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**Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa.**



**MIDTERM SUMMARY REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS  
SITUATION IN THE CONFLICT-AFFECTED REGIONS OF  
CAMEROON**

## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	3
<b>A) THE CONTEXT</b> .....	3
<b>B) METHODOLOGY</b> .....	6
<b>C) LEGAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	6
<b>D) THE SITUATION OF THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS</b> .....	8
<b>E) VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS</b> .....	10
<b>F) VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN THE FAR NORTH REGION OF CAMEROON</b> .....	25

## INTRODUCTION

**T**his report represents the summary of our monthly Human Rights monitoring which is divided into different human rights violations and abuses CHRDA documented in the first half of the year 2023. The human rights issues raised in the report are related to the ongoing armed conflict in the North West and South West Regions and the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Far North Region. You can read our quarterly report published on our website, [www.chrda.org](http://www.chrda.org).

### A) THE CONTEXT

Violations and abuses by government forces, armed separatists, Boko Haram Insurgency groups and armed Fulani herders continue to claim lives and affect people's safety, and livelihood, in the North West, South West and Far North Regions of Cameroon. The horrific effects of these human rights violations and abuses affect mostly those in the hinterlands especially those in the North West and South West Regions.

In October 2016, the ongoing Anglophone crisis started when lawyers and teachers from the North West and South West regions of Cameroon went on strike, protesting against what they termed the marginalization of the population, especially at the level of Common Law Courts and the Anglo-Saxon Education System. The protests were led by the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium. These protests were met with a stiff and violent response from the Cameroon government authorities and in 2017, and the crisis degenerated into full-blown armed conflict between the Separatist fighters and the State Defense Forces.

The Boko Haram insurgency began in Nigeria in 2009 and subsequently spread across the Lake Chad basin countries, including Cameroon. Boko Haram indiscriminately attack civilians using Improvised Explosive Devices, suicide bombings in crowded areas and use of lethal weapons thereby targeting civilians and civilian properties. In the first half of the year 2023, there were reported cases of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Boko Haram Insurgency Group.

In the first half of the year 2023, CHRDA recorded significant human rights violations and abuses committed in the conflict-affected regions of Cameroon by state defense and security forces, non-state armed groups and the authorities. These violations include; arbitrary killings, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, delayed litigations, harsh conditions in detention centers, abduction and physical abuse, arson, and Gender-Based Violence, ransom taking, restrictions on the right to free movement.

The conflict-stricken North West, South West and Far North Regions of Cameroon are facing serious human rights violations and abuses. The increase in the violations and abuses stem from violent conflicts resulting to insecurity, and administrative lapses in the regions.

In the North West and South West Regions, the First half of the year 2023 was characterized by events that escalated the ongoing armed conflict in one way or the other. On 20 January 2023, Global Affairs Canada announced that they were officially going to mediate between the ‘Ambazonia’ Separatist Groups and Cameroon Government authorities but it later failed due to refusal by the Cameroonian authorities. This particular event led to the escalation of the armed conflict as more killings and destructions were perpetrated by both the state and non-state armed groups thereafter. The celebration of the Cameroon Youth Day (11 February), the commemoration of International Women’s Day (8 March), and the celebration of National Unity Day (20 May) contributed to the escalation of the violence as there were calls for ghost towns and life threats from separatist fighters against civilians who attempted to participate in the celebrations. The Mount Cameroon Race of Hope which took place on 25 February also contributed to the escalation of the armed conflict as separatist fighters called for a lockdown, aimed at paralyzing this event. The Senatorial Elections of 12 March 2023, saw “Ambazonia’ Separatist Groups threaten those participating to dare engage elections and face them.

The first quarter of the year 2023 also saw an increase in conflict between the armed Fulani militias, the civilian population and armed separatists in the North West Region of Cameroon. The conflict stems from the protracted farmer-grazer-oriented land conflict between the Fulani and Natives of the North West Region. We recorded a number of incident, especially in the Nwa Sub-division and Momo Division of the Northwest Region. Still in that light, we also recorded a significant number of human rights abuses by the Fulani militias crossing from Nigeria to the Donga Matung Division of the North West Region.

There was also an increase in attacks against traditional and religious authorities in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. Some of these attacks led to killings, ill-treatment, kidnapping and extortion, excommunication, life threats and so on...

There was also an increase in attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram Insurgency Group members. The Boko Haram used landmines and lethal weapons to attack the military, vigilante group members and civilians. These attacks also resulted in the destruction of civilian property including arson and killing of animals in the Far North Region.

### **Trends in the North West and South West Regions.**

There was an increase in targeted attacks against those supporting warring parties in one way or the other. For example, the separatist fighters increased attacks against those they termed 'black legs' while the government forces increased the crackdown on ex-fighters who had dropped arms but didn't submit themselves to Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) centers. There was also an increase in the burning of homes owned by separatist fighters and or those suspected of supporting the separatist activities. The Cameroonian authorities also cracked down on the networks of those supporting the 'Ambazonia war' and targeted their frontline leaders. As a result, some frontline 'Ambazonia Generals' like 'General No Pity' was killed. Thus, an increase in targeted killings, arbitrary arrests/detention and kidnappings.

In the first half of the year 2023, we also witnessed an increase in threats against traditional rulers as well as traditional institutions both from the State and Separatist fighters in the North West and South West Regions. The Separatists continued to attack traditional rulers mostly because they are the auxiliaries of the administration and also their participation in government-organized initiatives or in activities aimed at promoting peace in the North West and South West Regions of the country. In some instances, government officials targeted and threatened traditional rulers for allegedly collaborating with the separatist fighters. As was the case with the threats meted against the Fon of Mbiame by the Senior Divisional Officer of Bui Division of the North West Region.

Another development was the introduction of the so-called 'Liberation Tax'. A separatist movement, 'Ambazonia Governing Council' with its fighters 'Ambazonia Defense Forces' imposed what they termed 'Liberation Tax' on civilians and business owners in the North West

and South West Regions. In addition to the economic hardship, this tax resulted in protests against its implementation in several localities in the North West and South West Regions.

In relation to the reaction from the international community and the commitment of the warring parties towards finding a more peaceful solution, there were proposed peace talks including the failed Canadian-led peace initiative which both the hardline warring parties, for the first time met/participated and discussed with each other in the pre-phase of the proposed talks.

## **B) METHODOLOGY**

To document this report, CHRDA carried out field monitoring through our staff and focal point persons in various localities in the conflict-affected regions; carried out observations in courts; observation of the conflict trends; and analyzed comments and reports from the national and international stakeholders and media reports. We also carried out interviews with victims, eyewitnesses and stakeholders. We used digital tools, including but not limited to the CHRDA's Android application (Community Reporter), Social media and other digital tools to collect and analyze our data.

## **C) LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The Cameroon Constitution of 1996 (as amended in 2008), the Cameroon Penal Code of 2016 and the Cameroon Criminal Procedure Code of 2005 were analyzed in this report. We also made reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The 1996 Constitution of Cameroon by virtue of its article 45 provides that "Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following the publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement." Below are some of the ratified laws which we analyzed while documenting this report.

- African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ratification on June 20, 1989).
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT; ratification on December 19, 1986);

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; ratification on August 23, 1994);
- Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity (accession on October 6, 1972)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; ratification on January 11, 1993) and its Optional Protocol (ratification on February 4, 2013);
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR; ratification on June 27, 1984);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR; ratification on June 27, 1984);



## D) THE SITUATION OF THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS

We recorded significant human rights violations and abuses in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The horrific and large-scale violations/abuses were perpetrated by the Defense and Security Forces (DSF), Separates fighters and armed Fulani herders.

### **The Situation at the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Centers:**

Created in 2018, the aim of DDR centers is to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of separatist fighters and Boko Haram Combatants in the North-West, South-West and Far-North regions of Cameroon. On 9 June 2023, the National Coordinator of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee (NDDRC), Fai Yengo Francis, disclosed that a total of 3,520 separatist fighters and Boko Haram combatants have answered President Paul Biya's peace call and dropped their weapons in the conflict-affected North-West, South-West and Far-North regions of Cameroon.<sup>1</sup> This year witnessed massive surrendering, especially by the ex-Separatist fighters in the Anglophone Regions as per the data from government sources. In the first half of 2023, CHRDA also observed the role and activities of the DDR Centers in the North West and South West Region of Cameroon and noted with dismay, some irregularities which did not meet the purpose of the Centers. For example, there were reports of a certain Shutang Urma who surrendered to DDR center in Bamenda being involved in military operations in the North West Region

### **The Senatorial Elections**

The elections took place on the 12 of March 2023. Though the elections were conducted throughout the country, the situation in the North-West and South-West Regions was tense as there were threats from separatist's fighters against whoever dares participate in the elections.

It is worth noting that senators are elected by councilors (indirect universal suffrage), while councilors are elected by the public (direct universal suffrage). During the previous general elections (presidential municipal and parliamentary election) conducted in 2018, there was general insecurity and the opposition political parties were not able to conveniently participate in these elections. During the 12 March senatorial elections, 'Ambazonia groups' called for ghost towns

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<sup>1</sup> <https://theguardianpostcameroon.com/post/1236/en/fruits-of-multidimensional-sensitisation-3-520-amba-boko-haram-fighters-surrender-join>

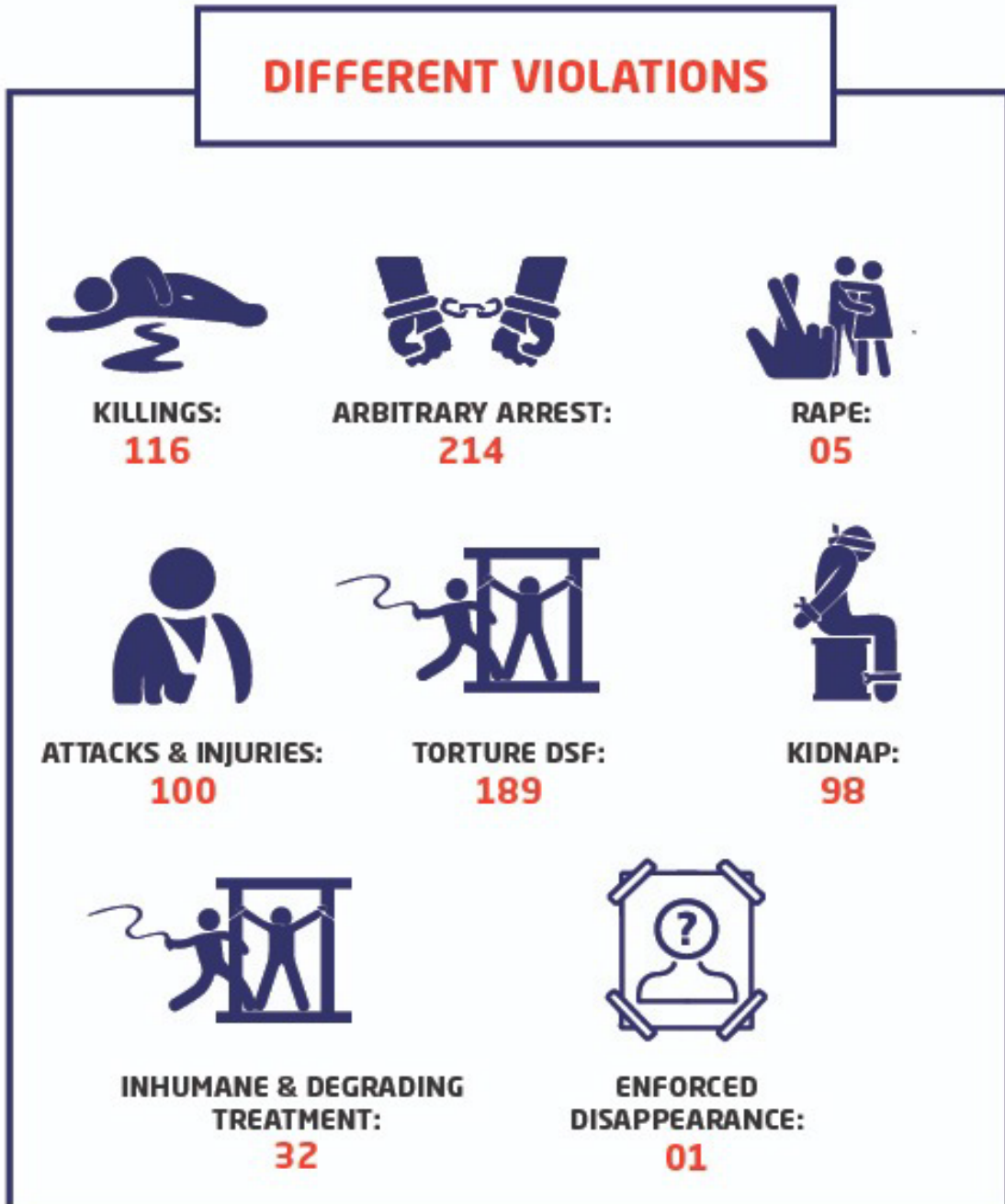
and threatened potential electorates not to dare participate in the elections in the North West and South West Regions

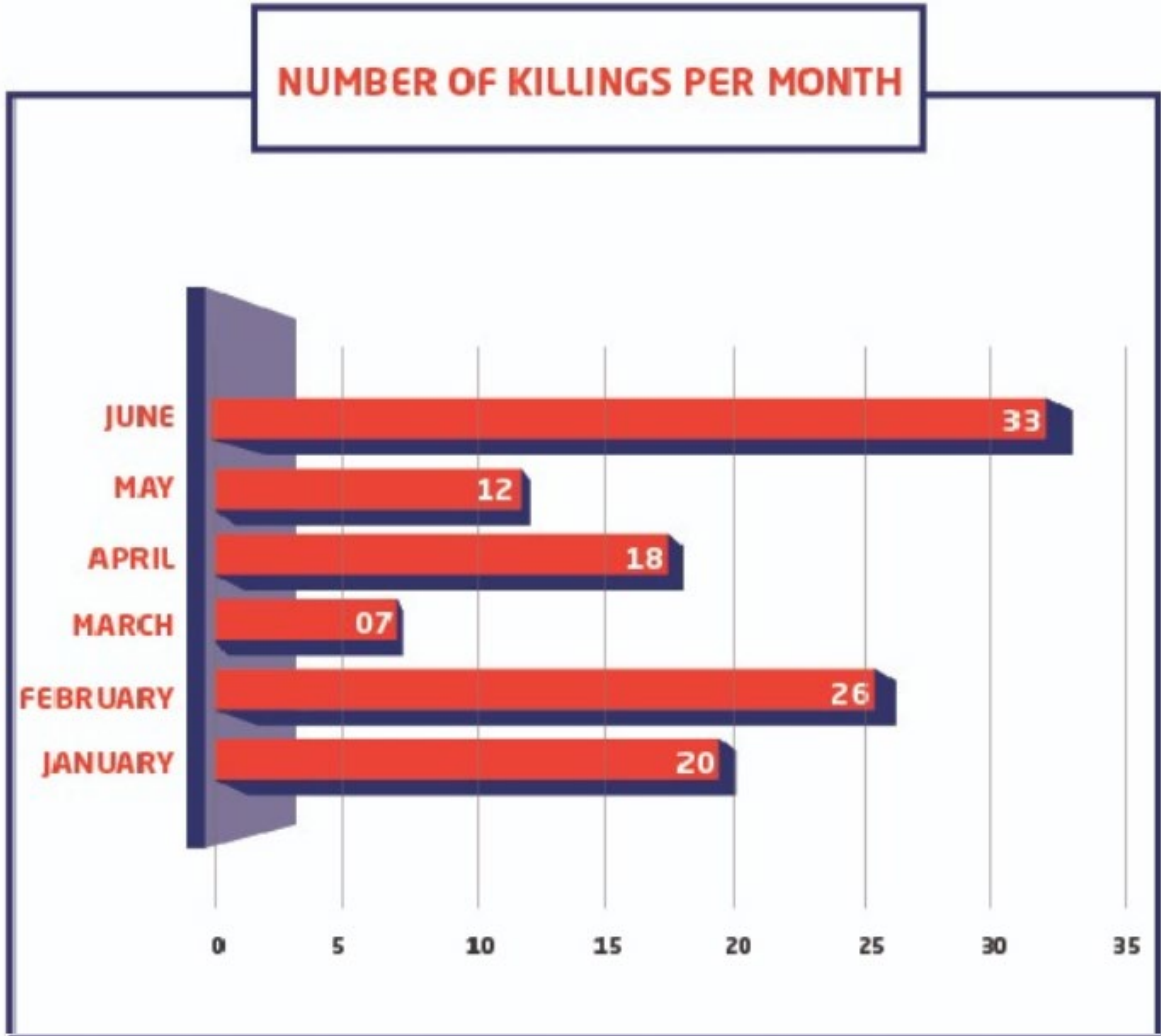
**Growing xenophobic sensation against the Francophone community in the North West and South West regions by some Separatist fighters.**

In the first half of this year, there were xenophobic campaigns from the ‘Ambazonia’ groups against the Francophones resident in the North West and South West Regions. The ‘Ambazonia Governing Council’ in several statements on their official Facebook Page reiterated that the killing of one Anglophone could be met with a reciprocal killing of 10 Francophones.

**E) VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS**

**FACTSHEET:**





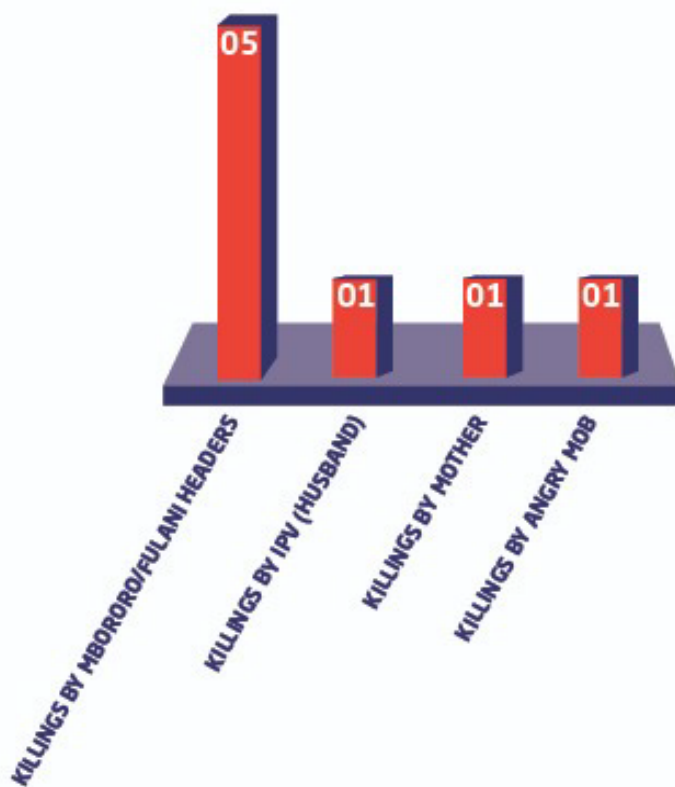
## OTHER KILLINGS

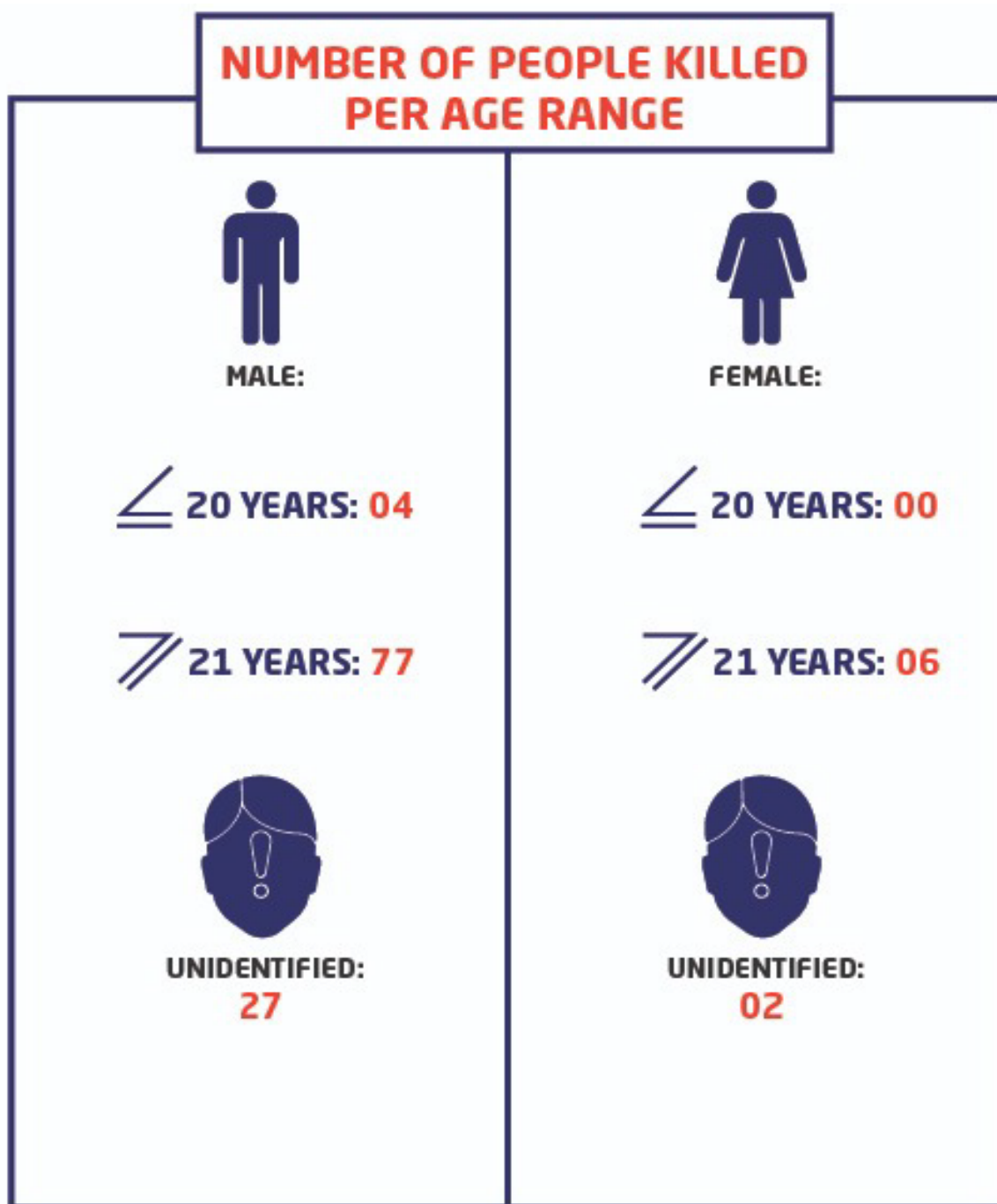
**KILLINGS BY MBORORO/FULANI HEADERS: 05**

**KILLINGS BY IPV (HUSBAND): 01**

**KILLINGS BY MOTHER: 01**

**KILLINGS BY ANGRY MOB: 01**





## **D) VIOLATION/ABUSE OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE**

The right to life is a fundamental human right, considered sacrosanct and is protected at all times including in conflict situations. This right is the most commonly violated right in conflict situations, though the national and international human rights and humanitarian law prohibits violations of the right to life. Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that ‘everyone has the right to life.’ The right to life and security of the person are guaranteed by the Cameroonian Constitution in its preamble “every person has a right to life, to physical and moral integrity”. Articles 4 and 6 of the African Charter, and Articles 6 and 9 of the ICCPR also protects the right to life. It is worth noting that the international conventions are incorporated into Cameroon’s domestic law by virtue of article 45 of the Constitution.

The right to life was violated and abused through targeted and indiscriminate killings and extrajudicial killings. In the first half of the year 2023, there was an increase in violations and abuses of the right to life by the state defense and security forces and non-state armed groups in the North West and South West Regions. We recorded as high as at least **116** deaths as a result of the use of lethal weapons against the state military, non-state fighters, and civilians. These numbers could be higher as more corpses are being discovered in remote areas in the North-West and South-West Regions.

Among other gruesome incidents of indiscriminate and targeted killings was the killing of six (6) and seriously injuring 52 workers<sup>2</sup> of Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC) on 10 February 2023. This attack was perpetrated by armed separatists in Tiko Municipality, of the South West Region of Cameroon. The attack took place while the CDC workers were on their way back from work, between 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm. The attack, which was carried out by armed separatists claimed the lives of five workers on the spot and saw over 52 others wounded. One person among those hospitalized later died due to severe bullet wounds. These workers belonged to the banana group of the CDC. A man in his sixties who was a victim of the attack revealed to CHRDA that they had closed from work as usual and were being transported to their residence by the CDC

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/chrda-report-on-the-attack-on-cdc-workers-by-unidentified-armed-men-in-tiko-south-west-region-cameroon/>

personnel carrier. They were attacked in an area after Makanja 1 Gate, on a stretch of road off the Tiko-Douala road towards the Mondoni Oil Mill.

*“We were driving towards a major road when we heard some gunshots and before we could ascertain where they were coming from, the attackers were already very close. They opened fire at our vehicle and punctured the tires, then they shot the driver and three other senior staff. They ordered another worker to come down and when they discovered he was also a technical staff, he was shot at close range and killed. All our phones were collected from us probably to ensure that we do not report the incident. One of the gunmen ordered his peers to kill all of us for disrespecting calls for a lockdown. I saw about 15 gunmen all armed and only two of them were masked. They all spoke in Pidgin English. We were only saved because of the plea of a pregnant woman who was among us and our lives were spared. After the gunmen had left, a few vehicles passed by but were afraid to help us despite our request for help. It was only some hours later that the military came and carried us to this hospital and the dead bodies to the mortuary.”*

On 7 May 2023, CHRDA recorded the barbaric murder of a Cameroonian journalists, known as Nde Nsoh, a North West correspondent of *The Advocate* newspaper and member of the Cameroon Association of English-Speaking Journalists (CAMASEJ) by armed separatist in Bamenda, the North West Region of Cameroon.

Another incident violating the right to life was the death of Ngule Linus, a student of the University of Buea, who died while in Sécurité Militaire/ Military Security (SEMIL) custody. On 16 March 2023, CHRDA received a complaint from the family members of late Ngule Linus Fonteh and Mbo Giress Akua ( who was released on 7 July 2023) that they were arrested and detained by SEMIL (Sécurité Militaire/ Military Security) in Buea, the South West Region of Cameroon. They were accused by the authorities for allegedly collaborating with the ‘Ambazonia Fighters’. Ngule Linus died while in detention under unclear circumstances. According to complaints laid by the family of Ngule Linus, they received a call from a SEMIL official through Linus’s phone stating that Ngule Linus died as a result of combat between the military and separatist fighters. ‘In the evening of 15 March 2023 at about 8 pm, a number called me that Linus and his friends had been arrested and taken away by the military... about 6 am breaking 16 March 2023, someone called



me through Linus phone number which I believe was a soldier and informed me that Linus was involved in a gun battle between the Cameroon military and Separatist fighters and that he was killed while asking him to come and identify his corpse.’ On the contrary, CHRDA spoke to some locals, who corroborated the earlier statement by relatives that Linus and his friend Giress were arrested by armed men who came in a white car and in civilian attire. SEMIL on their part after the incident claimed that Ngule Linus collapsed as a result of fear when they were interrogating them and that he died at the military hospital in Buea, information which CHRDA could not independently confirm.

The CHRDA pressed for an independent autopsy to be carried out to determine the cause of death while involving the family in every process. The CHRDA also urged the authorities of SEMIL to transfer Mboh Giress to the competent authorities for investigations. He was letter transferred to Gendamerie Legion. Though the government authorities reported to have carried out the requested autopsy, the results was not shared with the public. It is therefore unclear whether the cause of death for Ngule Linus was as a result of torture or illness or even tension from the investigations as reported by SEMIL. On 23 June 2023, the court gave an order that the corps of Ngule Linus should be handed to the family. Mboh Giress was released on 7 July 2023 following an order from the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence.

On 24 June 2023, members of the Cameroon Defense and Security Forces (DSF) extra judicially killed five youths in Ekona town, a locality in Muyuka Sub-division, South-West Region.<sup>3</sup> These individuals, aged between 20 and 37 years, were not armed nor actively participating in hostilities at the time of the incident. Though there were no clear-cut reasons for the killings, a resident described the killings as barbaric and horrific while suggesting that the attack could be because of the consumption of illegal drugs by the victims. While talking to an inhabitant of Ekona, he corroborated that five young men, ages ranging from about 20 to 37 years were shot and butchered. He alleged that one of the victims was the distributor of the hard drugs and the other four had come that morning to purchase and consume the said drug. In a video published and circulated on social media, the bodies of those killed could be seen lying in a house. As recounted by an inhabitant we interviewed, *“This house harbors young men who come and smoke hard drugs and take strong*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/chrda-report-on-the-extrajudicial-killing-of-unarmed-civilians-and-arson-in-ekona-the-south-west-region-of-cameroon/>

*liquor, most often about 30 to 40 of them will gather to smoke, it was luck that only a few of them were there, if not the pain would have been unbearable perhaps”*

These killings are in violation of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and sharply in contrast with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states that “Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” The indiscriminate and extrajudicial killing of civilians violates international humanitarian law principles. Article 48 (basic rule) of Protocol I to the Four Geneva Convention states that *‘In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives.’* Therefore, most of the victims, killed were not actively participating in hostilities against the conflicting parties and therefore did not constitute lawful targets.

## **II RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON**

### **1) ARBITRARY ARREST AND DETENTION**

The Cameroon Constitution and international human rights laws are against arbitrary arrest and detention. The Cameroon Criminal Procedure Code provides that, except in cases of flagrante delicto where suspects are caught in action committing a crime relating to a felony or misdemeanor, the law enforcement officers must disclose their identity and inform the detainee of the valid reason for their arrest. According to Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, ‘No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exiled.’ Article 10 further stipulates that *‘Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.’* Article 6 of the African Charter provides that *“Every individual shall have the right to liberty and to the security of his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom except for reasons and conditions previously laid down by law. In particular, no one may be arbitrarily arrested and detained.”* Article 9(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

states that *“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law.”* Therefore, the Cameroon authorities are bound to respect people’s rights to security, freedom and fair trial.

Article 6 of the African Charter provides that *“Every individual shall have the right to liberty and to the security of his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom except for reasons and conditions previously laid down by law. In particular, no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.”*

In the first half of the year 2023, CHRDA recorded more than **214 cases of arbitrary arrest** and detention in the North West and South West Regions of the country. These numbers could be high as we believed that hundreds of cases were unrecorded or unreported. The population of the North-West and South-West Regions have been witnessing violations of the right to fair trial on a daily basis. Some of the survivors have been released, while some are still in detention. We have been carrying out advocacy and providing pro bono legal services to some of the victims of arbitrary arrest and detention.

These violations have witnessed an increase because of delays in the production of civil documents such as identification cards and birth certificates, an increase in security checkpoints and illegal activities of some law enforcement officials in the regions. It is worth noting that without proper identification especially for males in Cameroon and especially in the North-West and South-West Regions, there is a high risk of arbitrary detention and this has been systematic. Some allegations of belonging to or relating to or being a family member of or promoting or actively participating in the ‘Ambazonia’ activities have also been the gateway for arbitrary arrest and detention.

CHRDA documented several cases of arbitrary arrested and detention and these cases were more on mere suspicion by the state force that victims could be collaborating with armed separatists. Most of those arrested were demanded huge sums of money to secure their release despite the fact that bail is free according to the Cameroon Criminal Procedure Code. The arrests have been qualified by several pundits as essentially “arrests for cash”

On 12 and 13 February 2023, the DSF carried out a raid in Ekona and arrested over a hundred persons, mostly youths and carried them to Buea, some of these youths were released later as a

result of a protest by over 500 women who marched from Ekona to the Gendarmerie Legion in Buea, the South West Region of Cameroon on 15 February to demand for the release of their children. Speaking to one of the protesters, an elderly woman of above fifty, she reiterated her dismay about the situation and the wanton arrest of their children, “*Were our son’s committing any crime by playing football?*” asked an old woman whose son was arrested. Another protester wondered why the state will encourage them to come out of hiding and live in towns but yet come around and arbitrarily arrest their children. A woman amongst the protesters informed our team that they had brought food to give their children on Tuesday 14 February but were denied access to the detention facility where their sons were detained. This was also confirmed by one of those who were detained that since they were arrested on Sunday 12 February, they only had access to food on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February.

### **Incommunicado Detention:**

In the first half of the year 2023, Cameroon officials held detainees incommunicado at detention facilities in the North West and South West Regions and sometimes in the Centre Region (Kondengui Maximum Prison) and Littoral Region at Secrétariat d’Etat à la Defence (SED). Incommunicado detention is generally understood as a situation of detention in which an individual is denied access to family members, an attorney, and an independent medical doctor. We received complaints of severe inhuman treatment while in detention centers especially when suspects are accused of having ties with armed separatist groups. Among the recorded incidents, we received five complaints of incommunicado detention cases in the First half of 2023. Included were the arrest and incommunicado detention of Charli (not his real name) and his relative on 15 March 2023 at about 5:50 pm who were arrested on their way back from work at Mamou Junction, Buea subdivision of the South-West Region of Cameroon. The traumatizing incident represents a large-scale reported and unreported incidents of incommunicado detention in the North-West and South-West Regions.

## **2) KIDNAPPING**

Separatist fighters have continued to use kidnapping as a weapon of war and largely against those they term “black legs” (persons who do not adhere to their ideology and instructions) since the

ongoing armed conflict began in 2016. They have regularly kidnapped most especially business persons and government officials for ransom taking. There was an increase of kidnapping cases in the first half of the year 2023 as a result of continuous disputes among ‘Ambazonia’ movements and crack down on their networks by the Cameroon government authorities that disrupted their funding channels.

In the first quarter of the year 2023, CHRDA recorded several cases of kidnappings in the North-West and South West Regions of Cameroon by separatist fighters and armed Fulani herders. Separatist fighters carried out a series of kidnaps against people who were not in support or violate their rules and regulations like the non-respect of ghost towns and lockdowns, participation in banned activities like the Senatorial elections and the commemoration of other national and international days and government officials were targeted. Some of the victims paid a ransom before they were released, some were killed while in captivity, some were freed and some are still in captivity at the time of this report.

On 19 May 2023, separatist fighters kidnapped<sup>4</sup> at least 30 women in Big Babanki of the North-West Region of Cameroon. Most of the victims were elderly women. These women were kidnapped and cruelly treated as some of them were molested, beaten while some sustained bullet wounds. The reason for the kidnapped and degrading treatment of the women was because they protested against the so-called ‘Liberation Tax’ imposed by the separatist fighters. A local, whom we spoke with told us that the demonstration was in protest of the economic policies on payment of monthly dues of FCFA 10,000 for men and FCFA 5000 for women imposed by the separatist fighters on the population of Big Babanki.

On 1 and 2 April 2023, armed Fulani herders from neighboring Nigeria kidnapped 22 people in Buku, a village in the Ako Subdivision of the North-West Region of Cameroon, bordering Nigeria. The victims were later released due to pressure from national and international stakeholders. In the early hours of Monday 19 June 2023, three civilians were kidnapped during another incursion of armed Fulani operatives from Nigeria in Buku village along the Cameroon - Nigeria border in Ako Subdivision Donga Mantung Division, North-West region

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/the-kidnapping-and-torture-of-women-in-big-babanki-of-the-north-west-region-by-ambazonia-fighters-is-barbaric-and-unacceptable/>

On Saturday, May 27 2023, at about 11:30 pm in Mamfe, Manyu Division, some separatist fighters with rifles went to the house of Chief Taboh at Lala Street and forced him to follow them. He was taken into captivity and the Separatist fighters called the following morning and demanded the sum of 12 million as a ransom payment and threatened that the population won't see his dead body if the amount is not paid and at the time of this report, CHRDA was still monitoring the incident.

### **3) ARSON AND PROPERTY DESTRUCTION**

Targeting and burning of homes and civilian properties were recorded in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon in the first quarter of 2023. These atrocities were perpetrated by the Defense and Security Forces (DSF), Separatist Fighters and armed Fulani/Mbororo. The homes of suspected separatist fighters and homes suspected of hosting separatist fighters were targeted and burnt by the military; administrative buildings, properties and homes of those tagged as 'black legs' were targeted and burnt by the separatist fighters, whereas the armed Mbororo/Fulani herdsmen targeted homes and properties of some natives whom they are in conflict with especially on issues relating to land conflicts. The arson attacks perpetrated mostly against the civilian population led to killings, inhuman treatment, force migration, an increase in a number of homeless people, a humanitarian crisis, and food insecurity.

CHRDA recorded some burnings in the North West and South West Regions of the country. On 28 January 2023, the Separatist fighters attacked Eshobi Village in the South West Region of Cameroon and razed houses, while some people were abducted and some killed.

On January 12, 2023, Fulani herdsmen, who allegedly came from the border between Nigeria and Cameroon, invaded Esu, a locality in Menchum Division of Cameroon's North-West Region and burnt down houses. On February 25, 2023, separatist fighters burnt down a car belonging to Ntemgwah Elvis who was also shot dead in M'mouck-Fossimondi in Lebialem Division of the South-West Region.

On February 4, 2023, separatist fighters attacked and burnt down three vehicles transporting goods in Bamessing Village in Ndop, the North West Region of Cameroon.



On Monday, February 6, 2023, several vehicles were burned down by armed separatist fighters in Wowo Village in Ndu Sub-division in Donga Mantung Division of the North-West Region. The vehicles burned include trucks and cargo vans.

On Tuesday 29th March 2023, State DSF set ablaze some houses/shops in Mbveh Market, in Kumbo Sub-division, Bui Division, North-West Region. On March 28, 2023, armed separatist fighters attacked workers and burnt down a Bulldozer, belonging to a construction company working on the Njikwa-Ngie road.

The State Defense and Security Forces on 5 April 2023, in an operation allegedly in search of separatist fighters, invaded and burnt down 7 houses in Basho village, of the South-West Region.

#### **4) THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ATTACK ON JOURNALISTS**

The right to Freedom of expression is enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. According to the above article, *'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'* In the first half of the year 2023, journalists and human rights defenders faced harassment from both the

state and non-state actors as a result of their work. On 7 May 2023, armed separatists killed Anye Nde Nsoh, a journalist and North-West Regional Bureau Chief of The Advocate Newspaper. He was shot at close range at Che Street, a locality in Bamenda, the North-West Region of Cameroon. This among other attacks both online and offline is in violation of international law protecting journalists and freedom of expression. Though CHRDA could not independently ascertain whether he was targeted because of his profession as a journalist or for some other reasons.

## 5) ATTACKS AGAINST TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

CHRDA recorded a number of human rights incidents involving the attack against traditional authorities and their palaces in the North-West and South-West Regions. Palaces on like religious sites are protected sites and not military targets during armed conflicts. These attacks were perpetrated by the Separatist fighters and State Defense and Security Forces. The Separatist fighters targeted, kidnapped and also threatened traditional authorities in the conflict-affected regions. In the Month of April 2023, Shey Wo Ngang, a traditional notable of Nso Tribe in the North West Region was kidnapped by the separatist fighters. In June, a prominent traditional ruler, Fon Kevin Shumitang who was kidnaped in 2021 by the dreaded ‘General No Pity’ was released from captivity. Still in the first quarter of the year, the Fon of Mbiame was threatened by the Senior Divisional Officer of Bui after accusing him of collaborating with the separatist fighters. In a letter address to the Fon, the SDO stated that *“On June 14, 2023, the terrorists visited your chieftdom and ordered all the Mbororos....to come out en masse to welcome you back from the United States, or risk suffering their wrath. The people who escorted you back from Mbonso to your palace in Mbiame were led by terrorists,”* that is when Fon Nweh II of Mbiame was returning from the United States on June 11. He also accused the Fon of *"giving information to terrorists on the movements of defense and security forces, and organizing the kidnapping of peaceful civilians for ransom to share the booty."* These attacks against the traditional authorities have been systematic since the escalation of the ongoing armed conflict which started in 2016.



## 6) TORTURE

Article 1 of the International Convention Against Torture defines torture as *any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.*" At the National Level, the Cameroon Penal Code of 2016 in Section 277(3) punishes torture.

In the first half of the year 2023, we recorded **189** cases of torture. These torture case, we believe could be more as most of them occur in secret detention centers and largely unreported. This torture cases were either affect victims psychological or physical, resulting from arbitrary arrest and detention and inhuman treatment in various detention centers across Cameroon, rape and unjustified long stay in pretrial detention centers. We intervened through humanitarian responses to some cases including the provision of pro bono legal services, counseling and medical and material assistance to the survivors and we have also been engaging in campaigns and advocacies for justice for survivors at the level of the Courts and other regional instruments including the United Nations Committee against Torture.

**F) VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN THE FAR NORTH REGION OF CAMEROON**

The Boko Haram Insurgency Group in the first half of the year 2023 committed atrocities mostly against the civilian population in the Far North Region of Cameroon. The atrocities were meted against the Cameroon Military and civilians through the use of land mines, lethal weapons, destruction of property and looting. We recorded at least 35 deaths as well as the destruction of properties including at least 200 houses and the looting of foodstuffs including sheep and cattle.



## a) ATROCITIES AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

### KILLINGS

On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at about 11:30PM in the locality of Gouzoudou, Koza Sub-division, Mayo-Sava division, a girl named Falta Alhadji, aged 26, was shot dead in front of her house during a confrontation between the Boko-Haram insurgency group and the (Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR).

On Saturday 18 March 2023 at about 11:00 pm, in the locality of Wata Toufou situated in Matakam, Tourou Sub-division, in the Mayo-Tsanaga Division of the Far-North region, an 81-year-old man named Soupawa Suiti was killed, another man by name Dedawi Djalva, aged 35 was injured and foodstuffs, sheep and other goods were taken during the invasion.

Equally on Saturday 18 March 2023, in the Moskota locality, Mayo-Moskota sub-division, Mayo-Tsanaga division, Far-North region, two children were killed and four others injured in an explosion at the home of Lawan Boukar. It appeared that the explosive had been carefully placed by elements of the Boko-Haram insurgency group. On that same Saturday 18 March 2023, the Boko-haram insurgency groups invaded the area of Mahoula, Mora sub-division of Mayo Sava division, Far-North region and killed a young shepherd.

On Thursday, June 1, 2023, at about 3:00 AM., a vigilante member was beheaded following an attack by the Boko Haram Insurgents in the Amchidé locality, Far-North region. It was reported that the heavily armed men stormed the locality and targeted the vigilante and Vanaha, popularly known as Obarotte was slaughtered on the process.

On July 30 at about 11:00 pm breaking July 31 2023, the Boko-Haram insurgents attacked the village of Lamram II, of the Mayo Tsanaga division, Mokolo Canto de Tourou sub-division. In the course attack, at least three deaths were registered; Ngargoua Dagawa about 78 years old, Ndanou Ngamti about 71 years old and Nihinta Gatvaya about 60 years old. Another person, Mahdjik Natawa of about 60 years was seriously injured and property looted.

On August 2, 2023, about eight fishermen were killed in an attack perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents in the locality of Darak in the Lagone and Chari division of the Far-North Region. It is

reported that there was a problem between a certain individual that was charged to collect taxes on fishing activities in the locality from the fishermen. As a result, the Boko haram militants took the opportunity and killed several fishermen in the area. The president of the fishermen's association of Darak, Abba Kabir reiterated that the attack was perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect as their bodies had received several bullets.

## **HARASSMENT AND KIDNAPPING**

On Monday, March 27, 2023, in the locality of Razzia towards Amchidé, of Kolofata, Mayo-Sava, division, the Boko-Haram invaded the area and harassed civilians.

On April 03, 2023, the same night of the attack of Watatoufou, another group attacked the village of Ldagodja in the Mayo Tsanaga Division of the Far-North Region. The attack resulted to the injuring of 2 people by names Dangora Hoya 52 years old who suffered a fracture on his right foot. Ngatawa Kildai, a man of about 70 years old was wounded on both feet. Also, bags of food stuff was carried away.

On the night of June 28 breaking June 29, 2023, suspected Boko-Haram Insurgents abducted at least 13 persons in Mordas, a locality situated around the Cameroon and Chad borders. Among those abducted were women and children.

## **LOOTING**

On Monday, March 20, 2023, at about 2:05 AM in the Limani area, Mora sub-division, Mayo-Sava division, the Boko-Haram attacked and looted a shop belonging to a man named Bahana Ababoundi.

On Sunday, March 19, 2023, at about 1:45 AM, the Boko-haram attacked the area of Limani, Mora sub-division, Mayo-Sava division of the Far-North region and looted several houses and properties, most especially foodstuffs and cattle. Fortunately, most of the cows were recovered by the vigilante committee in the area. On Sunday, March 19, 2023, in the locality of Yamede Gaboua, Koza, Mayo-Tsanaga division, the Boko-Haram in an incursion looted properties of civilians.

On 3 and 4 April 2023, the Boko Haram insurgents infiltrated the village of Watatoufou in the Mayo Tsanaga Division about 10:PM. As a result of this attack, about twenty fowls, about 15 bags of foodstuffs weighing 100 kg and clothing were carried away.

### **ARSON AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY**

On Monday, April 17 2023, over 200 houses were burnt down, and one soldier was killed and several inhabitants injured following an attack from the Boko Haram members in the Kerawa Mafa and Zeleved villages in the Mayo Tsanaga division of the Far North region. According to reports, the group launched simultaneous attacks on the two villages. The group reportedly burnt down two military posts killing a soldier from the Rapid Intervention Battalion while several others were injured. Narrating the incident a witness, Indigenes of Kerawa Mafa and Zeleved in the Far-North Region of Cameroon were taken by surprise at about 3 a.m. on Tuesday, following a fresh Boko Haram attack barely few days after the population suffered a similar attack. “In Tuesday morning, they began by burning down houses, which also resulted in a stampede, as everyone escaped into safety,” an eye witness said, adding that soldiers who arrived at the scene were unable to overpower the jihadists. One Cameroonian soldier was killed, while two other persons were taken hostage by the Boko Haram militants. The attack resulted in massive destruction as hundreds of houses were burnt, two people kidnapped, two large military vehicles were destroyed, and a dozen people injured. The injured victims were rushed to the hospital while women, men, and children in the area were stranded and left without food and shelter. The attack equally saw, thirteen soldiers wounded, a woman wounded, and one dead, the Boko Haram elements took away 2 vehicles. It is worth noting that heavy weapons and ammunition, with several phones, were seized by Boko Haram in the course of the attack.

#### **b) ATROCITIES AGAINST STATE DEFENSE AND SECURITY FORCES.**

In the first half of the year 2023, the Boko Haram Insurgency Group perpetrated a number of atrocities against the military in the Far-North Region. They used land mines/improvised explosive devices and lethal weapons to attack the Cameroon Military and some soldiers of the Nigerian Military. We recorded a number of incidents as seen below.

On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at about 9.30 am in Amchidé, Kolofata, Mayo-Sava division of the Far North region, two soldiers, (belonging to the BIR unit of the Cameroon Defense and Security Forces) were killed and several wounded in a mine explosion perpetrated by the Boko-Haram Insurgency Group in the locality of Amchidé.

On Saturday 18 March 2023, at the Banki-Bama road in Mora sub-division, Mayo Sava division, Far-North region, four Nigerian soldiers were killed and sixteen others injured as a result of the explosion of a mine detonated by Boko-Haram militants. A vehicle belonging to the Nigerian army was blown up in the explosion.

On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at about 1.00AM, the Boko-Haram attacked the locality of Kassa towards Gansé, Kolofata sub-division, of Mayo-Sava division and reportedly seized several weapons belonging to the Cameroon Military.

On Monday, April 24, 2023, six Cameroonian soldiers were killed after their vehicle exploded on a landmine planted by members of the Boko Haram Group in Hiteré, a neighborhood in Mayo Moskota, Mayo Tsanaga Division. The vehicle which carried a total of 8 soldiers was attacked when the soldiers were returning to their posts in Tchébétchébé when they came across a land mine at Carrefour Hiteré,” a witness narrated. The team of the 42nd Motorized Infantry Battalion was on a patrol mission when the unfortunate incident occurred. The explosion claimed the lives of six with two survivors whom at the time of this report were in critical condition, after sustaining severe injuries during the explosion.

In the early hours of Tuesday May 30, at least four persons were killed by suspected Boko Haram insurgents in Mora and Ziangue of the Far North region. The victims were two customs officers, 1 policeman, and a civilian. The officers who lost their lives in the attack were; Second Grade Police Inspector, Nana Nourou, alongside Tawato Cedric and Ebongue Alphonse, who were serving at the Mora Mobile Customs Brigade. A soldier, Guigolo Alain Obono, also died in the second attack. The attackers left behind explosive devices after the attack.

## G) CONCLUSION AND COMMENTARY

The first half of this year 2023 was worrisome in terms of Human Rights violations/abuses and we recorded an increase in human rights violations and abuses in the conflict affected regions of Cameroon. As a result, there is an increase in humanitarian crisis in these areas. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2023), the conflicts in Cameroon have caused a serious humanitarian crisis. Because of several conflicts in the country (armed conflict in the North-West and South-West, Boko Haram Insurgency in the Far-North and Refugee crisis in the East Regions), one in six people in Cameroon needs humanitarian assistance. They also reported that there was a 20% increase in humanitarian need since 2022 as an estimated 4.7 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection in Cameroon. The severity and scope of humanitarian needs continue to grow due to the combined impact of conflict, insecurity, and climate-related events, such as floods and droughts. Humanitarian needs are compounded by poverty, poor infrastructure, limited access to basic social services, and epidemics, such as cholera and measles. All of these challenges affect people's long-term recovery and livelihood.

As of May 2023, Cameroon's Far-North Region hosted 385,000 internally displaced people (IDPs), more than 115,000 Nigerian refugees and 350,000 Central African refugees. The United Nations High Commission for refugees also reported (June 2023) that more than 3 million people face acute food insecurity in Cameroon. The ongoing armed conflict in the North the North-West and South-West and the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Far-North Regions greatly contributed to the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon largely as a result of recurrent human rights violations and abuses.

The CHRDA recommends that the warring parties in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon should initiate a truthful and sincere mediated dialogue to resolve the ongoing armed conflict. We also recommend that the government forces and separatist fighters should show restraint and desist from committing human rights violations and abuses, especially the perpetration of attacks against civilians and their properties.

We encourage the Cameroon government to increase security measures in the Far-North Regions to protect civilians and their properties from the Boko Haram attacks in the region.

## **SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA (CHRDA)**

1. United States Embassy Yaounde
2. German Embassy Yaounde
3. British High Commission Yaounde
4. Canadian Embassy Yaounde
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6. Swiss Peace
7. Open Society for West Africa (OSIWA)
8. United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF)
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10. United Nations Voluntary Funds against Trafficking (UNVFT)
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12. CIVICUS/LIFELINE
13. Urgent Action Fund
14. Femmes Actantes
15. Color of Roses
16. Raoul Wallenberg Foundation
17. Fredreich Ebert Stiftung Foundation.
18. Mission 21
19. Christian Blind Missionary
20. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
21. Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT)





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