

# VERIFICATION REPORT

## Burning at LAP Healthcare Centre, Kumbo, Cameroon

Date of publication: October 21, 2022



**Date of event:** March 1, 2021

**Coordinates:** 6°14'3.35"N, 10°41'54.85"E

**Location:** LAP Healthcare Centre, Kumbo, Bui Division, North-West Region, Cameroon

**Team:** University of Exeter Research Team

**Synopsis:** A fire was reported at the Bansa Baptist Hospital in Kumbo, North-West Region. Researchers geolocated the incident with a high degree of certainty to the LAP Healthcare Centre. The incident is likely to have occurred on March 1, 2021. The video does not display the perpetrator; however, multiple sources on social media suggest the Cameroonian military was responsible. The incident appears to be linked to gunfire.



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## 1. About the Database

The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis Database of Atrocities is the product of an impartial, independent group of researchers and civic leaders, dedicated to recording and investigating human rights abuses committed by all actors during the Anglophone Crisis. Our team includes researchers at University of Toronto, Leiden University, the Edinburgh International Justice Initiative, and University of Exeter, with support from the Anglophone Crisis Monitoring Project, other OSINT verifiers, University of California - Berkeley's Human Rights Center Investigations Lab, and the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA).

The Database accepts incidents through an anonymous reporting portal, using Ushahidi software, and also through WhatsApp, Signal, and email submissions. Researchers work to investigate and verify incidents where the level of evidence permits. This Database is apolitical and will always avoid any partisan interference. It is hosted at University of Toronto (Canada) for reasons of neutrality and cybersecurity.

Contributors to this report:



## 2. Executive Summary

Two separate submissions to the Database on March 1, 2021, reported that a building was set ablaze at Bansa Baptist Hospital. The two submissions differed on the exact nature of the building: one reported that it was a laboratory, and the other reported it was the Life Abundant Primary (LAP) Healthcare Centre. One piece of evidence submitted (Submitted Source 1) is a video depicting extensive damage to the building in question, with smoke rising from the structure. No narration is provided in the video. The second piece of evidence submitted (Submitted Source 2) is a photo showing the building from a different angle, with active flames visible in the building. The second submission to the Database reported gunfire as the cause of the blaze.

Researchers were able to geolocate the incident as having occurred at the LAP Healthcare Centre in Kumbo, North-West Region, Cameroon, at **6°14'3.35"N, 10°41'54.85"E**. This is a smaller, separate facility from Bansa Baptist Hospital. Geolocation was aided by the identification of distinctive roofs and social media posts describing the location.

Researchers were able to determine that the video was likely created around midday on March 1, 2021. This was discerned through the analysis of shadows and tracking the earliest social media post of the incident. An official report from the Director of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services, posted on the CBC Health Services Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/CBCHSORG/status/1367398660955332609>), gave a date and time that corroborated researchers' findings.

The video footage does not appear to show any perpetrators, nor does it include narration identifying any perpetrators. The majority of media and social media posts attribute this incident to the Cameroonian military.

### 3. Data Sources

Researchers relied on the following sources:

- Videos and photos posted to social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp); and
- Satellite imagery (Google Earth Pro, PlanetLabs, Sentinel Hub)

Submitted Source 1: The video link provided to the Database led to a post made on Facebook on March 1, 2021, at 14:52 (Cameroon Local Time). This was submitted to the Database on March 1, 2021. Researchers noted a watermark on the video which traced back to a post made on March 1, 2021, at 14:45 (Cameroon Local Time) in a Facebook group called Scandy Media, Entertainment and Events (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1467441636849735/permalink/2763728407221045/>). This post had extra images of the burning building from a different angle, all with the same 'SM' watermark on them.

- Chain of custody: The video link was submitted to the Database via WhatsApp. Researchers downloaded a copy of the video from Facebook and observed the video directly. The video's provenance before its posting on Facebook is unknown.

Submitted Source 2: The photo was submitted to the Database on March 1, 2021.

- Chain of custody: The photo was submitted to the Database via WhatsApp. Researchers downloaded a copy of the photo from WhatsApp and observed the photo directly. The photo's provenance before its uploading to WhatsApp is unknown.

### 4. What Is Depicted

Submitted Source 1: The video opens showing a smoking and severely damaged building next to an undamaged one, with a crowd of onlookers gathered on the road alongside the buildings. The camera pans left and right to show more of the scene. The cameraperson then walks a short distance down the road, showing a large open space with several other buildings bordering it. The cameraperson then pans back to the burning building and films up the road in the opposite direction, showing another building which is also undamaged.

Submitted Source 2: The photo shows the burning building from the other side. The building is severely charred, and flames are still visible within. It is taken from the road, and another building is visible behind it.

### Metadata Analysis

Researchers ran Submitted Source 1 through the InVid Toolkit; however, no results were yielded from reverse-image searching the keyframes.

Researchers ran a reverse-image search on Submitted Source 2, which revealed that the image was used in an article describing an unrelated event on March 29, 2021.

### Other Corroborating Information

An additional video was found on Twitter, posted on March 1, 2021, at 16:00 (Cameroon Local Time) (<https://twitter.com/sabastianyuvn/status/1366403094351917056>). This video appears to be taken from the same position as Submitted Source 2. It helped to increase the researchers' understanding of the buildings in the surrounding area and facilitated more accurate recreation of the geospatial relations among the surrounding buildings.

Metadata analysis was also conducted on this video, and one keyframe yielded results to a separate Twitter post; however, the separate post did not contain additional information.

Note: Other posts on social media show the same video footage as Submitted Source 1 but without the 'SM' watermark. This suggests that the posters of the non-watermarked video obtained it from another source. The origin of this other source is not clear.

## 5. Location

### Process of Geolocation

1. Researchers began by making maps depicting geospatial relationships between buildings, roads, and trees visible in the Submitted Sources (Figure 1).
2. Researchers searched social media for additional reports of the incident. Several news outlets reported that the incident had taken place at the LAP Centre and Rest House, a department of the Bansa Baptist Hospital, situated in Bamkikai - Kumbo.
3. Facebook comments helped to confirm the location of the health centre and its relationship to Bansa Baptist Hospital. One individual, whose profile suggests the person is a state-registered medical staff member, stated that the LAP Centre was part of the Bansa Baptist Hospital in Bamkikai. Another individual also commented that the LAP Centre was "about a km away from the main hospital" (Figures 2 and 3).
4. A blog post written by two missionaries in 2017 titled "Beginning Work with LAP" provided further details on the centre specifically:
  - LAP is the 'Life Abundant Primary Health Care Centre.'
  - LAP is situated on approximately 5 acres of land, with "a number of buildings...and open spaces of green grass."
  - In the blog, the missionaries noted: "We are about a 10 minute drive from Bansa Baptist Hospital and about 2 and a half hours from Bamenda."
  - In the blog, the missionaries stated: "Instead of driving to church, we now walk down a dirt path." This suggested that a church or similar building was very close to the geolocation site.
5. A Facebook post gave directions to the Faith Baptist Church Youth Group from their location in Bamkikai to Bamenda. Researchers suspected that the youth group may be hosted in the same church in Bamkikai as that referred to by the missionaries.
6. On Google Earth, researchers looked within a 1km radius of the main Bansa Baptist Hospital for buildings that matched the geospatial maps drawn in step one. A cluster of buildings at the nearest large junction to Saint Augustine College matched the building layout and foliage on the drawn maps. Researchers matched other landmarks on the satellite imagery to those visible in Submitted Source 1 (Figures 4 and 5). Researchers also confirmed that the topography in this location matches the skyline of Submitted Source 1 (Figure 6).
7. Figures 7-12 demonstrate how the buildings shown in Submitted Source 1 correspond with the satellite images of the area the researchers geolocated. Building [3] was particularly distinctive and aided researchers' identification of the area, due to its size and pattern on the roof. Another distinctive feature researchers noted in the video was the curvature of the road. Further

verification was provided by a video discovered on Twitter, which showed the burning building from the same angle as another video, which showed building [9] in the background (Figure 13).

Based upon this analysis, researchers concluded with a high degree of certainty that the incident location was the LAP Healthcare Centre in Bamkikai - Kumbo, Bui Division, North-West Region, Cameroon, with coordinates **6°14'3.35"N, 10°41'54.85"E**.

### Geolocation Images



Figure 1: Map drawn by researchers

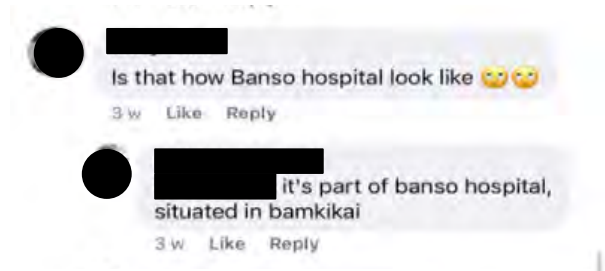


Figure 2: Facebook comment (identifying info redacted)



Figure 3: Facebook comments (identifying info redacted)



Figure 4: Satellite image of suspected location



Figure 5: Map drawn by researchers, rotated for comparison



Figure 6: Topography of suspected area and Submitted Source 1



Figure 7: Satellite image matching landmarks to those visible in Submitted Source 1 (screenshots below)



Figures 8, 9, 10, 11: Screenshots from Submitted Source 1, landmarks labelled to correspond with satellite image above



Figures 12, 13: Screenshots from Submitted Source 1 and another video of the incident, landmarks labelled to correspond with satellite image above

## 6. Date and Time

On March 4, 2021, the CBC Health Services Twitter account tweeted an official report published by the Director of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services. The report stated that there had been a fire beginning on March 1 at about 11:40 (Cameroon Local Time).

Using SunCalc, researchers were able to verify that Submitted Source 1 was filmed around 14:00 (Cameroon Local Time), as the shadows in the video correspond to the shadow directions at that time. Researchers compared daily satellite imagery on PlanetLabs from before and after the alleged attack date. The imagery shows a slight difference to the structures in the week preceding and following the fire, although the resolution is low and therefore this is inconclusive.

After review, researchers believe that the attack occurred on March 1, 2021, and that the video of the attack aftermath was filmed around 14:00 (Cameroon Local Time) that day.



Figure 14: Report published by the CBC Health Services Director

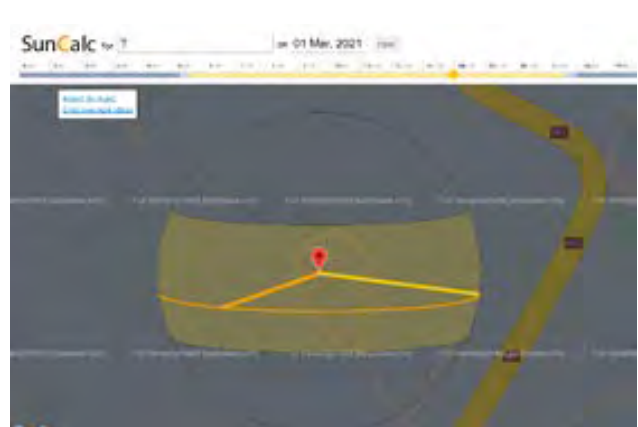


Figure 15: SunCalc shadow direction for 14:00 (Cameroon Local Time) on March 1, 2021, corresponding to shadows in video

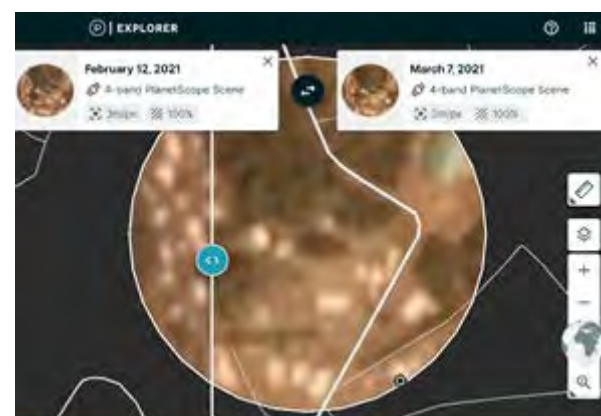


Figure 16: Comparison of PlanetLabs satellite imagery on February 12, 2021, and March 7, 2021



## 7. Perpetrators

The video footage does not show the attack perpetrators, nor does it contain narration identifying possible perpetrators. Thus, researchers searched media reports and social media to uncover narrative details around this attack and identify likely perpetrators.

The report by the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services Director stated that the building “burst into flames as a result of gunshots coming from above the Centre.” Most social media posts attributed the gunshots in this incident to the Cameroonian military.

1. The initial post by Scandy Media, Entertainment and Events was posted on March 1, 2021, at 12:45 (Cameroon Local Time). It states: “The LAP Centre where drugs are preserved & (Rest/guest house )a department of Bansa Baptist Hospital in Bamkikai has been razed down by the Biya’s military terrorists as frustration of their being unable to trap and crack down the professional Bui warriors” (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1467441636849735/permalink/2763728407221045/>). This post clearly attributes the attack to the Cameroonian military. However, the terms used in the post and other posts made by Scandy Media, Entertainment and Events indicate that this account supports the armed separatist movement. Thus, its conclusion is considered likely to be biased.
2. News outlet *Cameroon News Agency* tweeted Submitted Source 2 on March 2, 2021, with the caption: “Government forces on Monday, March 1, 2021, set on fire a Laboratory and guest house belonging to the Baptist Hospital in Bamkikai, Kumbo in the northwest region. This comes days after they attacked the Bamkikai Catholic Church leaving traces of gunshots on the walls and windows” (<https://twitter.com/CMRNewsAgency/status/1366812633886842886>).
3. News outlet *CamerounWeb* carried an article accusing the Cameroonian army of having carried out the attack. The article stated: “According to witnesses at the scene, Cameroonian soldiers shot at the building and a bullet hit a container of flammable liquid, causing the fire. This laboratory manufactured medicines that were transported to hospitals in Anglophone Cameroon” [translated from French by researchers using DeepL] ([https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/features/Drame-l-arm-e-accus-e-d-avoir-incendi-un-h-pital-Kumbo-577858?utm\\_term=Autofeed&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Twitter#Echobox=1615058645](https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/features/Drame-l-arm-e-accus-e-d-avoir-incendi-un-h-pital-Kumbo-577858?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1615058645)).

After review, researchers suggest that the likely perpetrators of the attack were Cameroonian soldiers. However, without visual evidence, and relying solely on media reports and social media, researchers could not conclude the perpetrators with complete certainty.

## 8. Conclusion

This analysis concludes that the fire depicted in the video footage occurred in the Bamkikai area, north of Kumbo, in Bui Division of the North-West Region, at the Life Abundant Primary Healthcare (LAP) Centre. Researchers used video footage submitted to the Database and found online to geolocate the LAP Centre to 6°14'3.35"N, 10°41'54.85"E. Social media postings and the report by the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services Director about the incident all point to March 1, 2021, as the attack date. Chronolocation using SunCalc suggested that the video of the incident aftermath—Submitted Source 1—was filmed around 14:00 (Cameroon Local Time). Researchers thus concluded with a high degree of certainty that the incident occurred on the morning of March 1, 2021. The Cameroon Baptist Convention Director's report stated that the incident resulted from gunshots on the LAP Centre, which caused a fire. After review of media and social media, researchers suggest that the likely perpetrators of the attack were Cameroonian soldiers; however, with limited evidence available, it is not possible to determine this conclusively. The LAP Centre was reportedly a laboratory manufacturing and storing medicines, and this attack on a medical facility underlines the worrying trend of attacks on healthcare in the conflict.

## 9. References

Cameroon News Agency (CNA) [@CMRNewsAgency]. (2021, March 2). *Government forces on Monday, March 1, 2021, set on fire a Laboratory and guest house belonging to the Baptist Hospital in Bamkikai...* [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/CMRNewsAgency/status/1366812633886842886>.

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