

**2023 REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS  
SITUATION OF THE CONFLICT-AFFECTED  
REGIONS OF CAMEROON.**



The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) is an independent, nongovernmental, apolitical and non-profit making organization founded in 2005, dedicated to the protection and advancement of human rights and the promotion of democracy as a political culture in Africa. It engages in different and sensitive issues related to the advancement of Human Rights and Democracy through the implementation of projects which seek to foster research in these fields by offering opportunities to Human Rights activists, legal practitioners, graduate and students to volunteer and to be a part of the human rights movement.

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**CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
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# THE 2023 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT OF THE CONFLICT AFFECTED REGIONS OF CAMEROON

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report represents the summary of our monthly human rights monitoring and is divided into different human rights violations and abuses that we documented 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.

Cameroon is a country in the Central African Sub-region. In the last decade, Cameroon has been plunged into multiple political, socio-economic and security crises, ranging from the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Far North Region, the refugee crisis in the East region and the armed conflict in the North West and South West Regions. The Boko Haram Insurgency has claimed over 3000 lives, displaced over 250,000 and had a great toll on properties and livelihood of the people of the Far North Region since the first by Boko Haram attack on Cameroonian soil on March 2014. The Boko Haram Crisis has also forced over 120,000 Nigerians to seek refuge in Cameroons Far North Region. The political and security crisis in the Central African Republic has also forced over 332,000 CAR citizens to seek refuge in Cameroon's East region.

The armed conflict in the North West and South West Region began as a protest in October 2016 when Anglo Saxon teachers and Common Law Lawyers went on strike, protesting against what they considered the marginalization of the Anglophones, 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. The crisis later degenerated into an armed conflict in 2017 due to the poor management of same by the state. The over five years conflict has claimed at least 6000 lives, rendered over 638,421 other IDPs, and forced over 64,388 to flee to Nigeria as refugees. The human rights situation of these conflict affected regions continued to deteriorate in 2023 considering the volatiles security situation these regions.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, we monitored and documented significant human rights violations and abuses by government forces, separatist's fighters, Boko Haram Insurgency groups, armed Fulani herders. These atrocities continued to claim lives and affected people's safety, and livelihoods, in the North West, South West and Far North Regions of Cameroon. The horrific effects of these human rights violations and abuses affected mostly those in the hinterlands especially of the North West and South West Regions. Some of these violations and abuses included; 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, interference with the right to vote,

Throughout the year 2023, the conflict-stricken North West, South West and Far North Regions of Cameroon continued facing serious human rights violations and abuses. The increase in the violations and abuses was as a result of the degenerating violence in these regions resulting to insecurity, and rendering administrative services very difficult to handle, especially in the enclaved areas. Though the government made some efforts to investigate some of these violations and abuses, the output of most of these investigations were never made known to the general public. This is particular with violations implicating defense and security forces and/or administrative authorities. Most of the times, investigations were launched but the outcome of such investigations were never made known to the press, civil society and the general public.

Since the beginning of the conflict in the North West and South West Regions in 2016, the security situation of these regions became volatile. In the year 2023, we noticed that some events escalated the ongoing armed conflict in one way or the other. These events include: the refusal of the state to commit to the Canada led pre-talks; Youth Day Celebration, Mt Cameroon Race of Hope; Women's Day celebration; 20 may celebration, Back to school resumption; 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 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. This simply confirmed that both parties to the conflict are still bent on their resolve to pursue a military option of the resolution of the conflict. 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, and went further to attack athletes with Improvised Explosive Devices. The Senatorial Elections of 12 March 2023, saw “Ambazonia’ Separatist Groups threaten those participating to dare participate in the elections and face them.

In the year 2023, there was equally an escalation of conflicts 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.

Attacks against traditional and religious authorities in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon also witnessed a significant increase. Some of these attacks led to killings, ill-treatment, kidnapping and ransom taking, 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 theft of civilian property, burning of homes and business places and killing of animals in the Far North Region.

### **3. 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 belonging to 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’ were killed. Thus, an increase in targeted killings, arbitrary arrests/detention and kidnappings.

In 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 negotiations processes in which both the hardline warring parties for the first time participated/met and discussed with each other in the pre-phase of the proposed talks.

#### **4. 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 stakeholder s. 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.



## 5. 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);

## **6. THE SITUATION OF THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS**

In the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, we recorded significant human rights violations and abuses. This was a result of the worsening security situation of these regions. These abuses were committed by separatist fighters, Defense and Security forces, Fulani militias as well as other splinter groups operating in these regions

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

#### **6.1.1 Arbitrary and Extrajudicial Killings**

In the course of the year, we recorded several cases of extrajudicial and arbitrary killings. This was done in outright violation of the right to life which is a fundamental human right, considered sacrosanct and is protected at all times including in conflict situations. This right is the most commonly violated rights 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. **At least three hundred (300)** people were killed in the North West and South West Regions this year 2023. The killings were as a result of targeted and extra judicial killings.

#### **i. Killings by State Defence and Security Forces**

We recoded several incidents of targeted and extrajudicial killings committed by government forces on official duties. In most cases, persons suspected of having links with separatist fighters or their networks were extra judicially executed. Some members of separatist armed groups were in some instances captured by state forces and later extra-judicially executed.

On January 5, 2023, a farmer was killed in Kwakwa, a village in Meme Division of the South West Region, reportedly by elements of Cameroon’s DSF. The individual was shot on his way to the farm. According to the villagers in the area, he was shot for allegedly being suspected of being a separatist fighter, an accusation which they rejected.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/January-2023-Human-Rights-Report-copy-1.pdf>

On February 9, 2023, two persons were reported to have been killed by the DSF. This incident took place in Mile 2 Nkwen, called Atanga Nji Street, in Bamenda in Mezam Division of the North-West Region. Before the incident, two separatist fighters are said to have stormed the area in a suspected attempt to kidnap a teacher living there. After the failed kidnapping attempt, these separatist fighters are said to have left on a bike. The military arrived later and lay guard, hoping to catch up with the separatist fighters. Some two civilians who were riding to that area on a bike were shot dead indiscriminately.<sup>2</sup>

On February 21, 2023, the DSF raided Kombone, a village along the Kumba-Ekondo Titi road in Meme Division of the South-West Region. This raid was reported to have resulted in the killing of at least five civilians. The indiscriminate shooting that night left at least three other civilians severely injured, who were immediately rushed to a hospital in Kumba. “Soldiers stormed the village and were shooting on every direction, a situation which got the entire village terrified,” said a villager. Some of the victims of this shooting were reportedly found in the bush. It was not clear what provoked the raid, but it was suspected to be one of several raids aimed at capturing armed separatist fighters.<sup>3</sup>

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 the 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

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/February-2023-Human-Rights-Report-2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

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 verify.

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 later transferred to Gendarmerie Legion. Though the government authorities reported to have carried out the requested autopsy, the results were never shared in public. It is therefore unclear whether the cause of the death of 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 the 30 of March, DSF killed a man in Baingang, Njinikom, Boyo Division of the North-West Region. The deceased named as Bogam George was a Community leader in the area, who was well known and was considered a role model by the youths of that area. He was reported to have been mistaken by the military, for a separatist fighter. He was a father of four kids.<sup>4</sup>

On Friday June 16, Cameroon DSF shot and killed over 10 locals suspected to be separatist fighters around Kedjom Keku, Tubah Sub division. Residents interviewed by CHRDA in Big Babanki and Bambui of Tubah Sub division, provided information to the effect that those summarily killed were civilians and not separatist fighters as purported in some reports. According to those interviewed, some of the men killed were civilians who were arbitrary arrested in Bambui, upon suspicion that they were collaborating with armed separatist fighters. And that the others were randomly picked up around Mughu, the area where separatist fighters had days back blocked the road and extorted money from passengers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/updated-HUMAN-RIGHTS-SITUATION-FOR-THE-NW-SW-MARCH-2023-1-4.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CHRDA-Human-Rights-Report-for-June-2023-1.pdf>

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>6</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 early morning to purchase and consumed the said drug. In a video, published and circulated on social media, the bodies of those killed could be seen lying in a house. An inhabitant we interviewed said the following *“This house harbors young men who come and smoke hard drugs and take strong liquor, most often about 30 to 40 of them will gather to smoke, it was luck that day that only a few of them were there, if not the pain would have been unbearable perhaps”*.<sup>7</sup>

On Sunday, June 25, 2023, one civilian and a separatist fighter were shot in Fiango, a neighborhood in Kumba, Meme Division, South West region. The civilian was shot at close range after challenging Gendarmes who stormed their meeting to arrest one of their members without presenting an arrest warrant. The man shot was said to be a member of a social/football association known as “veteran”. This man was reportedly removed from a veteran club meeting and shot.<sup>8</sup>

On Tuesday, July 4, 2023, elements of the DSF in a search for separatist fighters in Mejang Royal Palace invaded and burnt down the Royal palace, the Royal Queen mother and an IDP seeking refuge in the Royal Palace of Mejang in Boyo Division, Northwest Region of Cameroon.<sup>9</sup>

On July 9, 2023, a corpse was discovered at an advance state of decomposition in a bush around “C bend”, towards Mughli neighborhood in big Babanki, Tubah Sub division, Mezam Division, North West Region. The population was mobilized for identification of the corpse, which was

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/chrda-report-on-the-extrajudicial-killing-of-unarmed-civilians-and-arson-in-ekona-the-south-west-region-of-cameroon/>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> The Human Rights Situation of the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon for the Month of July 2023 [https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE\\_HUMAN\\_RIGHTS\\_SITUATION\\_REPORT\\_OF\\_THE\\_NORTH-WEST\\_AND\\_SOUTH-WEST\\_REGIONS\\_OF\\_CAMEROON\\_FOR\\_THE\\_-1.pdf](https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE_HUMAN_RIGHTS_SITUATION_REPORT_OF_THE_NORTH-WEST_AND_SOUTH-WEST_REGIONS_OF_CAMEROON_FOR_THE_-1.pdf)

difficult due to the state of the deceased. A witness noted, that a family suspected from the dress worn by the deceased belonged to their son. However, there was uncertainty because the size of the corpse did not match the description. A hole was excavated in the bush and the corpse was buried.

Again, on the 11 of July, 2023, 9 corpses were discovered still in an advanced state of decomposition littered in a bush around a neighborhood called “Bobi Na One” still in Big Babanki, Tubah Sub division. The population that rushed to the scene alerted the rest of the residents of the village. After some efforts families were able to identify their relatives amongst the deceased. These families blame the military for the death of their loved ones. Many noted that, their relatives were arrested few weeks back by elements of the military and despite several attempts to see them during visitation at the detention facility, the officer on duty often claimed, they had been transferred to a different facility. According to the relatives of the deceased, the officers treated them with disdain and sent them out, to search elsewhere without mentioning any detention facility. This therefore implies that, this inhumane, cruel treatment and killing of civilians was carried out by DSF.

On the night of July 14, 2023, DSF in a rescue mission invaded a house and shot dead at least four unarmed boys in Awing quarters, Bamenda 1 Subdivision, Mezam Division, North West Region of Cameroon. CHRDA gathered that the oldest amongst the deceased was a 21-year-old, the other victims were between the ages of 18 and 19 years old. The incident occurred when the boys (about 5 of them in number with two girls) were partying together. A witness who talked to CHRDA noted that the boys were notorious for taking hard drugs and will always quarrel and fight amongst themselves. According to the witness, the DSFs were on a mission to rescue a girl who had been allegedly kidnapped by the boys.<sup>10</sup>

On Saturday 02 September 2023, state DSF captured six suspected separatist fighters in the localities of Lubange and Defenda, Konye Sub-division, Meme Division, South-West region. We got the pseudonyms of these suspects as “Colonel Otondo”, “mission commander Arafat”, “Pay cash”, “Kasskumba”, “Rico”, and “Adebayor”. These suspects who are said to have been operating in these localities under a certain “general' Ikeku” were captured alive and by state defence and

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<sup>10</sup> Killing of at least, four boys in Awing Quarters by DSF, Available at <https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-and-south-west-regions-of-cameroon-for-the-month-of-july-2023/>

security forces. They snapped pictures of these individuals and shared them online after their captured. These individuals were later extra-judicially executed by the DSF and their corpses displayed beside a street in the area. According to a letter addressed to the Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute by Michael Ngwese Eko Ekosso, the National President of the United Socialist Democratic Party (USDP), the USDP national President noted that the five young men were civilians and not armed separatist fighters as alleged by the officers who carried out the attack.<sup>11</sup>

## **ii. Killings by Separatist Fighters**

On January 4, 2023, separatist fighters reportedly invaded Bache, a village in Akwaya Subdivision in Manyu Division of the South-West Region. Eyewitnesses recount that this attack resulted in the killing and subsequent burial of three persons. CHRDA got the names of those killed as: Pa Jonas Ekwale Abang (age 79), Ebai Ashu John (age 58), and Esua Desmond Kajang (age 30). At least ten other persons were also injured in this attack and several others forced to consume full bottles of whisky. Several houses were also reportedly set ablaze, while properties were looted and huge sums of money seized from locals. Those injured, as well as those who were forced to consume whisky, were reportedly taken to a hospital in Mamfe for proper medical attention.<sup>12</sup> Reports say a businessman named Bosco was killed in Mobile Nkwen, Bamenda, in Mezam Division of the North-West Region, around 8:00pm on the evening of January 17, 2023. Witnesses say Bosco, who was a brewery merchant who deals in soft and cane drinks amongst other goods, was shot while trying to resist being kidnapped. On January 17, 2023, a young man was killed and dropped in “Behind Che,” a neighborhood in Bamenda. It is reported that he was brought there on a bike and shot dead. Locals say the act was perpetrated by suspected armed separatist fighters. The reasons for his execution are yet to be confirmed. On January 21, 2023, gunmen suspected to be separatist fighters attacked and killed a man in Manda, Nkwen, Bamenda, in Mezam Division of the North-West Region. The old man, whose name CHRDA got as “Pa Shamag,” was gunned down at about 9:00pm. Denizens of the area pointed accusing fingers at separatist fighters operating in the area for having masterminded this targeted killing, although the reason for the killing is still unclear. On February 3, 2023, a man whose name CHRDA got as Henry Boma was

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<sup>11</sup> Extrajudicial execution of six suspected separatist fighters captured in Konye Sub-Division by DSF. Available at <https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-and-south-west-regions-of-cameroon-for-the-month-of-september-2023/>

<sup>12</sup> Invasion of Bache, killing three and injuring ten, Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/January-2023-Human-Rights-Report-copy-1.pdf>

shot dead at his residence between 9:00pm and 11:00pm by armed men identified by locals as separatist fighters. This incident took place in Alakuma, Bamenda, in Mezam Division of the North-West Region. Sources reveal that the man was rushed to the hospital after he was captured and shot, but he was confirmed dead. CHRDA has not been able to confirm the circumstances surrounding his murder. One of the most gruesome incidents recorded this year was the indiscriminate targeting and killing of six (6) and seriously injuring 52 workers<sup>13</sup> of the 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 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.”*

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/chrda-report-on-the-attack-on-cdc-workers-by-unidentified-armed-men-in-tiko-south-west-region-cameroon/>



On Wednesday, 15th of March 2023, Professor Chiabi was shot at his residence at New Road Nkwen neighbourhood, Bamenda III Sub-division, Mezam Division of the North West Region. Family sources reveal that the Professor of History had just returned home from the roadside, where he went looking for cooking gas. Armed gunmen suspected to be separatist fighters shot him while he was in his residence. He was rushed to a health facility in Nkwen Bamenda, where he succumbed to death due to the fatal bullet wounds.<sup>14</sup>

On Thursday March 16th, 2023, the Congregational Chairman of the Presbyterian Church (PC) Nchang, a village in Mamfe Central, Manyu Division-SWR was buried alive, by separatist fighters after his abduction on Wednesday March 15th, 2023. The chairman whose name CHRDA got as Agbormbough Prizo, was abducted alongside other locals while they were farming. It is alleged that while working on the farm and discussing, the chairman made a statement condemning some excesses of separatist fighters in the area. According to a local, the said topic of discussion was based on a clash between, the military and separatist fighters that occurred along the stretch of road one of the settlements in Nchang, on Tuesday 14 March 2023, which led to the death of at least three separatist fighters.<sup>15</sup>

On 10 April 2023, ‘Ambazonia’ Fighters killed three unarmed civilians in Fundong, Boyo Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. One of the victims, Njoh Oliver a youth leader was a worker with the Fundong Council. A community member revealed that the separatist fighters targeted the council Worker, for allegedly collaborating with the state forces. The other two victims whom we identified as Ngong Fabiola and Desmond were equally killed during the targeted attack against Oliver. According to another community member, Oliver had previously survived a separatist attack in 2018.<sup>16</sup> Another horrific human rights violation registered was the killing of a man in Bamenda the North West Region of Cameroon by Separatist fighters. From a video which circulated online and shared on different social media platforms belonging to the separatist movements, the victim by name Mr. Ali was accused of working with the Cameroon government in facilitating the establishment of National Identification Cards and other Civil Documents for

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<sup>14</sup><https://www.facebook.com/AgborNkonghoF/posts/pfbid0SR8woURrHVoeFSwCxc7FF5XnYLXELu4qavFZcsxPABXpddCvoSQis35VmPmKRLbAl>

<sup>15</sup> The Kidnap and subsequent burying alive, of the Chairman, of the Presbyterian Church Nchang by armed separatist fighters, Available at <https://theguardianpostcameroon.com/post/908/en/mamfe-suspected-amba-fighters-bury-presbyterian-church-congregational-chairman-alive->

<sup>16</sup> Killing of two bike riders and a council worker in Fundong, Own source

the population. According to the perpetrators, facilitating the establishment of ID cards is against the ‘Ambazonia’ separatist’s agenda; not to acquire or give legitimacy to any Cameroonian civil document.<sup>17</sup> Armed separatist fighters killed four civilians in Mbei Village, Santa Subdivision of the Mezam division in North West region of Cameroon. The gruesome act took place on the 22 of April 2023 at a local drinking spot around the Mbei Palace. Those killed were a quarter head and three princes of Mbei. CHRDA got names of the victims as Terrence, Achiri, Ngu, and Sylvanus. It is worth noting that, one victim who was a Prince of Mbei Village is the owner of the drinking spot.<sup>18</sup>

On 1 May 2023, three members of the state DSF’s and one bike rider were killed in Penda Mboko, Littoral region by separatist fighters. The victims were crossing from Nkongsamba to the CDC camp at Penda Mboko, Littoral region of Cameroon on board a bike, when they were ambushed and shot dead by separatist fighters. A bike rider was also shot and killed alongside the military officers.<sup>19</sup> Armed men who identified themselves in a video as ‘Mountain Lions’ of Fako Division (a well-known separatist armed group in Fako Division) claimed responsibility.

On Wednesday, May 31, 2023, Mboutou Fabrice, an army officer serving as a Lieutenant with the Rapid Intervention Battalion, BIR, a unit of the Cameroonian army was killed by an IED.<sup>20</sup> This happened in Mbengwi, Momo Division, of the restive North West region following an attack claimed by separatist fighters.

In the afternoon of June 8th 2023, the Brigade Commander of Mile 4 Gendarmerie Brigade, Bamenda III Sub Division, Ajoliva Akembe, was shot dead at Mbessi quarter by separatist fighters. The commander and his elements are said to have been ambushed by separatist fighters at Mbessi and in the course of the shootout, he was hit by a bullet. He is reported to have died shortly after

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<sup>17</sup> Own source

<sup>18</sup> Killing of four unarmed civilians in Mbei, Santa Mezam Division, Available at <https://mimimefoinfos.com/anglophone-crisis-carnage-in-santa-as-separatist-fighters-kill-three-members-of-royal-family-and-a-quarter-head/>

<sup>19</sup> Killing of three elements of state DSF and one bike rider in Penda Mboko by separatist fighters. Available at [https://mimimefoinfos.com/cameroon-anglophone-crisis-separatists-kill-three-soldiers-civilian-at-penda-mboko/?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR2q8Z9zeTcWsoVyqGBlaWmAf-nXc5WhrnDhQy9BexMbC6U6wEESRctD1j8#Echobox=1682946453](https://mimimefoinfos.com/cameroon-anglophone-crisis-separatists-kill-three-soldiers-civilian-at-penda-mboko/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR2q8Z9zeTcWsoVyqGBlaWmAf-nXc5WhrnDhQy9BexMbC6U6wEESRctD1j8#Echobox=1682946453)

<sup>20</sup> Killing of an Army Lieutenant by an IED detonated by armed separatist fighters. Available at [https://mimimefoinfos.com/anglophone-crisis-senior-bir-officer-killed-in-separatist-ambush-in-mbengwi/?utm\\_term=Autofeed&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR1u2WouJ3dOATfO31JrKxztG\\_4IWjJys9PFfZnb98QIM8auReqM-01pM3o#Echobox=1685733763](https://mimimefoinfos.com/anglophone-crisis-senior-bir-officer-killed-in-separatist-ambush-in-mbengwi/?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR1u2WouJ3dOATfO31JrKxztG_4IWjJys9PFfZnb98QIM8auReqM-01pM3o#Echobox=1685733763)

being rushed to the hospital. The gun exchange also disrupted matches of the North West Regional League at G.S Nibung.<sup>21</sup>

On Wednesday, May 31, 2023, Mboutou Fabrice, an army officer serving as a Lieutenant with the Rapid Intervention Battalion, BIR, a unit of the Cameroonian army was killed by an IED.<sup>22</sup> This happened in Mbengwi, Momo Division, of the restive North West region following an attack claimed by separatist fighter. Killing of Ms. Ajim at Tumuku by Armed Separatist Fighters.

On June 23, 2023, Ms. Ajim who has been in “Ambazonian ” captivity since February was found dead at Tumuku in Belo Sub division, North West Region of Cameroon. Residents interviewed by CHRDA said, she was killed by suspected separatist fighters who kept her hostage for over 4 months. According to one of the witnesses, Ms. Ajim was the mother-in-law to the 3rd Deputy Mayor of Belo and she was taken hostage by separatist fighters in February, 2023, following accusations that she was an informant to the 3rd Deputy Mayor.<sup>23</sup>

On Wednesday, July 5, 2023, two inhabitants of Kombone Bakundu, a village located some 13 kilometres away from Kumba, Mbonge Subdivision, South West Region were killed by Separatist fighters. These separatist came from Boa Bakundu, a neighbouring village. Shortly after they were kidnapped in Kombone Bakundu, they ended up being killed in Boa Bakundu, reported local sources.<sup>24</sup>

On 16 July 2023 gunmen attacked the Atuh Azire neighbourhood, Nacho Junction, Bamenda II Subdivision, Mezam Division, North-West region, killing 9 persons amongst which were 2 females and a newly wedded couple. Armed men, who identified themselves as “Amba boys” attacked and indiscriminately opened fire outside a drinking spot at Atuh Azire, in Nacho Junction, killing 9 persons, leaving one severely injured. According to information gotten by CHRDA, the perpetrators were dressed in military and civilian attires, had two vehicles, forcefully removed the

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<sup>21</sup> Attack on DSF and killing of a Gendarmerie Brigade Commander in Bamenda, Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CHRDA-Human-Rights-Report-for-June-2023-1.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Killing of an Army Lieutenant by an IED Detonated by Armed Separatist Fighters. [https://mimimefoinfos.com/anglophone-crisis-senior-bir-officer-killed-in-separatist-ambush-in-mbengwi/?utm\\_term=Autofeed&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR1u2WouJ3dOATfO31JrKxztG4IWjYs9PFfZnb98QIM8auReqM-01pM3o#Echobox=1685733763](https://mimimefoinfos.com/anglophone-crisis-senior-bir-officer-killed-in-separatist-ambush-in-mbengwi/?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR1u2WouJ3dOATfO31JrKxztG4IWjYs9PFfZnb98QIM8auReqM-01pM3o#Echobox=1685733763)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> Killing of two people at Boa Bakundu by armed separatist fighters. <https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-and-south-west-regions-of-cameroon-for-the-month-of-july-2023/>

victims from their houses, gathered them together at a roundabout and opened fire. During the attack, the perpetrators accused the population of being “black legs” a phrase used by separatist fighters referring to persons, not in support of their activities. This attack was a retaliation following the killing of four boys in Awing Quarter on 15 July 2023 by state DSF. Among those killed were a newly-wedded couple, Lontsi Simplicie (M) 37 years and wife, Tonga Raissa (F) 24, Tchoffo Virginie (F) 39, Dontiuo Boris (M) 40, Chi Martin (M) 57, Tindo Berthus (F) 25, Mbate Remond (M) 28, Njei Alfred (M) 56, Tchinda Dyliane (M) 18 and Tchoffo Rodrigue (M) 35.<sup>25</sup> On Tuesday August 15, 2023, two Gendarmerie officers were shot and killed by armed separatist fighters while returning to their base in Mundemba- Ndian Division, South West Region. The attack occurred when three gendarme officers had closed from their duty post that day and were returning to the military base when one of the officers departed the company of the others to deliver something at the Senior Divisional Officer’s (SDO) office while the others continued to the Gendarmerie base. While approaching the base, they were suddenly intercepted by gun men suspected to be separatist fighters and shot dead the two officer.<sup>26</sup>

On Thursday 7 September 2023, separatist fighters attacked the Muea, a Neighborhood in Buea Sub-division, Fako Division of the South-West Region. In the course of this attack which lasted for over an hour, three persons identified as Akuma Sullivan (taxi driver), and Ngam Fidelis, 13 and a third person burnt beyond recognition. Three vehicles were set ablaze, this attack was perpetrated by an armed separatist group known as the “Fako Mountain Lions”<sup>14</sup> under the leadership of a self-styled “Major General Sagat” aimed at enforcing the two weeks imposed lockdown (from 4- 18 September 2023)<sup>15</sup> by separatist fighters as a means to stifle school resumption of the 2023/2024 academic year in the English speaking North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> CHRDA Condemns in Strong Terms, the Killing of 13 Unarmed Civilians in Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon, Available at <https://www.chrda.org/chrda-condemns-in-strong-terms-the-killing-of-13-unarmed-civilians-in-bamenda-north-west-region-of-cameroon/>

<sup>26</sup> The killing of two DSF in Mundemba by separatist fighters, Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE-HUMAN-RIGHTS-SITUATION-OF-THE-NORTH-WEST-AND-SOUTH-WEST-REGIONS-OF-CAMEROON-FOR-THE-MONTH-O-1.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> CHRDA condemns in strong terms, the attack meted against unarmed civilians in Muea, a locality in Buea Sub-Division of the South-West Region by armed separatists. Available at <https://www.chrda.org/chrda-condemns-in-strong-terms-the-attack-meted-against-unarmed-civilians-in-muea-a-locality-in-buea-sub-division-of-the-south-west-region-by-armed-separatists/>

On Wednesday October 4, 2023, at about 5:00pm, armed men belonging to a separatist armed group known as the Ambazonian Defense Forces (ADF) shot indiscriminately at two men in Guzang village, Batibo Sub Division in Cameroon’s North West Region. We got the names of the two victims of this incident as Mbanyamsi Hansel, also known as “Heavy Son” (the brother of the Fon of Guzang) and Mbah Calistus, popularly called “Aboro” (business man). They were accused by the separatist fighters of working with the DSF notably a BIR Commander and thus revealing information about the fighters to the latter. CHRDA learnt from reliable sources that these two men had been captured and had been in captivity for close to a month in the separatist camp for interrogations. These separatists claimed that these individuals were found guilty and in a bid to deter others from such activities, they gathered the population of Guzang village at the market square precisely at three corners and forced the men to sit on the ground. They warned the population to be careful and then shot at the two men from a very close range in front of a population made up of men, women, the young, the old and children.<sup>28</sup> In a video showing how the shooting was carried out, the NSAG could be heard saying, “Tell Rene, tell the BIR Commander, to come get their bodies and bury them.”<sup>29</sup> CHRDA issued a statement as regards the killings.<sup>30</sup>

In the early hours of Monday 6 November 2023, armed men identified to be separatist fighters attacked Egbekaw, a village in Mamfe Central, particularly the neighborhood of Government Practicing Primary School (GPPS) towards Apostolic Church Egbekaw causing havoc and inflicting severe injuries on residents. In the course of this attack, at least 50 persons were killed, over 15 houses burnt and over 20 wounded and transferred to different health facilities within and without Mamfe. Those killed were either gunned down while trying to escape to safety or were simply burnt alive in their houses. More than 380 people have been displaced and in need of humanitarian services.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> [https://mimimefoinfos.com/separatists-execute-two-men-in-front-of-hundreds-accuse-them-of-betrayal/?fbclid=IwAR2hcFE4N1QhmlQm6UpXzZUVDyJ4lMnw4ySXgPY4wd\\_ZV04ZwP-szctv6LQ](https://mimimefoinfos.com/separatists-execute-two-men-in-front-of-hundreds-accuse-them-of-betrayal/?fbclid=IwAR2hcFE4N1QhmlQm6UpXzZUVDyJ4lMnw4ySXgPY4wd_ZV04ZwP-szctv6LQ)

<sup>29</sup> <https://mimimefoinfos.com/shocking-video-separatists-under-ayaba-cho-lucas-adf-publicly-kill-two/>

<sup>30</sup> The barbaric and summary execution of two unarmed civilians by separatist fighters of the ‘Ambazonia Defense Forces’, operating under the leadership of the ‘Ambazonian Governing Council’ is unacceptable. Available at <https://www.chrda.org/the-barbaric-and-summary-execution-of-two-unarmed-civilians-by-separatist-fighters-of-the-ambazonia-defense-forces-operating-under-the-leadership-of-the-ambazonian-governin/>

<sup>31</sup> Own source

In the morning of Tuesday November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, separatist fighters attacked the market Square in Bamenyam, Bamboutus Division of the West Region. Upon arrival, the separatist fighters shot and killed 10 civilians at the spot and injured several others. The armed men also set ablaze 3 shops and a Cargo vehicle and abducted 9 civilians before leaving the scene. According to eye witnesses, the armed men arrived on motor bikes and they were about 50 in number.<sup>32</sup>

On the night of November 25<sup>th</sup> 2023, gunmen who identified themselves as separatist fighters attacked Big G Snack Bar in Mile 3 Nkwen Bamenda North West Region and killed 5 persons leaving at least 9 severely injured.<sup>33</sup> CHRDA gathered that the attack was prompted by the presence of a Nigerian movie star, Sylvester Madu nicknamed “Shina Rambo”. He was brought into Bamenda by DAMA Films on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, given his role in the movie Abakwa (a movie set towards the fight against drug Abuse). The movie crew decided to hang out that evening to relax and catch fun with each other, then came the ordeal. Witnesses stated that the gunmen arrived the snack bar shooting sporadically. They identified themselves as separatist fighters questioning why the Snack owner hosted the Nigerian movie star without settling a certain tax with the separatist fighters. The manager of the snack bar quickly hid Sylvester in the VIP section where he stayed until the timely arrival of the gendarme officers.<sup>34</sup> Apparently, the security department was hinted on the ongoing attack and the arrival of the gendarme officers was followed by several gunshots, forcing the separatist fighters to escape the scene. Sylvester Madu and other crew members were transported to the police station where they spent two days in police custody before their release. Those who sustained injuries were rushed to PMI and Bingo Hospitals where they received treatment.

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

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<sup>32</sup> Cameroon News Agency: Suspected separatist kill at least 10, Kidnap others

<https://cameroonnewsagency.com/west-suspected-separatists-kill-at-least-10-kidnap-others/?fbclid=IwAR13LxNKzyNoTPj7bXuQJFLZ8r7eZf-b1SzCHuHHZ8X0zNvVs-qianecZqc>

<sup>33</sup> Gunmen attack Nigerian actor, kill five in snack bar

<https://cameroonnewsagency.com/bamenda-gunmen-attack-nigerian-actor-kill-five-in-bar-shooting-spree/>

<sup>34</sup> The Guardian Post:

<https://theguardianpostcameroon.com/post/1949/en/suspected-amba-fighters-open-fire-on-bar-kill-at-least-four-in-bamenda>

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.

### 6.1.2 Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

The Cameroon Constitution and international human rights law 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.”*

The population of the North-West and South-West Regions have been witnessing the violation of the right to fair trial on a daily basis. Some of the survivors were released, while some are still in

detention. We carried out advocacy and provided 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. These 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 ferried 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 Gendarmerie Legion in Buea, the South West Region of Cameroon on 15 February to demand 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 town 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.

In the early hours of March 2nd, 2023, the Defense and Security Forces on a hunt for separatist fighters invaded about five villages, in Konye Sub-Division, Meme Division of the South West Region. There was the mass arrest of about 155 youths and elderly persons, from the villages of



Matoh, Kindongi, Mbonge-Batoke, Mboh-Barombi, and Ediki. They were taken to the Kumba Company Gendarmerie, where they were detained for some days before later on transferred to the Kumba Central Prison where they are currently being detained. Our findings on this incident revealed that it was on the instructions of the Senior Divisional Officer of Meme Division, Ntuo'o Ndong Chamberlain. Speaking to CHRDA, a victim revealed that the officers got into Matoh at about 2:00am and invaded several houses from which men were arrested and taken away. According to the young man, they were over 40 in number taken from different houses in Matoh village and anyone who resisted was molested and pulled out of their homes. He stated that "the officers after dragging us out of our houses, assembled us in an open place where we were forced to seat and brace the cold weather. Some of the officers continued searching the village while the others stood guarding us". Another victim, said they were made to trek for over 2 hours, from Matoh to mile 12 Diongo, where they were merged with some of the persons arrested from other villages in Konye Sub-division. Thereafter, they were put in military trucks and transported to the Kumba Company Gendarmerie. It is alleged that some of them were molested and striped in public by the officers.<sup>35</sup>

On April 7 2023, Defense and Security Forces arrested over 60 youths in Ashong village of the Northwest Region. According to a local, the military spent days patrolling the village in search of separatist fighters. In the early hours Friday 7th of April, the officers invaded several homes and arrested many youths. Those who attempted to resist were forcefully dragged out of their homes and in some cases blindfolded. The soldiers took some persons to Bamenda town, while other reports state that some were taken to Bafut, and others left at the Batibo Gendarmerie. It is alleged that the soldiers demanded the sum of FCFA 500,000 per person for their release, information CHRDA WAS not been able to independently confirm.

On 18 May 2023, gendarmes arbitrarily arrested some residents in Tombel, Kupe Muanenguba Division of the South West Region. The raid saw the arrest of several men, women (including

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<sup>35</sup> THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2023 Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/updated-HUMAN-RIGHTS-SITUATION-FOR-THE-NW-SW-MARCH-2023-1-4.pdf>

pregnant women) and youths in Tombel.<sup>1</sup> The arrest was triggered by the attack and killing of two officers by separatist fighters who attacked officers at a checkpoint in Tombel.<sup>36</sup>

On Friday morning July 28, 2023, Police Officers in an offensive arrested over 60 youths in Muea, Buea Sub division South West Region. The youths were randomly arrested from snack bars, in the quarters (some were picked up on their way home) and in some cases, officers invaded homes and carried out arrest. The operation was carried out by police officers of the 3rd district police station in Muea.<sup>6</sup> Speaking to some victims, CHRDA learnt some were arrested due to lack of National Identity Cards (NIC), while many of them who were in possession of their NIC were also arrested.<sup>37</sup>

On Thursday, August 24th, 2023, Gendarme officers following the orders of Commander Joh Bolivar Idjandja, arrested at least 300 civilians residing in different villages in Oku Sub division, Bui Division North West Region of Cameroon. CHRDA gathered that Commander Joh Idjandja organized a raid in at least 12 villages in Oku sub-division which saw the arrest of at least 40 persons per village, of mostly the youthful population. The CHRDA while talking to some of the relatives of the victims learnt that the commander demanded an outrageous sum of about 500.000FRS CFA for the release of those arrested. It is alleged that the commander intimidated the victims and threatened deadly consequences on those who fail to pay the required sum, including threatening to write a report against them and transfer them to Bamenda under the pretext that they are separatist fighters.<sup>38</sup>

On Thursday, November 30, 2023, Security forces of the Gendarmerie corps in Wum, Menchum Division, North West Region, arrested and detained Mr. Tem Peter Cheghe, a former mayor of the Zhoa municipality at the Gendarmerie brigade in Wum Northwest region.<sup>39</sup> According to some sources, he was arrested and detained for allegedly collaborating with separatist fighters. This is

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<sup>36</sup> Arbitrary arrest and detention of residents of Tombel, Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CHRDA-Human-Rights-Report-for-May-2023.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Arbitrary arrest and detention of over 60 Youths in Muea by DSF. Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION REPORT OF THE NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON FOR THE -1.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> The arrest and extortion of at least 300 persons in Oku Sub division. Available at <https://mimimefoinfos.com/oku-brigade-commander-arrests-600-civilians-demands-ransom/>

<sup>39</sup> [https://cameroonnewsagency.com/menchum-division-gendarmes-arrest-former-mayor-for-alleged-separatist-role/?fbclid=IwAR3iV2ly7Zz8tArtH7Hboca5UooCv8tRSqLbFui\\_slgKi5pM6qrCKiTd54s](https://cameroonnewsagency.com/menchum-division-gendarmes-arrest-former-mayor-for-alleged-separatist-role/?fbclid=IwAR3iV2ly7Zz8tArtH7Hboca5UooCv8tRSqLbFui_slgKi5pM6qrCKiTd54s)

because it is alleged that separatist fighters don't attack trucks transporting goods that belong him as he is equally a business man and so insinuates that he is collaborating with separatist fighters.

Above were some incidents leading to the violation and abuse of human rights committed by both the separatist and Cameroon defense and security forces in the year 2023. It is worthy to note that

### **6.1.3 Incommunicado Detention**

In 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.

### **6.1.4 Kidnapping and Ransom Taking**

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. There was an upsurge of cases of kidnapping and ransom taking in 2023. The most targeted were business persons, state officials and education stakeholders. There upsurge of cases of kidnapping and ransom taking in 2023 can be said to be as a result of continuous disputes among 'Ambazonia' movements and also as a result of the crack down on their networks by the Cameroon government authorities thereby disrupting some of their funding channels.

In 2023, CHRDA recorded several cases of kidnappings in the North-West and South West Regions of Cameroon masterminded by separatist fighters and armed Fulani herders. Separatist fighters carried out a series of kidnaps against people who were not in support of, or violated 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 national and international days. Government officials/workers were particularly targeted. Some victims paid ransoms before they were released, some were killed while in captivity, some were freed by the military, some escaped and some are still in captivity at the time of this report.

On January 5, 2023, at least 15 mourners were kidnapped by separatist fighters in Central New Town Ashong, Batibo Subdivision, in Momo Division of the North-West Region. These mourners, who went to the village to bury their grandmother, were kidnapped and taken to Ewai vicinity, a source from the village informed us. They were only released on February 6, 2023. On February 5, 2023, Honorable Wainanchi Honorine Nchabi, a Member of Parliament for Boyo constituency belonging the Social Democratic Front (SDF) political party, was kidnapped by separatist fighters and taken to an unknown destination. Reports say Honorable Wainanchi was abducted on the Bambui Road in Tubah Subdivision in Mezam Division of the North-West Region. She was returning from her constituency when the armed men abducted her. Speaking to the media about the kidnap, the SDF Secretary General, Maître Adeline Djomgang, criticized what she termed as “targeted attacks on the SDF” and urged separatist fighters to refrain from going after the SDF and direct their demands to the government in power. According to our sources, the separatist fighters demanded 36 million FCFA in exchange for Honorable Wainanchi’s release. She was released on February 9, after spending five days in captivity. CHRDA could not independently confirm whether a ransom was paid to secure her release.

On 1 March 2023, some elements of the State Defense and Security forces; by name Gedeon Tikum and Honoraine, were captured while on duty in Lisoka, Buea Subdivision, Fako Division of the South West Region. The said policemen were reportedly tortured and their weapons seized by their captors. The South West Branch Head of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, presented the two policemen who had been later on released from captivity.<sup>40</sup>

On Monday 6th of March, 2023, some locals of Acha-Tugi in Mbengwi, Momo Division of the North West region of Cameroon were abducted by separatist fighters.<sup>20</sup> This came as a result of a

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/updated-HUMAN-RIGHTS-SITUATION-FOR-THE-NW-SW-MARCH-2023-1-4.pdf>

video in which some villagers expressed gratitude to President Paul Biya and Supreme State Audit Minister, Mbah Acha Rose for the ongoing rehabilitation works on the Acha-Njikwa road.<sup>41</sup>

On 2 May 2023, the first Deputy Mayor of the Mamfe central council, Mr. Agbor was kidnapped along the Kumba-Mamfe highway around Konye. He was later released after an undisclosed sum was paid as ransom. On 21 May 2023, Separatist fighters kidnapped six persons along the Andek-Mbengwi stretch of road in the North West Region. The victims of the incident were Stephen Ujambeng Andong a member of the North West Regional Assembly, Barrister Asumba Agharih, the president of the youth wing of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (YCPDM) in Mono, Gyera Anthony Ngu, the Sub-divisional Delegate for Youth Affairs and Civic Education Ngie, Tah John, Principal of Government Technical High School Teze, Yivisisibom Paulinus, Principal of Government High School Andek, and Tete Erastus, teacher of Government Technical High School Teze.

On 19 May 2023, separatist fighters kidnapped<sup>42</sup> at least 30 women in Big Babanki of the North-West Region of Cameroon. Most of the survivors 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 an incursion of armed Fulani operatives from Nigeria in Buku village along the Cameroon - Nigeria border in Ako Subdivision Donga Mantung Division, North-West region.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>42</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. On Tuesday, September 5 2023, about eight people were kidnapped by gunmen in Akum Santa sub-division, Mezam Division, North West region. A public transport vehicle was amongst some vehicles that left Bamenda on Tuesday morning to the West region. Unfortunately the car was intercepted and its occupants removed and taken to an unknown destination. According to one of the occupants of another vehicle that was coming behind the intercepted car, there were gunshots for some minutes before the passengers were taken away. The informant recounted, *"What they were saying was that, the cars and people are blacklegs, the fighters accused the cars for violating the imposed ghost town. When our driver realized the car in front was attacked, he made a U-turn and we entered in a quarter in Akum"*.<sup>43</sup> On Monday, September 25 2023, Separatists fighters kidnapped 10 quarter heads in Kembong village, Manyu Division of the South West region of Cameroon. These persons were kidnaped for allegedly advocating for school resumption. The kidnappers are said to have demanded a ransom of FCFA 50 million, to secure their freedom. The victims include: Ojong Solomon, Njock Richard, Nchong Patrick, Ayuk Thomas, Oben Samuel, Ayuk William, Eta August, Mboh Jonas, Ottop Lord, Bissong Mbi. Gunmen on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, abducted the Parish Priest of St. Mark Baba 1 Ngoketunjia Division and kept him confined for 2 days. He was set free on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023.<sup>44</sup> CHRDA was unable to confirm if any ransom demands were made and complied with as condition for the subsequent release of the Priest Fr Harris.

We believe that these cases could be more considering the fact that our team could not reach all the Sub Divisions of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon due to the enclaved nature of these areas, connection issues as well as logistical constraints. However, the above cases aptly paints a picture of what is obtaining in Anglophone Cameroon.

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<sup>43</sup> Kidnap of Eight persons in Akum by Separatist fighters. Available at [https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE\\_HUMAN\\_RIGHTS\\_SITUATION\\_OF\\_THE\\_NORTH\\_WEST\\_AND\\_SOUTH\\_WEST\\_REGION\\_PF\\_CAMEROON\\_FOR\\_THE\\_MONTH\\_OF\\_.pdf](https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE_HUMAN_RIGHTS_SITUATION_OF_THE_NORTH_WEST_AND_SOUTH_WEST_REGION_PF_CAMEROON_FOR_THE_MONTH_OF_.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Cameroon News Agency: Catholic Priest release after Two days of in captivity [https://cameroonnewsagency.com/catholic-priest-released-after-two-days-in-captivity/?fbclid=IwAR0X8gBqvyFIYtlzdvxUD6nLRHUxtJBHVyE18k\\_M4z0IGIZvuyod7or-H2Q](https://cameroonnewsagency.com/catholic-priest-released-after-two-days-in-captivity/?fbclid=IwAR0X8gBqvyFIYtlzdvxUD6nLRHUxtJBHVyE18k_M4z0IGIZvuyod7or-H2Q)

## 6.1.5 Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment

### 6.1.5.1 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 year 2023, we recorded a significant number of torture cases. These torture cases were either 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.

On March 2023, a farmer called Felix was picked up by some elements of the Cameroon's Defense and Security forces, when he stepped out of his house, that evening to buy Kerosene. The act took place in Ikiliwindi, a locality in Meme Division of the South West Region. In a video released on social media, YouTube by the "Ambazonia" Communication head; Capo Daniel, three officers can be seen in a dark room (with a deemed light shining from their phones or probably a touch light) torturing a man with a machete and forcing a gun into his mouth. The said video, expose the officers kicking the victim with their heavy boots, and they can be heard ordering the victim to show his legs, in French "envoie de pierre", while the victim continued to weep and beg for mercy, from his oppressors.<sup>45</sup> Felix's family had exhausted all options, searching for him since he stepped out of home that faithful day.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W244kVlozas>

<sup>46</sup> Arrest and Torture of a farmer in Ikiliwindi by State DSF. Available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/updated-HUMAN-RIGHTS-SITUATION-FOR-THE-NW-SW-MARCH-2023-1-4.pdf>

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the military severely beat up dozens of civilians at the Belo Park and shot dead a local of Belo Sub division North West Region. Witnesses account reveal that the military stormed the Belo park that day in anger and brutally beat up drivers, ‘loaders’, bike riders and even passengers. A witness speaking to CHRDA added that, the beating meted on commercial bike riders from Djichami was even more severe than that of the others. According to this witness, the severe beatings and infliction of injuries on these people especially on commercial bike riders from Djichami was because of an ambush attack on the military the previous day (November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023) carried out by separatist fighters supposedly from Djichami where in 3 elements of the military were reported killed. The identity of the man killed was revealed as Toh Caticah, a 30yrs old loader at 3 corners Park.

On Friday December 22, 2023, Barrister Atoh Walter Tchemi was tortured by Police officers in Kumba, Meme Division of the South West Region.<sup>47</sup> This happened while he went to pay a visit to a client at Mulango Street, in order to intervene in an accident dispute. The Police accused him of subverting Police authority, and resulted in torturing him, reported Human Rights Watch.<sup>48</sup> They hit him with a gun, threw him in their van and destroyed his clothes. The attack of residents in Kajifu, Beteme and Abonandu villages in Manyu Division

#### 6.1.5.2 Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment

Separatist fighters also committed some act considered as cruel inhumane and degrading treat on civilians in the year 2023. On the 13, 14 and 16 of April 2023, non-state armed fighters, allegedly operating under the ‘Ambazonian’ Restoration Forces (ARF) carried out a series of attacks against the population of Kajifu, Beteme, Abonandu in Akwaya South, Manyu Division and forcefully exiled some residents. Information from a witness states that, on the 13 and 14 of April, six (6) locals, one person from Kajifu village and 5 others from Beteme village were sent into exile by the separatist fighters. It is alleged that these locals were forcefully sent into exile because their children are going to school in Mamfe town after the separatist fighters sent out a warning notice for parents/ families to either take their children out of school or leave the community. During these attacks, mobile phones of residents were seized, and some residents threatened on the effect of defying the warnings of the separatist fighters. This was the case of an aged man; who’s name

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<sup>47</sup> <https://web.facebook.com/CAMEROONNEWSAGENCY/?rdc=1&rdr,,,90'h>

<sup>48</sup> <https://web.facebook.com/100064783444453/posts/759599726209469/?mibextid=7BxKtIcqh5F1hMP9&rdc=1&rdr>



CHRDA got as Asu Simon, who was severely beaten and tied up in a bag for still possessing a cell phone despite several warning. After several appeals from the residents of Beteme village for separatist fighters to untie the man, he was untied and later exiled. According to a Kajifu local resident in Mamfe town, many residents in the communities mentioned above, keep fleeing their villages out of fear and uncertainty of the next act these separatist fighters would carry on against the community. It is alleged that no day goes by without the non-state fighters perpetrating a violation against the locals of these communities. The names of the some of the persons exiled from Beteme are; Etta Victor Akom, Latie David Besog, Kekung Sampson Akom, Ekamba Florence, Akom Elizabeth and Asu Simon. Torture of population for building a community school in Akwaya.

On April 19 and 20, 2023, armed separatists fighters tortured some inhabitants of Amebiso in Akwaya Subdivision for two days because they had constructed a community school. According to some community members, the separatist fighters attacked the community because they were supposed to have given them the money, as they have been requesting for financial assistance from the people of Amebiso.

On 19 May 2023, separatist fighters kidnapped and maltreated over 30 women in Big Babanki, Tuba Sub Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. The women were kidnapped and maltreated because they publicly demonstrated against the exploitative activities of Separatist Fighters in Big Babanki, Mezam Division, and North West Region. CHRDA spoke to some locals and they revealed that the demonstration was in protest against the imposed harsh economic policies on payment of monthly dues (money they term liberation tax) of FCFA 10,000 for men and FCFA 5000 for women imposed to the separatist fighters on the population of Big Babanki. In a 1-minute 45-second video recorded and released online by the separatist fighters, a group of women were seen sitting on the ground begging for mercy while the fighters could be heard in the background scolding and insulting the women. Speaking in the Pidgin English language, the separatist fighters refer to the women as “blacklegs”, accusing them of complicity with the military in an attack against them, which occurred the night before this incident. Towards the end of the video, the separatist fighters were also heard threatening and promising death to the women stating that they have signed their death warrants by protesting against them. As of the time of this report, The ‘Ambazonia’ Governing Council, through their communication channel ‘Ambazonia

Communication Network-ACN', had acknowledged the act. As stated on their official Facebook Page, "After a thorough background investigation into the video in which some brave Ambazonia forces 'arrested' some women who attempted to carry out a protest against Ambazonia Liberation, ACN can now confirm that the protest was engineered by the enemy...'

On July 17, 2023, a man, by name Chi was tortured by separatist fighters in Mankon, Bamenda, Mezam Division, North-West region. He was tortured for not respecting Monday lockdowns. In a video shot by separatist fighters and circulated on several social media platforms, the man could be heard promising not to sell again to the population on Monday that has been observed as a ghost town day since the start of the Anglophone crisis in 2016.<sup>49</sup>

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.

## **6.6 The Situation of 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 arms in the conflict-affected North-West, South-West and Far-North regions of Cameroon.<sup>50</sup> This year witnessed massive surrendering, especially by the ex-Separatist fighters in the Anglophone Regions as per the data from government sources. In 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 creation of the DDR Centers. For example, there were reports of a certain

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<sup>49</sup> Man tortured in Bamenda by armed separatist fighters. Available at <https://www.chrda.org/the-human-rights-situation-of-the-north-west-and-south-west-regions-of-cameroon-for-the-month-of-july-2023/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://theguardianpostcameroon.com/post/1236/en/fruits-of-multidimensional-sensitisation-3-520-amba-boko-haram-fighters-surrender-join>

Shutang Urma who surrendered to DDR center in Bamenda being involved in military operations in the North West Region. Also, another prominent separatist fighter by name Tamaya Clinton, 24-year-old. This ex-fighter was presented to the public on July 6, 2023 at the Meme Divisional Officer's office in Kumba, South West Region. This fighter confessed that six Delegates kidnapped in Ndian Division, on Tuesday June 15, 2021 at Masore Balue, Ekondo Titi in Ndian Division of the Southwest Region were all killed by a separatist commander called "10 Kobo".

## **6.2 RESPECT FOR CIVIC LIBERTIES**

### **6.2.1 Freedom of Movement**

In 2023, freedom of movement, which is a fundamental human right was seriously violated. This was masterminded by both Non State Armed Groups and as well as state Defense and Security forces. DSF increased the number of checkpoints in all the roads in the North West and South West regions. The reason they gave for this was because of the increasing insecurity in the area as a result of the activities of NSAG, principally separatist fighters. However, we recorded disturbing reports as regards the activities of DSF in some of these checkpoints. Road users including bike riders, public transport vehicles, truck drivers and private car owners complained of being extorted by some elements of the state DSF in illegal checkpoints. Huge sums of money were collected from road users illegally without any issue of receipts or records taken regarding such money. This greatly affected the free movement of persons and goods as those who could not pay such money had their vehicles intercepted. The numerous checkpoints also slowed down the free circulation of persons and goods in these regions.

Separatist fighters adopted the strategy of ghost towns and lockdowns as a way of limiting the free movement of persons as well as goods. The impact of ghost towns and lockdowns have continued to affect free movement of civilians as well as free circulation of goods. The economic impact of these ghost towns is unmeasurable and disastrous. Since 2016, Mondays are observed throughout the North West and South West regions as "ghost town". The Monday Ghost towns, which were instituted by the outlawed Anglophone Civil Society Consortium in 2016 are still being observed till date and enforced by separatist fighters. During these days, businesses, private and public transport vehicles, private and public institutions as well as schools are prohibited from operating.

The Monday ghost towns persisted throughout the year and some of the most gruesome human rights violations were recorded during these days.

In addition to ghost towns, another phenomenon is that of lockdowns. Separatist fighters on several occasions called for lockdowns, some of these lockdowns lasting for more than two weeks. Throughout the year 2023, we recorded at **least 100 days** of lockdowns and ghost towns and most of these lockdowns were declared in order to paralyze some nationally commemorated events such as 11 February celebrated as National Youth Day, 8 March celebrated as women's day, 20 May, 1 May celebrated as Labour Day, 20<sup>th</sup> May celebrated as National Unity Day among other events. Separatist fighters declared a lockdown between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2023 as a way of paralyzing the celebration of the National Youth Day on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February. Free movement of goods and persons in the North West and South West regions was therefore restricted. It was in this period that workers of the Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC) were attacked on their way back from work. The attack took place between 4:00pm and 5:00pm on a stretch of road off the Tiko-Douala road toward the Mondoni Oil Mill, in Tiko Subdivision in Fako Division of the South-West Region. The attack, which was carried out by armed men suspected to be separatist fighters, claimed the lives of five workers on the spot and saw over 52 others wounded. CHRDA got the names of those killed as: Victor Ndanji (driver), Ebude Elizabeth (time monitor clerk), Amabo (irrigation foreman) Ngoe Akwe (watchman), Away Pascal (welder). One other person among those hospitalized later died due to severe bullet wounds. The workers belonged to the banana group of the CDC. Still in February, separatist fighters declared another lockdown as a means of paralyzing the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope.

On February 25, 2023, three IEDs were detonated at about 7:00am around Biaka Junction, Bonduma Gate, and the OIC Market in Buea in Fako Division of the South-West Region. This happened just a few minutes after the kick-off the 28<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope, which doubled as the 50th anniversary of the race. As a result of this attack, several athletes as well as onlookers were injured.

Another lockdown was declared in March when the President of the Republic decreed that the senatorial elections were to be convened on March 12. These are just few of the several occasions where the NSAGs called for lockdowns.

This situation of lockdowns has worsened the already limping economic situation of these regions. Business persons recorded huge material losses in the period of these lockdowns as their goods could not be transported to the markets. Separatist fighters also, in certain instances attacked business persons who dared to defy the lockdowns as well as their businesses. This situation has put economic operators in the middle of the fight as they are either attacked by the separatist fighters for defying calls for lockdown or face threats from the administration as their shops are often sealed for respecting the calls for lockdown and ghost towns. There is a new appellation given to those who fail to respect orders from separatist fighters; ‘Black Legs’ (Referring to those they consider as traitors). This is principally the explanation given by separatist fighters to justify the inhumane treatment meted out to civilians who fail to respect their orders.

Many persons were summarily executed within this third quarter of the year on the basis of being a ‘Black Leg’. Some of these cases include: the three civilians executed in Muea during the lockdown in September, the two drivers killed at Ikiliwindi in September, the civilian killed in Limbe in September among other instances.

### **6.2.2 Freedom of Expression**

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 2023, journalists and human rights defenders faced harassment from both the state and non-state actors as a result of their work. In Cameroon, the National Communication Council is the body that regulates issues regarding freedom of expression, especially as pertains to the practice of journalism. In 2023, the civic space continued to shrink especially regarding freedom of expression. The government continued to hit hard on any individuals or media organs who publishes or discussed matters considered by the regime as highly sensitive matters.

Separatist fighters on their part also threatened media organs who published any news article considered by them to contravene their plight or their interest. There were threats against media organs as well as individual journalists. On 7 May 2023, armed separatists killed Anye Nde Nsoh, a journalist and North-West Regional Bureau Chief 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. He was shot at close range at Che Street, a locality in Bamenda, the North-West Region of Cameroon. CHRDA could not independently ascertain whether he was targeted because of his profession as a journalist or for some other reasons. This among other attacks both online and offline is in violation of international law protecting journalists and freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression therefore remained highly subdued throughout 2023 in Cameroon both by the state as well as NSAG's.

### **6.2.3 Freedom to Participate in Political Processes**

The right to freely participate in all political processes is guaranteed by the constitution of Cameroon as well as Regional and international instruments duly ratified by Cameroon. Citizens are guaranteed the freedom to vote and to be voted into elected public offices. Elections in Cameroon are managed by an elections governing body known as Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). Section 4(1) of the Electoral Code of Cameroon states “Elections Cameroon shall be an independent body responsible for the organization, management and supervision of all election and referendum operations”. Members of ELECAM are appointed by the President of the Republic by way of a Presidential Decree.

#### **i. The Senatorial Elections**

The year 2023 was an elections year in Cameroon. The President of the Republic on the 13 January by way of a Presidential decree convened electoral colleges for the elections of senators.<sup>51</sup> Article 1 of the above cited Decree provided that “The electoral college is hereby convened to the chief town of each division on Sunday, 12 March 2023 for the election of senators.” It should be recalled that Cameroon operates a bi-camera system, therefore has two houses of Assembly. The Lower House of Assembly is known as the Parliament and the Upper House of Assembly known as the Senate. The Ruling Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM) party as well as opposition political parties were declared fit to participate in the March 12 Senatorial Elections. A total of 13 political parties took part in the elections.

It should be noted that the announcement of the senatorial elections prompted the declaration of a lockdown in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon by armed separatists. This was aimed

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<sup>51</sup> Decree No. 2023/023 of 13 January 2023 to convene the electoral colleges for the election of Senators

paralyzing the elections. These threats were followed by attacks on persons suspected of playing any role in the elections process. On January 18, 2023, the District Head of the ELECAM (Elections Cameroon) branch in Jakiri in Bui Division of the North-West Region was killed. CHRDA got the name of the victim as Gilbert Yufola. He was killed by separatists on the evening of January 18 at his Foncha Street residence. This attack came just few days after the senatorial elections were called. Before this incident, a well-known pro separatist leader, Ayaba Cho Lucas had declared the senatorial election scheduled for March illegal in the North-West and South-West Regions and promised that anyone who becomes involved in the said election in one way or the other will be “arrested.”<sup>52</sup>

On the Election Day, Streets in most parts of the North-West and South-West regions were deserted, thus paralyzing the free circulation of persons and goods. The elections took place in a relatively calm and secured environment as per the release of the Minister of Territorial Administration. However, both national and international observers had reservations, as concerns the organization of the elections.

According to the results published by ELECAM, ruling CPDM party won all the 70 elected seats that make up the senate. The head of state in a decree on 31 March 2023<sup>53</sup> appointed the other 30 senators to complete the number to 100 as required by the law. Political observers have continued to question the integrity of the Cameroon senate considering the fact that it is essentially managed by one party.

### **6.3 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

The prevailing crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon continued to aggravate the level of gender based violence. In 2023, we recorded the manifestation of several types of Gender Based Violence including physical abuse, psychological abuse, economic abuse and emotional abuse. Women and children were the most affected as they remain the most vulnerable groups in the context of the current conflict in the Conflict in the English speaking regions of Cameroon.

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/652585094854545/posts/5714528718660132/?flite=scwspnss>

<sup>53</sup> Decree No. 2023/188 of 31 March 2023 to appoint Senators. A available at <https://www.prc.cm/en/multimedia/documents/9616-decree-n-2023-188-of-31-march-2023>

### 6.3.1 Rape

We monitored and documented rape cases perpetrated by combatants within the context of the conflict. Young girls were raped in several occasions by combatants. In most cases, the victims chose not to report these cases for fear of reprisals from the perpetrators, who in several occasions threatened their victims not to report the cases. Mass Rape of School Girls from Muteff in Fundong by separatist fighters.

On Tuesday, May 16, 2023, in the Abassakom area of Fundong Subdivision in the Boyo Division of the North West Region of Cameroon, some three students of the newly created St.Jude's Secondary School, Fundong, were brutally raped by a suspected separatist fighter. The said female students, with ages ranging between 12 and 15, were said to have left their homes in Muteff as early as 5am that Tuesday morning and were hurriedly transiting through mainland Abuh, to catch up with an early morning class scheduled for 7.30am at St. Jude's College in Fundong town, when they were accosted by a dreaded 'amba' fighter and forcefully raped, one after the other. At the time inhabitants of the Abuh community discovered them at dawn, lying helpless on the spot where they had been raped and raised alarm some men alleged to be “amba fighters” rushed to the scene, took the teenage girls to the village health center, and ask that the consultation bills be charged on them. After the bruises had been cleaned up and initial first aid administered by the Health Center staff, the victims were referred to the Fundong District Hospital, for detailed medical attention.

On Sunday June 11, 2023, two teenage girls of about aged 16, Yenisse and Priscillia appeared in a viral video making startling revelations about a police officer for sexually abusing them.<sup>11</sup> The officer whose name was mentioned as a certain Mr Eyenga serves at the Buea Central Police Station, South West Region of Cameroon.<sup>12</sup> According to the girls revelations in the video, Mr Eyenga has been threatening to kill them if they speak out after sexually exploiting them.<sup>54</sup>

On the night July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, military officers invaded a home in Ashing-Kom in Belo Sub division, Boyo Division North West Region of Cameroon. During the attack, the officers took away two girls aged 12 and 14 years old to an abandoned building and raped them. A witness reported that, after the family members of the girls had searched for the children through-out the night, they located them in an abandoned building, beside St Beads College. The girls were taken to the

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<sup>54</sup> Two girls sexually abused by Police Officers in Buea, available at <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CHRDA-Human-Rights-Report-for-June-2023-1.pdf>



hospital for medical attention, after which their families were advised to get in touch with mental health experts for psychosocial support. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023, at least 5 rape cases perpetrated by DSFs were recorded in Boyo Division specifically in Baingo, Njinikom, Ashing-kom, and Kichu by locals, many of whom were reported to us by family members of the survivors. These families send out distress calls seeking for redress. However, it is sad that all attempts made by CHRDA, to get the survivors to speak out were unsuccessful due to threats by the perpetrators of this horrifying acts.<sup>55</sup>

In some cases, NSAG forced local traders, women especially to pay sums of money to them, what they labeled ‘liberation tax.’ In certain cases, women as well as men were brutalized for failing to pay such sums of money. This was the case on 19 May 2023 where separatist fighters kidnapped and maltreated over 30 women in Big Babanki for protesting against the 10,000 FRS and 5000 FRS “Liberation Tax” imposed on men and women respectively by separatist fighters in the area.

## **6.4 VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN**

In 2023 like previous years after the outbreak of the Anglophone conflict, children have been one of the most vulnerable groups. This is especially because of their vulnerability. Some of the rights of children that were severely violated are the rights to physical integrity, right to life and the right to education.

### **6.4.1 The Right to Education**

The right to education is guaranteed by the constitution of Cameroon as well as regional and international instrument ratified by Cameroon. The right to education have continued to be grossly violated since the outbreak of the conflict in 2016. In 2023, separatist fighters continued to implement their no school campaign especially as regards government schools. The institutions separatist permitted to operate freely were lay private, community and mission. Despite the clarion call from various stake holders on separatist fighters to allow children go to school without fear of intimidation and attacks, the latter continued to perpetrate attacks on school children, teachers,

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<sup>55</sup> Rape of 2 teenagers in Ashing-kom by state DSF, available at [https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE\\_HUMAN\\_RIGHTS\\_SITUATION\\_REPORT\\_OF\\_THE\\_NORTH-WEST\\_AND\\_SOUTH-WEST\\_REGIONS\\_OF\\_CAMEROON\\_FOR\\_THE\\_-1.pdf](https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/THE_HUMAN_RIGHTS_SITUATION_REPORT_OF_THE_NORTH-WEST_AND_SOUTH-WEST_REGIONS_OF_CAMEROON_FOR_THE_-1.pdf)

school infrastructure and other education stake holders. We recorded several of such cases of attacks, some of which resulted in severe bodily harm, arson on education infrastructure, and in some extreme cases the murder of some academic stake holders.

On Wednesday, 15th of March 2023, Professor Chiabi was shot at his residence at New Road Nkwen neighbourhood, Bamenda III Sub-division, Mezam Division of the North West Region. Family sources reveal that the Professor of History had just returned home from the roadside, where he went looking for cooking gas. Armed gunmen suspected to be separatist fighters shot him while he was in his residence. He was rushed to a health facility in Nkwen Bamenda, where he succumbed to death due to the fatal bullet wounds.<sup>11</sup> Some sources reveal one of the gunmen who shot the Professor was shot as well by his peers, while alleging that they had to kidnap the Professor and not to kill him.

Few days before the resumption into the 2023/2024 academic year in September 2023, separatist fighters like in the previous school year declared a lockdown aimed at crippling school resumption. This lockdown was aimed at discouraging school resumption. It should be noted that several separatist armed groups had stated that they will only permit school resumption on the 18 September 2023. They also stated that the only schools permitted to operate were mission, private and community schools, and thereby prohibiting government schools.

On 02 September 2023, two teachers were killed at Ijim forest, Mbessa, Boyo Division, North West region by separatist fighters. These teachers, identified as Eric Diense Foinjang and were killed while returning from a meeting in Belo Sub division, in anticipation of school resumption. This attack came a few days to school resumption. This attacks therefore appears to be a materialization of threats by separatist fighters against school resumption. CHRDA was also reliably informed that, another teacher who attended the said school resumption meeting was abducted and levied a ransom of one million, five hundred thousand Francs CFA (1.500.000FRS CFA). The teacher was threatened and promised dead if he fails to pay the ransom. The two teachers who lost their lives were buried on the 4th September 2023.

On Monday morning, 4 September, 2023, a female form three student of GHS Kake whom we got the name as Ajeck Hilda was shot by a stray bullet. This incident took place at a security checkpoint at the Mile I neighbourhood in Kumba I Sub-Division, Meme Division of the South West region of Cameroon. Separatist fighters are reported to have attacked a military checkpoint and this led

to a crossfire with state DSF. In the course of this exchange, the deceased was hit by a stray bullet while in their house. The bullet perforated their plank building and tore open her stomach. She died due to the severe nature of the bullet wounds. Indigenes of the area reported that this attack by separatist fighters was aimed at dissuading residents from sending their children to school and also to reinforce the lockdown they imposed.

On Saturday September 9, 2023, separatist fighters attacked a teacher of C.S Njinikejem, Boyo Division of the North West Region and inflicted severe injuries on her by using a machete to slice her fingers and injure her neck. CHRDA's correspondent on ground revealed that, the separatist fighters attempted using the machete to cut her neck and failed due to the resistance put up by the teacher who later overpowered her attackers and escaped. According to a friend to the teacher, the reason behind her attack is linked to school resumption, given that on Tuesday September 5, she was engaged in cleaning the school compound in preparation for the start of the academic year. At the time for this report, she was at the hospital receiving treatment.

On Thursday morning, September 14, 2023, separatist fighters attacked Government High School Tombel, Kupe Muanenguba Division, South West Region in a bid to disrupt the 2023/2024 academic year. In a video circulated on several social media platforms, students, teachers and parents were running for their lives. However, no casualty was recorded during the said incident.

On Tuesday evening, September 25, 2023, armed separatist fighters burnt down a section of GHS Batibo in Momo Division of the North West region. According to sources, it was Guzang market day and the Divisional Officer was in the market to stop all so called community schools operating in the area. As a results the separatist fighters went to burn the Government High School in Batibo.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that in the beginning of 2023/2024 Academic year, separatist fighters had decreed that the only schools permitted to operate in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon were Lay private, mission and community schools. Government schools were prohibited from opening their doors. The DO was therefore prohibiting these community schools in order to ensure persons enrol in government schools

On Tuesday September 26, 2023, armed separatist fighters attacked, shot and injured three civilians, disclosed as a priest of the Catholic Church, Rev. Father Elvis Bangsi, and 3 teachers of Saint Martins of Tours Catholic School in Kembong village, Manyu Division in the South West region of Cameroon. Though the armed men claimed they were enforcing the policy of no school

resumption in the area, they did not identify the armed group they represent. CHRDA was informed by a source that the victims were taken to St. John Hospital Mamfe and later referred to a better medical facility in Bamenda.

On Tuesday, December 12, 2023, separatist fighters attacked Government Technical High School Esu in Menchum Division, North West Region, during which they set ablaze a section of the school and abducted at least 8 students and 2 teachers. Information gathered revealed that the separatist fighters invaded the institution in the morning while classes were ongoing. Their arrival was accompanied by chaos and obstruction of school activities as students and teachers escaped for safety. Speaking to a witness, CHRDA learnt that the assailants gathered the students in a classroom and resorted to molesting and stripping them naked (both male and female). This information was validated in a 28 seconds video footage recorded and released on social media in which records the separatist fighters molesting and forcing the students to completely take off their clothes while the population can be heard yelling and weeping in the chaotic atmosphere.<sup>56</sup>

In the morning of December 17, 2023, gunmen in military attire invaded and kidnapped<sup>57</sup> the Principal of Government High School (GHS) Elak-Oku in Bui Division North West Region. CHRDA learnt that, upon arriving the school, the gunmen disguised in military attire were spotted by a student who was out using the restroom. Seeing their gestures and the weapons in their hands, the student immediately raised an alarm. This alarm was followed by gunshots from the assailants and this caught the attention of the entire school, causing students and teachers to run for safety. The commotion attracted the attention of the Principal who came out to see what was causing the upheaval. Catching sight of the principal, the armed men took hold of him and forcefully took him away.

On Friday the 29th of December 2023 suspected separatist fighters abducted a retired mathematics professor at his residence in Virgin land, Foncha Street in Bamenda III sub-division of the North West Region of Cameroon. A witness narrating the ordeal told CHRDA that, the armed men

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<sup>56</sup> Mimi Mefo Info –Separatist Fighters Burn Down GTHS Esu

<https://www.facebook.com/100044183406295/posts/906833964132709/?mibextid=7BxKtlCqh5F1hMP990684268413137/?mibextid=7BxKtlCqh5F1hMP9>

<sup>57</sup> Mimi Mefo Info- The Principal of Government High School Elak-Oku

<https://www.facebook.com/100044183406295/posts/908338133982292/?mibextid=7BxKtlCqh5F1hMP9>

entered into the professor's residence and demanded that he comes with them<sup>58</sup>. Due to his hesitation to follow the instructions of the armed men, the professor was forcefully taken away to an unknown location. It is alleged that the separatist fighters have made outrageous financial demands of the family who as at the time of this report are reaching out and begging the abductors to have mercy and set the professor free. Given his advanced age and poor health, his family is worried and deeply concerned about his safety.

## **6.5 ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN PROPERTY**

### **6.5.1 Arson and Property Destruction**

Since the outbreak of the Anglophone conflict in 2016, combatants have continuously targeted civilian property. State DSF as well as NSAGs including Separatist Fighters and armed Fulani/Mbororo militias continued to target anyone accused of going against them. Civilian homes, business centers, vehicles, construction machinery, motorbikes among other properties were targeted and burnt in 2023. 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, forced migration, an increase in a number of homeless people, a deterioration of the 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.

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<sup>58</sup> Own source

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.

On June 20th, 2023 DSFs attacked Anyajua. CHRDA learnt a separatist fighter's camp was allegedly located around the area, and burnt down 2 houses. The operation witnessed the arrest of dozens of women who were intercepted by the officers while on their way to the farm. Some locals were also arrested in their houses and business places. The women were interrogated and later released whereas many of those arrested from their houses and business places (including clergy men) were held back by the officers for further questioning. CHRDA spoke with a victim who noted that during the operation, businesses were looted with money and some items taken away by the officers. Adding that, the officers also beat up residents including a lady in her late 40s who

panicked after seeing the officers and started running. The burning of houses, random killings, and harassment of civilians by Defense and Security Forces forced women, children, the aged and persons with disability to escape for safety into the bushes and other safer places.

On Friday July 14, 2023, NSAGs of the Ambazonian Restoration Forces (ARF) of Bui Warriors under “General Talk and Do” burnt down the Nkum Council building in Tatum, Bui Division, and Northwest region. In a video that went viral you could hear someone saying; this is economic sabotage, they will destroy everything that belongs to la republic, other councils should be waiting for their actions.<sup>59</sup>

On June 22, DSFs carried out an operation in Tumuku and Elemighong during which 2 civilian houses were set ablaze, shops were looted, and two shops allegedly burnt. At least 3 rape incidents were reported to CHRDA by 2 residents. Also, a nursing mother and a drunk were severely beaten up by the officers during the operation. The degree of infliction of harm on the nursing mother was such that she was unable to seat up straight or feely go about carrying out her activities. The doctor advised she observes bed rest for at least 4 days, after which the pain most have greatly reduced.

## **6.6 ATTACKS AGAINST TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES AND INSTITUTIONS**

The trend of attacking traditional rulers as well as traditional institutions continued in 2023. 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 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. This explains why a good number of traditional rulers from the North West and South West region either migrated to the Major towns of these regions like Nkambe, Bamenda, Buea and Limbe which are relatively safe or the other regions of the country.

In the Month of April 2023, Shey Wo Ngang, a traditional notable of the Nso Tribe in the North West Region was kidnapped by the separatist fighters. In June, a prominent traditional ruler, Fon

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?mibextid=rS40aB7S9Ucbxw6v&v=1042376217106682>

Kevin Shumitang who was kidnaped in 2021 by the dreaded ‘General No Pity’ was released from captivity. Also, 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 chieftom 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 started in 2016.



## **7. THE SITUATION 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 out 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.

### **7.1 Atrocities against the Civilian Population**

#### **7.1.1 Killings**

In 2023, elements of the Boko Haram Insurgency group intensified attacks on both civilians as well as elements of Cameroon's DSF. Majority of these attacks took the form of suicided bombs and guerilla attacks. This is largely because the Militants over the years have reduced in numbers and can only depend on suicide bombs to maintain their presence in the region. We recorded several cases of such attacks which resulted in the death of civilians as well as members of the state DSF.

On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at about 11.30 pm 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 Suti was killed, another man by name Dedawi Djalva and 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 a.m., 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 and 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.

On Saturday, October 21 2023, at around 10pm, in the village of Dingding of the Far North region, a civilian Ngaibai Djaldai, aged 60, was killed by elements of the Islamist sect Boko Haram.

On Sunday, November 12, 2023, in the localities of Talkomari and Gangawa, agents of the Islamist sect Boko-haram attacked peasants engaged in their rural activities by name Ousmane 38 years and Madi Sali 60 years old. The two victims were working in their onion fields before being attacked by Boko-haram. The two men were tied up before being slaughtered by their executioners as they each tried to flee. The bodies of the victims were buried by their families and the Kolofata Gendarmerie brigade opened an investigation into the circumstances and motives of the attack. But it is likely that members of the terrorist group have banned rural activities because they use the fields as a transit area in these two localities located in the district of Kolofata in the department of Mayo Sava in the Far North.

On November 24 2023, two soldiers were killed and several others injured in a heavy bomb blast in Cameroon's Far North Region alleged to be planted by men of the Boko-Haram insurgency.

On Monday, December 18, 2023, a man named Adamou Najouni was shot dead by militants of the Boko Haram Islamist sect in the locality of Achigachia in the Far North region.

On Friday, December 29, 2023, a man named Adama, a farmer, aged around 30 was shot and killed in an attack by elements of the Islamist Boko Haram Islamist along the Sandawadjiri-Bornori road in the Far North region.

On Friday, December 29, 2023, a man named Boukar Hadidja son of Bogloka was shot and killed at Gouzoudou, in the Far North region in an attack by elements of the Boko Haram.

On Monday, December 18, 2023 two elements of Cameroon's DSF were killed in an attack by elements of the Boko-Haram Islamist sect

### **7.1.2 Harassment and Kidnapping**

In 2023, Boko Haram elements carried out a series of kidnappings in the Far North Region. These kidnapping and ransom taking is largely because of the lack of resources to sustain their operations. Most persons who were kidnapped were wealthy farmers and cattle owners or their family members.

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 in the injuring of 2 people by names Dangora Hoya 52 years old who suffered a fracture on right foot. Ngatawa Kildai, a man of about 70 years old was wounded on both feet. Also, bags of food stuff also 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.

### **7.1.3 Looting**

Due to the lack of food as well as other material resources to sustain operations, Boko Haram insurgents carried out a series of attacks mainly to steal property. Shops, cattle, sheep and other

materials and financial resources were looted. This caused a lot of hardship to civilians especially considering the already existing humanitarian crisis in the area.

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 kgs and clothing were carried away.

In the night of Saturday, September 30 2023, armed men of the Boko-haram insurgency attacked the village of Dingding Tourou which is located 4km from Tourou and 32km from Mokolo, killed one person and caused enormous damages in the locality. About 08 shops were broken and emptied, 76 houses looted, in which, foodstuffs, clothing and all other belongings were taken away by the members of the Boko Haram sect, which triggered the displacement of the population, with more than 90 households moving to the localities of Lbubam Ldamang Mokolo.

On Thursday, 16 November 2023, 15 (fifteen) fishermen in Darak of the Far North region were kidnapped by elements of the Boko Haram Islamist sect off the coast of Lake Darak.

On Wednesday afternoon, December 20, 2023, two children, a boy aged 15 and a girl aged 13, were abducted between Zamga and Djibrili by elements of the Boko-haram insurgency group.

#### **7.1.4 Arson and Destruction of Property**

In the course of attacks, there was heavy property destruction as a results of the use of heavy explosives and also as a result of targeted arson attacks. Some of this destruction was aimed at inflicting pain on the civilians.

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.

## **7.2 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 1.00 am, 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 Ziangué 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.

On Tuesday, December 19, 2023, in the locality of Bonderie in Kolofata of the Mayo Sava Division of the Far North region, elements of the Boko Haram sect in an attack on the Cameroonian army two DSF. In the course of the attack, two Boko Haram Elements were also killed. The Cameroonian soldiers that lost their lives were 2nd Class Samaleu of the 22nd Motorized Infantry Battalion (BIM) and Sergeant Idrissou. The two Boko Haram elements were killed by their own suicide bombs as they tried to target vehicles of the Multinational Joint Task Force that had come to assist the soldiers on ground. The Air Force and Army checkpoints in Bonderie were simultaneously targeted Boko Haram militants. The attack is suspected to have aimed at crippling the military base. Similar attacks had taken place a few kilometres from the town of Mora, in the village of Ngoulk, also located in the Mayo Sava Division.

The Defense and Security Forces launched an intense manhunt in response to the attack. The Cameroonian army managed to recover several grenades, machine guns and ammunition left behind by the attackers during the operation.

## **8 CONCLUSION AND COMMENTARY**

The year 2023 was worrisome as regards human rights violations/abuses and we recorded an increase in human rights violations and abuses in the conflict affected regions of Cameroon. These violations and abuses were perpetrated by state DSF, Separatist Armed groups as well as Fulani Militia groups in the North West and South West, Boko Haram Insurgents and other splinter groups. As a result, there was an increase in humanitarian crisis in these regions. 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 were 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.

According to UNICEF Cameroon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 (End of Year) January to December 2023,<sup>60</sup> *“As of 30 November 2023, there were over 2.2 million forcibly displaced persons living within Cameroon. This figure includes over a million internally displaced persons (IDPs), almost 660,000 returnees, who often are unable to return to their original home, and 490,000 refugees and asylum seekers. This total corresponds to a 9 per cent increase from the number of people who were registered as forcibly displaced in November 2022. Violence, natural disasters and epidemics continued to lead to human loss and injuries, displacement, family*

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<sup>60</sup> Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4 Reporting Period: 1 January to 31 December 2023 available at [https://www.unicef.org/media/152911/file/Cameroon-Humanitarian-SitRep-No.4-\(End-of-Year\)-January-to-December-2023.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/152911/file/Cameroon-Humanitarian-SitRep-No.4-(End-of-Year)-January-to-December-2023.pdf)

*separations and limited access to services in the Far North and the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. The presence of over 330,000 refugees in the East, Adamawa and North regions continued to exert additional pressure on the basic services available, leaving many refugees and their host communities dependent on humanitarian and development assistance. Some 1.3 million school-aged children needed education in emergency support in 2023. Almost 80 per cent of them are living in the regions which are most affected by violence: the Far North, the North-West and the South-West. In 2023, attacks on education continued to have a detrimental effect on the lives of children. In the North-West and South-West regions, 41 per cent of schools remain unfunctional. Some 25 attacks on education have been recorded, seven of them in September during the two-week long lockdown imposed by Non- State Armed Groups (NSAG) to boycott the start of the academic school year. Over 3.2 million people were estimated to be food insecure in Cameroon in 2023. The disruption of markets and food and nutrition services due to conflict negatively impact food consumption and nutrition patterns. Global developments, such as the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, led to a 5-year high in prices of imported food commodities, as well as a 7.8 per cent inflation rate (as of August 2023) as compared to 6.3 in August 2022”<sup>61</sup>*

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.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 To state authorities/ State Defense and Security Forces and Non State Armed Groups**

The Cameroon government should speed up judicial proceedings against persons arrested in the context of the conflict. These proceeding should be fair and in accordance with international standards. This will lead to the release all unlawfully incarcerated within the context of the Anglophone conflict.

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<sup>61</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/unicef-cameroon-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-end-year-january-december-2023>



The State should be transparent in its reports on the progress of investigations opened against state agents especially State Defense and Security Forces accused of committing human rights violations. This will be a prove justice not only being done but justice seen to be done.

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 urge the State Defense and Security Forces and Separatist Fighters to exercise restraint and desist from committing human rights violations and abuses, especially attacks against civilians and their properties.

We urge all parties to the conflict in North West and South West regions to stop attacks on journalists and human rights defenders. This will greatly permit the civil society to function properly and reverse the issue of shrinking civic space.

We call on separatist fighters and their leadership to stop attacks on school infrastructure, teachers, school children and other academic stake holders.

The Cameroon Government should ensure that Non-governmental Organizations and INGOs have safe access to places like detention centers without undue restrictions.

We call on judicial authorities to judiciously exercise their function of administration of justice and the promotion of the rule of law in accordance with the regulations in force as well as in accordance with the International Commitments that Cameroon is a party to.

In the Far North Region, the Cameroon Government should foster civil-military cooperation and also increase security measures in the region in order to curb the frequent attacks from the Boko Haram militias on the population and also educate the population on vigilante measures.

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.

## **9.2 To the friends of Cameroon and the international community**

We recommend that the international community continues to pressurize the State of Cameroon to respect its international Human rights as well as humanitarian law commitments.

We urge the International Community to continue to use all the available means to make the State of Cameroon as well as separatist fighters and their leadership to adopt a sincere, inclusive and negotiated dialogue as a means of resolving the conflict in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon.

We call on the International Community to urge the state of Cameroon to investigate and prosecute persons suspected of committing crimes against humanity in the context of the Anglophone conflict.

We call on the international community to continue to publicly condemn human rights violations and abuses committed by Cameroon Defense and Security Forces and armed separatists.

We call on the International Community should hold accountable persons instigating violence and promoting the violation of human rights in Cameroon, especially those resident in Foreign countries.