



Reach Out

REACH OUT's HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND INCIDENT REPORT FOR THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1st 2021 TO MARCH 31st 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Anglophone crisis which began in 2016 in the simple form of a peaceful protest soon steadily degenerated into a full-blown armed insurgency, pitching several Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) against Government Defense and Security Forces (GDSF). It has since provoked the displacement of over 700,000 persons internally and over 60,000 to Nigeria and other countries as refugees and asylum seekers. Over 4,000 persons have been killed and over 5 million people affected by the crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

As is endemic in conflict situations, widespread human rights abuses have become the order of the day, committed by both the State defence forces and by separatist groups in the Anglophone regions. Documented human rights violations include extra-judicial killings, torture, looting and destruction of properties, fair trial violations, and inhumane and degrading conditions of detention. These violations are in gross violation of both Cameroonian national laws and international human rights laws that bind Cameroon.

Between the January 1st 2021 and March 31st 2021, Reach Out has documented 297 incidents of conflict violence (94 violent attacks against civilians, 115 armed clashes, 18 abductions, 29 illegal arrests, 22 IED explosions, 2 counts of sexual violence and 17 incidents of looting and property destruction), with a total of 234 fatalities

Incidents Data gathered during the first quarter of 2021

Table 1: Incident Data Gathered by Reach Out NGO in the first quarter of 2021.

Incident type	Month			Total
	January	February	March	
Attacks against civilians	47	32	15	94
Armed clashes	52	44	19	115
Abductions	09	06	03	18
Illegal Arrests	17	12	00	29
IED Attacks	13	06	03	22
Sexual violence	02	0	00	02
Property destruction/looting	08	07	02	17
Total	148	107	42	297

This report documents incidents of violent conflict and gross human rights violations and abuse which have been committed in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon in the first quarter of 2021.

A. Human rights violations committed by Government Defense and Security Forces (GDSF)

i. The illegal arrest and detention of a young mother and her fourteen-month-old baby in Ekona.

On the **06/01/2021** GDSFs while on a raid in Ekona arrested a young mother of 20 alongside her 14 months old child. The young lady whose name Reach Out got as **Tanye Tchoubego Diana Anicelle**, was picked up in Ekona by GDSFs for allegedly dating a NSAG fighter, who is also the alleged father of the child. Reports reveal that they were arrested by an element of the GDSFs by name **Ndema Eugene**, popularly known by the pseudonym “**Baby face**”, who is notorious for harassing the population of Ekona.

ii. The massacre of nine unarmed civilians on Mautu

On **January 10 2021**, GDSFs carried out an offensive raid in Mautu, a village in the Muyuka sub-division of the South-west region, aimed at rooting out a notorious NSAG commander called **Mendozie**. They reportedly stormed the village, shooting indiscriminately on civilians, killing nine, including a six-year-old, and wounding several others and looting properties. Reach Out acquired the names of the deceased as; **Takang Anyi Roger, 20; Tambe Daniel; Shey Keisa, 6; Obenegwa David, 30; Egoshi Lucas, 25; Takang Bruno, 22; Ndakam Pascal, 22; Tambe Ann, 50; and Ngoto Valentine Akama, 32.**

State defence forces through their spokesman **Navy Captain Cyril Atonfack**, denied all allegations of wrongdoing, and insisted in his press release that GDSFs had indeed carried out an operation in the area, during which terrorists were neutralised.

Multiple Human rights groups both home and abroad have condemned the massacre and have called for an investigation into the killings. Earlier that day GDSFs had also stormed Ekona. There were no fatalities but two civilians were wounded. Also, eleven days after the Mautu incident, on the **21st January 2021** GDSFs raided **Maumu**, another village still in the Muyuka sub-division, shooting four unarmed civilians. Similarly, an operation carried out by GDSFs on the **6th February 2021** in **Mbalangi**, a village in the Kumba III sub-division ended up with the killing of four unarmed civilians, and burning of a number of IDP “bush houses”

iii. Torture of civilians

Since the onset of the crisis, torture has been a recurrent practice by both GDSFs and NSAG fighters. It has been used over and over as an intimidation method, as well as during interrogations by GDSFs. Despite Cameroon’s ratification in 1986 of the 1984 Geneva Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, GDSFs still continue to inflict torture upon civilians unchecked.

On the 13/02/2021 the eve of Valentine’s Day 2021, GDSFs tortured a civilian, whose name Reach Out got as **Jean Fai Bongong**, in front of the Ndu council building. An amateur video which

was widely circulated online showed a mixed unit of state defence forces interrogating the man in French and Pidgin English. The man's only crime apparently going by the video was the fact that he is a relative to a separatist fighter and must expose/release the whereabouts of his brother.

Jean Fai denies knowing where the said brother is hiding even under heavy torture from the uniformed men who poured water on him before whipping his legs with a cutlass repeatedly until he lay lifeless, apparently going unconscious. The next day, on the **14th February 2021** the Divisional Officer for Ndu called for disciplinary measures to be taken against the elements of



Figure 1: screen shot from the video of GDSFs torturing a civilian in Ndu

GDSFs who perpetrated the act.

It should be noted that this is not the only instance of a civilian being attacked and tortured for being related to an NSAG fighter. On the **January 17th 2021** GDSFs allegedly temporarily detained and beat up two women in Bambui, Tubah sub-

division for simply being related to known NSAG fighters.

On **March 10th 2021** GDSFs allegedly had seven civilians severely beaten up in Bamali, Ndop, sub-division. This time, their crime was failing to alert them when NSAG fighters entered the village.

iv. The killing of four boys in Meta quarters

Not long after the Mautu massacre, which received wide national and international condemnation, and the killing of four civilians in Maumu, Government security forces, during an operation shot and killed four teenagers in Meta quarters, a locality in the Bamenda II municipality. This happened on the **23rd January 2021**, thirteen days after the Mautu massacre and two days after the Maumu killings.

The Communication Director at the ministry of defence **Navy Captain Cyril Atonfack**, who had denied all allegations concerning the Mautu massacre, once more denied any wrongdoing on the part of GDSFs, insisting that all four young boys killed in Meta Quarters in Bamenda, were NSAG fighters who hid themselves in an abandoned building with heavy weapons to attack government forces.

However, the corpses of the four boys, whose names Reach Out acquired as; **Fon Blaise, Takam Nelly Mbah, Aloysius Ngalim, and Salle Saddam** were later retrieved from the site of incident with locals identifying them as young boys schooling in Government High school Down Town.

Similarly, barely four days later, on **January 27, 2021**, GDSFs killed two men in Bambui, Tubah Sub-division in the North West Region, and also arrested two others. **Awoh Augustine** one of the deceased, was reportedly pulled out of the house and shot dead after traditional “medicine pots” were found in his house. He was falsely accused of marking charms for NSAG fighters. Also, on **January 31, 2021**, GDSFs raided Tankov, a village in Nkum Sub-division of the North West Region and shot dead three men on their way to tap palm wine. **On the 6th of February 2021** GDSFs in the early hours of the morning pulled out four suspected NSAG fighters from their homes in Mulang, a locality in the Bamenda II municipality, and had them summarily executed

v. **Burning of villages and destruction of properties**

On the **12th January 2021** GDSFs raided Bawum, a sub fondom under the Bafut paramountcy in the North West Region, and burned down the Bafut Ecovillage, which is also a UNESCO world cultural heritage site, adding to the long list of war crimes committed by GDSFs in the North-west and South-west regions. More so, on **January 22nd 2021**, GDSFs attacked the village of Bafia in the Muyuka sub-division and set houses on fire. A similar incident happened on the **16th of**



Figure 2: Hospital facilities torched by GDSFs in Kumbo

February 2021 in Tad, a village in the Batibo sub-division in the North-west Region. GDSFs allegedly stormed the village, breaking doors and houses of civilians who, on alert, had fled to the bush before the arrival of GDSFs. Similarly, on the **1st of March 2021**, they also set fire to a guest house and laboratory of the Baptist hospital in Bamkikai, Kumbo sub-division.

vi. **Intimidation and extortion of civilians**

On the **16th of January 2021** at about 6pm, a Software developer was arrested by Gendarme officers in Buea and accused of illegal monetary transactions after his phone was illegally searched. They requested for 100,000 F CFA for his release, and 40,500 was collected through Mobile Money transfer and 10,000 Frs bank note was forcefully collected from his wallet, amounting to 50,500 F CFA. **Also, on the 17th of January 2021**, at about 7pm, a young man was arrested by Gendarme officers in a neighborhood in Buea and his phone checked, he was accused of being a scammer after CashApp application was found in his phone. He was extorted the sum of 60,000 F CFA by Gendarmes for his release.

On the **19th January 2021** GDSFs detained some civilians in Muyuka on their way to Buea and subsequently, and accused them of being NSAGs on their way to plant bombs in Limbe. They later on demanded 50,000FCFA each from the detained civilians before they were released. Similarly on the **24th January 2021** GDSFs pulled out a civilian from a vehicle at the outskirts of Batibo after detecting a wound on his hand and accused him of being an NSAG fighter wounded in battle. They later demanded the sum of fifty thousand francs before they released him.

B. Human rights abuses perpetrated by NSAG fighters.

i. Attacks against civilians

a. The murder of a school principal in Ossing.

On the **9th of January 2021** NSAG fighters shot and killed a school principal in Ossing, a village in Mamfe sub-division in the South-west Region. Local reports stipulate that, the principal was attacked and shot in his neighbourhood after returning from school that day by the armed men who immediately took off. Also, in another separate incident, on the same day, two persons were shot and seriously wounded in Tinto, a village in the Upper-Bayang sub-division. The victims; the Principal of Government Technical College Tinto and a student were shot at by the armed men for violating school boycott calls.

b. The abduction of radio hosts and reporters in Bamenda and Buea

Abductions have been a non-stop occurrence since the beginning of the crisis. NSAG fighters have used this hideous crime not only as means of intimidation against all those they consider as traitors or “black legs” as they are most commonly called, as well as a means of revenue generation.

On the **20th of January 2021** NSAG fighters abducted **Fung John Ngum**, radio host and reporter based in Bamenda, chief town of the North West region of Cameroon. According to reports, the journalist who is co-host of Press and Associate, a flagship programme of Bamenda-based Ndefcam radio was taken away early Wednesday around Che Street Ntarikon in Bamenda as he set out for work. Similarly, on the **13th March 2021** at about 07pm, NSAG fighters also abducted a CRTV journalist at Mile 18, in Buea, the chief town of the southwest region. The reporter, identified as **Fame Bunyui Fake** was to taken to an undisclosed location in Ekona, Muyuka sub-division, and sum of CFAF10.000.000 was demanded for her release. Her abductors posted a video on social media in which the journalist could be seen sitting with her face covered, her hands tied behind her back, her feet stretched, tied, in tears and frightened, begging her family to pay the ransom. In front of her, the men with knives and machetes in hand, threatened to kill her if her family refuses to comply. She was however released barely twenty-four hours after her abduction.

c. The abduction of the Paramount Fon of Kom

On the **14th February 2021** armed separatists abducted the paramount Fon of Kom, Fon Clement Ndi II was abducted around Fujua in Fundong on Sunday afternoon on his return from Njinikom, where he had attended a mass of thanksgiving.

He was reportedly abducted on the grounds that he had allowed GDSFs to guard, at the Sunday mass and on his way back from the mass. The separatists claimed they would guarantee the Fon's protection only if he ceases to have anything to do with the state authorities.



Figure 3: Fon Clement Ndi II of Kom

As news of the Fon's abduction spread, the population quickly mobilized and headed for the NSAG camp. Fearing the worst, they liberated the Fon before the angry mob could reach the camp.

d. The abduction of three municipal officers of the Bamenda II council.

On the **3rd of February 2021** NSAG fighters abducted three officers of the Bamenda II council, while they were in the process of sealing businesses whose owners observed the weekly Monday “ghost town” imposed by NSAG fighters.

In a video that circulated online, these officers are seen, shirtless, sitting on the ground, and being threatened by their captors who accused them of violating the laws of “Ambazonia” by sealing the shops of businessmen who observed the Monday “ghost town”.

Also, on the **13/01/2021** NSAGs attacked a transport truck at Bamessing in the Ndop sub-division in the North-west region and abducted the driver and his assistant. Barely two days after, on the **15/01/2021** two civilians were abducted from their farm in Mbelewa, in the Bamenda III municipality. Three civilians were also abducted from a construction site on the **21/01/2021 at Mile 6 Nkwen in the Bamenda III** municipality of the North-west region, for not seeking a permit from the local NSAG commander before starting construction. Equally, on the **26/01/2021** NSAG fighter abducted a driver in Nyenge, Mbengwi sub-division for violating the Monday ghost town. They also burned down his car. More so, on **the 07/02/2021** NSAGs attacked a truck transporting beer at Baba I, Babessi sub-division, and abducted the driver and his assistant.

e. The murder of three chiefs in Lebialem

On the **13th of February 2021** NSAG fighters under the leadership of Lekeaka Oliver , popularly known as Field Marshal, Commander of the” Red Dragons” carried out an attack on the village of Essoh-Attah. This attack led to the murder of four civilians, including three chiefs and also the abduction of over three dozen other civilians. According to eye witness testimony, the chiefs, **chief Benedict Fomin, chief Simon Forzizong and chief Fualeasuoh**, were accused of voting in the regional election. A fourth chief, **chief Fuambeh**, would



Figure 4: Mortal remains of three chiefs brutally executed in Lebialem

have been killed had he not been helped to escape by the NSAG fighter who was sent by “Field Marshall” to eliminate him.

Similarly, on the **28/02/2021** NSAG fighters stormed Bamessing, in the Ngoketunjia division of the North West region, dragged two civilians out of their houses and killed them for allegedly being “black legs”. It is not the first time NSAG fighters are targeting civilians for allegedly being black legs. On the **01/03/2021** NSAG fighters attacked and shot a civilian in the leg in Babessi, for being a black leg.

The attack of inter-urban transportation bus in Akum.

On the **08/03/2021** NSAG fighters attacked a bus transporting passengers out of the Northwest region at Akum, killing four civilians and wounding several others. The bus was attacked for leaving town on the eve of the weekly ghost town.

f. The rape of a young lady in Nkwen, Bamenda

On the **21/01/2021** NSAG fighters attacked, robbed and gang raped a young lady at Nkwen, in the Bamenda III municipality. According to an account rendered by the survivor she was on her way back from a night out with her aunt when she was attacked at the entrance to her neighbourhood in Nkwen. As she recounts, she was attacked from behind by armed men, who spoke to her harshly in pidgin English saying “*where are you coming from?.....You are from making love to men right.....we will show you how to make love very well this night...we are sleeping in the bushes fighting for you and you are busy making love to men....*” She continued “*I pleaded and pleaded with them but they refused to listen. They took my phones, all the money I*

had and forced me to give them my Mobile Money password. After this the pulled me into a nearby bush and took turns on me and when they were done, one of them hit my head with the butt of his weapon and I went unconscious and only woke up at about 3 am the next morning”

ii. **Attacks against GDSF and the planting of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)**

a. **The ambush of the convoy of the Senior Divisional Officer of Momo**

On **January 6th 2021**, NSAG fighters ambushed the convoy of the Senior Divisional Officer of Momo near Njikwa, using improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The SDOs convoy was returning from Ngie and Njikwa after installing Divisional Officers in their areas of command. Five soldiers and one civilian died in the attack. The Divisional Delegate of Communication for Momo Division, North West region, **Becky Jeme Iyabo**, was the lone civilian who died in the attack. A few days later On **January 19th, 2021**, another IED exploded by the roadside in Mile 17 Mbengwi.

b. **The attack of a military checkpoint at Matazem**

On **January 8th 2021** NSAG fighters attacked GDSFs at their check point at Matazem, the entry point into the Northwest region from the neighbouring West region. Security forces were taken unawares by a group of armed men to be NSAG fighters operating in that part of the country.

In the course of the attack, the armed men killed three Gendarmes, one policeman and two civilians, a truck driver and his aid and injured about four others. This attack came barely 48 hours after an IED exploded in Momo, killing five, including one civilian and four security elements.

Similarly, on February 8th 2021, NSAG fighters ambushed and killed two soldiers in Bamenda, chief town of the North-west Region. They were killed by suspected NSAG fighters while on routine patrol. Also, on the **12/03/2021** NSAG fighters stabbed a police officer on patrol at Mile 4 Nkwen, Bamenda III subdivision and made away with his AK47 rifle.

c. **The ambush of navy soldiers at Bekora**

On February 14 2021, three officers of the Cameroon Navy were killed and another was wounded in an NSAG attack in Bekora, Ndian Division. They were killed in an ambush laid by NSAG fighters in an attack carried out just before midday. The marines, **Kongyuy Peter, Ebot Ayuk and Matelot Lapiomi** were killed, while a fourth marine sustained serious injuries. This attack occurred on a weekend which saw the rise of atrocities from both soldiers and separatist fighters as the crisis in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon continue to escalate. On the very next day, **the 15th of February 2021, an Army captain was killed in a separatist ambush in Kumbo.** The captain, **Thierry Engbwe Omba** was killed after successfully leading an operation to defuse some IEDs that had been planted on the road.



Figure 5: Captain Thierry Engbwe Omgba, an element of GDSFs killed in Kumbo on the 15th Feb 2021

d. IED attacks

IEDs have over time become a favoured weapon of NSAG forces operating in the North-west and South-west regions of Cameroon. These explosive devices planted by NSAG fighters on paths frequently used by GDSFs, have had devastating effects, both on GDSFs and on civilians.

On **January 23, 2021** at about 2am, NSAG fighters on board a motor bike dropped an improvised explosive device (IED) around the Limbe stadium. The movement was captured by a drone flying in the vicinity. State Security Forces successfully deactivated the device. Still on the same **January 23rd**, at about 1pm, an IED was discovered in Fini Hotel in Limbe by a cleaner. The device was set and concealed in a water cylinder behind the hotel. State Security Forces were alerted and the device was dismantled. On the **same January 23rd**, at about 8pm, NSAG fighters detonated an improvised explosive device at Half-mile in Limbe. At least three persons were injured and about 4 vehicles destroyed by the blast effect of the explosion.

Barely three weeks later, on **February 18th**, seven soldiers perished in another IED explosion in Babessi, Ngoketunjia division.

Another attack happened barely six days later in Kumbo on the **24th February 2021** in which two soldiers were killed and at least another five were wounded. According to sources, the soldiers were on patrol when their vehicle landed on an IED, which however did not cause any. The soldier who then stepped out of the vehicle to assess the situation were caught off guard by gunshots from neighbouring bushes. Two soldiers; **Nkoa Kede** and **Divine Mussongue** were killed, and five others were injured before the attackers took off. This attack created panic in Kumbo as soldiers raided several neighbourhoods in search of NSAG fighters, and gunshots were heard all over some neighbourhoods forcing residents to remain indoors.

On the **25th of March 2021** an IED planted by suspected NSAG fighters exploded in the Kossala neighbourhood in Kumba at a place where little Angel was cracking coconuts. The child, identified as Angel Ngum, had her hands blown off and was rushed to the Kumba District Hospital and later evacuated to Mutengene for intensive care where she succumbed to her wounds the next day.

Before her passing, the Senior Divisional Officer for Meme, **Chamberlain Ntou'ou Ndong** visited the family in the hospital and promised that the State would take charge of hospital bills, and equally assured the family a military hunt would be launched to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Conclusion

Despite the continuous condemnation of these human rights abuses, both parties to the conflict continue to carry out, enable, and attempt to cover up such atrocities. Thus has so far been evident in the refusal of state authorities to acknowledge any wrong doing caused by elements of GDSFs, and the NSAG authorities sometimes blaming GDSFs for perpetration violence against civilian disguised as NSAG fighters. After the abduction of a CRTV reporter last March, Capo Daniel, Spokesman and Deputy Defence Chief of the Ambazonian Defense Forces, speaking to Mimi Mefo Info, slammed the Cameroonian government stating that, it has been using kidnappings as a strategy to counter Ambazonia operations.

Whereas we salute moves such as the ongoing trail of the perpetrators of the Ngarbuh Massacre, and the compensation of the Ngarbuh victims, as well as the arrest of the elements of the GDSFs responsible for the torture of Jean Fai, the civilian in Ndu, much still remains to be done to ameliorate the human rights situation in the North-west and South-west regions.

We call on both sides to the conflict to carry out rigorous and transparent investigations in the human right abuses perpetrated by their elements on the ground and take necessary steps to curb these violations. More so there is the need for meaningful and inclusive dialogue, so as to address the root causes of the conflict. Only such a dialogue can lead to any meaningful and sustainable peace.