days following ransom payments ranging from 100,000 CFA (\$186) to 500,000 CFA (\$933).¹¹⁹

Private High School Student Threatened and Beaten, Bamenda (October 2020)

Four separatist fighters threatened to kill a 14-year-old student, beating him on his way to Progressive Comprehensive High School. He said:

The amba stopped me and asked to see the contents of my bag. When they found books, they beat me.... They threatened to kill me if I was going to school again. They asked me to roll in the mud and tore all my books. I ran

¹¹⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Jim, April 8, 2021.

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Jim, April 8, 2021.

away and sought refuge in a stranger's house nearby, hiding under the bed for several hours.¹²⁰

A High-school Student Threatened, Bamenda (November 16, 2021)

Three separatist fighters threatened to kidnap a 20-year-old student on his way to the Government Technical High School in Bamenda. He told Human Rights Watch:

Three Amba stopped me along the road. They were armed with guns. They threatened to kidnap me if I did not comply with their demands to stop going to school. I went back home. I am not going to school now.¹²¹

This incident occurred four days after Christopher Anu, the spokesperson of the Ambazonia Interim Government, a separatist group, announced the renewal of the boycott of all schools across the Anglophone regions, threatening violence against teachers, students, and school owners who violate the boycott.¹²² The renewal of the boycott was made following the death of schoolgirl, Brandy Tataw, caused by a police officer in Bamenda on November 12.¹²³

Child Recruitment and Use by Armed Separatists

Armed separatists in the Anglophone regions have recruited children into their groups and used them to support their operations.¹²⁴ The ongoing violence, separatists' threats against students and youth, the frustrations caused by military abuses, and the need for survival have all increased schoolchildren's risk of recruitment by separatist armed groups. While living among separatist fighters, children may experience violence, may be required to participate in stressful initiation and training ceremonies, and may be forced to take dangerous drugs.

¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a student from the North-West region, April 7, 2021.

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 20-year-old high school student, November 17, 2021.

¹²² Audio message sent by Christopher Anu to Human Rights Watch on November 12, 2021.

¹²³ "Cameroon: Lethal Force Against Protesters," Human Rights Watch news release, November 19, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/19/cameroon-lethal-force-against-protesters>.

¹²⁴ ACAPS, "ACAPS Thematic Report: Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions."

However, due to poor documentation and reporting by Cameroonian authorities, as well as verification difficulties faced by both national and international monitors, there are no available figures about how many children are being used by armed separatist groups in the Anglophone regions.

Accounts from people who were kidnapped and taken to separatist camps reveal that children are present inside armed separatist groups. Human Rights Watch also reviewed photographs and video footage showing people who look like children with guns, standing with other older-looking separatist fighters. However, we were unable to determine if these children were students when they were recruited. Due to the difficulties in identifying current, or even former, child soldiers or recruits—who may experience stigma and fear of retaliation—Human Rights Watch did not speak to any for this report.

Some students voluntarily took up arms. One teacher said that after her school in Kombone Bakundu, South-West region shut down in December 2017, several of her former male students, who were under 18 when the school closed, joined armed separatist groups. She fled Kombone Bakundu and has not returned since because, she said:

It's very risky for me, as well as other teachers, to go back to Kombone, because some of our students joined the amba, so we could be identified and thus kidnapped for ransom, beaten. I cannot tell you exactly how many of my former male high school students joined the amba, but several of them, for sure.¹²⁵

Others Human Rights Watch interviewed observed school-age children in separatist camps. One kidnapped teacher recognized one child who was fighting with the separatist as his former high school student.¹²⁶ Boris saw “10 fighters, all very young, with guns, machetes, sticks—some of them were certainly below 18 years old” at a separatist camp.¹²⁷ Maria observed not only men and women, but also boys and girls between 10 and 14 years old equipped with guns, knives, cutlasses, slings, and spears.¹²⁸ Ida witnessed that, out of approximately 20 fighters, “many were just little boys of 15 years of age or so”

¹²⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher from the South-West region, July 9, 2021.

¹²⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Boris, March 23, 2021.

¹²⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Boris, March 23, 2021.

¹²⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Maria, November 2019.

participating in training and ritual ceremonies.¹²⁹ In another camp, Veronica saw a 15 or 16-year-old boy among the eight fighters there.¹³⁰

Killing of a schoolgirl by a gendarme (Buea, October 14, 2021)

Caro Louise Ndialle, a 4-year-old girl, was killed by a bullet fired by a gendarme, as she was sitting in a vehicle on her way to school in Buea's Molyko neighborhood, South-West region. An angry mob responded to the killing by lynching the gendarme.¹³¹

In a press release issued on the same day, Colonel Cyrille Serge Atonfack Guemo, the army spokesperson, said gendarmes at a checkpoint stopped the vehicle Caro Louise was travelling in, but the driver refused to comply.¹³² "In an inappropriate reaction [...] one of the gendarmes will fire warning shots in order to immobilize the vehicle," the press release stated, adding that "in the process" Caro Louise "was fatally shot in the head."¹³³ Atonfack also said in the press release that an investigation has been opened by the local administrative authorities and the defense and security forces "to shed more light on and establish responsibilities" in this incident.¹³⁴

Killing of a schoolgirl by a police officer (Bamenda, November 12, 2021)

Brandy Tataw, an 8-year-old schoolgirl, was killed by a bullet fired by a police officer as she was walking down a road in Bamenda, North-West region, on her way back from school.

In a November 12 news release, Martin Mbarga Nguete, the national security delegate general and Cameroonian police chief, said that Tataw was hit as she was walking down the street by a ricochet bullet a policeman had fired at a car that failed to stop at a police

¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Ida, April 8, 2021.

¹³⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Veronica, April 5, 2021.

¹³¹ Josiane Kouagheu, "Cameroun : la mort d'une fillette fait craindre une nouvelle poussée de violences en zone anglophone," *Le Monde*, October 18, 2021, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/10/18/cameroun-la-mort-d-une-fillette-fait-craindre-une-nouvelle-poussee-de-violences-en-zone-anglophone_6098868_3212.html (accessed October 2021).

¹³² Tweet, Ilaria Allegrozzi, October 15, 2021, <https://twitter.com/ilariallegro/status/1448912348195004416?s=20>.

¹³³ Tweet, Ilaria Allegrozzi, October 15, 2021, <https://twitter.com/ilariallegro/status/1448912348195004416?s=20>.

¹³⁴ Tweet, Ilaria Allegrozzi, October 15, 2021, <https://twitter.com/ilariallegro/status/1448912348195004416?s=20>.

checkpoint.¹³⁵ Nguete also announced that an investigation had been opened into the killing of Tataw and that the policeman believed to have fired the shot had been arrested. The killing of Tataw sparked protests in Bamenda, where hundreds of people took to the streets calling for justice for the police killing of the child. Cameroonian soldiers used excessive and lethal force, including live bullets, to disperse the protesters, injuring at least seven of them.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Tweet, Mimi Mefo Info, November 12, 2021, <https://twitter.com/MimiMefoInfo/status/1459284369974206465?s=20> (accessed November 2021).

¹³⁶ “Cameroon: Lethal Force Against Protesters,” Human Rights Watch news release.

IV. Attacks on Teachers by Armed Separatists

When [the separatist fighters] were torturing me because of my profession, I thought that they were attacking the whole sector. I am not just one victim—it's the education sector which is under attack.

– Andrew, a teacher who was beaten and shot by separatist fighters, April 2021¹³⁷

At least 100 education professionals have been attacked by separatist fighters since 2017, according to reports by the UN and other credible organizations, as well as Human Rights Watch research. Human Rights Watch has documented in detail 12 attacks against teachers, principals, school staff, and other education professionals. These attacks have included killings, physical assaults, kidnappings, extortion, threats, and other forms of intimidation.

Teachers Human Rights Watch interviewed believed their attackers were separatist fighters because of their clothing (plainclothes or just military pants or camouflage t-shirts as opposed to full uniforms), accessories (including amulets), types of weapons (such as hunting guns and machetes), language (Pidgin English, English, and local dialects), and statements accusing educators of teaching (including by saying teaching is a crime) and saying that schools should be closed. Finally, when kidnappings occurred, the perpetrators took their victims to camps in often remote areas—as opposed to police, gendarmerie, or military stations or barracks—one of the common tactics used by armed separatists.

Public school teachers, being government workers, appear to be the main targets of separatist fighters. However, Human Rights Watch also documented separatist fighters' attacks on teachers at private schools, such as at Kulu Memorial College and the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy.

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Andrew, a teacher from the North-West region, April 7, 2021.

Attacks in the South-West Region

Owner of Private Community School Kidnapped and Beaten, Muea (July 17, 2018)

Separatist fighters kidnapped the owner of the Community Christian College.¹³⁸ They identified themselves as separatist fighters, accused him of teaching and not respecting the boycott order, took him to their camp, and slapped his face before releasing him four days later after a ransom payment of 1 million CFA (US\$1,866). Separatist fighters had already harassed him and extorted food and 80,000 CFA (\$149) from him in a previous encounter. “They said that I had to support their struggle for independence and help them buy weapons,” he said.¹³⁹

Public School Head Teacher Cut with a Machete, Bachuo Ntai (March 16, 2019)

Four separatist fighters came to the house of Clara, the head teacher at a government nursery school in Bachou Akagbei village, at about 8 p.m. They said they were separatist fighters, accused her of teaching, and ordered her to stop. She gave them 30,000 CFA (\$56) when they demanded “their own share of the government money [she] was receiving as a salary.” They then cut her with a machete all over: on her back, neck, elbow, and hands, almost completely chopping off her right hand, which she later had amputated.¹⁴⁰ The teacher’s neighbor rushed to the scene right after the assault and took her to a hospital for treatment.¹⁴¹

According to Clara and one of her neighbors, security forces arrested at least one perpetrator and identified him as a separatist fighter. He is held at the Buea central prison while his trial is ongoing at time of writing.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with the owner of the Community Christian College in the South-West region, March 26, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a former teacher at the Community Christian College, June 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a member of a Cameroonian civil society organization, June 2021.

¹³⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with owner of the Community Christian College in the South-West region, March 26, 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Clara, March 22, 2021.

¹⁴¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 26-year-old man, June 2021.

¹⁴² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Clara, March 22, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 26-year-old man, June 2021.

Clara has not been able to resume teaching as she is physically incapacitated and feels psychologically down. She also expressed concern for her children, particularly her 19-year-old daughter who witnessed the incident.¹⁴³

Private School Teacher Cut with Machetes, Moko (June 12, 2019)

Seven separatists, some with machetes and others with guns, broke into the home of Aster, a 31-year-old teacher at about 4 a.m., and assaulted her for committing the “crime” of teaching. “I tried to beg them, but they did not show mercy and cut my right leg with machetes before running away,” she said. She later had her leg amputated at a hospital in Douala, more than 50 kilometers away.¹⁴⁴ Three others corroborated the victim’s account, and Human Rights Watch reviewed a photograph taken by one of the victim’s relatives showing her almost completely severed and bleeding leg.¹⁴⁵

17 Government Teachers Kidnapped and Beaten, Mundemba Camp (August 31, 2019)

Separatist fighters kidnapped 17 teachers, including 11 women, at about 8 p.m. while the teachers were heading to a meeting organized by the school administration.¹⁴⁶ The armed separatists beat the teachers before releasing them at about 3 a.m. on September 1, 2019. One teacher, Boris, recounted his experience:

At least five amba boys armed with guns intercepted us and took us to their camp some three kilometers away. We found more fighters there. They accused us of going to school and keep[ing] schools open, while they have given instructions that all schools should be shut down. They said they had to punish us and that we had to pay a ransom to be released. We were asked to lay on the ground where they beat us with canes, sticks, cables, and machetes. Women were also beaten. Some were bleeding.... They took all the money we had and then let us go.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Clara, March 22, 2021.

¹⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Aster, October 19, 2019.

¹⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Aster’s mother, October 2019; Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with a member of a local civil society organization, October 2019; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a UN staff member, November 19, 2019.

¹⁴⁶ It was not possible to obtain additional corroboration for this case, due to victims’ fear of reprisals.

¹⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Boris, March 23, 2021.

Public University Teacher Killed, Bamenda (May 17, 2020)

Two separatist fighters killed a 58-year-old University of Bamenda teacher, Paulinus Song,¹⁴⁸ who they had previously threatened and accused of being a traitor for not complying with their school boycott. When the teacher told the separatists that he needed to teach to make a living, they demanded 500,00 CFA (US\$933), but he could not afford to pay.¹⁴⁹

A witness to the killing said:

I saw two amba boys on a motorbike approaching him in front of his home. I was standing nearby. They said to him, “You are stubborn. Your end has come,” and then, they shot him once in the head and twice in the chest. He fell on the ground in a pool of blood. It was in broad daylight. I was terrified. He died on the spot. No one called the police [out of fear].¹⁵⁰

Public School Teacher Kidnapped and Beaten, Bafia (August 5, 2020)

Separatist fighters, who said they were from a group known as “Mountain Lions,” kidnapped a teacher from his home at 7:30 a.m., for refusing to hoist the “Ambazonia” flag outside his community school. At their camp, he said he found 16 other hostages, including other teachers and parents of students. They beat the soles of his feet with machetes for the three consecutive days and hit his arms and back. About a month later, on September 3, they released him following a ransom payment of 300,000 CFA (US\$560), which he needed to borrow.¹⁵¹

A farmer witnessed eight separatist fighters kidnap the teacher in broad daylight: “This teacher has been a community teacher for a long time and has invested a lot to improve the lives of the children in the Bafia community. His kidnapping came as a shock to the community.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ “Cameroon: Civilians Killed in Anglophone Regions,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 27, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/27/cameroon-civilians-killed-anglophone-regions>.

¹⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a family member of Paulinus Song, June 28, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 35-year-old man, June 29, 2020.

¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 42-year-old teacher in the South-West region, March 22, 2021.

¹⁵² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 39-year-old man from Bafia, May 2021.

When Human Rights Watch spoke with the teacher, he had stopped teaching for fear of being kidnapped again. He had instead begun farming and selling plantains for a living.¹⁵³

Public School Teacher Threatened, Buea (November or December 2020)

Three separatist fighters broke into the home of a teacher at the Government Bilingual Grammar School in Buea’s Molyko neighborhood and threatened to harm her if she did not boycott school on Mondays, their designated ghost town strike day.¹⁵⁴ She recounted what happened:

Since the government is doing whatever it can to counter this ‘ghost town’ thing, I was requested to do catch-up classes on a Monday. I did not feel comfortable, but I went. I felt a bit under pressure to go. Days later, three amba broke into my place and threatened me.... They said: “Never go to school on Monday again; otherwise, there will be consequences. You should not be teaching on Mondays! This is a peaceful warning. The next one won’t be so.” They spoke with authority – their voices were so frightening, I was scared. My kids were at home. The youngest started crying when he saw the three men coming in.¹⁵⁵

Attacks in the North-West Region

Public School Teacher Shot, Wum (August 8, 2018)

At about 4 p.m., two separatist fighters attacked Florence, a 48-year-old government teacher in Wum, on her way back home from school, along with her husband.

They shot several times at the couple, who were riding a motorbike, injuring Florence in the arms and legs and her husband in the chest, neck, and abdomen, before running away. Despite the injuries, the couple made it to the Wum district hospital where they received medical assistance.

¹⁵³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 42-year-old teacher in the South-West region, March 22, 2021.

¹⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Lily, June 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 36-year-old teacher, June 2021.

¹⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Lily, June 2021.

Human Rights Watch spoke with Florence and her husband and reviewed photographs showing their wounds, as well as medical records issued by the hospital.

Florence’s husband said that, while he was being treated at the hospital, separatist fighters called him on his phone and said they attacked him and his wife because Florence was a teacher. “They said the reason beyond the attack was my wife’s job. They said she

should not be teaching. They said schools should be shut down.”¹⁵⁶

Florence and her husband left Wum after the attack. Florence is no longer teaching.

After 11 years in Wum, we had to leave. We moved to the Adamawa region. I was too scared to stay in Wum, I feared we could be attacked again. My husband was traumatized and depressed. I submitted a request for redeployment to the ministry of education in July 2021, but I didn’t get any feedback. So, I am not working. I am doing nothing. I miss teaching.¹⁵⁷



Florence’s husband at the Wum district hospital. The bandage covers the gunshot wound to his abdomen. © Private, August 2018, Wum, North-West region, Cameroon

Public School Teacher Kidnapped, Bamenda (February 2019)

Armed separatists kidnapped Ida, a 55-year-old high school teacher at the Government Bilingual High School Bamenda, and her husband at about 6 a.m. from their home in Mankon, a community in Bamenda.¹⁵⁸ They took her and her husband to their camp, threatened them with death, and accused Ida of

¹⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Florence and her husband, October 2021.

¹⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Florence and her husband, October 2021.

¹⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Ida, April 8, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a Cameroonian human rights activist, June 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a Cameroonian journalist working in the Anglophone regions, June 2021.

going to school. They were released after 12 hours following a ransom payment of 500,000 CFA (US\$933). Ida described their experience:

We heard knocking at the door and then a voice saying, “Open the door or we are going to break it.” Suddenly, four amba boys came in. I was still in my night dress. They said, “Give us your phones,” which we did. They said they had come to take us. I cried, begged, and said, “What have we done?” They said they came for me because I am a teacher.... They said they took my husband along because he was guilty too by allowing me to go to school every morning.¹⁵⁹

Private Teacher Kidnapped and Shot, Between Njinikom and Belo (July 2019)

Eight separatist fighters, wearing plainclothes and *gris-gris* amulets and carrying guns, stopped a bus at a checkpoint between Njinikom and Belo. They checked all 17 passengers’ ID cards and bags and pulled out Andrew, a teacher, and three others (two men and a woman). They took these four to their camp, shot Andrew in the left leg, and released him four days later. He spent six months getting treatment at the hospital. He recounted his ordeal after the fighters found his teaching certificate:

They took [four of] us to their camp. They interrogated and threatened us with death. They accused me of teaching. They forced me to say I will no longer teach. They beat me with machetes and on the second day they shot me in the leg.... They shot me because I am a teacher.¹⁶⁰

Human Rights Watch reviewed a photograph sent by the teacher showing wounds consistent with his account.

Public School Teacher Kidnapped and Tortured, Takija (August 1, 2019)

Separatist fighters with hunting guns, knives, and pistols believed to be locally fabricated stopped a teacher at a checkpoint in Takija, searched his bag, found school materials revealing he was a teacher, and then kidnapped and tortured him at their camp, including

¹⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Ida, April 8, 2021.

¹⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Andrew, March 6, 2021.

by burning his body “all over” with a lighter. They released him six days later following a ransom payment of 700,000 CFA (\$1,191). He recalled what happened:

[The separatist fighters] found out I was a teacher. “According to the laws of Ambaland, this a crime, punishable by the death penalty,” they said to me.... I was taken to their camp and tortured there. They tied up my hands and feet together behind my back with a nylon rope; they hung me in this position and burned me. They left me hanging like this for several hours. I was almost dead when they put me down.¹⁶¹

Public School Teacher Shot, Bamenda (January 12, 2021)

Ida, who had been kidnapped in February 2019, was the victim of another attack on January 12, 2021. She said a group of gunmen, whom she believed were armed separatists because of how they were dressed and their weapons, shot her car—and her abdomen—on the busy road between Mankon and the military airport. She recounted:

I was approaching a junction when I saw a group of about six amba boys, all armed with guns, some carrying stones. They were dressed like amba, had amulets and hunting guns. They jumped in the middle of the road. I pulled the brake and stopped, but the engine was still on. I thought they wanted money. But they started shooting.... We later counted 18 holes in the car I managed to get out of the car, and I think I was shot in the stomach at this time.... I think I was attacked because of my job. I think they followed me. Other cars pass by that road, but me? I was targeted.¹⁶²

Human Rights Watch reviewed 10 photographs of the teacher’s car showing the holes and destruction, including broken windows caused by the shooting, that are consistent with her account. Human Rights Watch also reviewed medical records issued by a hospital in Bamenda stating the teacher had been treated for a gunshot wound in the abdomen on January 12, 2021.

¹⁶¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 49-year-old teacher, August 14, 2019.

¹⁶² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Ida, April 8, 2021.



Ida's car in the aftermath of the attack by armed separatists on January 12, 2021.
© Private, January 2021, Bamenda, North-West region, Cameroon

V. Attacks on Schools

Schools are supposed to be places of peace, where we, the students, learn, play, socialize. But this has not been the case in the Anglophone regions. Schools have become a battlefield.

– A 20-year-old former student from the North-West region, April 2021¹⁶³

Since 2017, armed separatists have attacked at least 70 schools according to reports from United Nations agencies, the World Bank, Cameroonian and international civil society organizations, and media outlets¹⁶⁴ to enforce their education boycott in the Anglophone regions. They would open fire on school property, set classrooms and school offices ablaze, destroy school windows, doors, walls, and roofs, burn school records, books, and other materials, pillage, and steal school fees.¹⁶⁵ Armed separatists have also conducted threatening visits, ordering schools to be closed and in some cases kidnapping students and teachers.¹⁶⁶

Some attacks on schools occurred at functioning schools, with students and teachers either inside classrooms or outside the school building, putting them at risk of injury or death. Teachers described scenes of students screaming, crying, and running away in panic, and students recounted the fear and anxiety they experienced during attacks.

¹⁶³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 20-year-old former student from the North-West region, April 2021.

¹⁶⁴ World Bank Group, “La crise sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun : Évaluation de l’impact économique et social” ; Amnesty International, “Cameroon: A turn for the worse: Violence and human rights violations in Anglophone Cameroon,” June 12, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/8481/2018/en/> (accessed September 2021); “Geneva Palais briefing note on the situation for children in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon,” UNICEF press release, June 21, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/geneva-palais-briefing-note-situation-children-north-west-and-south-west-regions> (accessed September 2021).

¹⁶⁵ Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR) and Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA), “Cameroon’s Unfolding Catastrophe: Evidence of Human Rights Violations and Crimes against Humanity,” June 3, 2019, <https://www.raoulwallenbergcentre.org/en/news/2019-06-03> (accessed August 2021).

¹⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, “*These Killings Can Be Stopped*”; Amnesty International, “Cameroon: A turn for the worse: Violence and human rights violations in Anglophone Cameroon”; Solidarity and Development Initiative (SODEI), “Baseline Research: Education in Crisis in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon,” January 2021, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Baseline%20Research_Education%20in%20Crisis%20in%20the%20Anglophone%20Regions_Final.pdf (accessed August 2021); ACAPS, “ACAPS Thematic Report: Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions.”

Human Rights Watch documented in detail 15 attacks on schools by armed separatist fighters between January 2017 and November 2021. In many of the attacks, perpetrators did not identify themselves as separatist fighters, and no group claimed responsibility. However, people Human Rights Watch interviewed believed the attacks were committed by separatist fighters because of their clothing (plainclothes or military pants with camouflage t-shirts as opposed to full uniforms), accessories (amulets), types of weapons (hunting guns and machetes), language (Pidgin English, English, or local dialects), and statements that schools should be boycotted and closed. In one other case documented in this report, evidence suggests that Cameroon security forces burned down and destroyed a school building which had been used by armed separatist groups.

Armed Separatists' Attacks in the South-West Region

Our Lady of Mount Carmel College, Buea (October 2017)

This boarding high school for approximately 200 female students shut down in October 2017 following increasing threats by separatist fighters, including a raid earlier that month. Human Rights Watch spoke with two students who were present during the raid.¹⁶⁷ Nina,¹⁹ recalled: “They didn’t shoot but used stones and machetes to break the windows of the school. We did not see the amba, but we heard the screams and felt the panic.”¹⁶⁸

Human Rights Watch also reviewed two videos showing the abandoned school.

Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy, Kumba (October 24, 2020)

Unknown gunmen stormed this private school in Kumba’s Fiango neighborhood at about 11 a.m., killing 7 children and injuring at least 13 others.¹⁶⁹ On the day of the attack, Cameroon’s communications minister announced the opening of an investigation.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a former female student at the College, May 4, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Nina, June 1, 2021.

¹⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Nina, June 1, 2021.

¹⁶⁹ “Cameroon: Gunmen Massacre School Children,” Human Rights Watch news release, November 2, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/02/cameroon-gunmen-massacre-school-children>.

¹⁷⁰ Fred Bihina, “Cameroun - Massacre de Kumba: Le gouvernement note que l’école attaquée a lancé ses activités «à l’insu des autorités administratives compétentes, et n’a pu bénéficier des mêmes mesures de protection que d’autres établissements scolaires du Département de la Mémé»,” *Cameroon-Info.net*, October 25, 2020, <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroun-massacre-de-kumba-le-gouvernement-note-que-lecole-attaquee-a-lance-ses-activites-386439.html> (accessed August 2021).

As of October 2021, the government has not made any information regarding the investigation public. The school shut down immediately after the attack and remains closed at time of writing.



Women protesting in the streets of Kumba, South-West region, after the killing of seven children at Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy by suspected armed separatists on October 24, 2020 © Private



A gathering in front of Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in the aftermath of a lethal armed attack on the school by suspected armed separatist fighters on October 24, 2020 © Private

On September 7, a military tribunal in Cameroon sentenced four people to death by firing squad for the Kumba school attack, however there are very serious concerns about how the four accused and eight other defendants were identified, the absence of credible evidence against them, and the manner in which the trial was conducted in violation of international fair trial standards.¹⁷¹ In addition to the use of a military tribunal to try civilians, and the imposition of the death penalty, the trial was marred by serious procedural irregularities, including the impossibility for the defense to cross examine witnesses; the lack of translation of proceedings from English or French into the Pidgin English spoken by most of the defendants; and lack of due process with respect to the detention of the accused.¹⁷²

The court found the four guilty of terrorism, secession, hostility against the fatherland, murder, possession of illegal arms and ammunition, and insurrection. It sentenced four other defendants to five months in jail and a fine of 50,000 CFA (US\$89) for allegedly failing to report receipt of a threat from separatist fighters. The court acquitted four others.



Blood stains on the benches in a classroom at Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Kumba where at least seven students were killed by suspected armed separatists on October 24, 2020 © Private, October 24, 2020, Kumba, South-West region, Cameroon

¹⁷¹ Josiane Kouagheu, “Cameroon sentences four men to death for shooting attack on school,” Reuters, September 8, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/cameroon-sentences-four-men-death-shooting-attack-school-2021-09-08/> (accessed September 2021).

¹⁷² “Cameroon: Sham Trial for Kumba School Massacre,” Human Rights Watch news release, October 22, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/22/cameroon-sham-trial-kumba-school-massacre>.



People protesting in the streets of Kumba South-West region, following the lethal armed attack on students and teachers at the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy on October 24, 2020 © Private

Kulu Memorial College, Limbe (November 4, 2020)

At about 8 a.m., at least 10 separatist fighters with guns and machetes attacked this private school.¹⁷³ They forced about 20 schoolchildren and 4 teachers who were present to undress and beat some of them before releasing them and burning down the principal's office and another office.

Human Rights Watch spoke with two teachers who were present during the attack as well as the principal of the school, who arrived at the scene soon after the attack.¹⁷⁴ One teacher, Julia, said:

I could not believe this was happening to me. It was horrific. The assailants gathered all of us in one class; they forced us to undress. I did not want to remove my clothes, but they threatened me. So, we were all naked on the

¹⁷³ The attack was reported by international media: "Anglophone Crisis: Gunmen attack Kulu Memorial College naked teachers and students, burn school," *BBC*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-54813736> (accessed August 2021).

¹⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch interviews with a teacher and the principal at Kulu Memorial College, November 19, 2020; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Julia, teacher Kulu Memorial College, November 20, 2020.

ground. They threatened to kill us. Then they poured petrol on us. I was so frightened. I struggled to keep calm and focused on consoling the children, my students, who were all scared. Then, the amba said, ‘Now run!’ They let us go and we started running naked towards nearby homes to seek help.¹⁷⁵

The other teacher added that the separatist fighters collected their petrol-doused clothes and put them into two school offices before setting the offices on fire.¹⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch also reviewed video footage of the attack.¹⁷⁷

Government Primary School, Muyuka (August 29, 2021)

At about 10 a.m., a group of suspected separatist fighters attacked the school, which had already been closed since 2017 due to the ongoing crisis, and partially burned at least one of the classrooms. Two witnesses¹⁷⁸ said they saw several gunmen, whom they identified as separatist fighters, enter the school, located in Muyuka’s Balong neighborhood, before seeing



Screenshot from a video posted on Twitter by a Cameroonian journalist showing one of the offices of the Kulu Memorial College burned by separatist fighters after an attack on November 4, 2020, Regina Sondo, Twitter, November 4, 2020, <https://twitter.com/ReginaSondoM/status/1323927039049633793?s=20>

¹⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Julia, November 20, 2020.

¹⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher at Kulu Memorial College, November 19, 2020.

¹⁷⁷ Tweet, Regina Sondo, November 4, 2020, <https://twitter.com/ReginaSondoM/status/1323927039049633793?s=20> (accessed December 2021).

¹⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with two women residents in Muyuka, September 16 and September 13, 2021.

smoke coming out from the building. They also said that soldiers intervened, firing at the assailants who ran away.

“When the gunfire stopped, I walked into the school and saw the burned classroom,” one of the witnesses said. “Residents of the area helped extinguish the fire.”¹⁷⁹

Human Rights watch also reviewed four photographs taken by a resident of Muyuka in the aftermath of the attack and showing the burned classroom.



A classroom in Government Primary School, in Muyuka, burned by separatist fighters during an attack on August 29, 2021. © Private, September 2021, Muyuka, South-West region, Cameroon

¹⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a woman resident in Muyuka, September 16, 2021.

Government Bilingual High School, Ekondo Titi (November 24, 2021)

Unidentified gunmen stormed the school, killed four children and one female teacher¹⁸⁰ and injured at least five other children. The attack unfolded in broad day light, during classes, at about 7:45 AM.

A woman living near the school told Human Rights Watch: “I heard multiple gunshots and then a loud explosion. I didn’t know what was going on. I lay down on the floor. An hour later, I was informed about the attack at the school. I am still in shock. The Government Bilingual High School is the biggest school in town, with about 1000 students.”¹⁸¹

A member of a humanitarian organization and resident of Ekondo Titi said:

I wasn’t far from the Government Bilingual High school when I started hearing many gunshots. Then there was the sound of an explosive. Minutes later I saw kids running, some were screaming. They were panicking. The first child I spoke to said gunmen had killed a female teacher in the school and some students. He said the teacher who was killed was holding a French language class.¹⁸²

Another woman from Ekondo Titi who knew two of the children killed, and rushed to the two hospitals where the casualties were transferred after the attack, said:

At the general hospital, I saw three dead bodies of children. Before I arrived, though, the medical staff had already evacuated two more casualties, two wounded children, to the hospital in Limbe. One of the two

¹⁸⁰ “Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon condemning the killing of school children in the South-West region,” UNOCHA news release, November 25, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/statement-humanitarian-coordinator-cameroon-condemning-killing-school-children-south> (accessed November 2021). See also: “Ekondo Titi: Schools dey fear to open afta classroom attack leave three students and one teacher dead,” *BBC News*, November 25, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-59413311> (accessed November 2021); “Three children, one teacher killed in Cameroon school attack,” *Al Jazeera*, November 24, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/24/three-children-one-teacher-killed-in-cameroon-school-attack> (accessed November 2021).

¹⁸¹ Human Rights Watch interview with a female resident of Ekondo Titi, November 25, 2021.

¹⁸² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a resident of Ekondo Titi, November 26, 2021.

wounded later died. At the Baptist hospital, I saw the dead body of a teacher and 5 wounded children.¹⁸³

According to the Ekondo Titi residents interviewed by Human Rights Watch, there was no presence of security personnel around the school at the time of the attack. The residents however said that there is a police station, a gendarmerie base, and an army base in Ekondo Titi.¹⁸⁴

The attack, which sparked national¹⁸⁵ and international¹⁸⁶ condemnation, led to the temporary suspension of all school activities in Ekondo Titi.¹⁸⁷

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but Aboloa Timothe, the Divisional Officer of Ekondo Titi Subdivision, has blamed separatist fighters for the attack.¹⁸⁸

Witnesses and Ekondo Titi residents who spoke to BBC News Pidgin said that, prior to the attack, separatist fighters had threatened to burn the school if it did not comply with their demands to shut down.¹⁸⁹

In a November 12, 2021, statement, Capo Daniel, the deputy defense chief of the Ambazonia Defense Forces, a major separatist group, blamed “The Expandable

¹⁸³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female resident of Ekondo Titi, November 25, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with three residents of Ekondo Titi, November 25 and 26, 2021.

¹⁸⁵ Tweet, President Paul Biya, November 29, 2021, https://twitter.com/PR_Paul_BIYA/status/1465424183303852034?s=20 (accessed December 2021); CHRDA, “Cameroon: The Massacre of Students and a Teacher in School in Ekondo Titi is Unacceptable,” November 24, 2021, <https://www.chrda.org/cameroon-the-massacre-of-students-and-teachers-in-school-in-ekondo-titi-is-unacceptable/> (accessed November 2021).

¹⁸⁶ Tweet, EU Delegation in Cameroon, November 24, 2021, <https://twitter.com/UEauCameroun/status/1463543858265047048?s=20> (accessed November 2021); Tweet, British High Commission in Cameroon, November 24, 2021, <https://twitter.com/UKinCameroon/status/1463538014869721099?s=20> (accessed November 2021); Tweet, US Embassy in Cameroon, November 24, 2021, <https://twitter.com/USEmbYaounde/status/1463565855141335046?s=20> (accessed November 2021); Tweet, UNOCHA Cameroon, November 25, 2021, <https://twitter.com/USEmbYaounde/status/1463565855141335046?s=20> (accessed November 2021); Tweet, High Commission of Canada in Cameroon, November 24, 2021, <https://twitter.com/USEmbYaounde/status/1463565855141335046?s=20> (accessed November 2021); Tweet, Education Cannot Wait, November 24, 2021, <https://twitter.com/EduCannotWait/status/1463557985125425152?s=20> (accessed November 2021); Tweet, David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International, <https://twitter.com/daveswords/status/1463548639595450373?s=20> (accessed November 2021).

¹⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with three Ekondo Titi residents, November 25, 2021.

¹⁸⁸ “Ekondo Titi: Schools dey fear to open afta classroom attack leave three students and one teacher dead,” *BBC News*.

¹⁸⁹ “Ekondo Titi: Schools dey fear to open afta classroom attack leave three students and one teacher dead,” *BBC News*.

100,” another separatist group which he said is under the authority of Samuel Sako, the president of the Ambazonia Interim Government, for the attack.¹⁹⁰

In a November 25, 2021, press release, Cyrille Serge Atonfack Guemo, the army spokesperson, blamed separatist fighters under the command of “10 Kobo” for the attack.¹⁹¹

Human Rights Watch viewed a video purporting to show fighters from “The Expandable 100” group and one of their leaders, known as “10 Kobo,” who, speaking in Pidgin English, threatens to attack any school and any other place guarded by the military. Human Rights Watch was unable to verify the authenticity of the video. In the unauthenticated video, “10 Kobo” states the date when the video was filmed: “today, the 8th of the 9th month of 2021,” which was the first week of the new academic year 2021-2022, suggesting that the context is consistent with the military seeking at the time to guard schools to allow their resumption.

In a November 25 Twitter post, prominent separatist activist Mark Baretta said that “10 Kobo has sent out an audio shaming the Cameroon military for killing the school kids” and added that “the fighter said he has no business with children or civilians, that his focus has always been military.”¹⁹²

Armed Separatists’ Attacks in the North-West Region

Government Bilingual High School, Jakiri (March or April 2017)

Separatist fighters burned this school one night, between 9 and 10 p.m., in March or April 2017.¹⁹³ Thomas, a teacher, described the attack: “They burned the staff room, the

¹⁹⁰ Office of the Deputy Defense Chief letter to Samuel Sako, November 24, 2021, available in Appendix V.

¹⁹¹ Yannick A. Kenne, “Cameroun – Tueries d’Ekondo Titi (Sud-Ouest) : L’armée accuse des assaillants sécessionnistes déguisés en uniformes militaires,” *Cameroon-Info.net*, <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroun-tueries-dekondo-titi-sud-ouest-larmee-accuse-des-assaillants-secessionnistes-deguises-en-uniformes-militaires-405474.html> (accessed December 2021).

¹⁹² Tweet, Mark Baretta, November 25, 2021, <https://twitter.com/MarkBaretta/status/1463769839332433920?s=20> (accessed November 2021).

¹⁹³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Thomas, May 4, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 21-year-old former student at the Government Bilingual High School, Jakiri, May and June 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a community leader in Jakiri, June 2, 2021.

principal’s room, and the library. We rushed there but struggled to quell the fire. All school records, books, and other documents were burned. Even some computers were burned.¹⁹⁴

A former student¹⁹⁵ of the school and a relative of another former student provided the same account of the events.¹⁹⁶

“It was a shock to see the library completely burned,” said a 21-year-old female former student. “For students like me who could not afford textbooks, those books in the library were very important.”¹⁹⁷

All three people Human Rights Watch interviewed about this incident believed that the perpetrators were separatist fighters because armed separatists had threatened to attack this school before and had attacked other schools in the area.

The high school, which had enrolled between 1,000 and 1,400 students before the crisis, finally shut down in 2018 and remained closed through at least late April 2021, as evidenced by two videos filmed at that time showing the abandoned school, the burned administrative block, and goats and cows grazing on the surrounding land, indicating the school’s lack of use.

¹⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Thomas, May 4, 2021.

¹⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 21-year-old former student at the Government Bilingual High School, Jakiri, May and June 2021.

¹⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a community leader in Jakiri, June 2, 2021.

¹⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 21-year-old former student at the Government Bilingual High School, Jakiri, May and June 2021.



What is left of the office of the bursar of the Government Bilingual High School in Jakiri after separatist fighters burned it down between March and April 2017. © Private, April 2021, Jakiri, North-West region, Cameroon



What's left of the principal's office at the Government Bilingual High School in Jakiri after separatist fighters burned it down between March and April 2017. © Private, April 2021, Jakiri, North-West region, Cameroon



A cow grazing in front of the abandoned Government Bilingual High School in Jakiri, which has been shut since 2018 following an attack in it by separatist fighters between March and April 2017. © Private, April 2021, Jakiri, North-West region, Cameroon

Government High School, Ashong (October 2017)

About 10 separatist fighters with guns and machetes raided the Government High School in Ashong village and threatened to kill eight teachers if they did not close the school. Human Rights Watch spoke with two teachers who witnessed the attack and a local official.¹⁹⁸ Students had stopped attending school weeks before, so they were not there during the attack. However, due to government pressure, teachers continued to go to school, and this school remained open—without students—even after the attack.¹⁹⁹

Government Secondary School, Konene (September 2018)

A 32-year-old teacher recounted how at least six armed separatists disrupted a meeting to discuss the resumption of classes:

The amba boys came with motorbikes and twisted the sign board of the school. They were at least six; they had machetes and hunting guns. I was outside, waiting for the meeting to start. I saw the amba coming. They shot in the air and forced all of us [the teachers and the principal] to flee. I was very scared. I escaped towards the bush and so did other teachers. While

¹⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with two female teachers at Ashong high school, June 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a local authority from Ashong, June 2021.

¹⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at Ashong high school, June 2021.

running, at least two teachers got injured. They attacked us because they thought we were traitors: traitors because we wanted to do our job and teach and offer the students the education they deserve and have the right to.²⁰⁰

The teacher told Human Rights Watch that in and around Konene, there are several separatist armed groups, including the Ambazonia Defense Forces and the group headed by General RK, British Southern Cameroons Resistance Forces.²⁰¹

Presbyterian Secondary School Nkwen, Bamenda (November 5, 2018)

Just before dawn, armed separatists stormed the boarding school in Nkwen and abducted 79 school children from their dormitories.²⁰² According to media reports, the students, aged 11-17, were kidnapped along with their principal, a teacher, and a driver.²⁰³ All 79 students, as well as the principal, the teacher, and the driver, were eventually released on November 7.²⁰⁴

In May 2020, the government said that one of the alleged perpetrators, a separatist fighter known as “General Alhaji,” had been killed during a military operation.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch in-person interview with a 32-year-old teacher from the North-West region, Nicosia, Cyprus, August 2019.

²⁰¹ Human Rights Watch in-person interview with a 32-year-old teacher from the North-West region, Nicosia, Cyprus, August 2019. A local journalist who spoke with witnesses to the attack who also confirmed the incident. Human Rights Watch interviews with a Cameroonian journalist working in the North-West and South-West regions, June 2021.

²⁰² Jonathan Pedneault, “Free Cameroon’s Kidnapped School Children,” Human Rights Watch dispatch, November 6, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/06/free-cameroons-kidnapped-school-children>.

²⁰³ “Dozens of students abducted in Cameroon by alleged separatists,” *Al Jazeera*, November 5, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/5/dozens-of-students-abducted-in-cameroon-by-alleged-separatists> (accessed August 2021); Bellingcat, “How Schoolchildren Became Pawns in Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis,” July 16, 2021, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/africa/2021/07/16/how-schoolchildren-became-pawns-in-cameroons-anglophone-crisis/> (accessed August 2021); Edwin Kindzeka Mozi, “Separatists kidnap 79 pupils in Cameroon’s restive northwest,” AP, November 5, 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/africa-ap-top-news-media-social-media-international-news-613d03d0c1b84f89a22eda5325148e65> (accessed August 2021).

²⁰⁴ Tabi Marriane Enow, “Kidnapped PSS Nkwen students released,” *Journal du Cameroun*, November 7, 2018, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/news-in-brief/kidnapped-pss-nkwen-students-released/> (accessed August 2021).

²⁰⁵ “Cameroon’s key separatist commander killed in troubled region,” *Xinhua*, May 2, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/02/c_139026569.htm (accessed August 2021); Bellingcat, “How Schoolchildren Became Pawns in Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis.”

Morning Star Nursery and Primary School; Holy Rosary Integrated Comprehensive College, Mendankwe (June and September 2020)

Armed separatists attacked these two Catholic schools, located in the same compound, twice.²⁰⁶ The first time, in June 2020, they came at about 7:30 p.m. and forced teachers at gunpoint to hand over money and valuables, including telephones and computers. Then, they broke into a female secondary school dormitory and “scared the girls to death because of their guns.”²⁰⁷ The second time, in September 2020, between 10 and 15 separatists armed with hunting guns and machetes and dressed in plainclothes came at about 6 p.m. They threatened the Catholic sisters managing the school and attempted to kidnap for ransom the abbess (the head nun), who the other sisters had hidden. No children were at school when this happened.²⁰⁸ Both times, they identified themselves as separatists and warned the staff to stop teaching and close the school.

Presbyterian School, Kumbo (November 3, 2020)

Separatist fighters attacked this school with more than 200 students present and kidnapped 11 teachers. They held and threatened the teachers in their camp in the bush before releasing them on November 6. Human Rights Watch spoke with Reverend Fonki Samuel Forba, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, and one of the abducted teachers.²⁰⁹ International media reports corroborated their accounts.²¹⁰

According to Forba: “The children ran away in different directions, all very scared.... The teachers were taken to a separatist camp far in the bush. While the teachers were not

²⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at the Morning Star Nursery and Primary School, November 4, 2020; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a male teacher at the Morning Star Nursery and Primary School, November 6, 2020; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at the Morning Star Nursery and Primary School, November 11, 2020; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at the Morning Star Nursery and Primary School, November 14, 2020.

²⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at the Morning Star Nursery and Primary School, November 4, 2020.

²⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a male teacher at the Morning Star Nursery and Primary School, November 6, 2020.

²⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Samuel Fonki Forba, November 4, 2020; Human Rights Watch interview with a teacher at the Presbyterian School, November 10, 2021.

²¹⁰ Attack also covered by international media. See, for instance: “Several teachers kidnapped in restive Cameroon region: Union,” *Al Jazeera*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/4/at-least-six-teachers-kidnapped-in-restive-cameroon-region> (accessed August 2021); Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Officials Say 11 Teachers Abducted by Separatist Groups,” *VoA*, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-officials-say-11-teachers-abducted-separatist-groups> (accessed August 2021).

mistreated, they were given a warning that they should not teach, that the school should remain shut.”²¹¹ Residents of Kumbo suspect the kidnappers were separatist fighters, who have many camps in the area, and the Cameroonian government has blamed separatist fighters for the kidnappings.²¹²

Government Bilingual High School Atiela, Bamenda (January 2021)

Armed separatists shot in the air and at the school gate, causing panic among students and teachers before the gendarmes, stationed inside the school, responded with gunfire. Human Rights Watch spoke with two teachers who were present during the attack.²¹³ One believed the presence of about seven gendarmes prompted the attack. He described the hostilities that ensued:

When the amba started shooting in the air and at the gate, the gendarmes responded to the gunfire and called for reinforcements. An exchange of fire followed and lasted for about 20 or 30 minutes. It was continuous, sustained gunfire. It was loud and frightening. It’s a miracle none of us got injured or killed. Students ran away in fear. Some students did not come to school for over a month after this incident.²¹⁴

The other teacher had a similar experience: “The amba came early, by the time the kids were entering the school gate. They started shooting in the air. They came to scare the students because they were going to school. I ran away with other teachers and students. Since this incident, I stopped teaching. It’s just too risky.”²¹⁵

²¹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Samuel Fonki Forba, November 4, 2020.

²¹² Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Officials Say 11 Teachers Abducted by Separatist Groups.”

²¹³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with 2 teachers at the Government Bilingual High School Atiela, May 4, 2021 and June 2021.

²¹⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher at the Government Bilingual High School Atiela, June 2021.

²¹⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher at the Government Bilingual High School Atiela, May 4, 2021.

Security Forces' Burning of a School Building Used by Separatists

Human Rights Watch learned of one alleged attack on a school by Cameroonian security forces through a video posted on social media in January 2019 that shows a group of Cameroonian soldiers around a burning school building and an interview with a resident of Widikum town, North-West region.²¹⁶ The University of California, Berkeley's Human Rights Center and Bellingcat, an investigative journalism collective, geolocated the video, which appears to have been filmed in Eka village, North-West region.²¹⁷ While the video does not show who lit the fire, they found that the soldiers "do not appear to be making a concerted effort to stop it."²¹⁸



A screenshot from a video posted on twitter in January 2019 showing a group of Cameroonian soldiers around a burning school building in Eka village, North-West region, Twitter, @iayongwa, January 11, 2019, <https://twitter.com/iayongwa/status/1083760705239638016?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/iayongwa/status/1083802717733060608?s=20>.

²¹⁶ Tweet, Israel Ayongwa, January 11, 2019, <https://twitter.com/iayongwa/status/1083760705239638016?s=20> (accessed August 2021); Tweet, Israel Ayongwa, January 11, 2019, <https://twitter.com/iayongwa/status/1083802717733060608?s=20> (accessed August 2021).

²¹⁷ "Verified incident: School burning in Eka," Scholars Portal Dataverse, 2019, <https://dataverse.scholarsportal.info/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.5683/SP2/QF5HP7> (accessed August 2021); Bellingcat, "How Schoolchildren Became Pawns in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis."

²¹⁸ Bellingcat, "How Schoolchildren Became Pawns in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis."

The resident of Widikum, a town near Eka, blamed soldiers for burning the school in retaliation for the separatists' previous use of it as a camp.²¹⁹ A pro-government website also claimed that the “army burnt the school because separatist fighters had used it as a base.”²²⁰

The attack seriously damaged the school, which remains closed as of July 2021.

²¹⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a resident of Widikum, July 2021.

²²⁰ KumKum Massa, “Alert! Ambazonia Widikum Propaganda,” KontriPipo, <https://kontripipo.com/alert-ambazonia-widikum-propaganda/>, January 5, 2019 (accessed September 2021).

VI. Use of Schools by Armed Separatist Groups

Schools are supposed to be safe havens when violence erupts. They are meant for children to learn and socialize. But we see too many schools being used by amba boys as camps and bases.

– A human rights activist in the South-West region, November 2020²²¹

Separatist fighters have used scores of schools as bases and have held hostages, stored weapons and ammunitions, and deployed fighters in and near them, according to reports from the UN and other credible organizations.²²² A senior Cameroonian education official said in July 2019 that separatist fighters were occupying and using 53 schools as camps in the Anglophone regions.²²³ In September 2020, the army announced they had chased separatist fighters from at least 100 schools in the North-West region alone.²²⁴ Human Rights Watch received information about the occupation by separatist fighters of three schools in the South-West region and in previous reports documented the occupation by separatist fighters of four schools in the North-West region.²²⁵

A former separatist fighter, Peter, said his former group, the Asawana group, had occupied at least three schools in the South-West region. It used the government secondary school in Foe Bakundu for about two years, the government secondary school in Maromba for about three years, and the government secondary school in Bai Panya for about one year, he said. All schools were used for weapons storage and as disciplinary centers to physically punish villagers who violated separatist rules. The schools in Foe Bakundu and Maromba had prisons and offices, where villagers could lodge complaints, and the school

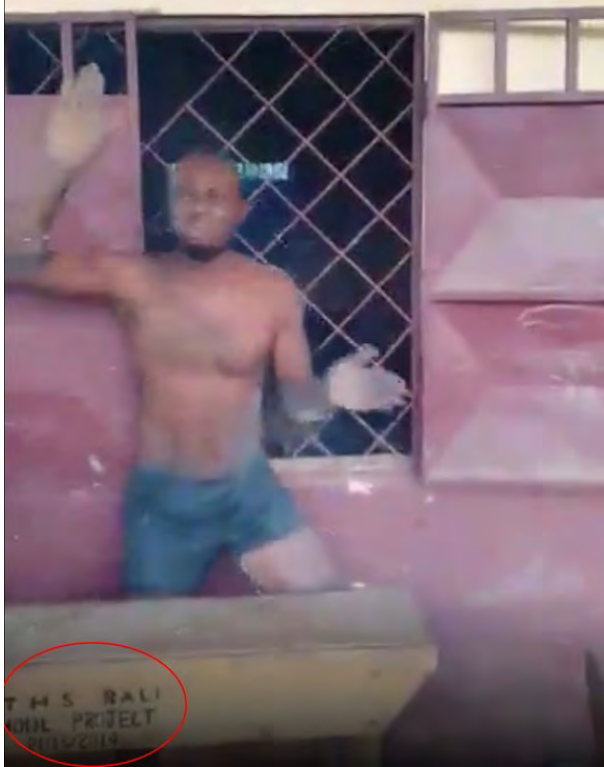
²²¹ Human Rights Watch interview with a member of a Cameroonian human rights organization, November 18, 2020.

²²² The World Bank reported that in January 2021, 47 schools were used as bases by separatist fighters, of which 12 in the North-West region and 35 in the South-West region. World Bank Group, “La crise sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun : Évaluation de l’impact économique et social.”

²²³ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon: Separatist Fighters Occupy 50 Schools,” *VoA*, July 22, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-separatist-fighters-occupy-50-schools> (accessed August 2021).

²²⁴ Moki Edwin Kindzeka Cameroon Campaigns for Schools Reopening, *VoA*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-campaigns-schools-reopening> (accessed August 2021)

²²⁵ “Cameroon: Video Shows Separatists Torturing Man,” Human Rights Watch news release; “Cameroon: New Attacks on Civilians By Troops, Separatists,” Human Rights Watch news release.



A screenshot from a video showing armed separatist fighters torturing a man in an abandoned school in mid-May, 2019. Writing on a school desk suggests that the video was filmed at the Government Technical High School in Bali, North-West region. © 2019 Private

in Bai Panya functioned as a meeting site for Asawana fighters.²²⁶ Human Rights Watch was unable to corroborate the occupation of these three schools.

Separatist fighters occupied the Government Primary and Nursery School in Tan village, in the North-West region, from at least 2018 to December 2019.²²⁷ On December 8, 2019, at about 5:30 a.m., soldiers stormed it and killed at least six separatist fighters in the school.²²⁸

Witnesses then saw soldiers damaging and looting the school. Textbooks had already been destroyed during the armed separatists' occupation.²²⁹ A community leader described the scene: "There was a lot of shooting. Villagers escaped for their lives. I also ran away with my family and went to the bush, where I remained for about one week. When I came back with

other villagers, we discovered the dead bodies [of separatist fighters] and buried them."²³⁰

²²⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a former separatist fighter, April 27, 2021.

²²⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a Tan community leader, June 2, 2021; Human Rights Watch interview with a Tan resident, May 30, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher from Tan, June 15, 2021.

²²⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a Tan community leader, June 2, 2021.

²²⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher from Tan, June 15, 2021.

²³⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a Tan community leader, June 2, 2021.



A view of the abandoned Government Primary and Nursery School in Tan village, North-West region. The school was used as a camp by armed separatists from at least 2018 to December 2019, when it was attacked by Cameroonian soldiers. © Private, June 2021, Tan, North-West region, Cameroon

Since December 2019, the school has been abandoned. Villagers and former teachers have started to repair the damage. “Following the military intervention, we could finally enter the school to see what it had become,” said a former teacher at the school. “There was a lot of damage.” He said two solar panels and kitchen utensils, like pots, were missing and the school’s doors and roof were bullet-ridden.²³¹ Human Rights Watch reviewed photographs and videos taken in May 2021 showing the abandoned school, a classroom with broken benches and notebooks spread on the floor, and the destroyed doors and roof. Before the crisis erupted in late 2016, this school had up to 300 students, serving the local population as well as the nomadic Mbororo people in the area.²³²

According to a former student from Ndu, also in the North-West region, separatist fighters occupied the Government High School Mbiplah in Ndu for one year before relocating to the Government Primary School Nalah, also in Ndu, which continues to be a separatist camp at time of writing.²³³

²³¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher from Tan, June 15, 2021.

²³² Human Rights Watch interview with a Tan resident, May 30, 2021.

²³³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Sara, April 7, 2021.

VII. Government Response

The Cameroonian authorities have taken steps to respond to attacks on education, including by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration in September 2018.²³⁴ Countries that endorse the declaration agree to take steps to strengthen prevention and responses related to attacks on education.²³⁵ The Cameroonian government has begun to fulfill its commitments under the Safe Schools Declaration by implementing some measures to maintain children’s access to education, with funding and support from donors and humanitarian organizations.²³⁶

Back-to-School Campaigns

The continuation of education during conflict is a commitment under the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Cameroonian government has attempted to revive education in the Anglophone regions with more pronounced back-to-school campaigns at the start of each new school year than the ones it executed during the pre-crisis period. Unfortunately, many teachers and independent analysts believe these back-to-school campaigns put the lives of students and teachers at risk by forcing them to go to school despite widespread insecurity.²³⁷

Tina, a teacher at the Government High School in Ashong village, North-West region, described how teachers must go to school, despite a lack of security, protection, and even students:

We are under pressure to keep the school open, to show up in class, even when we have to teach to empty benches. There have been days where I

²³⁴ “Cameroon is 81st Country to Endorse Safe Schools Declaration,” Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), September 11, 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-81st-country-endorse-safe-schools-declaration> (accessed August 2021).

²³⁵ “Safe Schools Declaration,” GCPEA, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/documents_safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf (accessed August 2021).

²³⁶ Human Rights Watch interviews with representatives of UNOCHA, UNICEF, the US, French, Canadian embassies in Yaoundé, June and July 2021.

²³⁷ Ruth Maclean, “Stay home or risk being shot: Cameroon's back-to-school crisis,” *The Guardian*, September 3, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/sep/03/cameroon-pupils-risk-being-shot-back-to-school> (accessed August 2021); Institut français des relations internationales, “Education et pouvoir dans le conflit anglophone au Cameroun,” June 2020, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/petrigh_education_conflit_cameroun_2020.pdf (accessed August 2021).

was alone in my classroom. The pressure comes from our board. And in turn, the board is under pressure from higher authorities. And when we go to school, we receive threats from the amba boys.²³⁸

Before the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, the government launched a highly publicized back-to-school campaign.²³⁹ Its next back-to-school campaign, before the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, came after nearly seven months of school closures across the country due to the Covid-19 pandemic.²⁴⁰ Attacks on education in the Anglophone regions escalated almost immediately after students physically returned to school in October 2020. Within weeks, a teacher was murdered, another one kidnapped,²⁴¹ and Human Rights Watch documented attacks on at least three schools (in Kumba, Kumbo, and Limbe).²⁴² Some students stopped going to school for months following these attacks, as parents were reluctant to send their children to school out of fear for their safety.²⁴³

Chris, a high school teacher in Buea, about 70 kilometers from Kumba, said that after information about the Kumba massacre spread, parents “rushed to the school and literally took their children out of the classrooms.” He described “panic and commotion, even though we were far away from the location where the killings took place.”²⁴⁴

²³⁸ Human Rights watch telephone interview with Tina, June 2021.

²³⁹ Eulalia Amabo, “Back-to-School : Defence Officials Join Campaign Train,” August 23, 2019, *Cameroon Tribune*, <https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/27501/fr.html/back-to-school-defence-officials-join> (accessed August 2021); Emmanuel, “Back-to-school Campaign : Growing Social Media Mobilisation,” *Cameroon Tribune*, September 2, 2019, <https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/27654/fr.html/back-to-school-campaign-growing-social-media> (accessed August 2021); Kiven B. Nsodzeze, “Cameroon, Back To School Campaign: Government Called To Free All Schools Taken Hostage By Separatists,” *Cameroon-Info.net*, July 24, 2019, <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroon-back-to-school-campaign-government-called-to-free-all-schools-taken-hostage-by-348639.html> (accessed August 2021).

²⁴⁰ Moi Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Campaigns for Schools Reopening,” *VoA*, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-campaigns-schools-reopening> (accessed August 2021); “Back to school 2020: Campaign to restore students’ academic drive launched,” *Cameroon Radio Télévision*, October 11, 2020 <https://www.crtv.cm/2020/10/back-to-school-2020-campaign-to-restore-students-academic-drive-launched/> (accessed August 2021); Felix Tih and Aurore Bonny, “Cameroon: Students return to school after seven months,” *Andalou Agency*, October 10, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/cameroon-students-return-to-school-after-seven-months/1995857> (accessed August 2021).

²⁴¹ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 25,” UNOCHA situation report, November 30, 2020, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/sitrep_nsw_nov_2020_vf.pdf (accessed August 2021).

²⁴² Please see Section III “Attacks on Schools” for further information about these attacks.

²⁴³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Chris, June 2021; Bellingcat, “How Schoolchildren Became Pawns in Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis”; “UNICEF alarmed by spike in school attacks in Cameroon,” UNICEF press release, November 6, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-alarmed-spike-school-attacks-cameroon> (accessed August 2021).

²⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Chris, June 2021.

Not only parents, but also teachers are afraid. “It takes courage to teach,” said a 36-year-old female teacher in Muea. “Every morning, when I wake up and walk to school, I pray God that I’ll return.”²⁴⁵

On September 3, 2021, ahead of the resumption of the 2021 to 2022 academic year on September 6, the government also carried out a robust back-to-school campaign. A post on the Facebook account of the defense minister stated: “Education is a fundamental right. Children must go to school,” above a cartoon showing a soldier holding a child by the hand.²⁴⁶



A post on the Facebook account of the defense minister stated: “Education is a fundamental right. Children must go to school,” above a cartoon showing a soldier holding a child by the hand. Facebook, Cameroon’s Minister of Defence, September 3, 2021, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1849906221861395&id=453680038150694&m_entstream_source=feed_mobile&anchor_composer=false (accessed September 2021).

²⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 36-year-old teacher from the South-West region, June 2021.

²⁴⁶ Minister of Defence’s Facebook page, September 3, 2021, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1849906221861395&id=453680038150694&m_entstream_source=feed_mobile&anchor_composer=false (accessed September 2021).

Cameroonian authorities said at least 400 schools reopened and 70,000 students have resumed their classes in the North-West and South-West for the new school year that began in September 2021.²⁴⁷ Local media reported that authorities of both Anglophone regions recorded improvements in school attendance compared to the last academic year.²⁴⁸

Citing statistics from Cameroonian education authorities, UNOCHA reported that only a week only after the resumption of the new school year 2021-2022, 53 percent of secondary schools, 49 percent of primary schools and 47 percent of nursery schools were not functional in the South-West region, and only 23 percent of secondary schools were functional in the North-West region.²⁴⁹

Teachers and parents of students from both regions also told Human Rights Watch that the majority of schools remain shut.

A mother of two school children in Muyuka, South-West region, said:

All government schools are shut here. Only community schools, run by local residents and sometimes members of the Catholic Church, are going on because they are tolerated by the amba fighters. The situation remains unpredictable, and I see no prospect for public schools to reopen in Muyuka anytime soon. We also started the first day of a lockdown imposed by the amba for approximately two weeks and during this period everything will be closed, including community schools.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, "Cameroon Says Students and Teachers Defy Separatists School Lockdown," *VoA*, July 19, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-says-students-and-teachers-defy-separatists-school-lockdown> (accessed August 2021).

²⁴⁸ "Cameroon: NW Region records improvement in school attendance," *Journal du Cameroun*, September 10, 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-nww-region-records-improvement-in-school-attendance/> (accessed September 2021); "Cameroon: SW Region records positive numbers after first week of school resumption," *Journal du Cameroun*, September 10, 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroonsw-region-records-positive-numbers-after-first-week-of-school-resumption/> (accessed September 2021).

²⁴⁹ "CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35," UNOCHA situation report.

²⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a woman from the South-West region, September 16, 2021.

In addition, separatist groups called for an 18-day lockdown from September 15 to October 2, 2021.²⁵¹

According to the UN, as a result of the separatist-imposed lockdown “all schools and community learning spaces were closed, except for some schools in a few urban areas which are operating at less than 60% of their capacity, compared to the first week of the 2021-2022 academic year.”²⁵²

“Schools were meant to open in September, but my kids are staying home. We are all staying home. The city is dead. We are afraid of breaking the lockdown. We don’t want to run into troubles,” a father of two in Kumba, South-West region, told Human Rights Watch.²⁵³

Presence of Security Forces at City Schools

The Cameroonian government has frequently deployed security forces in or outside school premises in an attempt to increase security at schools in major urban centers, where schools are functioning. Following the November 10, 2021 attack on the Buea University for example, Bernard Okalia Bilai, governor of the South-West region, told the media that everyone should return to the school because the military has been deployed to protect students and staff members.²⁵⁴ The responses have been mixed: some students and teachers told Human Rights Watch that they appreciated this form of protection, while others did not.

The *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, which Cameroon endorsed through the Safe Schools Declaration, propose a sliding scale of interaction between security forces and school premises in response to security threats to schools:

²⁵¹ “Crise anglophone : un mot d’ordre de confinement de deux semaines à Bamenda divise les leaders séparatistes,” *Agence Cameroun Presse*, September 15, 2021, <https://agencecamerounpresse.com/societe/soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9/crise-anglophone-un-mot-d%E2%80%99ordre-de-confinement-de-deux-semaines-%C3%A0-bamenda-divise-les-leaders-s%C3%A9paratistes.html> (accessed December 5, 2021).

²⁵² “Cameroon Flash Update: Ban on movements and activities in the North-West and South-West,” UNOCHA situation report, September 28, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-flash-update-ban-movements-and-activities-north-west-and-south-west-28> (accessed December 5, 2021).

²⁵³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a man from the South-West, September 28, 2021.

²⁵⁴ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Students to Return to Class After Cameroon University Bombing,” *VoA*, November 11, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/students-to-return-to-class-after-cameroon-university-bombing/6309196.html> (accessed November 2021).

[Security forces] should not be employed to provide security for schools and universities, except when alternative means of providing essential security are not available. If possible, appropriately trained civilian personnel should be used to provide security for schools and universities. If necessary, consideration should also be given to evacuating children, students and staff to a safer location... If fighting forces are engaged in security tasks related to schools and universities, their presence within the grounds or buildings should be avoided if at all possible in order to avoid compromising the establishment's civilian status and disrupting the learning environment.²⁵⁵

While the *Guidelines* have been produced specifically for application during armed conflict, they may also be useful and instructive for comparable situations, including those with the potential to turn into armed conflict.²⁵⁶

Positive Reception

Some teachers felt safer when security guards or security forces, such as police, gendarmes, and soldiers, were around their schools. Lily, a female teacher at the Government Bilingual Grammar School in Buea's Molyko neighborhood, expressed feeling more "comfortable" and "safer" due to the presence of about six security force personnel at the school gate and two or three on patrol. Private security guards replace the security forces at night.²⁵⁷ At the Government Technical High School, also in Molyko neighborhood, there are at least two or three security force personnel around, including at night. Chris, a teacher there, said, "I think it is good to have them around. I think without them we would be more exposed to attacks. Their presence deters attacks."²⁵⁸ A private school teacher in Buea's Sandpit neighborhood was "reassured and more protected" by the presence of

²⁵⁵ GCPEA, *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, 2014, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/documents_guidelines_en.pdf (accessed December 5, 2021), Guideline 5.

²⁵⁶ "Commentary on the "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict," GCPEA, 2015, <https://protectingeducation.org/publication/commentary-on-the-guidelines-for-protecting-schools-and-universities-from-military-use-during-armed-conflict/> (accessed December 5, 2021), p. 5.

²⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Lily, June 9, 2021.

²⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Chris, June 2021.

soldiers around the school. “I feel safer, and I work better,” he said. “I hope they’ll continue patrolling until the security situation improves.”²⁵⁹

Some students felt safer too. “Gendarmes are present in our school all the time—they sleep there,” said a 20-year-old male student at the Government Technical High School in Bamenda. “Their presence makes us feel safer. It’s a guarantee of extra security during class time. I think they should remain there.”²⁶⁰

Concerns about Deployment of Security Forces

Others were concerned about the deployment of security forces in and around their schools, citing fears that their presence would increase the risk of attacks by armed separatists. Some said that they feel uncomfortable in the presence of security forces because of their abusive reputation.

A teacher at the Higher Technical Teacher Training College in Kumba expressed fear of security forces patrolling the classrooms:

Their presence makes me scared. First, they are known to harass young men because they suspect them of having ties with the separatist fighters, so students and young male teachers are their targets. Sometimes, soldiers can arrest and detain you arbitrarily. Secondly, when the amba see the security forces, they tend to attack them. So, if you are with the security forces or near them, you automatically become a target.²⁶¹

When separatist fighters targeted the Government Bilingual High School Atiela in Bamenda, one teacher believed separatist fighters attacked his school because gendarmes were stationed there for security purposes. As of June 2021, the school was functioning with gendarmes inside.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Human Rights watch telephone interview with a teacher in the South-West region, June 2021.

²⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with a student from the North-West region, July 20, 2021.

²⁶¹ Human Rights watch telephone interview with a teacher from the South-West region, June 9, 2021.

²⁶² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher at the Government Bilingual High School Atiela, June 5 and 7, 2021.

Staff at the Community Christian College in Muea decided not to apply for soldiers to provide extra security because:

If the amba boys know the soldiers are at the school, they might attack us, there could be a clash, lives of kids could be at stake. So, we [the school staff] decided to ensure the security ourselves and instructed children to take precautions and use some coping strategies like not wearing uniforms on their way to and from school, to leave their books at the school, and to use shopping bags instead of school bags.²⁶³

A 22-year-old student at the Saint Paul Comprehensive College, a private school in Nkwen village, Bamenda, said that private security guards generally provide security at her school. However, during the exam period from June 29 to July 13, 2021, security forces patrolled the school, likely to dissuade separatist fighters from attacking it. She said she preferred private security guards to government security forces:

I am comfortable only having private security guards in the school compound. I would not want the military to station in my school. Military presence in school makes us, the students, a target of the amba boys. During the exams, I was nervous when the soldiers came close to the school because I feared the school could be attacked by the amba boys.²⁶⁴

Some found a compromise with the security forces. At the Government Nursery School Bokwoango in Buea, education staff asked the security forces to vacate the premises and instead conduct patrols around the school perimeter. “The students were afraid, and we felt like we could become a target of the amba,” a teacher explained. The security forces agreed to their request.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 36-year-old teacher from the South-West region, June 7, 2021.

²⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 22-year-old student at the Saint Paul Comprehensive College July 16, 2021.

²⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at Government Nursery School Bokwoango, June 7, 2021.

VIII. Persistent Failures to Protect Education

The government has made efforts to address attacks on education in the Anglophone regions, however these efforts have not been sufficient to resolve issues related to security for schools in rural areas and on the way to and from schools and accountability for attacks on education has been almost non-existent. The government has also failed to address the lack of resources and overcrowding in schools hosting internally displaced students.

Provision of Security to Places of Education

In times of armed conflict or comparable situations of persistent violence that threaten the safety of places of education, students, and staff, governments have an obligation to counter the risk and take feasible efforts to ensure the safety of places of learning and those in them. Provision of security to schools and universities should be undertaken in such a way that does not enhance their vulnerability to attack, for example by making them potential targets in an armed conflict, or for armed groups in an insurgency. The views of educational professionals, students, and parents, who should be regularly and formally consulted, should be taken into account in developing security plans for schools and universities.

Government forces deployed to provide security should also strictly observe international human rights law, and where applicable international humanitarian law, with zero tolerance of abuses against civilians so that staff and students alike can trust those providing security. As noted above, the Safe Schools Guidelines call for appropriately trained civilian personnel to be used to provide security if possible, and for armed forces only to be used where alternative means are not available.

Therefore, the Cameroonian government should consider a sliding scale of security measures in response to assessed risks to schools, students, and teachers. If possible, appropriately trained civilian personnel, such as guards and watchmen, should be used to provide security. Any decision to escalate to police, gendarmes, and then armed forces personnel, should be done only as a necessary and proportionate response to assessed risk.

If armed forces personnel are engaged in security tasks related to schools, their presence within school grounds or buildings should be avoided if at all possible, including for accommodation. Where feasible, establishing wider security perimeters in neighborhoods around schools, rather than directly outside schools, may minimize disruption to children’s education and avoid militarization of school or university grounds.

Similarly, where provision of security along routes traveled by teachers and students to and from schools is necessary, the government should consider the feasibility of conducting sweeps along the routes before and after the school day, rather than direct escorts.

Inadequate Security in Some Places

Absence of Security Measures

Some schools that were attacked had no security protection or security forces had failed to respond adequately to early warning signs and threats of an attack. Some victims and witnesses expressed disappointment at the government’s inaction.

For example, there was no government security – police or otherwise – near the private Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Kumba when suspected separatist gunmen stormed the school and killed seven children in broad daylight on October 24, 2020.²⁶⁶ “It is a shame that no member of the security forces was present nearby the school at the time of the attack,”²⁶⁷ said a man whose 12-year-old daughter was shot and injured in the attack. “Our children deserve better protection.”²⁶⁸

In a statement in response to the incident, the government spokesperson said that the school “only launched its activities at the start of the 2020-2021 school year, without the knowledge of the competent administrative authorities and could not benefit from the same security measures enjoyed by other schools.”²⁶⁹ However, according to Kumba

²⁶⁶ “Cameroon: Gunmen Massacre School Children,” Human Rights Watch news release.

²⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a man from Kumba, October 28, 2020.

²⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a man from Kumba, October 28, 2020.

²⁶⁹ Fred Bihina, “Cameroun - Massacre de Kumba: Le gouvernement note que l’école attaquée a lancé ses activités «à l’insu des autorités administratives compétentes, et n’a pu bénéficier des mêmes mesures de protection que d’autres établissements scolaires du Département de la Mémé.»”

residents and journalists, the school had been open for several years, but only government schools in Kumba—not private schools—have security forces outside.²⁷⁰

When separatist fighters attacked the private Kulu Memorial College in Limbe less than two weeks later, that school was also unprotected.²⁷¹ “There was no presence of security forces around the school at the time of the attack: no military, no gendarmes, no police, nothing,” said Julia, a teacher there. “The military only came after the attack when the gunmen had already disappeared.”²⁷²

No law enforcement intervened during or after separatist fighters raided the Ashong public high school.²⁷³ Tina, a teacher at the school felt the security forces did not care: “There is a gendarmerie station in our community. But the gendarmes did not respond during or after the amba attack. Even in the following days, they did not come to ask us questions, to know what had happened to us.”²⁷⁴

Despite repeated threats by separatists to disrupt the National Day on May 20, 2020, there were no security personnel in or around the University of Bamenda that day. Jim, who was kidnapped by separatist fighters, said: “There is a military base just seven kilometers from [Bambili]. But no one intervened when we were kidnapped. No soldier came and no soldier was around the university when the amba came.... From what I have experienced, I think that [separatist] threats were overlooked or not taken seriously.”²⁷⁵

Lack of Security on the Road

Students and teachers should have not only safe schools, but also safe locales so they can go to and from school without being attacked. According to Lily, a public high school teacher:

²⁷⁰ “Cameroon: Gunmen Massacre School Children,” Human Rights Watch news release.

²⁷¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Julia, November 20, 2020; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a female teacher at the Kulu Memorial College, November 19, 2021.

²⁷² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Julia, November 20, 2020.

²⁷³ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with two female teachers from the North-West region, June 3 and 6, 2021.

²⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tina, June 7, 2021.

²⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Jim, April 8, 2021.

The main problem is what happens off the school campus. Security is guaranteed by the security forces at the school, but not outside. Some students and teachers live at the periphery of the town. These areas are not secured—amba are around and can attack them.... We don't just need safe schools, we need safe cities, safe neighborhoods.²⁷⁶

In fact, all the students, teachers, and parents interviewed by Human Rights Watch who still go to school in the Anglophone regions had major concerns regarding the lack of security on the road to and from school.

“When I see them leaving the house in the morning, I worry, I am nervous,” said a father of two boys living in Bomaka, South-West region. “I think about all the risks along the road and at school. We live in fear.”²⁷⁷

Some parents have sought to mitigate these risks by arranging taxis for their schoolchildren, despite the cost.²⁷⁸ One high school student in Bamenda described a common self-protection strategy used by many students: “When I go to school, I don't wear my school uniform. I just wear my normal clothes. I am afraid of being spotted by the amba. I walk for about a kilometer, and I never feel safe.”²⁷⁹

Lack of Security in Rural Areas

Most of the schools in the violence-affected areas, especially in rural areas where the presence of separatist groups is stronger, have been closed since 2017.²⁸⁰ Some of the teachers, students, and families of students interviewed by Human Rights Watch thought that an increased military presence in rural communities would promote school resumption. Others believed that more security forces still would not allow classes to safely resume and could even heighten insecurity.

²⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Lily, June 9, 2021.

²⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a parent of two primary school children in the South-West region, May 3, 2020.

²⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a student from the North-West, April 7, 2021; Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a father of two children in the South-West region May 3, 2021.

²⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a high-school female student from Bamenda, July 2021.

²⁸⁰ “Cameroon's conflict keeps schools shut,” *BBC*; ACAPS, “Education in crisis in the North-west and South-West regions,” February 2021, <https://www.acaps.org/special-report/cameroon-education-crisis-north-west-and-south-west-regions> (accessed August 2021).

In Akeh village, a rural community in the North-West region where there are active separatist groups, a former senior education staffer at the Government High School, which has been closed since July 2018, believed a greater military presence would help schools safely resume. He thought that “the creation of a military base or post could contribute to discouraging amba from attacking schools.”²⁸¹

Thomas, a public high school teacher, called for a comprehensive, political solution to address the complexities of school resumption:

An increased presence of the military in rural areas won’t be enough for schools to resume. Not everyone feels safe when the soldiers are around. Some think a military man is a threat, and when they see the soldiers, they are scared because the soldiers misbehave. Also, the amba are not giving up their strategy of the school boycott. There should be some more comprehensive solution to the crisis: a political solution. There should be a dialogue between the government and the separatist leaders.²⁸²



A view of the abandoned Government High School in Akeh village, a rural community in the North-West region. The school has been closed since July 2018. © Private, April 2021, Akeh, North-West region, Cameroon

²⁸¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a former senior education staffer at Akeh school, May 3, 2021.

²⁸² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Thomas, May 4, 2021.

Inadequately Resourced and Overcrowded Host Schools

As the number of IDPs in the Anglophone regions as well as in the Francophone Littoral, West, and Centre regions more than tripled from 160,000 in 2018 to nearly 600,000 in 2021,²⁸³ both public and private schools in host towns suffered from overcrowding. Schools in urban centers are particularly overcrowded,²⁸⁴ partly because internally displaced teachers, students, and parents felt that these places would be safer due to the heightened presence of security forces.²⁸⁵ Consequently, many children moved, with or without their families, to those urban areas to more safely access education.²⁸⁶ Teachers were also redeployed to main urban centers once their schools in the countryside shut down.²⁸⁷

In these urban centers, teachers, parents, and students Human Rights Watch interviewed identified overcrowding as a problem that stretched class sizes beyond their limit, resulting in 100 students in some classes— when the pre-crisis sizes ranged from approximately 25 to 50 students per class, according to our research—and schools struggling to accommodate everyone with only limited assistance from the government. A lack of material and human resources exacerbated this situation.

A teacher at the Government Bilingual Grammar school in Buea said that the student body increased by at least 1,000 since 2019 due to the arrival of displaced students. She expressed a need for additional classrooms, teachers, desks, benches, and school materials.²⁸⁸ Another teacher working in Buea observed a steep increase in student numbers at the Government High School in Great Soppo neighborhood and at the

²⁸³ “Cameroon: Emergency Response Plan seeks US\$15M to reach 160,000 internally displaced people in the next three months,” UNOCHA news release, May 29, 2018, <https://www.unocha.org/story/cameroon-emergency-response-plan-seeks-us15m-reach-160000-internally-displaced-people-next> (accessed August 2021); “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35,” UNOCHA situation report.

²⁸⁴ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 24,” UNOCHA situation report, October 31, 2020, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_cameroon_sitrep_nsw_-_october_2020.pdf (accessed August 2021).

²⁸⁵ ACAPS, “ACAPS Thematic Report: Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions.”

²⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch interviews with a member of a Cameroonian civil society organization working in the South-West region, November 18 and 20, 2021; with a staff working for a UN agency, November 18, 2020; with Lily, June 2021; and with a 54-year-old teacher from the South-West region, June 2021.

²⁸⁷ Noela Ebob Bisong, “Anglophone Crisis: Teachers To Be Redeployed To Functional Schools,” *The Sun*, October 15, 2019, <https://thesuncameroon.cm/index.php/2019/10/15/anglophone-crisis-teachers-redeployed-functional-schools-3/> (accessed August 2021).

²⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Lily, June 9, 2021.

Government Technical High School in Molyko neighborhood because of the arrival of large numbers of internally displaced students. “It is hard to ensure quality education when you have such a large number of students,” he said. “We need more classroom space, more desks, and more teachers. We have not received any support from the government in this direction.”²⁸⁹

Tim, who fled his community following an assault by separatist fighters, experienced congestion in his new school, the Government Technical High School, in Buea:

The classroom space is inadequate, there is minimal student-teacher interaction, teaching time is more limited. Our class is overcrowded and thus, the environment is not conducive for the students to learn and for teachers to teach.²⁹⁰

According to an education official in Douala—Cameroon’s largest city, located in the Littoral region, which has welcomed thousands of IDPs²⁹¹—the government has taken steps to accommodate displaced students. He said the Minister of Secondary Education empowered Parent Teacher Associations to build more classrooms and claimed that “as a result, the problem of the influx has been resolved.”²⁹²

Yet some schools remain over capacity in Douala, and teachers told Human Rights Watch that their institutions have not received any additional school materials from the government. For example, although the class size at the Government Bilingual High School in the Bonaberi neighborhood increased from an average of 25 to 50 students per class, the government did not supply additional benches, desks, or books.²⁹³

Private schools have also become congested. A private school teacher in Yaoundé, Cameroon’s capital, described how private school enrollment doubled, and even tripled,

²⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Chris, June 2021.

²⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tim, April 6, 2021.

²⁹¹ “Cameroon: West and Littoral Regions,” UNOCHA Multi-Sector Rapid Assessment (MIRA), October 2019, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/cmr_mira_west_littoral_oct19_report_final_ok.pdf (accessed August 2021).

²⁹² Ngala Killian Chintom, “Cameroon conflict: ‘I go to a secret school,’” *BBC*, December 12, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-50663389> (accessed August 2021).

²⁹³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher working in Douala, June 21, 2021.

as a result of internally displaced students from the Anglophone regions. Student numbers at the Bilingual College Paul Messi and the Bilingual College Frantz Fanon each rose from 700 to 1,600-plus, while the Bilingual College Amazia increased from 700 to 2,000-plus. “It’s not sustainable,” he said. “Classes are overcrowded, it’s difficult to teach. Sometimes we have up to 100 students per class.”²⁹⁴

Impunity for Attacks on Education

There is no doubt that there has been an absence of accountability for attacks on education by armed separatists. As of October 2021, Human Rights Watch is aware of 23 persons who have been arrested following attacks. One armed separatist was arrested and is being prosecuted for his alleged involvement in assaulting and cutting the hand of Clara, a teacher in the South-West region.²⁹⁵ After the incident in March 2019, Clara said that Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) soldiers came from their camp near Mamfe, chased the assailants, and caught and detained one of them in Buea. His trial started at the beginning of 2021 and at time of writing is ongoing.²⁹⁶

About a week after the release of the kidnapped University of Buea students in March 2019, the military said it arrested at least 10 suspects.²⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch has been unable to independently verify these arrests or to learn more about the identity or fate of the 10 suspects.

Human Rights Watch is aware of the arrests of 12 more persons, 8 of whom were ultimately convicted of different offences in connection with the school attack in Kumba in October 2020.²⁹⁸ The 12 were prosecuted before a military tribunal, which on September 7, 2021, following a severely unfair trial, sentenced four to death, fined and jailed another four, and acquitted the final four.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher working in Yaoundé, June 21, 2021.

²⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Clara, March 22, 2021; Human Rights Watch interview with a 26-year-old man from the South-West region, June 3 and 14, 2021.

²⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Clara, March 22, 2021.

²⁹⁷ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Football Teams Move After Kidnapping of Players, Coaches.”

²⁹⁸ “Cameroon: Sham Trial for Kumba School Massacre,” Human Rights Watch news release.

²⁹⁹ For more on the unfair trial, see section VIII and “Cameroon: Sham Trial for Kumba School Massacre,” Human Rights Watch news release.

It is likely that there are other cases of arrests and prosecutions of people who were involved in attacks against education. However, Human Rights Watch is not aware of them, including because of the failure of government to respond to its request for this information,³⁰⁰ the general restrictions imposed by government on information flows, access to the Anglophone regions,³⁰¹ as well as the near secrecy surrounding trials of separatist suspects in military courts. Other factors contributing to the low number of arrests and prosecutions of suspected school attackers documented in this report include the government's adoption of a primarily military approach to the crisis.

Restrictions Of Access to the Anglophone Regions and Of Information Flow

Since the security and political crisis broke out in the Anglophone regions in late 2016, authorities have systematically tried to control the information flow and hinder access to the North-West and South-West regions to independent national and international monitors and journalists.

In January 2017, the government shut down the internet for three months in the English-speaking regions.³⁰² According to Internet Sans Frontières, “it was the longest shut down by a country in Africa and its impact on the country's economy was devastating.”³⁰³ The internet disruptions hampered the ability of journalists and human rights activists to cover and report on events unfolding in the Anglophone regions and hindered people's access to crucial life-saving information.³⁰⁴

At least one journalist has died in military custody following his arrest for covering the crisis. On August 2, 2019, police arrested Samuel Ajiekah Abwue, known as Wazizi, an English-speaking journalist at the privately owned broadcaster, Chillen Muzik and TV

³⁰⁰ On September 21, 2021, Human Rights Watch sent a letter, with its findings and a list of questions, to Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute. The Prime Minister has not replied. The letter is available in Appendix II.

³⁰¹ “Cameroon: Human Rights Watch Denied Entry,” Human Rights Watch news release, May 2, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/02/cameroon-human-rights-watch-denied-entry-0>.

³⁰² “Access Now files new legal intervention in Cameroon against shutdowns,” Access Now, August 2, 2018, <https://www.accessnow.org/access-now-files-supporting-intervention-in-renewed-legal-challenge-to-internet-shutdown-in-cameroon/> (accessed November 2021).

³⁰³ “New internet shutdown ordered in Cameroon,” Internet Sans Frontières, October 2, 2017, <https://internetwithoutborders.org/new-internet-shutdown-ordered-in-cameroon/#:~:text=%E2%80%9C%20Internet%20Without%20Borders%20is%20again%20concerned%20about,the%20longest%20shutdown%20by%20a%20country%20in%20Africa> (accessed November 2021).

³⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with three Cameroonian journalists and four residents of the Anglophone regions, November 2021.

(CMTV), and transferred him to a military-run facility in the same city on August 7, where he was then forcibly disappeared.³⁰⁵ None of his family, friends, colleagues, or lawyers had contact with him after August 7, 2019, but in early June 2020 media reported that they had learned Wazizi died in custody following torture, on an undetermined date. Cameroonian authorities have yet to effectively investigate his enforced disappearance and death in military custody.³⁰⁶

Few international journalists have been able to visit the Anglophone regions since 2017, and those who did were either embedded with the Cameroonian army³⁰⁷ or travelled undercover.³⁰⁸

The media accreditation of other journalists who were granted visas to enter Cameroon excluded the Anglophone regions. An international journalist told Human Rights Watch “when I obtained my visa and media accreditation in 2019 from the Cameroonian embassy in Paris, I was told that I could not travel to the Anglophone regions.”³⁰⁹ Another journalist said: “I got the visa at the Cameroonian embassy in Paris, but I only got the media accreditation in Yaoundé at the communication ministry, five days after my arrival and that accreditation did not cover the Anglophone regions.”³¹⁰

Adoption of a Primarily Military Approach

At the beginning of the crisis, between late 2016 and early 2017, security forces arrested hundreds of people for taking part in protests,³¹¹ but by the second half of 2017, the government’s approach changed. In November 2017, as the number of armed separatist groups grew in the Anglophone regions, President Paul Biya labelled them terrorists and

³⁰⁵ “Cameroon: Ensure Independent Probe of Reporter’s Death,” Human Rights Watch news release, June 9, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/09/cameroon-ensure-independent-probe-reporters-death>.

³⁰⁶ “Cameroon: Ensure Independent Probe of Reporter’s Death,” Human Rights Watch news release.

³⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with an international journalist, November 24, 2021.

³⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone and WhatsApp interviews with two international journalists, November 24, 2021.

³⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch WhatsApp interview with an international journalist, November 24, 2021.

³¹⁰ Human Rights Watch WhatsApp interview with an international journalist, November 24, 2021.

³¹¹ “Bamenda protests: Mass arrests in Cameroon,” *BBC*, November 23, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38078238> (accessed November 2021); “Cameroon: Release of Anglophone leaders a relief but others still languish in prison,” Amnesty International, August 30, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/08/cameroon-release-of-anglophone-leaders-a-relief-but-others-still-languish-in-prison/> (accessed November 2021); “Cameroon: Arrests and civil society bans risk inflaming tensions in English-speaking regions,” Amnesty International, January 20, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/01/cameroon-arrests-and-civil-society-bans-risk-inflaming-tensions-in-english-speaking-regions/> (accessed November 2021).

declared “war” on them.³¹² After the so-called ‘Grand National dialogue’ between September 30 and October 4, 2019,³¹³ a military solution appears to have largely prevailed.

The deployment of thousands of troops to the English-speaking regions to engage in counter-insurgency operations has led to the killings of hundreds of civilians³¹⁴ as well as alleged separatist fighters.

As a Cameroonian lawyer put it:

The government’s approach in the two Anglophone regions has not been one of arrest and prosecute, but rather one of pursue and neutralize. Security forces often prefer to kill the suspected separatist fighters rather than capture, interrogate, and prosecute them. When armed actors commit attacks, such as the Kumba and Ekondo Titi school massacres, the government’s response should not only exclusively consist of military operations to dislodge them. There is an important military or civilian justice role to investigate the gravest incidents these groups commit. If some perpetrators are caught alive, they would need to be prosecuted, and terrorism does not tell the whole story of their crimes. That is the reason to conduct some investigations, and early.³¹⁵

Trial of Suspected Separatists in Military Courts

The insecurity prevailing in the two Anglophone regions appears to have hampered Cameroonian authorities’ ability to investigate attacks against education and prosecute those responsible. Some courts are not operational or fully operational in both regions. In

³¹² “Cameroon to hold ‘national dialogue’ on separatist crisis,” *Al Jazeera*, September 11, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/9/11/cameroon-to-hold-national-dialogue-on-separatist-crisis> (accessed November 2021); Mbom Sixtus, “Cameroon government ‘declares war’ on secessionist rebels,” *The New Humanitarian*, November 4, 2017, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2017/12/04/cameroon-government-declares-war-secessionist-rebels> (accessed November 2021).

³¹³ “Yaoundé Conference Centre,” Major National Dialogue, September 30 – October 4 2019, <https://www.nationaldialogue.cm/> (accessed November 2021); See also “Cameroon opens dialogue to end Anglophone separatist crisis,” *France 24*, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190930-cameroon-opens-dialogue-to-end-anglophone-separatist-crisis> (accessed November 2021).

³¹⁴ “Cameroon,” Human Rights Watch, Cameroon Country Page, <https://www.hrw.org/africa/cameroon>.

³¹⁵ Human Rights Watch WhatsApp interview with a Cameroonian lawyer, November 23, 2021.

the two documented cases of prosecution of suspected attackers of schools, the authorities resorted to the use of military courts.

Following the killing of a government schoolteacher by suspected separatist fighters in Kumba, South-West region in July 2021,³¹⁶ a Cameroonian lawyer told Human Rights Watch:

One of the most effective ways to stamp out the narrative among separatist fighters that "teachers are black-legs" [spies] would be for the security forces to actually arrest, investigate, try, and sentence some of those culpable in the attacks against schools, students, and teachers. Unless and until there is another mechanism to do so, Cameroon's judicial system ought to handle these cases. It is true that these attacks occurred in military operations zones, but all cannot be left to the army to neutralize perpetrators of these incidents.³¹⁷

Impunity for Security Force Abuses

Security forces are often abusive toward young men and boys, whom they often treat (with or without cause) as separatists. They continue to instill fear in civilians in the Anglophone regions, especially young men, boys, and their relatives, who worry about being violently targeted by security forces.

A father of two school-age boys from a rural community in the South-West region expressed fear and wariness of the security forces, including in or around schools, because they are known to be abusive:

When soldiers come for their security operations, we fear the worst. We have seen them kill, torture, burn homes, and arrest young people with no reason. They are engaged for a legitimate cause—to fight the separatist fighters—but they don't do it according to the law. They are brutal and

³¹⁶ Atia T. Azohnwi, "Cameroon Anglophone Crisis: Armed men kill physics teacher in Kumba," *Cameroon-Info.net*, July 2, 2021, <http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroon-anglophone-crisis-armed-men-kill-physics-teacher-in-kumba-402528.html> (accessed November 2021).

³¹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with a Cameroonian lawyer, July 2021.

suspect everyone to be an amba, especially young men and boys. They don't differentiate between an ordinary man and an amba fighter.³¹⁸

Some young men also share this sentiment. Jim, kidnapped by armed separatists from his university residence, was relieved that the authorities did not contact him after his release:

I am scared of the security forces, and when you talk to them you can get in real trouble. If they know that you have been in touch with the amba, they think that you know their things, that you can show them their whereabouts, or that you collaborate with them and give them information.³¹⁹

A 23-year-old student at the College of Technology of the University of Buea was accused of being a separatist fighter and detained after reporting to gendarmes a generator explosion in Molyko neighborhood in January 2021. He was locked up for one night, but then he secured his release by paying a 150,000 CFA (\$270) fine. "More should be done to reign in the security forces," he said. "Their conduct should improve—they need to respect human rights and respect civilians. They can and should fight the separatists, but they should do it in a legal way."³²⁰

Impunity as a Trigger for Displacement

Violence and impunity on both sides has motivated displacement, including abroad. A 28-year-old former student at the University of Buea, South-West region, fled to Cyprus in February 2019 because he feared threats by separatist fighters and abuses by the army:

As a young man living in Cameroon's Anglophone regions, you are automatically a target. The soldiers look at you as a potential suspect—[they] perceive all young men as separatist fighters. On the other hand, the amba boys see you as a potential fighter, so they force you to join. They can

³¹⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a parent of two primary school children in the South-West region, May 3, 2021.

³¹⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Jim, April 8, 2021.

³²⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 23-year-old student from the South-West region, June 2021.

threaten you directly or threaten your family to press you to join their group.³²¹

³²¹ Human Rights Watch in person interview with a 23-year-old former student from the South-West region, Nicosia, Cyprus, August 20, 2019.

IX. Consequences of Attacks on Education

The first consequence [of these attacks] is that our kids are not going to be educated. Ignorance will be running riot in our community. It would lead to teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and a culture where people don't valorize education. The worst thing is that it affects future generation of Anglophone Cameroonians. But the bigger picture is that it makes the international community to look at us if we don't really know what we're doing. Why would a people in a liberation movement be preventing kids from going to school? And these same kids are the leaders of tomorrow. And most of these people who are against school education, they have got an education. If you look at the leaders of most of the [separatist] groupings, they studied in this country and they benefited from the education.

— Nkongho Felix Agbor Balla, President of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa³²²

Attacks on students, teachers, and schools in the Anglophone regions have had a significant impact on access to education, consequently reducing Anglophone Cameroonians' opportunities for economic and social mobility in the long run. According to a Cameroonian human rights activist:

A single attack on a single school can be simply devastating and keep hundreds of children out of the school for a long period of time, possibly annihilating the community's only place of learning, especially in the most remote areas of the Anglophone regions... Attacks on schools, students, teachers have an impact on the overall development of our communities, on its economy—on everything. Without access to education, our children will just grow up without the fundamental skills they need to be able to contribute to the development of their regions and of Cameroon.³²³

³²² Human Rights Watch video interview with Barrister Nkongho Felix Agbor Balla, President of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, November 2021.

³²³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a Cameroonian human rights activist, April 2021.

In addition to directly harming students, teachers, school buildings, and school materials, attacks on education have caused school closures or disruptions, a decline in student attendance and the quality of education, forced displacement of teachers and students, and early pregnancies after students drop out.³²⁴ Education professionals and students who survived attacks have also experienced ongoing psychosocial distress and physical problems.

Decreased Access to Education

School Closures

As of February 2021, less than half of primary schools and secondary schools (49 and 42 percent, respectively) in the South-West region were operational, while less than one-third of primary schools and secondary schools (27 percent for both) in the North-West region were operational.³²⁵



A classroom in Government Practicing School in Bomaka neighborhood, Buea, South-West region, which was burned down by unidentified men between June and July 2020. © Private, June 2021, Buea, South-West region, Cameroon

³²⁴ See ACAPS, “ACAPS Thematic Report: Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions.”

³²⁵ Email correspondence between Human Rights Watch and a staff working for a UN agency in Cameroon, who cited information received from the ministries of primary and secondary education, August 18, 2021.

In Akeh, the Government High School was a place for students from remote, rural areas to learn. But due to separatists' threats and attacks, the school has been closed since 2018, depriving nearly all 250 students of an education. "The school is abandoned and dirty," said a senior official at the school. "The bush is taking it over. It's a deplorable situation." The same official noted that in October 2020, a Cameroonian NGO decided to refurbish the school but stopped its work following an attack by armed separatists.³²⁶ Photographs and video footage of the abandoned school building taken after the armed separatists' attack show the construction materials left in the classroom.

A teacher at the Government Bilingual High School in Jakiri said that attendance dropped to zero within a year after separatist fighters partially burned his school in mid-2017. The school closed shortly thereafter.³²⁷



A view of the abandoned Government High School in Akeh village, a rural community in the North-West region. The school has been closed since July 2018. © Private, April 2021, Akeh, North-West region, Cameroon

³²⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a senior official at the Government High School Akeh, May 3, 2021.

³²⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Thomas, May 4, 2021.



An abandoned classroom in Government High School in Akeh village, a rural community in the North-West region. The school has been closed since July 2018. © Private, April 2021, Akeh, North-West region, Cameroon

On September 6, 2021, schools reopened in Cameroon the 2021-2022 academic year. However, two out of three schools in the Anglophone regions remained closed, leaving over 700,000 students without education.³²⁸ Citing statistics from education authorities, UNOCHA reported that after the first week of schooling, in September 2021, 53 percent of secondary schools, 49 percent of primary schools, and 47 percent of nursery schools were not functional in the South-West region, and only 23 percent of secondary schools were functional in the North-West region.³²⁹

In addition to the challenges posed by attacks on education, the spread of Covid-19 affected school attendance. In 2021, teachers were infected in about 30 percent of the operational schools in the North-West region.³³⁰

³²⁸ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35,” UNOCHA situation report.

³²⁹ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35,” UNOCHA situation report.

³³⁰ Email correspondence between Human Rights Watch and a staffer working for a UN agency in Cameroon, August 18, 2021.

Students Forced to Drop Out of School

The UN Secretary-General estimated in June 2021 that 700,000 school-age children were out of school because of the Anglophone crisis.³³¹ Students have had to drop out due to school closures, fear, and economic reasons related to the crisis. Other students had to stop school for years before eventually resuming their education elsewhere.

Tim stopped his schooling for about three years out of fear. Because his school in Kumbo, North-West region, closed, he enrolled in another school in Buea to pursue his education. “Amba boys started threatening all those who used to go to school, and the teachers too and our parents; they repeatedly indicated that anyone seen going to school shall be dealt with bitterly,” he said. “I was afraid all the time.”³³²

Linda, a 17-year-old girl who dropped out of school in 2017 due to violence in Mbam, North-West region, said she feels like she is forgetting how to read and write after missing more than four years of education. “Because I did not go to school for a long period of time,” she said, “I now struggle to read and write. It is like I forgot how to do it.”³³³

To make a living, support their families, or pay fees at new schools, many students, including children,³³⁴ found jobs after their schools closed or after they experienced attacks or abuses. According to students, teachers, parents, and social workers in the Anglophone regions, out-of-school students became mechanics, hairdressers, tailors, domestic workers, or construction workers.³³⁵ UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and community leaders have reported that teenage pregnancies have significantly increased because of many girls and young women dropping out of school.³³⁶ Teenage pregnancy is both a major obstacle to the educational achievement of female learners and

³³¹ United Nations Security Council, “The situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.”

³³² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tim, April 6, 2021.

³³³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Linda, April 2, 2021.

³³⁴ ACAPS, “Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions.”

³³⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with a member of a Cameroonian civil society organization in the South-West region, November 18, 2020; with a human rights activist in Yaoundé, November 22, 2020; and with a humanitarian worker from a UN agency, November 18, 2020. See also SODEI, “Baseline Research: Education in Crisis in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon.”

³³⁶ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 25,” UNOCHA situation report; Ruth Maclean, “Stay home or risk being shot: Cameroon's back-to-school crisis”; ACAPS, “ACAPS Thematic Report: Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions.”

often a consequence of them dropping out.³³⁷ Numerous studies have shown that the longer a girl stays in school, the less likely she is to be married as a child and or to become pregnant during her teenage years.³³⁸

Psychosocial and Emotional Consequences

Teachers Traumatized by Attacks on Education

Numerous education professionals who experienced or witnessed attacks told Human Rights Watch that they have since struggled with depression, anxiety, fear, trouble sleeping, nightmares, and other emotional difficulties.

Julia, who was attacked by armed separatist fighters in her school in Limbe, eventually felt better but decided to change schools: “After the attack, for days, I felt sad, scared, traumatized. I could not sleep. I was afraid of my shadow. I refused to listen to the words of encouragement by my family and friends, I just felt so empty. I truly feared for my life.”³³⁹

Andrew, who was kidnapped and shot by separatist fighters in the leg, conveyed his hopelessness:

Sometimes I am depressed when I think about my situation, when I realize that we live in towns and villages with devastated schools, schools abandoned, used as amba camps. We have traumatized children and desperate teachers. Teachers had to flee, run away out of fear for their lives. Students got displaced, sometimes separated from their families, unable to continue their education and to build a future.³⁴⁰

In all cases documented by Human Rights Watch, education professionals who survived attacks did not receive psychosocial support services from the government. In fact, there

³³⁷ Human Rights Watch, “*Leave No Girl Behind in Africa*,” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2018), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/06/14/leave-no-girl-behind-africa/discrimination-education-against-pregnant-girls-and>.

³³⁸ United Nations Population Fund, “State of the World’s Population 2017,” 2018, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/sowp/downloads/UNFPA_PUB_2017_EN_SWOP.pdf, (accessed April 20, 2018), p. 50.

³³⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Julia, November 20, 2020.

³⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Andrew, April 2021.

are not enough government psychosocial support services available to handle this problem.³⁴¹

Some teachers told Human Rights Watch that they have experienced anxiety and stress because of their precarious financial situation, which was often worse for private school teachers. Our research found that public school teachers continued to receive their salaries regardless of school closures and were sometimes redeployed, but private school teachers became jobless.

A 57-year-old private school teacher whose home in Mile 40, South-West region, burned during a confrontation between soldiers and separatist fighters in October 2017 struggled for over one year to find another teaching job:

I teach in a private school now, but I am not paid. I struggle to feed my six children. I am forced to do small farming to get some food... I live with the memories of the atrocities I saw. I carry with me the images of my sudden displacement. And as a result, I feel down. I behave in ways that are unfamiliar to me. I feel sad, depressed, low, and anxious.³⁴²

Students Traumatized by Attacks on Education

Since 2017, thousands of students in Cameroon's Anglophone regions have experienced attacks on education. According to parents, teachers, and experts, these experiences have had serious long-term emotional and educational consequences for students, particularly young children.³⁴³ A UN official working in Cameroon explained: "Children who have experienced violence and witnessed atrocities will have more challenges than others in

³⁴¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with a member of a member of a Cameroonian civil society organization operating in the South-West region, November 2020; with a teacher working in Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, July 2021; with a human rights activist in the North-West region, August 2021; and with a UN staffer working in the South-West region, November 2020.

VoA, Psychological Care Lacking in Cameroon's Separatist Conflict, October 16, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/psychological-care-lacking-camerouns-separatist-conflict> (accessed August 2021)

³⁴² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 57-year-old teacher from the South-West region, March 22, 2021.

³⁴³ Cai Nebe, "Children's drawings shed sinister light on Cameroon conflict," *Deutsche Welle*, June 22, 2021, <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/childrens-drawings-shed-sinister-light-on-cameroon-conflict/ar-AALj6aO?ocid=BingNewsSearch> (accessed August 2021).

learning, focusing during classes, completing their homework or exams. They are likely to experience post-traumatic stress.”³⁴⁴

A teacher at the Holy Rosary Integrated Comprehensive College, which suffered two separatists’ attacks, witnessed a range of trauma and negative emotions in his students, some of whom were displaced, attacked, threatened, or witnessed abuses:

We have children showing signs of trauma, depression, anger. I believe that some of them are former fighters; they didn’t open up to me, but from the way they talk and behave, I can tell they might have been in the bush fighting. Some also express the desire to join the separatist groups... Some students are also very violent—they have too much hate inside them.³⁴⁵

Maria expressed difficulty concentrating on her schoolwork after her kidnapping experience.³⁴⁶ Tim, who was 17 years old when separatist fighters assaulted him on his way to school, could not stop feeling afraid. “The smallest noise would make me panic,” he said.³⁴⁷

A teacher at the Government Bilingual High School in Douala’s Bonaberi neighborhood, which has hosted many displaced children from the Anglophone regions, explained other emotional difficulties for displaced students:

They end up in classes with younger students because they have lost up to four years of school. So, they feel inadequate, inferior to their younger classmates, they feel as if they are not achieving.... It’s like these students are starting from scratch. It’s both embarrassing and traumatic for them.³⁴⁸

He also noted a correlation between students’ economic status, performance, and need for psychosocial support. Unfortunately, the lack of psychosocial support services for these

³⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with a UN staffer working in the Anglophone regions, head of Education Cluster (UNICEF), November 18, 2020.

³⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 40-year-old teacher from the North-West region, November 6, 2020.

³⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Maria, November 2019.

³⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tim, April 6, 2021.

³⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher working in Douala, June 21, 2021.

students, which the government does not provide, is compounded by cultural norms that stigmatize those with mental health conditions.

According to another teacher: “I have students who have experienced violence, displacement, and all sorts of atrocities. They are absent-minded—it’s like they cannot forget the pain. Sometimes classmates make fun of them and call them fools. There is little to no understanding of mental [health conditions] in Cameroon.”³⁴⁹

UNICEF has been trying to close the gap in psychosocial support services by training teachers and community leaders on this and related topics and by supporting the creation of child friendly spaces for recreation and healing.³⁵⁰

Impact of Attacks on Students with Disabilities

The crisis has disproportionately affected children with disabilities. One teacher described children with disabilities whom she knew:

They were also particularly traumatized by the violence they witnessed... Many of the deaf children we have in school have been internally displaced. They told me that even if they could not hear the gunshots when their communities were under attack, they felt them, they felt the panic, they saw the terror in the eyes of their families trying to escape to safety. Some of these children have trouble sleeping; they cannot concentrate or do their homework.³⁵¹

A former student with an amputated leg described additional barriers to education because of the crisis:

Access to education for [people with disabilities] was already a luxury prior to the crisis and has just become impossible now. The violence

³⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a teacher in Yaoundé, Cameroon’s capital, June 2021.

³⁵⁰ Email correspondence between Human Rights Watch and a UN staffer working in Cameroon, August 18, 2021.

³⁵¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 35-year-old teacher from the North-West region, November 14, 2020.

exacerbated our challenges in accessing education. Nowadays, only those who can run go to school. In case of an attack, you should be able to escape fast and take shelter. This is not the case of people who have some physical disabilities. And there is no support for us by the state—no material or psychosocial support.³⁵²

Student and Teacher Resilience

Despite the violence and abuses they experienced or witnessed, many students and teachers demonstrated remarkable resilience.

Veronica said she felt “traumatized and shocked but also determined to continue with my university” after her kidnapping. In her case, her family was able to pay her school fees and support her.³⁵³

Sam, a student who was threatened of harm by separatist fighters on his way back from school in Bamenda in February 2019, now in Yaoundé, is still pursuing his dream of becoming a doctor:

I wanted to go back to school. I did not want this bad experience to affect my ability to study and create a future for myself. I accepted the reality and moved forward. I moved to Yaoundé, where I study at a government bilingual high school.... I want to go to university and study medicine to become a doctor.³⁵⁴

Nina, a 19-year-old student, managed to change schools and continue her education after Our Lady of Mount Carmel College shut down in October 2017. “I don’t think I am brave—I just want to pursue my studies despite the threats posed by the separatist fighters,” she said.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a former student from the North-West region, June 21, 2021.

³⁵³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Veronica, April 5, 2021.

³⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Sam, April 8, 2021.

³⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Nina, June 1, 2021.

One government primary school teacher’s employer relocated her from Muyuka to Tiko, South-West region, after she was repeatedly threatened by separatist fighters. However, she refused to let such intimidation determine her future:

The amba threatened to harm me and my husband, but I still teach. I taught for 14 years, and my passion for education cannot just be taken away so easily. It is easy to panic and feel overwhelmed. This crisis is destroying the education sector. But if we all give up, who’s going to help our children build their future?³⁵⁶

Displacement of Teachers and Students

According to the UN, the cycle of violence in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions has internally displaced nearly 600,000 people since late 2016.³⁵⁷ Among them are teachers—likely thousands—and at least 230,246 children who had to flee following attacks on education or against their communities.³⁵⁸ Displaced teachers and students often struggle to return to school while trying to settle somewhere new. The trauma they endured and the loss of their possessions and livelihoods compound their challenges.³⁵⁹

Internally Displaced Teachers

Some of the internally displaced teachers who spoke with Human Rights Watch stopped teaching and took up different work, which was difficult to adjust to. A former teacher, whose husband was killed during a clash between armed separatist fighters and soldiers in Isu, North-West region, in April 2018, fled to Tiko. She has not taught since and instead farms for a living. She said: “I miss school, my students, the other teachers. Sometimes, I feel vulnerable, helpless. The experience of being displaced is hard. Integration in Tiko has

³⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 47-year-old teacher, June 2021.

³⁵⁷ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35,” UNOCHA situation report.

³⁵⁸ Email correspondence between Human Rights Watch and a staff working for a UN agency in Cameroon, citing information from UN reports and assessments, August 18, 2021.

³⁵⁹ UNESCO, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *The impacts of internal displacement on education in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2020*, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20background%20paper%20FINAL%20IDMC.pdf> (accessed August 2021).

not been easy – adapting to the new context, new people, losing your routine, losing what made you happy.”³⁶⁰

Challenges Faced by Displaced Older Teachers

Due to their age, older teachers had greater difficulty fleeing and living in the bush for weeks to months at a time. In the bush, older people faced higher risks of exposure to diseases without medical care or shelter.

A 60-year-old former teacher said he ran away from Ekona, South-West region, following a violent confrontation between soldiers and separatist fighters in February 2018:

There was indiscriminate shooting. Bullets were flying. Rounds of bullets. It was like being in a warzone. Everyone ran away. Running away during the attack was a shock for me. I am old and I cannot run as fast as young people. I did my best to collect few things and leave.³⁶¹

A 63-year-old former primary school teacher fled Defang, South-West region, in late 2019, during a violent confrontation between separatist fighters and soldiers:

As the gunshots approached, we just took a few things and left. I escaped to the bush with my wife, my kids. I spent three months in the bush. Fleeing was not easy for me. I am old and cannot walk as fast as others. In the bush I was sick. I was sleeping in a hut on the ground, exposed to the weather. Mosquitos were constantly beating me.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 47-year-old teacher, March 25, 2021.

³⁶¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 60-year-old man, March 23, 2021.

³⁶² Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 63-year-old man, March 23, 2021.

Internally Displaced Students

Attacks on education led to thousands of families leaving their hometowns and villages to move to safer areas where their children could access school safely. According to a January 2021 World Bank report, “a significant number of displacements occurred because of education-related reasons.”³⁶³

A 17-year-old student from the South-West region said: “I used to go to school in Tombel, in South-West region. In 2018, my parents decided to send me to study in Douala because the situation was getting bad and there was insecurity and too many threats against students, teachers, attacks on schools by the amba boys.”³⁶⁴

Other students never went back to school after dropping out. A 24-year-old student who had stopped school in 2017 following the closure of his school fled Sang, North-West region, in March 2019 after soldiers came to his house and shot him in the hand:

I ran to the nearby bush where I spent about two weeks. I don’t even know how I am still alive. My hand was bleeding. I had no medicines to take. I slept in the bush with other people from the village who had also ran away. It was really tough. I was in pain all the time. I was exposed to the weather. I had a fever. I thought I was going to die. Then, I managed to reach Bamenda, where I went to the hospital.³⁶⁵

Linda, a 17-year-old female student, had difficulties after dropping out from her school in Mbam, North-West region, and beginning work as a nanny in Buea: “Buea is not my city. Everything is new here. I have no friends—I just spend my time at home babysitting. I feel all the time some sort of uncertainty. I have no familiarity with this new social environment. I feel unsettled.”³⁶⁶

³⁶³ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 35,” UNOCHA situation report.

³⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 17-year-old student, August 11, 2021.

³⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with a 24-year-old former student, April 6, 2021.

³⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Linda, April 2, 2021.

Asylum Seekers

Since late 2016, up to 66,000 people from Cameroon have sought asylum in Nigeria,³⁶⁷ and thousands more have fled to Europe or the US.³⁶⁸ In August 2019, Human Rights Watch interviewed 56 Anglophone Cameroonian asylum seekers in Cyprus, including 7 former students and 2 former teachers. While asylum seekers felt safer in Cyprus than they did in Cameroon, despite poor living conditions, all interviewees also mentioned feeling isolated and unhappy.



A view of the Pounara reception center for asylum seekers in Cyprus, where several Anglophone Cameroonians were seeking protection, August 2019. © Ilaria Allegrozzi/Human Rights Watch

³⁶⁷ “CAMEROON: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 29,” UNOCHA situation report.

³⁶⁸ International Organization for Migration, “Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean - Compilation of Available Data and Information”; “Cyprus Fact Sheet,” UNHCR, February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/605b506d19.pdf> (accessed August 2021); “US: Protect Cameroonians From Deportation,” Human Rights Watch news release.

A 27-year-old former University of Buea student fled in July 2019 due to the increasing risks and his inability to go to school:

I came to Cyprus because I was seeking safety and protection. Protection from the general violence, from the amba boys who would force you to join them or hinder your studies, protection from an abusive military who would not spare anyone.... Not that life is better here because I have no job and nothing to do. I live in bad conditions in a crowded home, but at least I sleep, and I am free to walk without fear of being arrested or assaulted.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch in person interview with a 27-year-old former student, Nicosia, Cyprus, August 19, 2019.

X. Cameroon's Legal Obligations On The Right To Education

The right to education, as well as other rights implicated in attacks on education, is enshrined in Cameroonian law as well as binding human rights treaties. Accordingly, the government must refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of these rights and take the necessary steps to protect the population from separatist fighters.

Domestic Law

Cameroon has a bijural legal system, in which English common law is applied in the Anglophone regions and French civil law in the Francophone regions.³⁷⁰ The 1972 Constitution incorporates recognition of obligations to respect the rights to life, humane treatment, freedom of expression, movement, and education, among others.³⁷¹ The government has an obligation to take measures to prevent separatist fighters from interfering with the enjoyment of these constitutionally protected rights. Cameroon's 1998 and 2001 guidance laws on basic, secondary, and teacher's education and on higher education further provide for the right to education and for the protection of both students and teachers in school.³⁷² The 1998 law also guarantees two separate, parallel Francophone and Anglophone public education systems.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ Charles Manga Fombad, "UPDATE: Researching Cameroonian Law," Hauser Global Law School Program, New York University School of Law, November/December 2015, https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Cameroon1.html#_The_Cameroonian_Legal (accessed August 2021).

³⁷¹ *Cameroon's Constitution of 1972 with Amendments through 2008*, via Constitute Project, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cameroon_2008.pdf?lang=en (accessed August 2021) Preamble, paras. 4, 12, 16, and 18.

³⁷² LOI N°98/004 DU 4 AVRIL 1998 D'ORIENTATION DE L'EDUCATION AU CAMEROUN, via UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/3fbc027088867a9096e8c86f0169d457b2ca7779.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2021) arts. 15, 27(1), 35, 37(2); Law No. 005 of 16 April 2001 to Guide Higher Education, http://www.minesup.gov.cm/ipescam/en/textes/1_LOI_N%C2%Bo_005_du_16_avril_2001.pdf (accessed August 2021) article 46: (1): Students' right to physical and moral integrity shall be guaranteed in the higher education realm.

³⁷³ LOI N°98/004 DU 4 AVRIL 1998 D'ORIENTATION DE L'EDUCATION AU CAMEROUN, via UNESCO, arts. 3, 15.

Regional and International Human Rights Law on Education

Cameroon is a party to all African and international instruments enshrining the right to education.³⁷⁴ As a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), Cameroon is obligated to provide compulsory, free primary education as well as available, accessible, and progressively free secondary education.³⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch calls on states to take immediate measures to ensure that secondary education is available and accessible to all free of charge. Human Rights Watch also calls on states to make education compulsory through the end of lower secondary school.

Under international human rights law, Cameroon has, as all governments do, an obligation to protect the rights to life, personal liberty, and security of students, teachers, academics, and all education staff.³⁷⁶ The ICESCR requires that material conditions of teaching staff be continuously improved.³⁷⁷ As children, students under the age of 18 receive special protections under the CRC and ACRWC, which require the “best interests of the child” be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies.³⁷⁸ The government is also required to also ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and the development of children.³⁷⁹ Cameroon is also required to take measures to encourage regular attendance by children at schools and the reduction of child dropout rates.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁴ African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (“Banjul Charter”), OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev.5, 21 LLM 58 (1982); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx> (accessed August 2021); Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (accessed August 2021); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx> (accessed August 2021).

³⁷⁵ ICESCR, art. 13; CRC, art. 28; ACRWC art. 11.

³⁷⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) acceded to by Cameroon in 1984, arts. 6, 9, and 10.

³⁷⁷ ICESCR, op. cit., art. 13 (e).

³⁷⁸ CRC art. 3 (1); ACRWC art. 4(1).

³⁷⁹ CRC art. 6; ACRWC art. 5.

³⁸⁰ CRC art 28 (e). ACRWC 11 (3) (d).

Cameroon has signed but not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which guarantees the right to quality inclusive education and the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk.³⁸¹ The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has noted that situations of and akin to armed conflict have a disproportionate impact on the right to inclusive education. Temporary learning environments in such contexts must ensure the right of children with disabilities to education on an equal basis with others.³⁸²

Attacks on schools and education facilities, and more generally, failure to respect the right to education are deemed a serious violation of international human rights law.³⁸³ For example, the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights considered that the closure of universities and schools for two years was a “serious or massive” violation of article 17 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights – the right to education.³⁸⁴ The scale and longevity of denial of education to students in Cameroon could be considered a gross violation of human rights. In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.³⁸⁵ The Basic Principles provides that victims of gross violations of international human rights law are entitled to a remedy including compensation and reparations, such as for loss of education.³⁸⁶

Safe Schools Declaration

In September 2018, Cameroon endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, an international political commitment aimed at strengthening the prevention of and responses to attacks

³⁸¹ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by Cameroon October 1, 2008, arts. 11, 25.

³⁸² Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment no. 4, on the right to inclusive education, November 25, 2016, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD/C/GC/4&Lang=en (accessed October 2021) para. 14.

³⁸³ Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, “What amounts to ‘a serious violation of international, human rights law’? An analysis of practice and expert opinion for the purpose of the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty,” August 2014, pp. 5, 22, 37.

³⁸⁴ African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, *World Organization against Torture v. Zaire*, Communication Nos. 25/89, 47/90, 56/91, 100/93 (1996) ACHPR 1, para. 48 ff.

³⁸⁵ Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 60/147, December 16, 2005.

³⁸⁶ Basic Principles, articles 11 and 20 (b).

on students, teachers, schools, and universities during times of armed conflict.³⁸⁷ By endorsing the Declaration, Cameroon has committed to using the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, which urges parties to armed conflicts not to use schools, particularly functioning ones, “for any purpose in support of the military effort.”³⁸⁸ These non-binding recommendations remain informative even in crises that do not amount to armed conflicts, such as the crises in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions.

³⁸⁷ “Cameroon is 81st Country to Endorse Safe Schools Declaration,” GCPEA; “Safe Schools Declaration,” GCPEA.

³⁸⁸ GCPEA, *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.

XI. The Way Forward

The Cameroonian government has obligations to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of attacks on students, teachers, and schools as well as to provide assistance and reparations to victims. This should include restoration of access to education where it has been cut off and protected where it exists or when it is re-established. The creation of special task forces to assist in meeting obligations of investigation and prosecution and the establishment of a reparations program, including restoring access to education, could be an effective and practical way forward.

Special Task Forces

It has become increasingly urgent for the Cameroonian government to take concrete steps to tackle the crisis of education in Cameroon's Anglophone regions and address two prongs of the problem – the impunity for attacks and the provision of access to safe education. Given both the immediate severity of the impacts on children and the potential long-term consequences, the government of Cameroon should consider establishing two special task forces, with adequate human and financial resources, each to address one of the aspects of the crisis.

The mandate of one task force would be to help reverse the longstanding impunity for attacks against students, teachers, and schools, and to ensure that perpetrators, whether separatist fighters or government actors, are held accountable for their actions. The task force, which should draw on international support as needed, would assess and make recommendations regarding investigations into attacks on students, teachers, and schools and prosecutions of perpetrators. Such a task force would not conduct investigations and prosecutions itself but could provide support and expertise to the judicial authorities.

The special task force should include prosecutors and police with experience in crimes against children (Cameroon has a police unit that specializes on crimes against children: *Police Spécialisée sur les Crimes contre Mineurs*), as well as independent forensic experts. Experts from the UN and AU should offer to support the task force.

The second special task force should have a mandate to further the re-establishment and protection of access to education for all on an equal basis. It should include experts on children's rights, women's rights, and disability rights, and draw members from the education ministries, the ministry of justice, and representatives from the National Human Rights Commission, and Cameroonian civil society. UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) should offer support to the task force. The task force could provide recommendations, with the best interests of the child at the center, on how to tailor effective protective measures for places of education, and options for ensuring access to safe, quality education going forward. It could also advise on the content of a reparations program (see below).

Better information collection and analysis of attacks on education would assist both task forces. Information should be disaggregated by date, location, type of school (educational level, private, public), gender and age of victims and suspected perpetrators, and if the school had been used by armed separatist groups or for military purpose.

Reparations Program

Teachers and students who experienced attacks on education, as well as their families, deserve reparations to help remedy the harms they suffered.

The government should establish, through a transparent and participatory process, a credible and inclusive reparations program, with an adequate annual budget and human resources, to support victims of attacks on educations and their families.

In addition to the provision of free education for all students as a right, reparations for those affected by attacks could include compensation for loss of materials, and extra support and opportunities, including financial as necessary, to make up for lost education time. The government should also financially compensate teachers who have suffered harm or losses during the exercise of their duties or as a result of being targeted for their profession. To address the physical and emotional trauma of teachers and students, the government should provide adequate free physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support services to victims. This is critical to address the current, massive lack in the provision of such assistance.

The government should promote public awareness of this reparations program, compensation options, and how to access reparations. It should also encourage victims (or their relatives if the victims are children) and education professionals to submit compensation claims.

Support Needed from Cameroon's International Partners

Cameroon's international partners should publicly and privately press the Cameroonian government to create the special task forces and the reparation programs, leveraging their political and economic relationships as needed.

Cameroon's regional and international partners, such as Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the US, the UK, the European Commission, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, and the AU should provide financial and expert assistance to any special task forces established and the reparations program to ensure they are adequately resourced and sustainable. Along with civil society organizations, they should supply experts on criminal and reparative justice for attacks on education who would support the mechanisms while developing or improving the Cameroonian staff's skills and expertise.

Recommendations

To Leaders of Separatist Groups

- Publicly announce and ensure an end to the school boycott as well as attacks and threats against schools, teachers, education officials, and students.
- Do not engage in any activities that would threaten, undermine, or prevent safe school resumptions.
- Issue statements and disseminate pamphlets, leaflets, and instructions among members and fighters explaining and endorsing the need to comply with international human rights law.

To Armed Separatist Groups' Fighters

- Cease all human rights abuses, including killing, torturing, kidnapping, extorting, and threatening civilians, including students and teachers.
- Immediately cease all recruitment of children under 18 years old.
- Immediately release all kidnapped civilians, including students and teachers.
- Release all children under 18 years old from armed groups and ensure their safe return by acting in cooperation with concerned authorities, including those responsible for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of child soldiers.
- Cease attacking schools and using schools for any purposes including for camps, weapons, and ammunition and supply depots.
- Comply with international human rights law, including by handing over alleged perpetrators of attacks on education and other crimes to the government for prosecution.

To the Cameroonian Government

- Ensure students deprived of educational facilities because of the crisis are promptly given access to accessible alternative forms of education, such as community education; distance learning using the most effective medium to reach affected students, including radio, television, and internet; and temporary learning schools or spaces, with suitable equipment and adequately trained teachers.

- Ensure schools damaged or destroyed because of the crisis are promptly rebuilt and are accessible for children with different types of disabilities and teaching and learning equipment and materials are replaced.
- Take concrete measures—for example, through legislation, military orders, and trainings—to deter the military use of schools, drawing upon examples of good practice by other African Union countries, and at a minimum implementing the *Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines on Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict*.
- Facilitate monitoring and reporting of the human rights situation by independent observers and rights groups by granting them unfettered access to the North-West and South-West regions.
- Facilitate visits by relevant United Nations special procedures and African Union special rapporteurs.
- Compensate education workers who suffered property loss or injury during attacks.
- Facilitate the enrollment or re-enrollment of those who have missed out on their education during the crisis, including children with disabilities.
- Adopt positive re-entry policies and expedite regulations that facilitate pregnant girls and young mothers of school-going age returning to primary and secondary school.
- Take immediate measures to ensure that both primary and secondary education is available and accessible to all free of charge. Make education compulsory through the end of lower secondary school.
- Ensure education staff, families of students, and students themselves are regularly and formally consulted regarding the security provided to schools.
- Employ a sliding scale of security measures in response to assessed risks to schools and teachers. If possible, appropriately trained civilian personnel—such as guards and watchmen—should be used to provide security. Only as the security situation necessitates should this be escalated to police, gendarmes, and then armed forces personnel.
- Establish a credible and inclusive reparations program, through a transparent and participatory process, to support victims of attacks on education and their families. Such a program should be sensitive to the particular needs of women and men, boys and girls, and address the needs of students and families living with disability, their families and those in hard-to-reach areas.

- Consider establishing two special task forces, one to assess and make recommendations regarding investigations into attacks on students, teachers, and schools and prosecutions of perpetrators; the second to further the re-establishment and protection of access to education for all on an equal basis (see Section XI: “The Way Forward”).
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Amend the Penal Code and Military Justice Code to ensure the inclusion of definitions of war crimes and crimes against humanity as provided for in international law.

To the Cameroonian Police and Gendarmerie

- Conduct effective investigations into government authorities and members of the security forces allegedly responsible for human rights abuses committed during operations against separatist fighters in the Anglophone regions, including attacks on schools, with a view to securing their successful prosecution in fair trials.
- Conduct effective investigations into separatist leaders and fighters allegedly responsible for human rights abuses, including attacks on students, teachers, and schools, and use of schools that violate domestic laws, with a view to securing their successful prosecution in fair trials.

To the Cameroonian Judicial Authorities

- Ensure victims of human rights abuses by all sides have access to effective remedies, including accessible complaint mechanisms, witness protection, and the opportunity to participate in a transparent judicial process.

To the Cameroonian Ministers of Basic, Secondary, and Higher Education

- Effectively implement the Safe Schools Declaration, and work with relevant authorities, community leaders, and parents to ensure better security for schools in the Anglophone regions.
- Ensure the availability, accessibility, and adaptability of schools.
- Take immediate measures to ensure that both primary and secondary education is available and accessible to all free of charge, and that no students—including those who have been displaced or affected by attacks—are excluded from their right to education by any direct or indirect costs.

- Expand temporary learning spaces and other “education in emergencies” programs to reach additional towns and cities hosting large numbers of displaced people, prioritizing those that have not yet benefitted from such programs.
- Ensure teachers and administrators are not pressured to reopen schools in insecure zones without appropriate, effective security measures.
- Ensure all students, teachers, and education staff who were victims of attacks receive timely, appropriate, and subsidized medical and psychosocial support and follow ups.
- Expand and improve efforts to collect data on attacks on students, teachers, and schools and the use of schools by armed separatist groups, including date and location of attacks, type of school attacked, disaggregated information about victims and suspected perpetrators, and the number of students and teachers affected.

To the Cameroonian Security Forces

- Ensure security operations in the Anglophone regions respect and protect human rights, including by abiding by the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Firearms, respecting principles of necessity and proportionality, and deploying military judicial police officers on operations to monitor the conduct of security forces, report abusive members to commanding officers, and advise commanding officers on human rights issues.
- Take steps to deter the military use of schools, including at a minimum by implementing the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.
- Ensure child protection training for all military personnel.
- Ensure education staff, families of students, and students themselves are regularly and formally consulted regarding the security provided to schools.
- Ensure that, if armed forces personnel are engaged in security tasks related to schools, their presence within school grounds or buildings be avoided if at all possible, including for accommodation. Where necessary, establish wider security perimeters in neighborhoods around schools, rather than directly outside schools, to minimize disruption to children’s education and avoid militarization of school and university grounds.

- Where necessary and following consultation with affected communities, consider providing security sweeps along routes traveled by teachers and students to and from schools, before and after the school day.

To the African Union (AU)

- Following the Fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration and in keeping with the AU Silencing the Guns Initiative and the Safe Schools Declaration, advocate for more comprehensive and sustained measures to protect education from attack in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions, by calling on the Cameroonian government to prioritize security of schools, students, and teachers, including the assessment of any security risks for schools which are currently open.
- Engage proactively with the Cameroonian government and support its efforts to expand and strengthen monitoring and reporting on attacks against education and military use of schools, including by collecting and reporting disaggregated data by type of attack on education, sex, age, location, person, or group responsible.
- Encourage and support the Cameroonian government to implement fully the commitments contained in the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.

To the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)

- Conduct an investigative mission to Cameroon, focusing on the right to education in the Anglophone regions, make the findings public and present them before the AU Peace and Security Council.
- The ACHPR should appoint a Special Rapporteur on Education to liaise with and facilitate coordination among the ACHPR, ACERWC, and the AU policy organs.
- Both the ACERWC and the ACHPR should call on the Cameroonian government to conduct impartial, transparent, and independent investigations into attacks against students and teachers, including physical assaults, killings, abductions, threats, and into attacks against school buildings, including destruction and arson, in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions. Urge Cameroonian authorities to publicize the findings of these investigations, prosecute those responsible in fair trials, and incorporate lessons learned into future protection measures and strategies to prevent attacks against education.

To the AU Peace and Security Council

- Include the situation in Cameroon's Anglophone regions as a priority item on the AU peace and security agenda, request a briefing by the ACHPR and the ACERWC on the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Anglophone regions, and demand an end to human rights abuses.
- Unequivocally condemn attacks against education in Cameroon's Anglophone regions and play a more assertive role, including by using all political and diplomatic tools at your disposal, such as imposing targeted sanctions, on separatist leaders and fighters responsible for attacks against students, teachers, schools.

To the AU Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development Department, the AU Human Resources, Science and Technology Department and other AU education agencies

- Include the right to education in Cameroon as a priority goal in your strategies and policies.
- Urge the ACERWC to carry out an investigative mission focusing on the right to education in Cameroon's Anglophone regions and to make findings public. Engage and collaborate with key stakeholders, including Cameroonian civil society, the national human rights commission, community and religious leaders, and teachers' unions to improve the monitoring and documentation of attacks against education in Cameroon's Anglophone regions, and raise awareness on the crisis and its impact on education.

To the United Nations (UN)

To the UN Secretary-General

- Continue to include Cameroon as a situation of concern in the annual report on children and armed conflict to the UN Security Council. Include in the annex of the report any parties engaging in violations against children. Ensure voices and experiences of children with disabilities are included.
- Regularly raise the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon with the UN Security Council as a situation that threatens international peace and security.

- Ensure the integrity of the annual report on children and armed conflict by applying consistent standards, based on evidence and not political pressure, when deciding which abusive parties to list in the report.

To the UN Security Council

- Include Cameroon as a priority item on its agenda, request a briefing by the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Cameroon, and demand an end to human rights abuses.
- Request the UN Secretary-General to name parties who commit grave violations against children.
- Establish a sanctions regime in Cameroon, including targeted sanctions, such as travel bans and asset freezes against individuals credibly implicated in serious abuses, including attacks on students, teachers, and schools.
- Request the UN to engage with parties to develop action plans to cease and prevent the six grave violations against children - including children with disabilities, bearing in mind their specific rights and needs - and the use of schools by armed groups.
- Recommend the provision of technical assistance to Cameroon to improve the national judiciary's capacity to effectively investigate and prosecute attacks on students, teachers, and schools.

To the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

- Ensure accurate, public monitoring and reporting on threats and attacks on students, teachers, and schools as well as the use of schools by armed separatist groups.
- Highlight the urgency of the situation in Cameroon in reports and updates to UN bodies, namely the General Assembly, Human Rights Council, and Security Council, and in discussions with the Cameroonian government and its international and regional partners.

To the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- Improve its mechanism in cooperation with NGOs and other UN agencies to monitor and report threats and attacks on students, teachers, and schools, as well as the use of schools by armed groups and other grave violations against children committed in the context of the Anglophone crisis (and the Far North region).

To the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- Make publicly available the findings of its 2019 investigations and any future investigations into the Anglophone crisis.
- Actively monitor the situation in the Anglophone regions and provide regular updates to the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council, including by holding intersessional briefings and informal conversations with Council members and observers. These updates should include information about OHCHR's work in Cameroon, including its engagement with Cameroonian authorities and the situation in the Anglophone regions, including attacks on students, teachers, and schools.

To the UN Country Team in Cameroon

- Under the formal Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on children and armed conflict, actively document and verify incidents of military use of schools, including use of schools by armed groups, and grave violations against children, including threats and attacks on students, teachers, and schools, and provide this information to the UN special representative to the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. Actively monitor and document violations against children with disabilities, bearing in mind their specific rights and needs.

To Cameroon's International Bilateral Partners, including France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Italy and the European Union

- Privately and publicly urge the Cameroonian government and security forces to adopt and support the implementation of the above recommendations.

- If established, provide technical and financial support to the special task forces on attacks on students, teachers, and schools, and to reparations program to support victims of attacks on education and their families.
- Urge the national authorities to empower the investigative police, including its forensic criminal evidence gathering, judicial investigation, prosecutorial, and trial capacity and provide targeted and specifically monitored support.
- Publicly denounce attacks on students, teachers, and schools as well as the military use of schools, and call for impartial investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators.
- Encourage and financially support the Cameroonian government’s efforts to rebuild damaged or destroyed schools and to make schools safer, including by ensuring humanitarian education response plans are adequately funded.
- Ensure any support to the Cameroonian security forces does not contribute to or facilitate human rights abuses.
- Implement targeted sanctions, such as travel bans and asset freezes, against individuals credibly implicated in serious abuses, including attacks against education.

To The World Bank

- Ensure that a significant amount of the US \$97 million provided to Cameroon’s government in support of education sector reform is used to improve access to safe schools in the Anglophone regions, including by assisting displaced students and teachers in rebuilding and repairing damaged or destroyed school buildings, support, if established, the special task forces on attacks on education and the reparations program to support victims of attacks on education and their families.

Acknowledgments

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Human Rights Watch would like to thank the many brave education professionals, students, witnesses, and family members of victims who, often at great personal risk, shared how they have been impacted by attacks on education as well as the organizations and individuals who connected us with these interviewees and provided interpretation as necessary. We are also grateful to the government officials, separatist leaders, activists,

diplomats, humanitarian workers, civil society activists, lawyers, journalists, and community leaders who shared their experiences and views with us.

Appendix I, Safe Schools Declaration

The impact of armed conflict on education presents urgent humanitarian, development and wider social challenges. Worldwide, schools and universities have been bombed, shelled and burned, and children, students, teachers and academics have been killed, maimed, abducted or arbitrarily detained. Educational facilities have been used by parties to armed conflict as, inter alia, bases, barracks or detention centres. Such actions expose students and education personnel to harm, deny large numbers of children and students their right to education and so deprive communities of the foundations on which to build their future. In many countries, armed conflict continues to destroy not just school infrastructure, but the hopes and ambitions of a whole generation of children. Attacks on education include violence against educational facilities, students and education personnel.

Attacks, and threats of attack, can cause severe and long-lasting harm to individuals and societies. Access to education may be undermined; the functioning of educational facilities may be blocked, or education personnel and students may stay away, fearing for their safety. Attacks on schools and universities have been used to promote intolerance and exclusion—to further gender discrimination, for example by preventing the education of girls, to perpetuate conflict between certain communities, to restrict cultural diversity, and to deny academic freedom or the right of association. Where educational facilities are used for military purposes it can increase the risk of the recruitment and use of children by armed actors or may leave children and youth vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation. In particular, it may increase the likelihood that education institutions are attacked.

By contrast, education can help to protect children and youth from death, injury and exploitation; it can alleviate the psychological impact of armed conflict by offering routine and stability and can provide links to other vital services. Education that is ‘conflict sensitive’ avoids contributing to conflict and pursues a contribution to peace. Education is fundamental to development and to the full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. We will do our utmost to see that places of education are places of safety.

We welcome initiatives by individual States to promote and protect the right to education and to facilitate the continuation of education in situations of armed conflict.

Continuation of education can provide life-saving health information as well as advice on specific risks in societies facing armed conflict.

We commend the work of the United Nations Security Council on children and armed conflict and acknowledge the importance of the monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave violations against children in armed conflict. We emphasize the importance of Security Council resolution 1998 (2011), and 2143 (2014) which, inter alia, urges all parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education and encourages Member States to consider concrete measures to deter the use of schools by armed forces and armed non-State groups in contravention of applicable international law.

We welcome the development of the Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. The Guidelines are non-legally binding, voluntary guidelines that do not affect existing international law. They draw on existing good practice and aim to provide guidance that will further reduce the impact of armed conflict on education. We welcome efforts to disseminate these guidelines and to promote their implementation among armed forces, armed groups and other relevant actors.

We stress the importance, in all circumstances, of full respect for applicable international law, including the need to comply with the relevant obligations to end impunity.

Recognizing the right to education and the role of education in promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations; determined progressively to strengthen in practice the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and of children and youth in particular; committed to working together towards safe schools for all; we endorse the Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict, and will:

- Use the Guidelines, and bring them into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate;
- Make every effort at a national level to collect reliable relevant data on attacks on educational facilities, on the victims of attacks, and on military use of schools and universities during armed conflict, including through existing monitoring and

- reporting mechanisms; to facilitate such data collection; and to provide assistance to victims, in a non-discriminatory manner.
- Investigate allegations of violations of applicable national and international law and, where appropriate, duly prosecute perpetrators;
 - Develop, adopt and promote ‘conflict-sensitive’ approaches to education in international humanitarian and development programmes, and at a national level where relevant;
 - Seek to ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict, support the reestablishment of educational facilities and, where in a position to do so, provide and facilitate international cooperation and assistance to programmes working to prevent or respond to attacks on education, including for the implementation of this declaration;
 - Support the efforts of the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict, and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant UN organs, entities and agencies; and
 - Meet on a regular basis, inviting relevant international organisation and civil society, so as to review the implementation of this declaration and the use of the guidelines.

Appendix II, Letter to Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute

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21 septembre 2021

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Joseph Dion Ngute
Premier ministre
République du Cameroun

Boulevard du 20 Mai
Centre-ville de Yaoundé
Cameroun

CC : Félix Mbayu
Bureau du Premier ministre

Son Excellence le Premier ministre,

Je vous écris au nom de Human Rights Watch pour partager les conclusions de nos recherches sur les attaques contre les professionnels et les institutions de l'éducation dans les régions anglophones du Cameroun depuis 2017. Ces conclusions formeront la base d'un rapport en cours de compilation par notre organisation. Nous sommes désireux d'intégrer les perspectives de votre gouvernement sur ces attaques et d'obtenir des détails sur les actions que votre gouvernement a prises ou prendra pour y faire face. Ces informations seront incluses dans un rapport dont la publication est prévue dans les semaines à venir.

Human Rights Watch est une organisation non gouvernementale internationale qui mène des recherches et des actions de sensibilisation sur les droits humains dans plus de 90 pays. Human Rights Watch a documenté et fait des rapports sur les violations des droits humains au Cameroun depuis de nombreuses années.

Nos recherches ont documenté plusieurs attaques contre des élèves, des professionnels de l'éducation et des écoles menées par des combattants séparatistes armés dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest entre 2017 et 2021. Nous avons également documenté au moins une attaque contre une école par des soldats camerounais présumés. Nous examinons les conséquences de ces attaques, qui ont conduit, selon les Nations



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unies, à priver plus de 700 000 élèves d'un accès à l'éducation. Nous espérons mettre en lumière à la fois les mesures prises par votre gouvernement pour prévenir ou limiter ces attaques et les lacunes qui subsistent. Dans notre prochain rapport, nous proposerons des recommandations sur les mesures spécifiques qui peuvent être prises pour mieux protéger les écoles, les élèves et les enseignants, pour s'assurer que les responsables des attaques font l'objet d'enquêtes et de poursuites, et pour offrir de nouvelles opportunités à ceux dont l'éducation n'a pu être assurée pendant la crise anglophone. Ces mesures comprennent la création d'une équipe spéciale chargée des attaques contre l'éducation et d'un fonds de réparation pour soutenir les victimes et leurs familles.

Entre novembre 2020 et septembre 2021, Human Rights Watch a interrogé par téléphone un total de 110 personnes, parmi lesquels figuraient des anciens élèves, des enseignants et d'autres professionnels de l'éducation. Nous avons également interrogé des anciens combattants séparatistes, des travailleurs de la santé, des travailleurs sociaux et humanitaires, des avocats, des journalistes, des représentants de la société civile, des fonctionnaires de l'ONU et des diplomates.

Human Rights Watch n'a pas pu se rendre au Cameroun pour mener des recherches en personne en raison de la pandémie mondiale de Covid-19 et des difficultés à obtenir des visas. Nous avons cherché à pallier les limites des entretiens téléphoniques en corroborant nos conclusions par d'autres sources, notamment des rapports de groupes camerounais de défense des droits humains et d'organisations humanitaires internationales, en recueillant et en examinant des photographies et des extraits vidéo, et en examinant des dossiers juridiques et médicaux.

Permettez-nous d'ajouter que Human Rights Watch apprécie que le Cameroun ait approuvé la Déclaration sur la sécurité dans les écoles en 2018. Nous sommes désireux de connaître les mesures prises par votre gouvernement conformément à la déclaration.

Vous trouverez plus de détails sur nos conclusions à l'annexe I et une liste de questions destinées à votre gouvernement à l'annexe II.

Nous vous serions reconnaissants de nous fournir une réponse détaillée d'ici le 4 octobre 2021. Nous vous serions également reconnaissants de nous donner l'occasion de nous entretenir avec vous ou l'un de vos représentants pour discuter plus avant de cette question.

Si vous avez des questions, ou si vous souhaitez convenir d'un moment pour discuter du contenu de cette lettre, n'hésitez pas à me contacter à l'adresse [REDACTED] ou au [REDACTED].

Cordialement,



Maudi Segun
Directrice exécutive, Division Afrique
Human Rights Watch

Annexe I : Résumé des conclusions de Human Rights Watch

Les attaques contre les élèves, les enseignants et les écoles sont devenues caractéristique de la crise dans les régions anglophones du Cameroun depuis 2017, avec des conséquences dévastatrices pour toute une génération de jeunes, ainsi que pour leurs enseignants, leurs familles et leurs communautés au sens large.

Attaques d'écoles par des combattants séparatistes armés

Au moins 70 écoles ont été attaquées dans les régions anglophones depuis 2017, selon les rapports des agences des Nations unies, de la Banque mondiale, des organisations de la société civile camerounaise et internationale, et des médias. Human Rights Watch a documenté en détail 14 attaques contre des écoles par des combattants séparatistes et une attaque contre une école par les forces de sécurité entre janvier 2017 et janvier 2021. Les séparatistes armés ont effectué des visites à caractère menaçant dans les écoles, au cours desquelles ils ont ordonné la fermeture des établissements, et détruit infrastructures et fournitures scolaires, notamment en y mettant le feu. Au cours d'une attaque, des hommes armés ont fait usage d'armes à feu et tué sept élèves.

Attaque d'une école par les forces de sécurité

Human Rights Watch a pris connaissance d'une attaque présumée des forces de sécurité camerounaises contre une école du village d'Eka, dans la région du Nord-Ouest, par le biais d'une vidéo publiée sur les réseaux sociaux en janvier 2019. La vidéo montre un groupe de ce qui semble être des soldats camerounais autour d'un bâtiment scolaire en

feu et une interview d'un habitant de la ville de Widikum, dans la région du Nord Ouest, qui accuse les soldats d'avoir brûlé l'école en représailles à son utilisation comme base par les séparatistes.

Enlèvements, agressions et menaces contre des élèves et enseignants par des combattants séparatistes armés

Human Rights Watch a documenté la façon dont les séparatistes armés ont tué au moins trois enseignants, kidnappé plus de 268 élèves et enseignants, et menacé, intimidé, harcelé ou agressé des centaines d'autres dans le but de les empêcher d'aller à l'école. Dans certains cas, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des écoles, les agresseurs ont détruit ou saisi les livres des élèves et les documents des enseignants.

Recrutement et utilisation d'enfants par des séparatistes armés

Selon les recherches de Human Rights Watch, les séparatistes armés dans les régions anglophones ont recruté des enfants au sein de leurs groupes et les ont utilisés pour soutenir leurs opérations. Les témoignages recueillis par Human Rights Watch auprès de personnes enlevées et emmenées dans des camps séparatistes révèlent la présence d'enfants au sein des groupes séparatistes armés. Human Rights Watch a également examiné des photographies et extraits vidéo montrant des enfants armés, debout aux côtés d'autres combattants séparatistes visiblement plus âgés. La violence permanente, les menaces des séparatistes à l'encontre des élèves et des jeunes, les frustrations causées par les abus à caractère militaire et le besoin de survie ont tous augmenté le risque de recrutement des élèves par les groupes séparatistes armés. Lorsqu'ils vivent parmi les combattants séparatistes, les enfants sont susceptibles de subir des violences, d'être obligés de participer à des cérémonies d'initiation et d'entraînement éprouvantes et d'être contraints de prendre des drogues dangereuses pour leur santé.

Utilisation des écoles par les séparatistes armés

Les combattants séparatistes ont utilisé des écoles comme bases, y ont détenu des otages, y ont stocké des armes et des munitions et ont déployé des combattants à l'intérieur et à proximité de celles-ci. Human Rights Watch a documenté l'occupation d'au moins six écoles par des combattants séparatistes dans la région du Nord-Ouest (une à Bali, une à Koppin, une à Mbuluf, une à Tenkha, une à Tan et une à Mbiplah) et trois dans la région du Sud-Ouest (une à Bai Panya, une à Foe Bakundu et une à Maromba).

Annexe II : Demande d'information

Nous vous serions reconnaissants de bien vouloir fournir des réponses aux questions suivantes :

- 1) Disposez-vous de chiffres spécifiques concernant les points suivants ?
 - Nombre total d'écoles (primaires, secondaires) et d'élèves (en primaire et en secondaire) dans les régions anglophones (régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest) ;
 - Nombre d'écoles (primaires, secondaires) dans les régions anglophones (régions du Nord Ouest et du Sud-Ouest) qui, selon les estimations, ont été fermées depuis 2017 (y compris le nombre d'écoles fermées pendant un certain temps depuis le début de la crise et qui ont rouvert par la suite, et le nombre d'écoles actuellement fermées) ;
 - Nombre d'élèves (en primaire et en secondaire) qui, selon les estimations, ne sont pas scolarisés dans les régions anglophones depuis 2017 (y compris le nombre d'élèves ayant manqué un temps d'école important depuis le début de la crise, et le nombre d'élèves actuellement non scolarisés) ;
 - Nombre d'écoles dans les régions anglophones qui ont été attaquées par des combattants séparatistes armés depuis le début de la crise en 2017 ;
 - Nombre d'écoles dans les régions anglophones qui ont été utilisées à des fins militaires par des groupes armés séparatistes et/ou par les forces gouvernementales ;
 - Nombre d'enfants recrutés dans les rangs des groupes armés séparatistes.

- 2) Le 24 octobre 2020, jour de l'attaque de l'Académie Internationale Bilingue Mère Francisca,¹ une école privée de Kumba, par des hommes armés non identifiés qui ont tué sept enfants, le ministre camerounais de la Communication a annoncé l'ouverture d'une enquête. Le 7 septembre, un tribunal militaire de Buea a condamné 4 personnes à la peine de mort par peloton d'exécution pour le meurtre de 7 enfants et pour en avoir blessé au moins 13 autres l'année dernière dans une école de la région du Sud-Ouest, au cours d'un procès qui, selon les avocats de la défense, a été entaché de graves irrégularités de procédure, notamment le recours à un tribunal militaire pour juger des civils et l'imposition de la peine capitale. Pouvez vous nous indiquer si votre gouvernement envisage de ratifier le deuxième

¹ Human Rights Watch, Cameroun : Massacre d'écoliers par des hommes armés, 2 novembre 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2020/11/02/cameroun-massacre-decoliers-par-des-hommes-armes-0>

protocole facultatif au Pacte international relatif aux droits civils et politiques concernant l'abolition de la peine de mort ?

- 3) Outre l'enquête sur les meurtres d'enfants à l'Académie Internationale Bilingue Mère Francisca, y a-t-il eu d'autres enquêtes sur des allégations d'attaques contre l'éducation dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest entre 2017 et aujourd'hui ? Pourriez-vous fournir des détails et des documents sur les cas où de telles enquêtes ont été ouvertes ?
- 4) Des enquêtes ont-elles été ouvertes sur l'incendie susmentionné de l'école d'Eka par des soldats camerounais présumés ?
- 5) Le 20 mars 2019, des combattants séparatistes présumés ont pris d'assaut le terrain de football de l'université de Buea et ont enlevé au moins 15 joueurs de l'équipe de football masculine de l'université. Les étudiants, dont certains ont été battus, ont été libérés le lendemain, et l'armée a arrêté au moins 10 suspects environ une semaine plus tard. Les suspects sont-ils toujours en détention ? Ont-ils été inculpés et jugés ?
- 6) Les autorités camerounaises ont déclaré qu'au moins 400 écoles ont rouvert et 70 000 élèves ont repris leurs cours dans le Nord-Ouest et le Sud-Ouest pour la nouvelle année scolaire qui a débuté en septembre 2021.² Les médias locaux ont rapporté que les autorités des deux régions anglophones ont enregistré des améliorations dans la fréquentation scolaire par rapport à l'année scolaire passée.³ Pouvez-vous le confirmer et fournir des informations ventilées concernant le nombre d'écoles qui ont rouvert leurs portes dans les régions du Sud-Ouest et du Nord-Ouest pour l'année scolaire 2021/2022 ?
- 7) Des actions ont-elles été entreprises par votre gouvernement pour fournir des réparations aux victimes et survivants d'attaques contre l'éducation commises dans le contexte de la crise dans les régions anglophones depuis 2017 ? Si oui, pourriez-vous fournir des informations détaillées sur ces actions ?

² *VoA*, Cameroon Says Students and Teachers Defy Separatists School Lockdown, 19 juillet 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-says-students-and-teachers-defy-separatists-school-lockdown> (consulté en août 2021).

³ *Journal du Cameroun*, Cameroon: NW Region records improvement in school attendance, 10 septembre 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-nw-region-records-improvement-in-school-attendance/> (consulté en septembre 2021); *Journal du Cameroun*, Cameroon: SW Region records positive numbers after first week of school resumption, 10 septembre 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroonsw-region-records-positive-numbers-after-first-week-of-school-resumption/> (consulté en septembre 2021).

- 8) La poursuite de l'éducation en période de violence est un engagement pris dans le cadre de la Déclaration sur la sécurité dans les écoles, approuvée par votre gouvernement, qui a tenté de relancer l'éducation dans les régions anglophones avec des campagnes de rentrée des classes étendues à un plus grand nombre d'entre elles. Certains enseignants et analystes indépendants estiment cependant que ces campagnes ont mis la vie des élèves et des enseignants en danger en obligeant les parents et les enseignants à envoyer les élèves à l'école malgré l'insécurité généralisée. Quel est votre point de vue sur cette question ?
- 9) Certains élèves et enseignants ont exprimé leurs inquiétudes quant au déploiement des forces de sécurité dans et autour de leurs écoles. Certains ont déclaré qu'ils se sentaient mal à l'aise en présence des forces de sécurité en raison des abus qu'elles sont réputées commettre, tandis que d'autres ont expliqué qu'ils craignaient d'essayer des tirs si des combattants séparatistes attaquaient les forces de sécurité présentes dans l'école ou à proximité. Quel est votre point de vue sur cette question ?
- 10) Pourriez-vous expliquer ce que votre gouvernement a entrepris pour faire face à l'impact de la crise anglophone sur l'éducation, notamment en matière de réponses multisectorielles pour assurer la protection et l'accès à des opportunités d'apprentissage de qualité pour les élèves ?
- 11) Pourriez vous expliquer ce que votre gouvernement a entrepris pour s'assurer que les élèves privés d'accès aux établissements scolaires en raison de la crise aient rapidement accès à des formes alternatives d'éducation, telles que l'éducation communautaire, l'enseignement à distance et les écoles ou espaces d'apprentissage temporaires, avec des équipements appropriés et des enseignants correctement formés ?
- 12) Pourriez vous expliquer ce que votre gouvernement a entrepris pour assurer la reconstruction des écoles endommagées ou détruites à cause de la crise ?
- 13) Pourriez-vous expliquer ce que votre gouvernement a entrepris pour améliorer la collecte de données sur les attaques contre l'éducation ?
- 14) La législation nationale, le droit militaire national ou les politiques ou pratiques militaires actuelles liant les forces armées du Cameroun stipulent-ils

spécifiquement (et non implicitement) que les écoles et autres établissements d'enseignement ne doivent pas faire l'objet d'attaques par les forces armées, sauf s'il s'agit d'objectifs militaires ? Si tel est le cas, veuillez nous communiquer les articles pertinents des lois, codes, politiques ou pratiques concernés.

- 15) La législation nationale, le droit militaire national, ou les politiques ou pratiques militaires actuelles liant les forces armées du Cameroun prévoient-ils une interdiction, une réglementation ou une limitation de l'utilisation des écoles et autres établissements d'enseignement par les forces armées à des fins militaires ? Si tel est le cas, veuillez nous communiquer les articles pertinents des lois, codes, politiques ou pratiques concernés.

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21 septembre 2021

Son Excellence
Joseph Dion Ngute
Premier ministre
République du Cameroun

Boulevard du 20 Mai
Centre-ville de Yaoundé
Cameroun

CC : Félix Mbayo
Bureau du Premier ministre

Son Excellence le Premier ministre,

Je vous écris au nom de Human Rights Watch pour partager les conclusions de nos recherches sur les attaques contre les professionnels et les institutions de l'éducation dans les régions anglophones du Cameroun depuis 2017. Ces conclusions formeront la base d'un rapport en cours de compilation par notre organisation. Nous sommes désireux d'intégrer les perspectives de votre gouvernement sur ces attaques et d'obtenir des détails sur les actions que votre gouvernement a prises ou prendra pour y faire face. Ces informations seront incluses dans un rapport dont la publication est prévue dans les semaines à venir.

Human Rights Watch est une organisation non gouvernementale internationale qui mène des recherches et des actions de sensibilisation sur les droits humains dans plus de 90 pays. Human Rights Watch a documenté et fait des rapports sur les violations des droits humains au Cameroun depuis de nombreuses années.

Nos recherches ont documenté plusieurs attaques contre des élèves, des professionnels de l'éducation et des écoles menées par des combattants séparatistes armés dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest entre 2017 et 2021. Nous avons également documenté au moins une attaque contre une école par des soldats camerounais présumés. Nous examinons les conséquences de ces attaques, qui ont conduit, selon les Nations



HRW.org

22 SEPT 2021
R.P
DCA SPM
[Signature]



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September 21, 2021

Your Excellency
Joseph Dion Ngute
Prime Minister
Republic of Cameroon

Downtown Yaoundé
May 20 Boulevard
Cameroon

CC: Felix Mbayu
Prime Minister's Office

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch to share the findings of our research into attacks on education professionals and institutions in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2017. These findings will form the basis of a report being compiled by our organization. We are keen to integrate your government's perspectives on these attacks and to obtain details of any actions your government has taken or will be taking to address them. This information will be included in the upcoming report scheduled for publication in the coming weeks.

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights in over 90 countries. Human Rights Watch has for many years documented and reported on human rights violations in Cameroon.

Our research documented attacks on students, education professionals, and schools carried out by armed separatist fighters in the North-West and South-West regions between 2017 and 2021. We also documented at least one attack against a school by alleged Cameroonian soldiers. We are examining the consequences of these attacks, which have led to over 700,000 students being denied an



education, according to the United Nations. We hope to highlight steps taken by your government to prevent or curtail such attacks as well as remaining gaps. In our upcoming report will proffer recommendations on specific steps that can be taken to better protect schools, students, and teachers, to ensure that those responsible for the attacks are investigated and prosecuted, and to provide new opportunities for those who have missed out on their education during the Anglophone crisis. These include the establishment of a special task force focused on attacks on education and a reparations fund to support victims and their families.

Between November 2020 and September 2021, Human Rights Watch interviewed by telephone a total of 110 people, including former students, teachers, and other education professionals. We also interviewed former separatist fighters, healthcare, social and humanitarian workers, lawyers, journalists, civil society representatives, UN officials, and diplomats.

Human Rights Watch was unable to travel to Cameroon to conduct in person research due to the global Covid-19 pandemic and difficulties obtaining visas. We sought to address the limitations of phone interviews by corroborating our findings through other sources, including reports by Cameroonian human rights groups and international humanitarian organizations, by collecting and examining photographs and video footage, and by reviewing legal and medical records.

May we add that Human Rights Watch appreciates that Cameroon endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2018, and we are keen to learn steps your government has taken in line with the declaration.

Please find further details of our findings in Appendix I and a list of questions for your government in Appendix II.

We would be grateful if you could provide us with a detailed reply by October 4, 2021. We would also be grateful for the opportunity to have a conversation with you or any of your representatives to further discuss this matter.

If you have any questions, or if you wish to arrange a time to discuss the content of this letter, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Mausi Segun
Executive Africa Director
Human Rights Watch

Appendix I: Summary of Human Rights Watch's Findings

Attacks on students, teachers, and schools have become a hallmark of the crisis in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2017, with devastating consequences for an entire generation of young people, as well as their teachers, families, and broader communities.

Attacks on Schools by Armed Separatist Fighters

At least 70 schools have been attacked in the Anglophone regions since 2017, according to reports from United Nations agencies, the World Bank, Cameroonian and international civil society organizations, and media outlets. Human Rights Watch documented in detail 14 attacks on schools by separatist fighters and one attack on a school by security forces between January 2017 and January 2021. Armed separatists made threatening visits to schools, during which they ordered the schools to be closed, and destroyed school infrastructure and property, including with fire. During one attack, gunmen shot and killed seven students.

Attack on a School by Security Forces

Human Rights Watch learned of one alleged attack on a school in Eka village, North West region, by Cameroonian security forces through a video posted on social media in January 2019. The video shows a group of what appears to be Cameroonian soldiers around a burning school building and an interview with a resident of Widikum town, North-West region, who blamed soldiers for burning the school in retaliation for the separatists' use of the school as a camp.

Kidnapping, Assaults, Threats against Students and Teachers by Armed Separatist Fighters

Human Rights Watch has documented how armed separatists have killed at least three teachers, kidnapped over 268 students and teachers, and threatened, intimidated, harassed, or assaulted hundreds of others in their attempts to force them to stop attending school. In some cases, both in and outside of schools, attackers destroyed or seized students' books and teachers' documents.

Child Recruitment and Use by Armed Separatists

According to Human Rights Watch's research, armed separatists in the Anglophone regions have recruited children into their groups and used them to support their operations. Accounts collected by Human Rights Watch from people who have been kidnapped and taken to separatist camps reveal that children are present inside armed separatist groups. Human Rights Watch also reviewed photographs and video footage showing children with guns, standing with other seemingly older separatist fighters. The ongoing violence, separatists' threats against students and youth, the frustrations caused by military abuses, and the need for survival have all increased schoolchildren's risk of recruitment by separatist armed groups. While living among separatist fighters, children may experience violence, may be required to participate in stressful initiation and training ceremonies, and may be forced to take dangerous drugs.

Armed Separatists' Use of Schools

Separatist fighters have used schools as bases, held hostages at schools, stored weapons and ammunition in schools, and deployed fighters in and near them. Human Rights Watch documented the occupation of at least six schools by separatist fighters in the North West region (one in Bali, one in Koppin, one in Mbuluf, one in Tenkha, one in Tan, and one in Mbiplah villages) and three in the South-West region (one in Bai Panya, one in Foe Bakundu, and one in Maromba villages).

Appendix II: Request for Information

We would be grateful if you could provide us with responses to the following questions:

- 1) Do you have specific figures you could share regarding the following?
 - The total number of schools (primary, secondary) and students (primary, secondary) in the Anglophone regions (both North-West and South-West regions);

- The number of schools (primary, secondary) in the Anglophone regions (both North-West and South-West regions) that are estimated to have been shut down since 2017 (including the number of schools that were closed for certain periods since the crisis began and later reopened, and the number of schools that are currently closed);
 - The number of students (primary, secondary) who are estimated to be out of school in the Anglophone regions since 2017 (including the number of students who missed significant periods of school since the crisis began, and the number of students who are currently out of school);
 - The number of schools in the Anglophone regions that have been attacked by armed separatist fighters since the crisis began in 2017;
 - The number of schools in the Anglophone regions that have been used for military purposes by armed separatist groups and/or by government forces;
 - The number of children recruited in the ranks of armed separatist groups.
- 2) On October 24, 2020, the day of the attack on Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy,¹ a private school in Kumba, by unidentified gunmen who killed seven children, Cameroon's communications minister announced the opening of an investigation. On September 7, a military court in Buea sentenced 4 people to death by firing squad for the killing of 7 children and the injuring of at least 13 others last year at a school in the South-West region, in a trial that defense lawyers say was marred by serious procedural irregularities, including the use of a military court to try civilians and the imposition of capital punishment. Can you tell us whether your government is planning to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the Abolition of the Death Penalty?
- 3) Other than the investigation into the killings of children at Mother Francisca

¹ Human Rights Watch, Gunmen Massacre School Children, November 2, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/02/cameroon-gunmen-massacre-school-children>

International Bilingual Academy, have there been any other investigations into allegations of attacks against education in the North-West and South-West regions between 2017 and today? Could you provide details and documentation of instances where such investigations have taken place?

- 4) Have there been any investigations into the above-mentioned burning of the school in Eka by alleged Cameroonian soldiers?
- 5) On March 20, 2019, suspected separatist fighters carried out an assault at the University of Buea's football field and kidnapped at least 15 male football players from the university's team. The students, some of whom were beaten, were released the following day, and the military arrested at least 10 suspects about a week later. Are the suspects still in detention? Have they been charged and put on trial?
- 6) Cameroonian authorities said at least 400 schools reopened and 70,000 students have resumed their classes in the North-West and South-West for the new school year that began in September 2021.² Local media reported that authorities of both Anglophone regions recorded improvements in school attendance compared to the last academic year.³ Can you confirm this and provide disaggregated information regarding how many schools reopened in the South-West region and in the North-West region for this school year 2021/2022?
- 7) Have any actions been taken by your government to provide reparations to victims and survivors of attacks against education committed in the context of the crisis in the Anglophone regions since 2017? If so, could you provide detailed information about such actions?

² VoA, Cameroon Says Students and Teachers Defy Separatists School Lockdown, July 19, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-says-students-and-teachers-defy-separatists-school-lockdown> (accessed August 2021)

³ Journal du Cameroun, Cameroon: NW Region records improvement in school attendance, September 10, 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-nw-region-records-improvement-in-school-attendance/> (accessed September 2021); Journal du Cameroun, Cameroon: SW Region records positive numbers after first week of school resumption, September 10, 2021, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroonsw-region-records-positive-numbers-after-first-week-of-school-resumption/> (accessed September 2021)

- 8) The continuation of education during times of violence is a commitment under the Safe Schools Declaration endorsed by your government, which has attempted to revive education in the Anglophone regions with more extensive back-to-school campaigns. However, some teachers and independent analysts believe these campaigns have put the lives of students and teachers at risk by forcing parents and teachers to send students to school despite widespread insecurity. How do you respond to this?
- 9) Some students and teachers expressed concerns about the deployment of security forces in and around their schools. Some said that they feel uncomfortable in the presence of security forces because of their abusive reputation, while others explained that they fear they may come under fire if separatist fighters attack the security forces present in the school or in its proximity. How do you respond to this?
- 10) Could you please explain what your government is doing to address the impact of the Anglophone crisis on education, including through multi-sector responses to ensure protection and access to quality learning opportunities for students?
- 11) Could you please explain what your government is doing to ensure students deprived of educational facilities because of the crisis are promptly given access to alternative forms of education, such as community education, distance learning, and temporary learning schools or spaces, with suitable equipment and adequately trained teachers?
- 12) Could you please explain what your government is doing to ensure schools damaged or destroyed because of the crisis are rebuilt?
- 13) Could you please explain what your government is doing to improve data collection on attacks against education?
- 14) Does the domestic legislation, national military law, or current military policies or practices binding on the armed forces of Cameroon state specifically (not implicitly) that schools and other educational institutions

shall not be the object of attack by armed forces unless they are military objectives? If so, please share the relevant articles of the laws, codes, policies, or practices.

- 15) Does domestic legislation, national military law, or current military policies or practices binding on the armed forces of Cameroon provide any prohibition, regulation, or limitation on the use of schools and other educational institutions by armed forces for military purposes? If so, please share the relevant articles of the laws, codes, policies, or practices.

Appendix III, Response from Dr. Jonathan Levy

Dr. Jonathan Levy
Attorney at Law
Unit 7810, PO Box 6945,
London, W1A 6US
Tel [REDACTED]
Fax [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 29, 2021

Human Rights Watch
Mausi Segun
Executive Director, Africa Division

Dear Ms. Segun:

I am replying to your of September 22, 2021, letter on behalf of Dr. Ebenezer Akwanga, the African Peoples Liberation Movement (APLM) and the Southern Cameroons Defense Force (SOCADEF) or “the Respondents.”

First, the Respondents want to stress they support education and particularly education and equality of girl-children. The situation in Ambazonia is a tragedy, children are not only insecure in their schools but even more so in their homes, town, and villages. This appalling situation which is going on for more than four years now is the responsibility of the Republic of Cameroon (LRC).

Second, the Respondents disagree with your qualitative and quantitative sampling methodology including the line of questioning in the questionnaire. Phone calls to a few individuals, 110 altogether, is a small sample and subject to bias. Therefore, your conclusions are based on raw data that is suspect.

Third, while HRW is seemingly eager to apportion blame to Ambazonian freedom fighters, not being on the ground, HRW is missing the dynamics in play. The Ambazonian forces while at times jointly cooperating, do not have a united high command. The LRC on the other has diverted funding, logistics, and weaponry from the Boko Haram front to kill our people. This is a matter of self defense against a modern military with foreign advisors – French, Israelis, and Americans with Czech and Hungarian weaponry too.

Fourth, one cannot and should not lump together all the forces opposing the LRC, some are organized, others are simply vigilante or local self-defense movements. One day they may be a local band, the next claiming to be part of the IG or ADF or some other non-existing group.

Fifth, schools have become caught in the crossfire of the armed struggle but entire villages have been razed and burned by the LRC and in particular by the BIR unit which is notorious for its brutalities against civilians. Your narrow focus on schools misses the larger problem of an oppression of an entire people and the destruction of their homeland.

Dr. Jonathan Levy
Attorney at Law
Unit 7810, PO Box 6945,
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[REDACTED]

Sixth, there are other irregular armed forces at work, in particular the LRC supported MKPD or “black legs” militia who murder, rob, and terrorize civilians, often claiming to be “Amba Boys.”

Seventh, the use of child soldiers is inherently wrong; the Respondents condemn the practice but have seen little evidence of this occurring. However, the small physical stature or slight appearance of Ambazonian Freedom Fighters should not be mistaken for child soldiers.

The Respondents have been very open as to their policies:

1. Respondents support a Comprehensive Negotiated Settlement (CNS) and have been working directly with the Swiss Foreign Ministry and the Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) Center in Switzerland for more than 2 years to achieve conflict resolution.
2. Respondents have held meetings with the ICRC in an attempt to mitigate violence and have lobbied for a NIAC (Non International Armed Conflict) to be declared in order to bring the protections of the Geneva Convention to the conflict.
3. Respondents have worked with OEAS to self-declare a NIAC which was ignored by LRC and IGOs alike.
4. Respondents have utilized materials from ICRC and Geneva Call to train individuals associated with them in the conflict zone.
5. Respondents have received training on the Geneva Convention and laws of war from both the ICRC and Geneva Call.
6. Respondents have sought advice from the late Jerry Rawlings on how to resolve the dispute.
7. Respondents heeded the call of the UN Secretary General to call and extend a COVID cease fire.
8. Respondents recently have called off “ghost town” events as part of a Confidence Building Measures (CBM) requested by the State Party for the purpose of commencement of DIRECT TALKS towards a negotiated settlement – LRC has failed to reciprocate.
9. Respondent have had low level direct discussions with LRC representatives on various matters

Dr. Jonathan Levy
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[REDACTED]

Respondents are dismayed that LRC has yet to reciprocate and that if there is a cycle of violence, it is becoming clear this serves the purposes of the Biya regime and its collaborators.

Ms. Segun, it is clear from the skewed attitude of HRW that it blindly serves the purposes of those close to the ancient dictator Biya. It is well known that Canada and France have a financial interest in the Biya regime as do others. Ambazonia is not Sierra Leone, Liberia, or eastern Congo. The goal is one of external self-determination brought on by decades of broken promises, discrimination and a brutal and barbaric annexation. Respondents are not warlords nor are the leadership cadre of the entire Ambazonian movement.

Respondents do not want your advice based on hearsay and innuendo. We know the problem and we know that the cycle of violence can only be ended through conflict resolution. The current situation is intolerable for the Ambazonian people but they have no choice but to defend themselves until the criminals in Yaoundé are brought kicking and screaming to the negotiating table by their financial backers.

Therefore, Respondents plead with HRW: do not enable violence by promoting the agendas of La Republique du Cameroun. HRW's work is admirable but it can also be influenced by politics and funding. Our advice to the HRW therefore is do not pander to bloodstained dictators and their foreign backers. Paul Biya has shown himself to be a craven coward who murders men, women, and children because he is afraid of doing anything other than perpetuating the status quo for his tribe, his family and his own survival.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Jonathan Levy
Legal Representative for Respondents

Appendix IV, HRW Letters to Separatist Leaders

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September 22, 2021

To: Dr. Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga, chairman of the African People's Liberation Movement

Dear Dr. Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch to share the findings of our research into attacks on education professionals and institutions in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2017. These findings will form the basis of a report being compiled by our organization. We are keen to integrate your perspectives on these attacks and to obtain details of any actions you and your group have taken or will be taking to address them. This information will be included in the upcoming report scheduled for publication in the coming weeks.

Human Rights Watch is an international nongovernmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights in over 90 countries. Human Rights Watch has for many years documented and reported on human rights violations and abuses in Cameroon, including in the Anglophone regions.

Our research documented attacks on students, education professionals, and schools carried out by armed separatist fighters in the North-West and South-West regions between 2017 and 2021. We also documented at least one attack against a school by alleged Cameroonian soldiers. We are examining the consequences of these attacks, which have led to over 700,000 students being denied an education, according to the United Nations. Our research also highlights steps taken by the government of Cameroon to prevent or curtail such attacks as well as remaining gaps. The report will include recommendations for separatist groups, the Cameroonian government, and international partners regarding specific steps that should be taken to end attacks, better protect schools, students, and teachers, ensure that those responsible for the attacks are



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investigated and prosecuted, and provide new opportunities for those who have missed out on their education during the crisis.

Between November 2020 and September 2021, Human Rights Watch interviewed by telephone a total of 110 people, including former students, teachers, and other education professionals. We also interviewed former separatist fighters, healthcare, social and humanitarian workers, lawyers, journalists, civil society representatives, UN officials, and diplomats.

Human Rights Watch was unable to travel to Cameroon to conduct in person research due to the global Covid 19 pandemic and difficulties obtaining visas. We sought to address the limitations of phone interviews by corroborating our findings through other sources, including reports by Cameroonian human rights groups and international humanitarian organizations, by collecting and examining photographs and video footage, and by reviewing legal and medical records.

Please find further details of our findings in Appendix I and a list of questions for you and your group in Appendix II.

We would be grateful if you could provide us with a detailed reply by October 4, 2021. We would also be grateful for the opportunity to have a conversation with you or any of your representatives to further discuss this matter.

If you have any questions, or if you wish to arrange a time to discuss the content of this letter, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Mausi Segun
Executive Africa Director
Human Rights Watch

Appendix I: Summary of Human Rights Watch's Findings

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Attacks on Schools by Armed Separatist Fighters

At least 70 schools have been attacked in the Anglophone regions since 2017, according to reports from United Nations agencies, the World Bank, Cameroonian and international civil society organizations, and media outlets. Human Rights Watch documented in detail 14 attacks on schools by separatist fighters and one attack on a school by security forces between January 2017 and January 2021. Human Rights Watch found that armed separatists made threatening visits to schools, during which they ordered the schools to be closed, and destroyed school infrastructure and property, including with fire. During one attack, gunmen shot and killed seven students.

Kidnapping, Assaults, Threats against Students and Teachers by Armed Separatist Fighters

Human Rights Watch has documented how armed separatists have killed at least three teachers, kidnapped over 268 students and teachers, and threatened, intimidated, harassed, or assaulted hundreds of others in their attempts to force them to stop attending school. In some cases, both in and outside of schools, attackers destroyed or seized students' books and teachers' documents.

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According to Human Rights Watch's research, armed separatists in the Anglophone regions have recruited children into their groups and used them in their operations. Accounts collected by Human Rights Watch from people who have been kidnapped and taken to separatist camps reveal that children are present inside armed separatist groups. Human Rights Watch also reviewed photographs and video footage showing children with guns, standing with other seemingly older separatist

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September 22, 2021

To: Dr. Samuel Ikome Sako, President of the Interim
Government of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia

CC: Christopher Anu, head of the communication
department of the Interim Government of the Federal
Republic of Ambazonia

Dear Dr. Samuel Ikome Sako,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch to share the findings of our research into attacks on education professionals and institutions in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2017. These findings will form the basis of a report being compiled by our organization. We are keen to integrate your perspectives on these attacks and to obtain details of any actions you and your group have taken or will be taking to address them. This information will be included in the upcoming report scheduled for publication in the coming weeks.

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September 22, 2021

To: Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, President of the Ambazonia Interim Government

CC: Dabney Yerimah, Vice-president of the Ambazonia Interim Government

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Appendix V, Office of the Deputy Defense Chief letter to Samuel Sako

1 of 1



OFFICE of DEPUTY DEFENSE CHIEF
AMBAGONIA DEFENSE FORCES

Ref: ADF/D02/11/2021

November 24, 2021

Dear Dr. Samuel Ikome Sako,

Subject: Request for public statement over the killing incident in Ekondo-Titi, today 24 November 2021.

The Ambazonian Defence Forces (ADF) are writing to you over the shooting dead of over seven students and injuring of many other at Ekondo Titi this morning.

Our preliminary investigations reveal that the group "The Expendable 100", who are directly answerable to your authority, are responsible for these acts of terrorism. We have also received credible information that explosive ordinances were used during these attacks.

We would be grateful if you would publicly:

- Condemn these horrendous acts of terrorism against the Ambazonian people;
- Issue an apology to the aggrieved family members and to the Ambazonian people;
- Immediately arrest the perpetrators and take the necessary disciplinary and punitive actions against all directly or indirectly involved in these massacres and;
- Reassure the Ambazonian people that such killings will not happen again in the future.

We are looking forward to your prompt reaction before we make an official public statement on this regrettable and criminal incident.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Capo Daniel".

Capo Daniel
Deputy Defense Chief
Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF)

AMBAGONIA GOVERNING COUNCIL

Appendix VI, Code of Conduct, Ambazonia Defense Council



AMBAGONIA DEFENSE COUNCIL

If it is possible it will be done, if it is impossible it can be done

Allegiance and the oath of the ADF

I am an Ambazonian.

“I swear by almighty God that I will be faithful and pledge true allegiance to the flag of Ambazonia, the cause of her freedom from illegal and colonial rule by Cameroun and her acolytes.

I will proudly, honestly and faithfully support and defend Ambazonia in person, leadership and dignity against all enemies.

I will observe and obey all orders of my superiors, generals and officers appointed over me, and I will defend and protect my fellow comrades and all those who have gone before me.”

Introduction:

The provisions herein constitute the code of conduct of the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF). The mission of the ADF are as follows; Firstly, to free/protect the people of Ambazonia from illegal occupation by Cameroun in accordance with UN Resolution 1608 of 21 April 1961. Secondly, to uphold the right of Ambazonia to external self-determination. Thirdly, to achieve the independence of Ambazonia as a sovereign country. Also, to defend Ambazonians from any harm by Cameroun, its acolytes, and other individuals of evil intent seeking to take advantage of our revolution. It further seeks to assist with the provision of humanitarian services to Ambazonians especially the most vulnerable demographic. Finally, it seeks to ensure peace and stability in a post-independence Ambazonia. All ADF personnel are

A COALITION OF AMBAGONIA DEFENSE FORCES



expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of personnel and professional integrity/ethics. ADF personnel shall comply with directives issued by the Chairperson of the Ambazonia Defense Council.

This Code of Conduct, in accordance with the Geneva Convention, therefore provides members of the Ambazonia Defense Forces with a standard of conduct should they be captured by an enemy. It also provides a framework of ethical standards that will help ADF members resist the mental, moral and physical treatment of their captor.

Persons Subject to this code: All members of the Ambazonian Defense Forces, other persons lawfully called or ordered into the ADF, prisoners and prisoners of war. Failure to obey any regulation subjects the offender to charges under article 12 (Failure to obey an order or a regulation) of the ADF code of Conduct. The articles enumerated therein shall be carefully explained to ALL members of the ADF at the time of joining the Defense Forces or within five days thereafter.

The 42 articles are as follows:

Article1. Honor and Commitment:

I am an Ambazonia and/or I am fighting in the ADF for the liberation of my Ambazonia homeland from illegal annexation by Cameroun; Ambazonia is my country, and I am fighting to defend our way of life, our heritage, our identity, our right to exist and develop ourselves as a people; I am fighting to ensure that the generation after me and me have the best country to live in. I am prepared to give my life in their defense. The ADF fighter must never forget that he/she is an Ambazonian or stands for Ambazonia, fighting for freedom, responsible for his or her actions, and dedicated to the mission of the ADF as spelled out in the

A COALITION OF AMBAZONIA DEFENSE FORCES



introduction to this Code of Conduct. He/she will trust in God and in Ambazonia and will never let down honor to the Ambazonia flag.

Article 2. Courage and Morale:

All ADF members must be prepared to use lethal force in combat missions and to show restraint when necessary and when commanded by superiors. ADF fighters shall maintain the courage to do what is right even when it may be unpopular, or risk ridicule or danger, and to insist on maintaining the highest standards of decency and behavior always. Each Ambazonian soldier has the obligation and duty to maintain high morale among the ADF. Morale includes confidence in equipment, good training and sound administration; it is the confidence between commanders and those under their command and between individual fighters. Such confidence is a product of leadership and comradeship. Commanders and each soldier shall forge close bonds and personal trust, which will withstand the stresses imposed by the demands of operations. Through commitment and self-sacrifice, the interests of the team and the task to be accomplished shall supersede one's own.

Article 3. Statement of Values & Discipline

Discipline, Effectiveness, Sacrifice, Integrity, Loyalty and Team Spirit shall be the defining values of the members of the ADF, and of the ADF as an organization in the pursuit of its mission. Discipline is the primary antidote to fear and maintains operational effectiveness: it is supported by team loyalty, trust and professionalism.

Discipline is a character builder and not a destroyer of individuality thus, shall be the mark of all ADF fighters. This includes respect for superior commands, readiness and commitment to training and operations, respect for one another in speech and acts.

Respect for Others

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There shall be respect in the ADF. There shall be no place for discrimination, favoritism, tribalism, regional sectarianism and xenophobia. All ADF soldiers shall be treated with dignity alive and in dead. Respect for others shall extend to respect for the integrity of any persons and organs or units promoting the liberation of Ambazonia, local cultural norms and values not contrary to the revolution and progressive education of the populace when such norms oppose the revolution, to respect for victims of conflict, civilians, respect for the wounded and the dead.

Humanitarian Assistance

The ADF shall protect innocent local civilian populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing conflict zones. The ADF shall never obstruct but assist in the provision of humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons while safeguarding the safety of its membership in such engagements.

Civilian Administration

The ADF shall not engage in administration of the day to day life of villages, towns, cities, or counties except in matters of defense. The ADF shall encourage the setting up of local civilian administrators and judges and embrace a civilian public service system including the provision of public goods and services. It shall be the responsibility of the ADF to protect the civilian personnel.

Article 4. Loyalty

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All ADF soldiers shall maintain loyalty to Ambazonia as their country and faithfulness to its liberation. Those in authority must be loyal to their subordinates: representing their interests faithfully, dealing with complaints thoroughly and developing their abilities through all means necessary. Subordinates must be loyal to their leaders, their team, and their duty. Being loyal shall not imply condoning wrong doing but being solution focused for operational effectiveness and the wellbeing of the team. Commitment, self- sacrifice, courage, professionalism, decency and integrity shall be the qualifying factors of loyalty

Article 5. Free Consent

I commit to the ADF out of free will, and I will never surrender myself to the enemy out of free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my unit, battalion, or command to the enemy while they still have the means to resist the illegal occupier and its acolytes.

Article 6. Resistance

If captured, an ADF soldier shall continue to resist by all means available including escaping and will use every opportunity to advance the Ambazonia independence cause and promote the safety of fellow fighters and the Ambazonian people against the enemy.

Article 7. Prisoner of War

If an ADF fighter becomes a prisoner of war (POW), he or she shall keep faith with fellow prisoners. He or she will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to his or her fellow comrades. If he or she is senior, he/she will

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take command. If not, he/she will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over him/her and will back them up in every way.

Article 8. Fraternization Prohibited/ Sexual Harassment

The ADF shall maintain conduct that fosters team cohesion, trust and a spirit of camaraderie. Unacceptable behavior that shall attract disciplinary action include: unwelcome sexual attention; sexual advances towards the partners of fellow fighters; displays of affection which might cause offence to others; behavior which damages or hazards the marriage or personal relationships of fellow fighters or civilian colleagues within the wider defense network; and taking sexual advantage of subordinates. Each case of social misbehaviors shall be examined with consideration of the specific prevailing circumstances and the potential for adverse effect on the operational effectiveness. The ADF has a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment, abuse or relationships that undermine ranking and encourages favoritism. Do not use implicit or explicit sexual behavior to control other personnel.

Article 9. Integrity

The ADF shall maintain a team spirit in which individual needs and desires are subordinated to those of the team, however unpalatable. Each fighter must be honest, truthful, and trustworthy to teammates who shall “have each other’s back” always. Integrity means being honest and truthful. There shall be intolerance to deceit and dishonesty. All commanders are responsible for defining and maintaining standards of personal behavior in their units and battalion. All persons in positions of authority, at all levels, shall set the highest standards and be fair and consistent to their subordinates.

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Inter Units Collaboration:

The ADF shall aid all units under attack that it is conscious of to evade the threat, and ADF units may work with other units where necessary and appropriate to execute joint missions.

Article 10. Delegation of Authority and Accountability

Although you may delegate authority, which does not relieve you being responsibility therefore you must make sure that the delegated authority is properly exercised and orders and instructions are properly executed. Those entrusted with ADF funds and materials must use those funds accountably for the mission of the ADF and any other purpose for which the funds were officially appropriated. Embezzlement, dishonesty and deception in the control and management of ADF funds shall be a crime. All defense materials provided by the ADF to its soldiers belong to the ADF at all times and must be used only for self-protection and in achieving the mission of the ADF.

Article 11. Authority over Subordinates/Abuse of authority

This article gives officers/generals the authority to exercise due diligence necessary to perform their duties however, persons in position of authority are forbidden to injure their subordinate by tyrannical conduct or abusive language except deadly force is met.

Article 12. Failure to Obey an Order or a Regulation

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Disobedience of 'any other lawful order' requires that the person must have had a duty to obey that order and must have had knowledge of the order. Dereliction of duty occurs when a person willfully or negligently fails to perform them or in a culpably inefficient manner.

Article 13. Responsibilities Concerning Marijuana, other controlled substances and alcohol

ADF members may not bring any controlled substances within the vicinity of the barracks. Any person subject to this article including lookout, who is found drunk on duty will be punished as the ADF court-marshal may direct. The ADF shall not tolerate excessive alcohol consumption and drunkenness shall be a serious offense. Drug misuse that adversely impacts operational effectiveness shall not be permitted. Commanders are to ensure that social functions take place in a controlled environment, and they must also set an example through their own moderation, demonstrating self-discipline, moral courage, and ability to exercise the responsibilities of their rank.

Article 14. Treatment and Release of Prisoners

Persons in confinement must not be subjected to cruel or unusual treatment. They must be visited every 6 hours to check on their condition and to care for their needs. In the event of an emergency, they may be removed to a safe area or released within the limits of the ADF barracks. The rights of any Prisoners Of War under the ADF custody must be respected. The POW shall be provided nutritional, shelter and medical needs as necessary. Efforts shall be made to educate, train and integrate a viable POW into the ADF or other responsibilities of the revolution where

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appropriate with the free consent of the POW, and with due consideration of all security issues that may be involved.

Article 15. Disclosure, Publication and Security of Official Information

ADF personnel may not make speeches or write anything that might disclose information of interest to the enemy or that would aid persons with claims against Ambazonia. If ADF personnel publish articles on political or international subjects, they must state the views are theirs and not those of the ADF. When such articles are accepted for publication, the personnel must forward a complete copy of each article to the Chair of the Ambazonia Defense Council.

Article 16. Capture by an Enemy

If a member of the ADF is captured by the enemy is required to give name, rank, Dog tag, Service number and Date of birth. That person will make no statement disloyal to, critical of or harmful to Ambazonia and its Forces.

Article 17. Possession of Weapons/other ADF Properties

ADF Personnel may not have any weapons or explosives in their possession without proper authority. ADF personnel shall not possess, without permission, any property of the ADF except what is needed in the performance of their duty.

Article 18. ADF Identification Dog Tags.

All ADF field personnel shall be in possession of an Identification Dog Tag. Under no circumstances shall any person without proper authority shall;

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- a) Have in his/her possession more than one properly validated Dog Tag.
- b) Have in his/her possession a false or unauthorized Dog Tag bearing false information concerning a name, rank, service number or Date of birth.

Article 19. Photographic Equipment

No person shall:

- a) Make photographs of any unit or its equipment, objects from the unit, without permission from the General or authorized representative.
- b) Possess or introduce in a barracks or unit any camera or other photographic equipment capable of exposing a photographic plate or film without permission of the General or his authorized representative.
- c) While on duty or on patrol, knowingly permit the introduction of any camera or photographic equipment in any unit unless such equipment is authorized by the General or his authorized representative.

Article 20. Confinement with Enemy Prisoners

ADF members may not be placed in confinement in immediate association with enemy prisoners. ADF members may be confined in the same jails, prisons or other confinement facilities, however, so long as they are separated from other categories.

Article 21. Conspiracy and Solicitation

Conspiracy is defined as an agreement between two or more persons to commit a crime of a bold nature for instance overthrowing the General or other senior officers. Such an agreement need not be formal; it could be a common understanding in the minds of the parties to accomplish the objective of the conspiracy. Solicitation may

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be accomplished by other means than by word of mouth or by writing. Any act or conduct that may be considered as a serious request or advice others to desert or commit an act of misbehavior the enemy constitute solicitation, he or she shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

Article 22. Cruelty and Maltreatment

Any persons guilty of cruelty toward or oppression or maltreatment of any person subject to the orders shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct. The cruelty, oppression or maltreatment must be real, although not necessarily physical. The assignment of necessary or proper duties and the requirements for their correct performance will not constitute this offense even though such duties may be arduous.

Article 23. Principals

The mere fact that someone is present at a scene of a crime does not make that person liable or a principal. To be considered a principal of a crime; the person must be guilty of the intent to aid or encourage the person(s) who committed the crime.

A person who witnessed a crime can be a principal if evidence shows the witness had a duty to interfere and the witness's noninterference was intended to operate and did operate to encourage or protect the perpetrator.

A person may be a principal even though not at the scene of the crime if he/she commanded, advised or obtained another person to commit an offense.

Article 24. Desertion

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All ADF members who, without permission from his or her immediate superior, leave their place of duty or organization with the intent to remain away permanently are guilty of desertion. The status of an absentee shall change to that of a deserter after 5 days of absence or sooner if the intent to desert is certain.

The charges for desertion can be severe and ranges from confinement to execution in times of war.

Article 25. Resistance, Breach of Arrest and Escape

Any ADF member subject to this article who resists apprehension or breaks arrest or who escapes from custody or confinement shall be punished as ADF court martial may direct.

Article 26. Releasing Prisoner without Proper Authority

Any ADF member who, without proper authority, releases any prisoner committed to charge, or who through neglect or design suffers any such prisoner escape, shall be punished as the ADF Court Marshall dictates, whether or not the prisoner committed in strict compliance with ADF rules and regulations.

Article 27. Unlawful Detention

Any person subject to this article, who, except as proved in the ADF code of Conduct, apprehends, arrests, or confines any person shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

Article 28. Mutiny or Sedition

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Any ADF member who intends to usurp or override lawful ADF authority, refuses, in concert otherwise do his duty or creates any violence or disturbance is guilty of mutiny.

Any ADF member with intent to cause the overthrow or destruction of ADF civil authority creates, violence, or disturbance against that authority is guilty of sedition.

Any person who is found guilty of attempted Mutiny, Mutiny, Sedition or failure to suppress or report a mutiny or sedition shall be punished by death or such other punishment as the ADF court martial may direct.

Article 29. Captured or Abandoned Property

Persons subject to this article will secure all public property taken from the enemy for the service of Ambazonia, and shall give notice and turn over to the proper chain of command without delay all captured or abandoned property in their possession, custody, or control. Immediately upon its capture from the enemy, the public property becomes the property of the people of Ambazonia.

Any person who –

(a) buys, sells, trades, or in any way deals in or disposes of captured or abandoned property, whereby he receives or expects any profit, benefit, or advantage to himself or another person directly or indirectly connected with himself or

(b) engages in looting or Pillaging;

Shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

Article 30. Aiding the enemy, Spies and Espionage

Any ADF member who-

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(a) aids, or attempts to aid, the enemy with arms, ammunition, supplies, money or other things or

(b) without proper authority, knowingly harbors or protects or gives intelligence to, or communicates or corresponds with or holds any intercourse with the enemy, this may be directly or indirectly;

Shall suffer death or such other punishment as the court martial or General of the Ambazonian Defense Forces may direct.

This article applies to all persons regardless of nationality whether or not they are serving in the Ambazonian Defense Forces.

Any person who in times of war is found lurking as a spy or acting as a spy in or about any place or barracks within the control or jurisdiction of the ADF or any place engaged in work in aid of the prosecution of the Ambazonian revolution shall be tried as the ADF court martial may direct. Any person found guilty, conviction shall be by death.

Any person with intent or reason to believe that it is to be used to the injury of Ambazonia or to the advantage of a foreign nation, communicates, delivers, or transmits, or attempts to communicate, deliver, or transmit, to any entity described...either directly or indirectly, anything described...shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct. If the offense involves major element of defense strategy, the accused shall be punished by death or such punishments the ADF court martial may direct.

Article 31. Murder

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Any ADF personnel who, without justification or excuse, unlawfully kills a human being, when he-

- (a) has a premeditated design to kill;
- (b) intends to kill or inflict great bodily harm;
- (c) is engaged in an act that is inherently dangerous to another and evidence a wanton disregard of human life; or
- (d) is engaged in the perpetration or attempted perpetration of burglary, sodomy, rape, robbery or aggravated arson;

is guilty of murder and shall suffer such punishment as the ADF court martial shall direct, except that if found guilty under clause (a) or (d), he shall suffer death or imprisonment for life as the court martial may direct.

Article 32. Manslaughter

Any person who with an intent to kill or inflict great bodily harm, unlawfully kills a human being in the heat or sudden passion caused by adequate provocation is guilty of voluntary manslaughter and shall be punished as the ADF court martial may directs.

Any person(s) subject to this article who without an intent to kill or inflict great bodily harm, unlawfully kills a human being-

- (a) by culpable negligence; or
- (b) while perpetrating or attempting perpetrate an offense, other than those named in clause (d) of article 31, directly affecting the person;

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is guilty of involuntary manslaughter and shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

Manslaughter is the unlawful killing of another. It may be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary manslaughter is the unlawful killing of another when there is intent to kill or inflict great bodily harm, but the act is committed in the heat of sudden passion caused by adequate provocation.

Involuntary manslaughter is the unlawful killing of another committed without intent to kill or inflict great bodily harm.

Article 33. Larceny and Wrongful Appropriation

Any ADF person(s) subject to this article who wrongfully takes, obtains, or withholds, by any means, from the possession of the owner or of any other person any money, personal property, or article of value of any kind-

(a) with intent permanently to deprive or defraud another person of the use and benefit of property or to appropriate it to his own use or the use of any person other than the owner, steals that property and is guilty of Larceny; or

(b) with intent temporarily to deprive or defraud another person of the use and benefit of property or to appropriate to his own use or the use of any person other than the owner, guilty of wrongful appropriation.

Any person(s) found guilty of larceny or wrongful appropriate shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

Article 34. Robbery

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Any ADF person(s) who with intent to steal takes anything of value from the person, community or in the presence of another, against his will, by means of force or violence or fear of immediate or future injury to his person or property or to the person or property of a relative or member of his family or of anyone in his company at the time of the robbery is guilty of robbery. This is a serious offense as it contradicts the ADF core values thus, shall be punished as the court martial may direct.

Article 35. Forgery

Any person(s) with intent to defraud-

- (a) falsely make or alters any signature, to, or any part of, any writing which would, if genuine, apparently impose a legal liability on another or change his legal right or liability to his prejudice; or
- (b) utters, offers, issues, or transfers such writing, known by him to be so made or altered;

is guilty of forgery and shall be punished as the ADF court martial directs.

A forgery can be committed by a person signing his/her own name to an instrument.

Article 36. Maiming

Any ADF person(s) with intent to injure, disfigure, or disable, inflicts upon the person of another an injury which

- (a) seriously disfigures his person by a mutilation thereof;
- (b) destroys or disables any member or organ of the body; or

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(c) seriously diminishes his physical vigor by the injury of any member or organ; is guilty of maiming and shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

Maiming includes putting out a person's eye; cutting off a person's hand, foot, or finger; or knocking out a person's front teeth, as these injuries destroy or disable those members or organs.

Article 37. Arson

Any Person(s) who willfully and maliciously burns or sets on fire an inhabited dwelling, community or any other structure, movable or immovable, wherein to the knowledge of the offender there is at the time a human being, is guilty of aggravated arson and shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

In aggravated Arson, the danger of human life is the essential element; in simple Arson, it is the injury to the property of another. In either case, the fact that no one is injured is immaterial.

The ADF shall not engage in the destruction of schools, hospitals and health centers, churches, attack of school children, or destruction of heritage sites.

Article 38. Burglary

Any person(s) subject to this article who, with intent to commit an offense punishable under articles 31-37, breaks and enters, the dwelling house of another, is guilty of burglary and shall be punished as the ADF court martial may direct.

This includes, any entry gained through tricks, false pretense, impersonation, intimidation, kidnapping for purpose of ransom or collusion also constitutes breaking. The ADF shall also act as necessary to stop any of these acts that may be

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carried out by anyone during the liberation struggle and shall hand them over to the established local Ambazonian civilian institutions of justice.

Article 39. General Article

Though not specially mentioned in this article, all disorders and neglects to the prejudice of good order and discipline in the Ambazonia Defense Forces, all conduct of a nature to discredit upon the Defense Forces, and crimes and offenses not capital of which persons subject to this article may be guilty, shall be taken cognizance of by a general, special, summary court martial convened by the Ambazonia Defense Council Chair according to the degree and nature of the offense. The offender shall be punished at the discretion of the court martial.

Article 39 makes punishable acts or omissions not covered specifically mentioned in other articles. Those acts include; the careless discharge of a firearm and impersonating as an ADF personnel.

Discredit means injure the reputation of; that is, to bring our Anglo-Saxon Culture into disrepute.

Crimes and the offenses not capital include those acts or omissions, not punishable by another article denounced as crimes or offences by enactment of the Common Law under the authority of the people of Ambazonia. All these offenses are punishable only if committed within the geographical boundaries of Ambazonia.

Article 40. Complaints of Wrongs

Any member of the Ambazonia Defense Forces who believes himself wronged by the General of the Ambazonia Defense Forces, and who, upon due application to the

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General, is refused redress, may complain to Chair of the ADF through their immediate superior who shall forward the complaint to the Chairman of ADF.

This article provides for redress of wrongs inflicted by a superior official on subordinates and prescribes the procedure to be followed by the subordinates to apply for such redress.

Article 41. Redress of Injuries to Property

Whenever complaint is made to any superior or the General of the ADF that willful damage has been done to the property of any person or that his property has been wrongfully taken by any member(s) of the Defense Forces, he may, convene a meeting when possible to investigate the complaint. For the purpose of that investigation, the ADF authority has the power to summon witnesses and examine them upon oath, to receive documentary evidence, and to assess damages sustained against the responsible parties.

Article 42. General's Non-Judicial Punishment

The General's non-judicial punishment is often referred to as the General's Mast. During the General's Mast cases are heard and punishment given at the General's Mast. Any ADF member may, however, demand trial by ADF court-martial in lieu of punishment at Mast, before such punishment is imposed. The General may order a court martial on a case by case basis. The following are some of the punishment that may be given at the General's Mast;

(a) **Restriction-** is the requirement to remain within certain specified limits within the camp or barracks. The restricted person(s) usually continues to perform his/her duties but without liberty.

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(b) **Correctional Custody**- is the physical restraint (confinement) of a person during operations or non-operations hours or both.

(c) **Confinement on Bread and Water or Diminished Rations**- may be imposed by the General depending on the offense.

APPEALS: If any person(s) consider their punishment under article (42) to be unjust or out of proportion to the offense, they may appeal to the next superior in the chain of command. The appeal must be made within reasonable time (2 days) and promptly. If the superior upholds the appeal, all rights, privileges and property are restored.

MERITORIOUS AND REQUEST MASTS.

Not all General's Masts are for disciplinary purposes. A meritorious mast may be held by the commanding officer to give awards or commendations to those persons who have earned them.

When and where an issue arises that is not covered in this Code, the matter shall be submitted to the Ambazonia Defense Council for deliberation, guidance and decision as most appropriate to protect the revolution, achieve its goal, and bequeath to future generations the foundations of a just, peaceful, democratic and sovereign Ambazonia.

Effective this July 20th, 2018, the welfare of the Ambazonia liberation and independence cause requiring it and our justice protects us, **so help us GOD!**

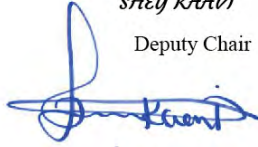
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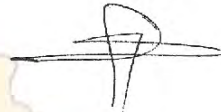
Benedict Kuah
Chairman of the ADC



SHEY KAAVI
Deputy Chair

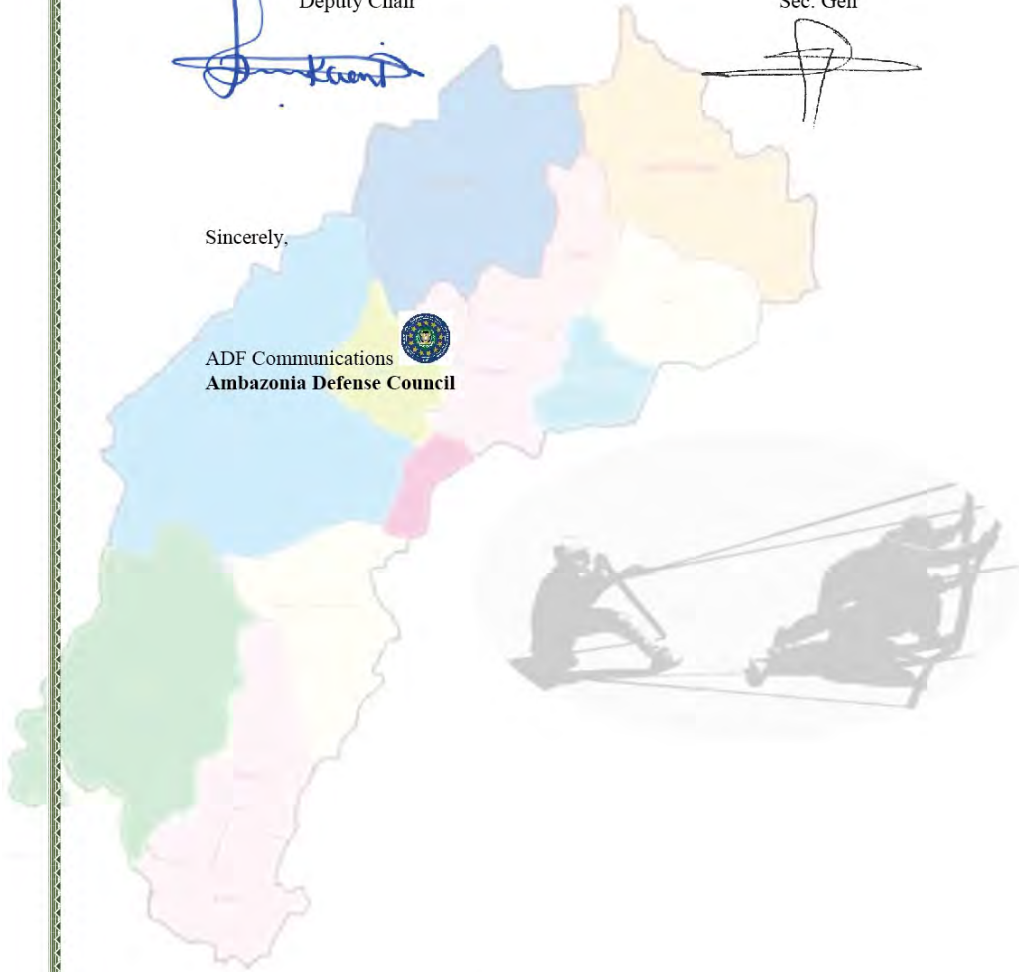


AJAMBA JR
Sec. Gen



Sincerely,

ADF Communications
Ambazonia Defense Council



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Appendix VII, Akoson Raymond letter to HRW



**Department of Human Rights &
Humanitarian Services (HHS), Buea
Ambazonia Governing Council**

AGovC/HHS/006/09-30-2021

The Executive Africa Director,
Human Rights Watch
350 Fifth Avenue,
NY 10118-3299

9/30/2021

Dear Ms. Mausi Segun,

The Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC), vanguard organization committed to the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ambazonia (the former British Southern Cameroons) received your letter of September 22, 2021 addressed to the President of the AGovC, Dr. Cho Lucas Ayaba. In *Appendix II: Request for Information* of the said letter, your office sought responses to several questions we would like to formally make statements on.

For the sake of clarity, find our response below each question.

• Question: What is your position with regards to the resumption of classes in the Anglophone regions?

Response: The People of Ambazonia take offence at, and do not subscribe to, the colonialist appellation of “Anglophone regions”. Ambazonia (the former British Southern Cameroons) is a separate political entity from the Republic of Cameroun with well-defined international boundaries. As Human Rights Watch is aware of, in violation of international law including Article 4b of the African Union Constitutive Act that froze its boundaries as obtained at independence, Cameroun, in October 1961 marched an army of occupation and colonial administrators across international borders into Ambazonia (British Southern Cameroons at the time) that it has occupied to this day. Cameroun would gradually unleash a failed assimilation plan as publicly declared by its President Paul Biya in the November 2019 Paris Peace Conference (*Beta Tinz, 1:50*). A major item on this plan was to, inter alia, impose Cameroun’s socio-cultural and foreign educational system on the people of Ambazonia.

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www.agovc.org

The People of Ambazonia have collectively rejected Cameroun's colonial educational system. **The AGovC champions for the resumption of classes under an Ambazonian Educational system.** That is why, following the call of school boycott, the AGovC presented an alternative learning system under community schools run and managed by Ambazonians. Currently, Ambazonia boasts of fifty-four (54) community schools throughout its territory. Though insufficient, the progress is steady but slow due to insecurity challenges posed by Cameroun's terrorist soldiers. We call on the international community, including The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Human Rights Watch, to support this initiative.

• Question 1: How do you respond to allegations that armed separatist fighters, including those belonging to the armed groups affiliated to your political organization, have attacked schools, teachers, and students since 2017?

The pioneer and leading defense force in Ambazonia called the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF) is the military wing of the AGovC. There are several independent armed groups littered across Ambazonia that look up to the ADF for advice, direction, and leadership. Together with ADF soldiers, they are trained to conduct the Ambazonia Liberation War in strict conformity with the Geneva Convention and other international instruments. Be informed that, owing to the dire humanitarian situation orchestrated, fostered and perpetrated by Cameroun through its soldiers in our land, the AGovC (as a measure of responsibility) applied to The FDFA Directorate of International Law (DIL), through The Swiss Federal Council, for a Unilateral Declaration in accordance with Article 96(3) of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and in relation to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts – Protocol 1 of 8 June 1977.

Worthy of note is the fact that Cameroun soldiers, in a bid to sully the good image and reputation of the ADF and its allied forces, have camouflaged in civilian attire and conducted atrocious actions including the burning down of schools, property and farms in the furtherance of its open scorched-earth policy and genocide in Ambazonia. Human Rights Watch and the rest of the world community must resist falling for such cheap pranks by one of the world's worst and longest serving dictatorships of all time. It is not superfluous to reiterate that Cameroun's occupation of Ambazonia is responsible for the war and its ravaging consequences. The responsibility of all war crimes in Ambazonia including but not limited to crimes of colonialism, crimes against humanity, genocide, and ethnic cleansing rest squarely on the aggressor State of Cameroun and its current leaders.

• Question 2: Could you please provide us with more information regarding how many armed groups have pledged allegiance and/or are fighting on behalf of your political organization? Could you tell us whether they are operating in both Anglophone regions, or just in one of the two?

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The majority of forces have pledged allegiance to the AGovC and do operate throughout all Ambazonian states.

• **Question 3: Could you please provide us with more information regarding the chain of command within the armed groups which have pledged allegiance and/or are fighting on behalf of your political organization?**

Yes, in ascending order (from least to top):

- i. Soldiers of an ADF/allied force barracks
- ii. Deputy Commander of the ADF/allied force barracks
- iii. Commander of the ADF/allied force barracks
- iv. Chief Commander at the state level of the ADF/allied force
- v. Deputy Supreme Commander of the ADF
- vi. Supreme Commander of the ADF
- vii. Deputy Defense Chiefs of the Ambazonia War Council
- viii. Defense Chief of the Ambazonia War Council
- ix. Commander in Chief

• **Question 4: How many, if any, schools in the Anglophone regions have been used by armed groups affiliated to your political organization? Where, when, and why?**

None that the AGovC leadership is aware of.

• **Question 5: How many, if any, children have been recruited and used by armed groups affiliated with your political organization? Where, when, and why?**

None that the AGovC leadership is aware of. Again, the AGovC frowns at such practice(s) and will not condone the recruitment of minors. This remains a sacrosanct principle among the ADF and allied forces.

• **Question 6: Have you taken any steps to instruct fighters within the armed groups affiliated with your political organization to refrain from attacking schools, teachers, and students? If so, can you describe these actions?**

It is not official ADF policy to attack civilians, so going after teachers, students, schools and other civilian targets is not systemic. During recruitment, the forces go through training that discourage any practice that targets civilians.

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www.agovc.org

• **Question 7: Have you taken any steps to instruct fighters within the armed groups affiliated with your political organization to refrain from using schools for purposes such as checkpoints and bases? If so, can you describe these actions?**

ADF and its allied forces DO NOT use school campuses for whatever purpose. During recruitment, the forces go through training that discourage practices that undermine educational institutions.

• **Question 8: Have you provided fighters within the armed groups affiliated with your political organization with any code of conduct to guide their operations in the Anglophone regions, including to avoid harming civilians? If so, could you share a copy?**

Yes. See attached.

• **Question 9: Have you ever sanctioned fighters within the armed groups affiliated with your political organization for abusing civilians, including students and teachers, in the Anglophone regions? If so, could you please provide more details as per what kind of sanctions, when, where, against how many fighters, and for what kind of wrongdoing?**


The AGovC has received reports from the ADF hierarchy of a few soldiers affiliated to the organization guilty of certain crimes such as score settling kidnap and in about two instances, kidnap for ransom. In one of the kidnaps for ransom cases involving a medical doctor in Bamenda, investigation was conducted and the culprits were arrested, the money retrieved and refunded to the victim. The culprits were detained for one week and were subjected to retraining by the hierarchy of ADF Bamenda Brigade.


• **Question 10: Could you please explain what your organization is doing to address the impact of the Anglophone crisis on education, and to ensure protection and access to learning opportunities for students?**

Please, revisit the first question above.

The AGovC thanks and appreciates your organization, HRW for its continued interest in the Ambazonia Liberation War. If further questions arise from these responses, please, feel free to send us an email, or for quicker response, contact us on Whatsapp through +1-614-3770445.

Sign


Akoson Raymond
Secretary of the HHS

AMBAZONIA GOVERNING COUNCIL
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Appendix VIII, Statement on Education by Dr. L. Cho Ayaba



EXECUTIVE OFFICE

AMBAZONIA GOVERNING COUNCIL

AGovC/OP/EDUC/001

May 26, 2021

STATEMENT ON EDUCATION

There are currently 27 million Children worldwide who are out of school due to insecurity created by conflict. Despite the safe school declaration championed by Norway and Argentina, schools and teachers remain a target in conflict zones. These statistics unfortunately includes schools in Ambazonia which have been used in the past 60 years as institutions to perpetuate a harmful colonial enterprise with devastating socio-economic and political outcomes.

The AGOVC maintains its position that schools will remain closed in Ambazonia primarily because of insecurity created by the failure of Cameroun to respect its obligations under international humanitarian law to respect schools and teachers as civilian objects and most importantly because of our opposition to the introduction or continuous usage of any colonial curriculum of education as the basis of knowledge in Ambazonia. The Ambazonia Governing Council has however facilitated, permitted and opened Community schools within areas of control of the Ambazonia Defence Forces and other sister forces. We are currently in discussion with several proprietors of secondary schools on extending permission for secondary schools to be opened once we are able to determine the validation procedure of certificates acquired under the prevailing circumstances



Dr. L. Cho Ayaba
President
Ambazonia Governing Council

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AMBAZONIA GOVERNING COUNCIL
P.O. Box 93 Blacklick, OH 43004 USA

Ph: [REDACTED]

Appendix IX, Letter from the “Leadership of Ambazonia in Prison”

November 29, 2021

Dear Ms. Mausi Segun,

I have received Human Rights Watch (HRW)'s request for my comments regarding the attacks on children and teachers in Ambazonia. Before I address your questions, I would like to state clearly that I find your research as summarized to be extremely biased to the degree that it is difficult to characterize it as anything other than as deliberate misinformation. Given this, it is difficult to reply in good faith. This letter is an attempt to do so nonetheless. In order to do so, it is necessary for me to address the extreme and manipulative bias first.

The elements of your bias can be summarized as follows:

- A. **You choose to start your timeline for the current campaign of the Cameroon military against Ambazonian communities in 2017 instead of 2016.** Fall 2017 is when the first Ambazonian self-defense groups emerged. Starting your timeline in 2017 allows you to avoid talking about the well-documented unprovoked wholesale attacks on the as-of-then completely unarmed and nonviolent Ambazonian communities that were executed by the forces of the Cameroon regime, starting in fall 2016. It was this extended onslaught that eventually forced some in the community to form self-defense groups to try to protect their communities from violent assaults by Cameroon forces, the largest military in the Central African subregion. We do not believe that you do not know this history. We believe you are intentionally omitting it because your primary goal is to assemble data on alleged violations by armed resistance, which emerged in 2017; you are notably uninterested in assembling data on violations by the Cameroon military. This bias in your focus allows you to see the year-long military campaign prior to the emergence of the armed resistance as not even worthy of mention. If you believe you are not intentionally omitting this information, then we challenge you to revise your presentation of the conflict to include this context in your forthcoming report.
- B. **You repeatedly and consistently utilize biased or outright incorrect characterizations of the research you are citing.** It seems you do not think anyone will follow your citations and check your sources. We have been doing so consistently, and based on this we assert you are intentionally trying to mislead your readers. For example, in the abstract you sent us, you write that “at least 70 schools have been attacked in the Anglophone region since 2017.” You place this information under the subtitle “Attacks on Schools by Armed Separatist Fighters.” Yet neither the reports you cite, nor your topic sentence itself attributes *all* these attacks to those you call “armed separatists.” The UN, for example, is disciplined and evenhanded in representing that

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they do not know for certain who the perpetrators are.¹ The way you use your subhead pushes your readers to conclude that all 70 attacks were by Ambazonians, when the data you cite does not demonstrate or even imply this. This is just one example of this behavior, which is a constant in your reporting style. Why do you do this? You owe the public an explanation of whose interests this practice is in service of. Are you being paid off to implement this bias? If you believe you are not being paid off to implement this bias, then we challenge you to produce your forthcoming report to include: (1) exact quotations, (2) full citations including page numbers, and (3) active web links to the report in question, for *every source to which you refer*.

C. You use language that systematically undermines the credibility of the resistance while inflating the credibility of Cameroon's regime perspective. You call Cameroon military and paramilitary formations "security forces" which is a propagandized term that is designed to legitimize their actions. Why do you not call them "death squads," as Ambazonians who are feeling the brunt of their force do? Or at least call them what they are: military and paramilitary units? By contrast, you call Ambazonians "separatist fighters" — which is a derogatory term aimed at delegitimizing them. Why not refer to them as "Ambazonian self-defense groups," since this is how they are referred to on the ground and by many others? "Separatist" is not a term that is used by the self-defense groups or by Ambazonians striving for a political solution to the conflict. Across the board, Ambazonians call ourselves "Restorationists." This is based on the assertion that in 1961 Ambazonia had nearly all aspects of self-governance intact prior to entering into the federation with Cameroon: a constitution, a parliament, an elected prime minister, a legal system, local police forces, a public works department, and multiple other functional civil institutions, all of which were dismantled unilaterally by French Cameroon government in violation of the federation agreement. Our intention is to "restore" this independence. Why would you not call us as we call ourselves? We see your reports on the Rohingya: the Burmese government's ban on the word Rohingya has not stopped HRW from using this term. Are we to conclude that when it comes to African people whose struggles are less known, HRW does not see it necessary to extend such courtesy? If you do not believe you are using these terms to intentionally manipulate readers, then we challenge you to, in your forthcoming report, systematically and consistently use the terms "restorationist forces" and "military forces," *and* include a glossary in which the justification for why you use each term is laid out in exact detail.

¹ "Cameroon: Joint Statement of UNICEF and UNESCO on Abduction of Education Personnel and Attacks Against Schools in the South-West Region of Cameroon, June 1, 2018. <https://www.africa-newsroom.com/press/cameroon-joint-statement-of-the-united-nations-childrens-fund-unicef-and-the-united-nations-education-scientific-and-cultural-organization-unesco-on-abduction-of-education-personnel-and-attacks-against-schools-in-the-southwest-region-of-cameroon?lang=en>

D. **You focus your reporting disproportionately on alleged crimes by Ambazonian self-defense groups while all-but ignoring multiple mass-level crimes that are impacting many more Ambazonians.** In specific, HRW underreports or gloss over village burnings, torture, and mass imprisonment of grassroots leaders by Cameroon. If HRW is sincerely interested in reporting on crimes against children and educational professionals, they would have published a thoroughly researched documentation of the more than 1000 students, most of them minor and workers in the academia, who are currently being detained in prisons and detention centers across the territory controlled by the Cameroon regime. No commonly accepted human rights principles on the treatment of minors are being applied by the Cameroon government in their detention. There are a comparable number of teachers and educational administrators, of which I myself am one, being detained in similar conditions. We are being held in degrading conditions; tortured and denied medical treatment; forced to fundraise to pay for food, health care and legal representation; and denied access to civilian trials. Similarly, if HRW was sincerely interested in tallying the number of schools that have been destroyed through this conflict, they would be including in their numbers the schools that were burned when the whole village they were in were burned down by the Cameroon government. Other human rights organizations have reported various numbers, including 500, 206, 150 and 90 villages burnt in this way.² HRW's reporting omits this big picture view and only when the situation makes ignoring a burning impossible does it grudgingly mention that "property" has been destroyed. Well, amongst the so-called "property" that has been destroyed in these assaults are hundreds of schools, built by Ambazonian community initiative over generations. Children and elderly have been killed in these onslaughts on numerous occasions. Where is the "documented in detail" report by HRW on these matters? It seems as though HRW's concern for Ambazonian and Cameroonian students begins and ends at the frontiers of what can be spun for the benefit of the regime. HRW cites Cameroon's signing on to the GCPEA Safe Schools Declaration — run by the online front group Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) — as evidence of "steps taken by the government of Cameroon to curtail [school] attacks."³ Your whitewashing services are surely very appreciated by Cameroon. If you do not believe that this is your intention, then we challenge you to include in your forthcoming report a **setting in context** of the alleged school attacks by presenting a detailed overview of the numbers of Ambazonians and Cameroonians impacted by the conflict: How many have been killed? How many have been internally displaced or made refugees? How

² See for example: *Cameroon: The Anglophone Crisis: 206 Villages burnt in the North West and South West Regions*, April 2019, <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/206-Villages-burnt.pdf> and "End the bloodshed in Cameroon," October 3, 2019,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/10/03/end-bloodshed-cameroon/> and *Cameroon's Unfolding Catastrophe: Evidence of Human Rights Violations and Crimes Against Humanity*, June 2019,

<https://www.raoulwallenbergcentre.org/images/reports/cameroons-unfolding-catastrophe-june-2019-report.pdf>
³ see: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/12/targeted-going-school-cameroon>

many villages have been destroyed and what were their populations? How many minors, teachers and other adults have been imprisoned? How many schools have been destroyed including through village burnings by the Cameroon military and paramilitary forces?

This is just a summary of the egregious bias that we see emanating from HRW's reporting. We could go into detail on a dozen specific examples — and it would be helpful if you had a mechanism by which to receive such feedback! From where I sit inside Cameroon's Maximum Security Prison in Kondengui, alongside many others invisibilized by your reporting practices, there is little that HRW can do to gain trust — short of a public apology acknowledging and expressing consternation at the above practices followed by a full scale shift. Watching these shenanigans unfold in the past five years has given us a new level of cynicism as to the racist paternalism woven into the so-called international community. If these practices are not the result of deliberate, politically agendized manipulation, and rather the result of some combination of ignorance, wanton use of privilege, and inertia, then we challenge you to address the above concerns publicly as part of your next report, and to create and advertise a mechanism for community feedback by which such concerns can be reported to you and receive a public response.

Now, though we doubt your integrity and we suspect you to be engaged in an intentional effort to distract the public from the war of extermination that our people are currently being subjected to, we will nonetheless attempt to answer the questions you have laid out.

1. What is our position with regards to classes in the Anglophone regions?

Ambazonians are deeply aware of the value of education. In fact, education has been a nexus of the power struggle between Ambazonian civil society and the Cameroon regime for decades: constant defunding and threats to disband educational infrastructure is one of the main ways that the Cameroon regime has acted in disregard of the terms of the 1961 plebiscite to marginalize and oppress the Ambazonia population. For decades we have responded by consistently and vigorously fighting within the civil sphere to defend and build up our educational institutions. It is because of this history that the 2016 general strike and school boycott civil action was called by a coalition of civil society organizations including the Teachers Unions & the Federation of Parent Teachers Union (CAPTAC) which have been in the forefront for decades of the fight for resources and empowerment for Ambazonian schools.⁴

⁴ To learn more, consult Joseph Takougang and Julius A. Amin, eds. *Post-Colonial Cameroon: Politics, Economy, and Society*. Lexington Books, 2018. Pages 115, 408, & 409 and "CORRECTION NEEDED: Children Killed at Kumba are being made into Pawns by the French Neocolonial Regime in Cameroon — Fact Finding Mission Needed Now!!!!" October 25, 2020, subsection: "Why are children being targeted?" <https://ambazoniapocs.net/node/39>

Given this, what could possibly be our position with regards to classes in Ambazonia? *Our position is for an end to the military attacks on our population and the immediate resumption of classes.* Schools are not somehow separate from the rest of society.

2. How do you respond to allegations that armed separatists fighters, including those belonging to the armed groups affiliated to your organizations, have attacked schools, teachers , and students since 2017?

I share your horror at the brutal attacks on minors, schools and educational professionals. These attacks are inconsistent with the principled political campaign for rights and self-determination of Ambazonians of which I am a part. One of the reasons we must work vigilantly to end this war by addressing the root causes is because of how war distorts the human spirit and draws out horrific behavior. History has shown that this takes place on both sides of enemy lines.

In a handful of cases that we know of where there have been threats and attacks against those violating the general strike & school boycott, it is our understanding that those actions have been summarily condemned by the Teachers Union and other leaders of the civil society coalition.⁵ This condemnation accords with the slogan of the decades-old teacher-led Ambazonian movement, "The Force of Argument, not the Argument of Force."⁶

By contrast, it is common knowledge that attacks by Cameroon military forces on minors, schools and educational professionals — as well as other defenseless civilians — are frequent and brutal. It is also our belief that in many cases, paramilitary groups controlled by Cameroon are responsible for horrific activities which they are intentionally making look as though they are self-defense groups. I wish I and my colleagues had the time and resources that HRW has to document all of these incidents.

And when uncontroversial information emerged of Cameroon troops burning schools. HRW has on some occasions decided to justify without evidence that the regime is burning school because supposedly the schools were occupied by "separatists. An idea that is ridiculous on its face by any measure seeing the wholesale war of extermination being waged against Ambazonian communities by the Cameroon regime, that someone would set themselves up to be killed.

⁵ June 9, 2017. "Anglophone Leaders Condemn Gruesome Attack On Students In Bamenda," <http://www.cameroonpostline.com/anglophone-leaders-condemn-gruesome-attack-on-students-in-bamenda/>
⁶ Edward Halle, "The Force of Argument' and the Fight for an Anglophone Identity in Cameroon," November 28, 2014, https://papers.ssm.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2529021

I am an educator, and many of my fellow prisoners are students, teachers and administrators. Many of us have been subject to torture and degrading conditions during our imprisonment, and there is no question that we were targeted by the regime in large part because of our leadership as educators. We are unequivocally and vigorously against all actions that harm students and educational professionals, and we stand firm in asserting that the primary perpetrator of such harm is the Cameroon military and paramilitary forces, and that they must be called to account for this. It is in this regard that we have been calling for the deployment of an international independent fact-finding mission to the ground, to investigate and apportion responsibility.

3. Could you please provide us with more information regarding how many armed groups have pledged allegiance and /or are fighting on behalf of your political organization? Could you tell us whether they are operating in both Anglophone regions, or just in one of the two?

I share your desire for specific information on numbers and names of armed groups in Ambazonia. I am particularly interested in seeing documentation of specific Cameroon military and paramilitary units and leaders who are responsible for mass atrocities and systematic human rights abuses. From where I sit, behind bars in Kondegui, it is difficult to amass this information.

I do note that this is not the first time I have laid eyes on this same question from HRW, even as you claim in your September 22, 2021, correspondence to have in your possession written documents from Ambazonian leaders detailing such things. So by your “documented in detail” count, how many groups are there, and where do they operate?

I’m afraid our organization will not be able to help bolster your “documented in detail” reporting. While we understand and deeply empathize with the motive for self-defense that is rising within our communities, our efforts are focused on locating a nonviolent, political solution to this crisis.

4. How many, if any, children have been recruited and used by armed groups affiliated with your political organization? Where, When, and why?

We do not know of any efforts to “recruit” minors. As far as we are aware, the self-defense groups are not being formed through any centralized recruitment effort, but rather through volunteers assembling in decentralized formations. If there are explicit policies within these formations regarding the participation of minors, we are not aware of them nor are we being consulted about them.

5. Have you taken any steps to instruct fighters within the armed groups affiliated with your political organization with any code of conduct to guide their operations in the Anglophone regions, including to avoid harming civilians? If so, could you share a copy?

We do have a charter that defines our ethics. It is called the "Freedom Protocol" and I am attaching it here. While it does not address children specifically, it does address the more general theme of marginalization and vulnerability which children as well as others outside of the formal power structure experience on a day-to-day basis.

We also have repeatedly and emphatically called on the UN to mandate an Independent International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-finding Mission to investigate reports of massive human rights violations going on in Ambazonia. In our view, this sort of impartial investigation into all parties is absolutely necessary to begin the process of restoring trust. The excessive and wanton violation of human rights has wrought untold trauma on the Ambazonian people. You write as though you believe that the main perpetrators of these violations are resistance self-defense groups; we believe that the main perpetrators of these violations are found within the largest French neocolonial army in Central Africa, the Cameroon military, and its paramilitary affiliates. Whose impression is correct? The only way to determine this is through a rigorous and publicly accountable fact-finding process. Every question that is asked of Ambazonian organizations must also be asked of the Cameroon military and government agencies and units, and all answers must be made public. Toward that end, we would like to have this response published. If you share our desire for such a publicly accountable process to unearth facts about human rights violations, then we challenge you to join our call for a UN-mandated Independent International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-finding Mission to Ambazonia / English-speaking Cameroon, and to make this call public in your forthcoming report.

Regards,

SIGNED



Sisiku Julius AyukTabe

AMBAZONIA FREEDOM PROTOCOL 28/02/2019

1 of 3

Preamble:

On behalf of the people of former British Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia), Everyone who by accident of history have ancestral roots in the territory from the shores of Ambas Bay on the Atlantic coast of Limbia in the South, to the banks of the river Aken in the North, or whom without criminal intent or prejudice against the communities in this area choose to become part of the communities in this territory.

Handwritten notes on the left margin: "Ambazonia", "British Southern Cameroons", "Limbia", "Aken", "Ambas Bay", "Atlantic coast", "South", "North", "criminal intent", "prejudice", "communities", "territory".

Handwritten notes on the right margin: "Dr. Fideles Ndek-Ude", "Dr. Constantine A. Mwaanga".

To our generation and the rest of humankind, we make this solemn commitment today:

1. We shall pickup and bind together the pieces of our communities mutilated by slave trade, defaced by colonialism and battered by neocolonialism.
2. We shall as all other peoples for whom the accident of history created the international legal framework to exist as independent peoples, exercise their right to independence to its fullest extent - Aware of our past experience without prejudice.

Signatures and names: SHUPIN BRUISE S. BERNY, NFOR, NFOR.

3. We apologize to women for the shameful way humankind has treated them for most of human history, and we commit to total respect of women without qualification

Handwritten signature
Suzanne M. ...

4. We apologize for the marginalization and mistreatment of minority communities in most societies throughout human history, and we commit to total equality and respect without qualification to all differently abled and every other minority of individuals or groups.

Handwritten signature
Edward ...

Handwritten signature
Dr. Frederic Noel - Oba

5. We apologize to those who have been mistreated and hurt physically, mentally and emotionally by tribalism and we commit to total equality and respect without qualification for all tribes and cultures.

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Dy ...

Handwritten signature
Dr. ...

6. We are aware of the richness and advancement in the quality of life of a society when the labour of all individuals is valued fairly and encouraged along with wisdom from the cultural contribution of communities and tribes.

Handwritten signature
E ...

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SHARAH ...

Handwritten signature
H. S. Kimung

Handwritten signature
NFOR, N. NFOR

SHARAH ...

Handwritten notes:
Iyemba
sinu
Bakobale

7. We commit to build a Society that cultivates peace and harmony through respect for human rights and equitable sharing of the rich resources of our land. We shall work continuously to create avenues for prosperity and the wellbeing of all.

Handwritten notes:
Eyoabo
G. E. E.
G. E. E.
G. E. E.

8. We commit to engage the Pan-African struggle with full resolve and to stand in solidarity with all peoples around the world fighting for their dignity against neocolonialism.

Handwritten notes:
G. E. E.

9. We are done being balanced from one colonial chess-board to another and assert unequivocally that going forward, for Ambazonia, it shall be Total Independence or Resistance forever.

Signed, Leadership of Ambazonia in Prison.

Signature

Signature
H. F. KIMBA

Signature
NFOR, N. NFOR

Small handwritten text at the bottom left.

THE AMBAZONIAN FREEDOM PROTOCOL 28/02/2019

PREAMBLE:

ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THE FORMER BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROONS (AMBAZONIA),

EVERYONE WHOM BY THE ACCIDENT OF HISTORY HAVE ANCESTRAL ROOTS IN THE TERRITORY FROM THE SHORES OF AMBAS BAY ON THE ATLANTIC COAST OF BIMBIA IN THE SOUTH, TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER AKON IN THE NORTH, OR WHOM WITHOUT CRIMINAL INTENT OR PREJUCIDE AGAINST THE COMMUNITIES IN THIS AREA CHOOSE TO BECOME PART OF THE COMMUNITIES IN THIS TERRITORY

TO OUR GENERATION AND THE REST OF HUMANKIND, WE MAKE THIS SOLEMN COMMITMENT TODAY:

1- WE SHALL PICK-UP AND BIND TOGETHER THE PIECES OF OUR COMMUNITIES MUTILATED BY SLAVE TRADE, DEFACED BY COLONIALISM, AND BATTERED BY NEOCOLONIALISM.

2- WE SHALL, AS ALL OTHER PEOPLES FOR WHOM THE ACCIDENT OF HISTORY CREATED THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO EXIST AS INDEPENDENT PEOPLES, EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO INDEPENDENCE TO ITS FULLEST EXTENT — AWARE OF OUR PAST EXPERIENCE WITHOUT PREJUDICE.

3- WE APOLOGIZE TO WOMEN FOR THE SHAMEFUL WAY HUMANKIND HAS TREATED THEM FOR MOST OF HUMAN HISTORY, AND WE COMMIT TO TOTAL RESPECT OF WOMEN WITHOUT QUALIFICATION.

4- WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE MARGINALIZATION AND MISTREATMENT OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN MOST SOCIETIES THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, AND WE COMMIT TO TOTAL EQUALITY AND RESPECT WITHOUT QUALIFICATION TO ALL DIFFERENTLY ABLED AND EVERY OTHER MINORITY OF INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS.

5- WE APOLOGIZE TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN MISTREATED AND HURT PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY BY TRIBALISM, AND WE COMMIT TO TOTAL EQUALITY AND RESPECT WITHOUT QUALIFICATION FOR ALL TRIBES AND CULTURES.

6- WE ARE AWARE OF THE RICHNESS AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF A SOCIETY WHEN THE LABOR OF ALL INDIVIDUALS IS VALUED FAIRLY AND ENCOURAGED ALONG WITH WISDOM FROM THE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITIES AND TRIBES.

7- WE COMMIT TO BUILD A SOCIETY THAT CULTIVATES PEACE AND HARMONY THROUGH RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF THE RICH RESOURCES OF OUR LAND. WE WILL WORK CONTINUOUSLY TO CREATE AVENUES FOR PROSPERITY AND FOR THE WELL BEING OF ALL.

8- WE COMMIT TO ENGAGE THE PAN AFRICAN STRUGGLE WITH FULL RESOLVE AND TO STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH ALL PEOPLES AROUND THE WORLD FIGHTING FOR THEIR DIGNITY AGAINST NEOCOLONIALISM.

9-WE ARE DONE BEING BALANCED FROM ONE COLONIAL CHESS-BOARD TO ANOTHER, AND ASSERT UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT GOING FORWARD, FOR AMBAZONIA, IT SHALL BE TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OR RESISTANCE FOREVER.

SIGNED, LEADERSHIP OF AMBAZONIA IN PRISON.

SISIKU AYUKTABE
BARRISTER EYAMBE ELIAS
PROFESSOR AUGUSTINE AWASUM
DR. EGBE OGORK
BARRISTER SHUFAI BLAISE S. BERINYUY
DR. H. T. KIMENG
DR. NFOR N. NFOR
DR. CORNELIUS N. KWANGA
DR. FIDELIS NDEH-CHE



“They Are Destroying Our Future”

Armed Separatist Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools in Cameroon’s Anglophone

Armed separatist groups have enforced a boycott of schools in Cameroon’s two English-speaking regions since 2017, citing their opposition to “Francophone” education imposed by the central government” and as part of a perverse attempt to pressure the government to get greater political recognition. They have attacked students, education professionals, and school buildings, causing school closures across the two Anglophone regions and depriving 700,000 students access to education. Based on interviews with 155 people, including 29 current and former students and 47 education professionals, this report documents how during scores of attacks, armed separatist groups have killed, assaulted, abducted, threatened, and terrorized thousands of students and education professionals; they have harassed and intimidated families into keeping their children out of school; and damaged, destroyed, burned, and looted schools in the North-West and South-West regions since 2017.

This report calls on separatist groups to immediately end the school boycott and cease all attacks on schools, teachers, and students. It also calls on the Cameroonian government to investigate all education-related attacks, prosecute those responsible, and provide timely support to victims, while ensuring safe access to education to all students in the Anglophone regions.

(above) An empty classroom in a now abandoned school on May 12, 2019 in Buea, South-West region, Cameroon.

© 2019 Giles Clarke/UNOCHA via Getty Images

(front cover) Schoolchildren, their parents and teachers hold a protest after suspected armed separatists opened fire at a school, killing at least seven children, in Kumba, South-West region, Cameroon, October 25, 2020.

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