

August 4, 2022

Joint Report: Massacre of Civilians in Ballin, Akwaya

On June 25, 2022, a major attack was reported on the village of Ballin in Akwaya Subdivision in Cameroon's South-West Region. At least 30 unarmed civilians were reportedly killed and several others injured, with over 50 houses burned.

Different reports presented conflicting narratives about the attack. The initial report, produced by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, attributed it to a longstanding land dispute between the neighbouring Oliti and Messaga Ekol peoples. The Church said the Oliti people earlier attacked the Messaga Ekol people on April 29, 2022, killing some. CHRDA has confirmed images of that attack to be true. According to the Church, this second attack against the Messaga Ekol people was perpetrated by the Oliti people along with hired gunmen.

The Church's account was contradicted by the Cameroonian Ministry of Defence, which stated that non-state armed separatist groups were responsible. Conversely, some sources on social media pointed to the Cameroon military.

In the midst of the conflicting reports and counter accusations, another two videos surfaced online on July 1, 2022, depicting members of an alleged separatist group involved in an operation in Ballin. Dialogue in the video establishes that a non-state armed group known as the "Manyu Unity Warriors" was centrally and directly involved in this attack on Ballin. Its narration demonstrates that the Manyu Unity Warriors attacked Ballin on the grounds that villagers were hostile to their cause. The fighters also threatened other villages with a similar fate.

Video Footage Analysis

On June 26, video footage purporting to show villagers returning to Ballin the day after the attack was posted to Facebook. This video depicts some aftermath of the attack, including several bodies of those killed.

On July 1, two videos showing a self-described separatist group engaged in the attack began to circulate on WhatsApp. These videos depict fighters with guns walking around a burning village. The person filming narrates that the fighters have destroyed the community because the people did not support the fighters.

The Database and CHRDA received the July 1 videos, both of which appear to be narrated by the same person.

As the videos spread on social media, certain actors asserted that they do not depict the Ballin attack, but rather an earlier incident in a different part of Akwaya.

However, after investigation, the Database and CHRDA can verify the following:

1. A group calling itself "Manyu Unity Warriors/Forces" was directly involved in the Ballin attack.
 - At the outset of the attack video, the narrator says: "*Unity Force Manyu wey today, Saturday, they don destroy Ballin community...*" [00:01].
 - Video footage of the group perpetrating the attack clearly shows the same buildings and a dead body that are also visible in the "aftermath" video posted on Facebook on June 26.
2. In the video, the group justified the attack on the grounds that Ballin villagers were hostile to the separatist movement:

- The narrator says: “Unity Force Manyu wey today, Saturday, they don destroy Ballin community where dey don kill Ambazonian soldiers! And dey collect Ambazonian arms!” [00:01]. Later, he says: “As you can see now the Unity Force Manyu so, they don destroyed the community of Ballin! The community of Ballin people that are killing Ambazonian freedom fighters for long years! Since this war started and [we started] the struggle! So the Unity Warriors of Manyu don decide make up their mind to destroy this community” [00:53].

3. The group threatened other villages with a similar fate.

- The narrator says: “Any community who wey say Ambazonia no go grow, we stand to destroy that community! Nobody will stop this struggle till we see the end!” [01:08].

Thus, the narration in the Manyu Unity Warriors’ videos suggests that the attack was directly motivated by friction between their group and the Ballin villagers.

Geolocation

Initial searches for Ballin produced the coordinates 6° 28' 5.0088" N, 9° 38' 30.7176" E. Geospatial sources confirmed this was the correct general location. A search area was established around the village.

The “aftermath” video is 7 minutes, 35 seconds long. It depicts destroyed buildings and several corpses over a substantial area. This report focuses on the clearest subset of the footage.

Exhibit 1 (below) confirms that the aftermath video is from Ballin, at precisely 6° 28' 17.34" N, 9° 38' 02.55" E. The satellite image is from *Google Maps* and depicts a part of Ballin. Screenshots from the aftermath video are placed around the edge of the satellite image. As labelled below, the Database matched nine buildings depicted in the “aftermath” video to buildings visible on satellite image of Ballin.

Exhibit 1: Geolocation of “aftermath” video to Ballin

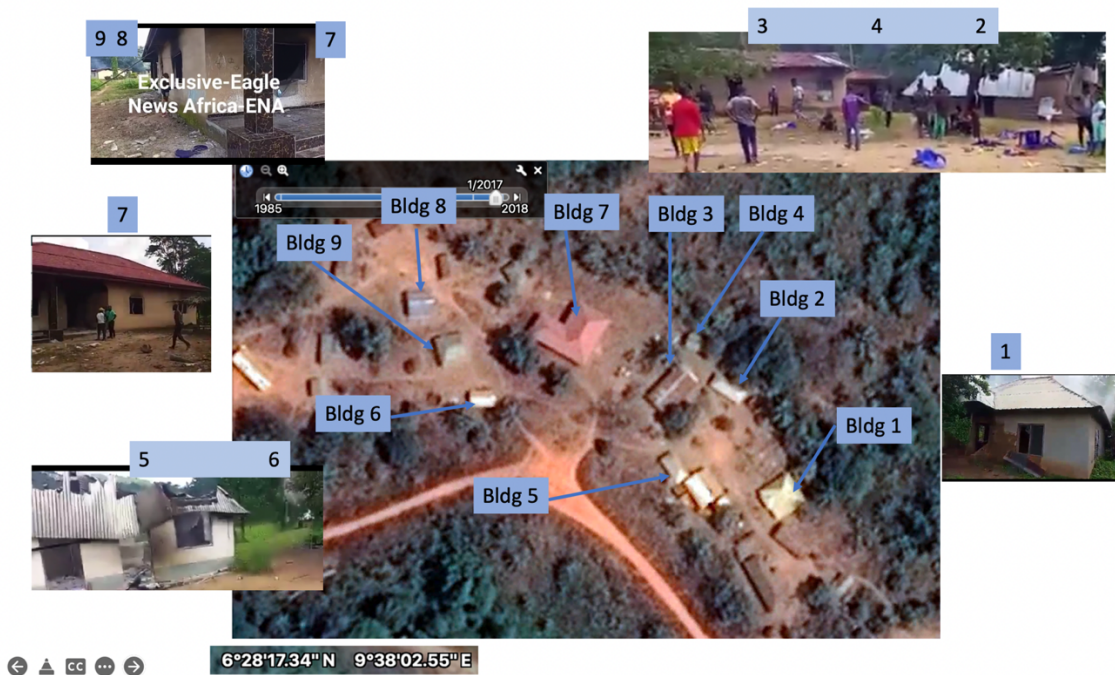


Exhibit 2 proves that the videos of the Manyu Unity Warriors perpetrating an attack in Akwaya were taken in Ballin. The videos of the Manyu Unity Warriors' attack clearly depict Building 7 from Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 2: Comparison of frames from “aftermath” video (left) to Manyu Unity Warriors attack video (right)



These two geolocations demonstrate that the Manyu Unity Warriors incident occurred in Ballin, at the location of the aftermath video.

Chronolocation

The fact that the attack video is geolocated to the same location as the aftermath video suggests that this attack occurred on June 25, as reported.

As further evidence, a deceased individual wearing a distinctive blue shirt and lying close to the red-roofed building, is visible in both the attack video and the aftermath video (images omitted due to graphic content). This body verifies that the aftermath video was taken after this attack.

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The Database of Atrocities and CHRDA condemn this significant human rights abuse, which violates numerous international legal codes, including International Humanitarian Law, the Geneva Convention, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Recommendations

To the Government of Cameroon and Cameroonian Human Rights Commission:

- Investigate the Ballin Massacre and hold the perpetrators to account.
- Find a lasting, non-military solution to the Anglophone Crisis, to end the loss of lives.

To the Manyu Unity Warriors and other armed separatist groups:

- Respect International Humanitarian Law at all times. Do not harm or kill civilians, or destroy civilian objects.
- Find a lasting, non-military solution to the Anglophone Crisis, to end the loss of lives.