

PREVENTING AND MITIGATING MASS ATROCITIES IN NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST CAMEROON

IDENTIFYING POLICY OPTIONS



UNITED STATES
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FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE

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teaches that the Holocaust was preventable and that by heeding warning signs and taking early action, individuals and governments can save lives. With this knowledge, the **Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide** works to do for the victims of genocide today what the world failed to do for the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The mandate of the Simon-Skjodt Center is to alert the United States' national conscience, influence policy makers, and stimulate worldwide action to prevent and work to halt acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity, and advance justice and accountability. Learn more at ushmm.org/genocide-prevention.

COVER: Mile 16, Buea, Southwest Cameroon. May 11, 2019: A mother and child walk past a destroyed car in a small town on the main highway on May 11, 2019 near Buea in SW Cameroon. These towns were attacked by the military as suspected armed militants or protestors were known to live. This is one of many residential areas that now lie empty as residents fled to the main city of Buea or into the deep tropical forests. In 2017, separatists in Cameroon's Anglophone territories declared an independent state of Ambazonia, an area formerly known as Southern Cameroons, and took up arms against the Cameroonian government. The violence has forced hundreds of thousands from their homes and, according to the UN, left more than a million people in need of humanitarian assistance. *Giles Clarke/UNOCHA via Getty Images*

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The Simon-Skjodt Center focuses on situations where there is a risk of, or ongoing, genocide and related crimes against humanity. The Center primarily works on large-scale, group-targeted, identity-based mass atrocities. Mass atrocities are large-scale, systematic attacks against civilian populations.

In response to growing concerns about mass atrocity risks related to Cameroon's Anglophone crisis and the need to stimulate creative preventive responses,¹ the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide solicited expert opinions on policy options to prevent and mitigate mass atrocities in the Anglophone region of Cameroon. The following brief is informed by the conclusions and recommendations put forth by these experts.

SUMMARY

- Cameroon has hovered near or within the high-risk (top-30) category of the Early Warning Project's Statistical Risk Assessment of countries at risk of mass killing since 2014.²
- This brief focuses on armed conflict and instability in Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions, where long-standing grievances have given way to conflict between armed Anglophone separatists and government security forces.³
- The crisis has resulted in over 6,000 people killed and over 600,000 people internally displaced.⁴
- Major impediments to resolution of the Anglophone crisis include the Cameroonian government's commitment to military victory, the splintering of separatist groups, and the international community's lack of attention and preventive engagement.
- The crisis requires re-energized US and international policy action to halt atrocities and bring the conflict parties to a peaceful solution.



Map of Cameroon. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

BACKGROUND

The situation remains dire in Cameroon’s Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions since the Simon-Skjodt Center first warned of the immediate risk of mass atrocities against civilians in June 2020.⁵ The crisis emerged from decades of grievances of Anglophone citizens,⁶ who make up 20 percent of the population in a mostly Francophone country.⁷ For the past several decades, the Cameroonian government has enacted policies that economically and politically marginalize the Anglophone region despite demands for reform.⁸

In October 2016, Anglophone teachers and lawyers launched protests over the imposition of French-speaking teachers in Anglophone schools and the “francization” of the Anglophone common law system.⁹ Security forces responded to the growing protests with violence, which fed Anglophone nationalism and prompted clashes between the two sides. By 2017, armed Anglophone separatists began fighting for independence for the territory they refer to as Southern Cameroons, or Ambazonia.¹⁰ Violent conflict primarily between armed separatists and state security forces continues to date.¹¹

ATROCITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Cameroonian security forces have continued to target civilians in the Anglophone region.¹² Security forces have been accused of unlawful killings; destroying property; arbitrarily arresting, detaining, and torturing civilians; and firing indiscriminately into crowds.¹³ According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, political violence by armed separatists and government forces against civilians has increased in recent months.¹⁴

Armed Anglophone separatists have continued to attack teachers, students, and schools in Anglophone areas—ostensibly to enforce a boycott on state-mandated Francophone education—leaving approximately 700,000 students without access to education as of December 2021.¹⁵ Children and teachers who do not follow the separatists' boycott have been kidnapped, assaulted, and killed.¹⁶ As of the end of 2022, only 46 percent of schools in the Anglophone region remain functioning.¹⁷ Continued attacks on health facilities and humanitarian workers have restricted aid delivery and left approximately 30 percent of hospitals inoperable as of June 2021.¹⁸ Additionally, armed separatists have increasingly used improvised explosive devices, and while separatist leaders claim these explosions target the military, they have also killed and severely injured civilians.¹⁹

Acts of sexual violence against women and girls, by both government and separatist forces, are reportedly widespread throughout the Anglophone region.²⁰

CURRENT DYNAMICS

The violence in the Northwest and Southwest regions has ebbed and flowed in recent years as civilians in Cameroon have continued to face severe risks. The situation has become a grinding crisis where armed actors on both sides may have little incentive to shift towards peace, and where global powers have made insufficient and so far unsuccessful efforts to end the violence.²¹

There is limited information on the size and composition of the Anglophone separatist movement.²² Some separatist groups have joined forces, but the alliances made among armed groups appear weak, and disagreements among leaders have led to frequent splintering and division within political groups.

The conflict has also expanded across national borders. One Cameroonian separatist group, the Ambazonia Governing Council, and the Indigenous People of Biafra, a secessionist group in Nigeria, announced a partnership in April 2021.²³ In the beginning of the conflict, Anglophone Cameroonians had been able to live in Nigeria with relative security, with the exception of an extradition of separatist leaders back to Cameroon that was facilitated by the Nigerian government in 2018.²⁴ More recently, the Nigerian and Cameroonian governments are allegedly coordinating crackdowns on separatist groups, increasing fear among refugees from Cameroon living in Nigeria.²⁵ Additionally, separatist attacks in Cameroon's Francophone regions have continued in recent months.²⁶

Government security forces have allegedly enlisted the help of Fulani, a pastoral ethnic group, living in and around Ngarbuh in Northwest Cameroon to attack Ambazonian fighters and people who are perceived to

support them.²⁷ Survivors of a brutal massacre in Ngarbuh in February 2020 reported that government forces and armed Fulani committed the assault.²⁸

The advanced age of Cameroon's president of over 40 years, Paul Biya, also presents a looming threat of destabilization.²⁹ While a transition to new leadership could improve the security situation, it could also cause uncertainty and destabilization throughout the country. Posing additional concerns, experts shared that there are several groups in Biya's close circles competing for power, some with the resources to fund a civil war if it serves their financial or political purposes. The potential escalation in violence that could follow Biya's incapacitation or passing should necessitate immediate atrocity prevention planning.³⁰

PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

Coordinated, sustained, and calibrated international responses necessary to effectively respond to atrocity risks and ongoing crimes in Cameroon are woefully lacking today. This section summarizes key components of the international response to the crisis to date.

United States

In response to reports of serious human rights violations, the State Department withheld approximately \$17 million USD in security assistance to Cameroon in February 2019.³¹ However, the United States has continued to provide the Cameroonian government forms of security assistance.³² The US government ended Cameroon's preferential trade benefits and announced a policy to impose visa restrictions on individuals believed to be undermining efforts to end the crisis.³³ The US Senate and House of Representatives passed resolutions urging action to end violence and respect human rights.³⁴ During the December 2022 US-Africa Leaders Summit, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman met with Cameroonian Foreign Minister Lejeune Mbella Mbella and reportedly "discussed ways to find sustainable and peaceful solutions" to the Anglophone crisis and the need for addressing broader human rights concerns in Cameroon.³⁵

Mediation Efforts

The most direct attempt at resolving this conflict had come through a high-level mediation process led by the Swiss government and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. In September 2022, the Cameroonian government ended the Swiss-mediated peace talks that began in 2019 and had since stalled.³⁶ On January 20, 2023, the government of Canada announced it would facilitate a peace process between and agreed to by the Cameroon government and five major separatist groups.³⁷ While new talks may signal hope, uncertainty remains surrounding the Cameroon government's official participation in the mediation process.³⁸

Regional Organizations

Regional organizations have expressed concern over the situation and have reiterated commitments to peace but have not generated tangible progress to prevent mass atrocities. The European Union made several statements condemning violence and urging a peaceful mediation of the conflict but continues to trade freely with Cameroon through an Economic Partnership Agreement that entered into force in 2014.³⁹

In January 2017, former chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, released a statement expressing concern about the situation.⁴⁰ Current Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat visited Cameroon in July 2018 and discussed the situation in the Northwest and Southwest regions with President Biya and in July 2019 publicly supported dialogue efforts.⁴¹ The African Union Assembly has issued calls for dialogue and in 2022 reiterated a call for a cessation of hostilities.⁴² The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights issued press releases and resolutions on human rights violations in Cameroon and requested the opportunity to visit the country and assess the situation,⁴³ but the government of Cameroon has not authorized the request.⁴⁴

United Nations

UN member states, secretariat officials, and independent experts have issued statements and reports expressing concern.⁴⁵ In 2018, the UN Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide called for an independent investigation of abuses committed by both parties during the conflict.⁴⁶ In March 2019, on behalf of 38 countries, the United Kingdom presented a statement to the UN Human Rights Council expressing concern over the Anglophone Crisis.⁴⁷ This concern led to an Arria-formula meeting of Security Council members on the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon on May 13, 2019,⁴⁸ and a visit by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to Cameroon in May 2019 followed by a technical mission by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) later that year.⁴⁹ On April 29, 2022, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued findings on Cameroon expressing concern about widespread violence and urged Cameroon to prioritize national reconciliation, transitional justice, and efforts to ensure accountability.⁵⁰

United States Interests and Opportunities

The August 2022 US Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa situates Cameroon and the region as a critical partner for US national security interests.⁵¹ Additionally, the US government identifies Cameroon as serving “a key role in regional stability.”⁵² Yet the US government has acknowledged that armed conflict in Cameroon, alongside several crises in the region, has contributed to “fragility [that] provides fertile ground for expanding terrorist activity.”⁵³ The US government maintains a partnership with the Cameroon government to counter terrorist threats from the Islamic State West Africa Province and Boko Haram.⁵⁴

The Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy underscores the United States' interest in working with like-minded partners to strengthen responses to political and security crises in Africa.⁵⁵ US action to prevent atrocities in Cameroon presents an opportunity to strengthen these ties and engage with the government of Cameroon to limit the potential of other actors that do not share the same interests, such as China and Russia.⁵⁶ US efforts to maintain a relationship with the current government and potential successors should not limit efforts to push for an end to the atrocities and for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The December 2022 United States-Africa Leaders Summit highlighted the US government's “continued efforts to strengthen ties with African partners based on principles of mutual respect and shared interests and values,” including advancing peace and security and human rights.⁵⁷ The implementation of the efforts initiated at the Summit presents an opportunity for the US government to act upon the atrocity prevention commitments it has laid out on paper. The US Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities

reiterates US commitments to atrocity prevention and should, as with regional strategies, guide US action to promote peace and stability in Cameroon.⁵⁸

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE POLICY ACTION TO MITIGATE MASS ATROCITIES

Hopes for an effective negotiated solution to the crisis have dimmed as the government remains committed to a military victory while separatists are set on independence. Experts shared with the Simon-Skjodt Center several reasons why the crisis has continued for years:

- **The Cameroonian government has not engaged seriously in negotiations.** Negotiations are widely acknowledged as the key to ending the crisis. Those involved in the recently terminated process led by the Swiss government and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue reported that Biya did not seriously engage in negotiations, seeing the crisis as a Cameroonian issue, not one to be resolved through outside parties. Additionally, the Swiss mediation process faced criticism for including “only a limited number of actors” involved in the conflict.⁵⁹ While a new effort moderated by Canada may be promising, the government of Cameroon publicly dismissed the initiative.⁶⁰ Experts expressed frustration with the Cameroonian government’s unwillingness to meaningfully engage.
- **The Cameroonian government has prioritized solutions generated during the Major National Dialogue held by the government in September and October of 2019.**⁶¹ However, the Major National Dialogue did not include “key opposition and separatist leaders [who] remained in prison”—and some moderate Anglophone leaders did not participate.⁶² Most experts believe that the results of these talks are unlikely to generate any meaningful solutions.
- **Separatist groups are splintered.** Without a coherent list of demands or legitimate coalition of Anglophone leaders to negotiate, it will be difficult to achieve peace through negotiations. Since armed separatist groups are deeply fractured and lack unified leadership and clear demands, mediators faced difficulty selecting which separatist groups to include in the Swiss-led negotiations and discerning whether groups accurately reflect broader constituencies.
- **Foreign governments continued to support the Swiss mediation process and were reluctant to support new approaches, despite the failure of these talks to make significant progress.** Advocates shared frustration that such strong commitment to the Swiss-led process impeded efforts to create alternative processes with a potentially greater likelihood of success.
- **Foreign governments are not prioritizing the Anglophone crisis.** It is common for the Anglophone crisis to be misperceived as communal violence by policy makers in foreign countries. However, the state is a key player in this crisis, and, as noted earlier, evidence from multiple sources implicates state actors in serious human rights violations. Experts reported that policy makers working on Central African affairs view Cameroon as a “slow burn” crisis, not an emergency. Cameroon is seen as relatively stable by outsiders, even though civilians in the Anglophone region continue to suffer. With other global crises demanding immediate attention, foreign leaders generally have not prioritized the crisis

in the Anglophone region. This approach has resulted in responses that lack the urgency necessary for preventing and mitigating atrocities.

- **The African Union—alongside regional and international actors—has yet to propose effective responses.** The African Union has not leveraged its leadership and political power to encourage an end to atrocities and conflict through mediation.

POLICY OPTIONS

Experts identified several options for actions that could help end mass atrocities and support a peaceful resolution of the conflict. While it is unlikely that all actors will embrace each option, the options should inform serious discussion and debate within and among governments and other stakeholders.

For the Government of Cameroon:

- Immediately cease the targeting of civilians, adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law, and seek a peaceful solution to the conflict.
- Address the Anglophone community's underlying grievances:
 - Fully participate in a credible mediation process that includes conflict parties, civil society, and representatives of affected Anglophone communities, with particular attention to the inclusion of women.⁶³
 - End discriminatory practices against Anglophones and ensure proper representation in civilian infrastructure, including educational and legal settings. This should also include ending the prohibition against teaching in English, making public services accessible in English, and destigmatizing the use of English in professional capacities.
 - End arbitrary detention of government critics and release individuals unjustly detained for exercising their rights.⁶⁴
- Launch credible investigations, supported by the African Union and/or UN, into allegations of mass atrocities. Ensure that perpetrators on both the government and separatist sides are held accountable according to international legal standards.
- Protect and support people displaced by the crisis.
- Increase safety measures and improve access to the Anglophone regions for humanitarian organizations.
- Permit access for and ensure the safety of journalists and media organizations operating in Cameroon.

For armed separatist groups in Cameroon:

- Immediately cease the targeting of civilians, including attacks on students and teachers, adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law, and seek a peaceful solution to the conflict.
- Develop and strengthen existing relationships with organizations with mediation expertise to facilitate discussion among separatist groups and strengthen a shared agenda in order to make successful mediation more likely.
- Focus on coalition building among separatist groups to designate mutually agreed-upon representatives with the authority to represent the groups in negotiations.

For foreign governments and multilateral organizations:

- Support and pursue creative options to re-energize and expand an independent mediation effort led by an international third-party, such as the current Canada-led effort.
- Ensure international support and coordination for the mediation and involve actors with leverage over the conflict parties.⁶⁵
 - Expand multilateral actor involvement with groups such as other African governments, local mediation efforts such as the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation,⁶⁶ and international governments such as the United States and France, who could help generate greater political pressure for Biya to take a more serious role in negotiations.⁶⁷
- Apply coordinated pressure on conflict parties to reach a mediated agreement.
 - Encourage international actors with economic, political, and/or cultural ties with Cameroon to utilize their relationships in order to support peace.
 - Impose targeted sanctions, including travel and visa restrictions, against perpetrators of violence and individuals provoking conflict. These sanctions should be (1) targeted against individuals with international exposure, including financial ties abroad, (2) accompanied by adequate resources for sanction enforcement, (3) imposed in coordination with or support from international partners, and (4) paired with clear communication to targeted individuals regarding actions that would trigger sanction removal.⁶⁸
 - Generate greater attention for the Anglophone crisis in international fora, such as by putting Cameroon on the agenda as a topic of discussion in relevant UN fora, trade negotiations, and bilateral and multilateral meetings with actors who have a significant capacity to influence the situation such as the United States and France.
- Highlight ongoing mass atrocities and promote accountability
 - Add Cameroon to the agenda of the African Union Peace and Security Council.
 - Demonstrate sustained attention from the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, including a potential visit to Cameroon.
 - Create or support an independent investigation into abuses committed by all parties in Cameroon to advance justice and accountability efforts.
 - Appoint a UN Special Envoy for Cameroon or a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cameroon to investigate mass atrocities and advance justice and accountability in Cameroon.
- Prioritize efforts to protect and support people displaced by the crisis.
- Increase support for local civil society organizations (CSOs) and other actors advancing atrocity prevention in Cameroon.⁶⁹
 - Provide these actors with financial assistance and protection when appropriate, as CSOs in Cameroon have faced significant threats and intimidation as they carry out their work.⁷⁰
- Integrate atrocity prevention into development programming.
 - Encourage entities such as the UN Development Program and other governments' development programs with active operations across Cameroon to analyze the effects of their work on current atrocity dynamics and their capacity to influence actors in the conflict toward ending mass atrocities.

For the United States government:

- Formulate a clear atrocity prevention strategy based on comprehensive analysis and planning.
 - Conduct an internal comprehensive conflict and atrocity risk assessment for Cameroon to inform the development of a new atrocity prevention strategy for the country.⁷¹
 - Conduct scenario planning, including for Biya's eventual transition out of power. Planning should identify opportunities for programmatic and diplomatic actions to help prevent atrocities in the context of a potentially disordered transition.
 - Review security assistance to Cameroon to ensure such assistance is not supporting violence against civilians. Condition reinstatement of withheld security assistance on effective efforts to protect civilians and promote accountability for grave human rights violations.
 - Arrange for the visit of senior US officials to Cameroon to demonstrate to the Cameroonian government its commitment to preventing atrocities and holding perpetrators accountable.
 - Ensure implementation of outcomes of the United States-Africa Leaders Summit reflects the urgency of preventing mass atrocities in Cameroon.
- Protect civilians fleeing violence in Cameroon
 - Given the ongoing nature of the violence in Cameroon, Cameroonians seeking asylum in the United States may credibly fear persecution or violence if they were to be returned. While each asylum case is considered individually, as a general matter, the ongoing violence and persecution in Cameroon's Anglophone region is a threat to safety and may be a valid reason for seeking refuge in the United States.⁷²
 - Expand the US government Temporary Protected Status for Cameroon after it expires in December 2023 should risks remain in Cameroon.⁷³
 - Explore additional efforts to protect those fleeing violence as part of a broader atrocity prevention and response plan.

ENDNOTES

¹ References to “the Anglophone crisis” and “the crisis in Northwest and Southwest Cameroon” are used interchangeably to refer to the conflict in Cameroon’s Northwest/Southwest regions.

² “Cameroon,” Early Warning Project, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/countries/cameroon>. The Early Warning Project is a joint initiative of the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College; The Early Warning Project focuses on the risk of new mass killing—a subset of mass atrocities—to help fill an analytic gap that is critical to prevention. The project defines a mass killing as having occurred when the deliberate actions of armed groups—including but not limited to state security forces, rebel armies, and other militias—result in the deaths of at least 1,000 non-combatant civilians who are targeted as part of a specific group, over a period of one year or less. The Early Warning Project’s latest review of potential new mass killings did not find sufficient evidence that the violence in Cameroon met these criteria. We revisit these judgments each year. This assessment is just one tool meant to be a starting point for discussion and further research, not a definitive conclusion on risks. Given the ongoing violence against civilians in Cameroon, deeper analysis about potential escalation is certainly merited.

³ Armed conflict and instability in the far north between Boko Haram and the state fall outside the scope of this brief.

⁴ “Cameroon,” International Crisis Group, accessed January 17, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>; “Cameroon Situation Report,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December 30, 2022, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/cameroon/>.

⁵ “Risk of Mass Atrocities in Cameroon,” US Holocaust Memorial Museum, June 2020, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Cameroon_Policy_Brief_June_2020_English.pdf.

⁶ After World War I, the colonial powers of France and the United Kingdom administered the former German colony of Kamerun as mandate territories and then as joint trustees, leading to the development of politically and culturally distinct Francophone and Anglophone regions. For a more comprehensive background to the crisis, see “Risk of Mass Atrocities in Cameroon,” 1-2.

⁷ Roxana Willis et al., “Human Rights Abuses in the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis: A Submission of Evidence to the UK Parliament,” University of Oxford Faculty of Law, 2019, 7-8, https://www.rightofassembly.info/assets/downloads/Cameroon_Anglophone_Crisis_Report.pdf.

⁸ See “Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads,” International Crisis Group, August 2, 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/250-camerouns-anglophone-crisis-crossroads>.

⁹ “Cameroon Teachers, Lawyers Strike in Battle for English,” *Al Jazeera*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/5/cameroon-teachers-lawyers-strike-in-battle-for-english>.

¹⁰ “Cameroon,” Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, February 28, 2023, <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/cameroon/>.

¹¹ “Cameroon Situation Report,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December 7, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-situation-report-7-december-2022>.

¹² “Cameroon: Events of 2021,” Human Rights Watch, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/cameroon>.

¹³ “Human Rights Report between October 2021 and March 2022,” Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, December 9, 2022, <https://www.chrda.org/human-rights-report-between-october-2021-and-march-2022-there-was-an-increase-in-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-by-the-state-defense-and-security-forces-and-non-state-armed-groups-in-cameroon/>; “Cameroon: Events of 2021”; “Cameroon 2021,” Amnesty International, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/cameroon/report-cameroon/>; “Cameroon’s Unfolding Catastrophe” 26-33; Willis et al., “Human Rights Abuses in the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis.”

¹⁴ “Regional Overview: Africa, January 2023,” Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, February 1, 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/02/03/regional-overview-africa-january-2023/>.

¹⁵ “Cameroon: Armed Separatists’ Attack on Education,” Human Rights Watch, December 15, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/15/cameroon-armed-separatists-attack-education>; “Spiral of Violence Shuts Schools in Cameroon’s Anglophone Region,” *Al Jazeera*, December 11, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/12/11/spiral-of-violence-shuts-schools-in-camerouns-anglophone-region>.

¹⁶ Lizzy Davies, “They Punished Me for Having Books’: Schools in Cameroon Terrorised by Armed Groups,” *The Guardian*, December 16, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/dec/16/they-punished-me-for->

[having-books-schools-in-cameroon-terrorised-by-armed-groups](#); “Cameroon - The education crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions,” ACAPS, February 19, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/acaps-thematic-report-cameroon-education-crisis-northwest-and-southwest-regions-19>.

¹⁷ “Cameroon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 4: 1 January to 31 December 2022,” UNICEF, February 2, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/unicef-cameroon-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-1-january-31-december-2022-2-february-2023>.

¹⁸ “Cameroon,” Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect; Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “After Cameroon Government Ban from Western Regions, MSF Says Thousands Lack Healthcare,” *Voice of America*, June 23, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-after-cameroon-government-ban-western-regions-msf-says-thousands-lack-healthcare/6207370.html>.

¹⁹ “Cameroon Situation Report,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, August 5, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-situation-report-5-aug-2021>; “European Parliament Resolution of 25 November 2021 on the Human Rights Situation in Cameroon,” European Parliament, 2021/2983(RSP), November 25, 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0483_EN.html. The European Parliament resolution notes “in the first five months of 2021, armed separatists carried out at least 27 attacks with improvised explosive devices in 13 towns, more than in all previous years of the crisis combined.”

²⁰ Jess Craig, “Sexual Violence Pervasive in Cameroon’s Anglophone Regions,” *Al Jazeera*, April 29, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/29/gender-based-violence-pervasive-in-cameroons-anglophone-regions>.

²¹ Experts interviewed by the Simon-Skjoldt Center noted that individuals associated with the separatist movement may be profiting from a “wartime economy” in a region where little other economic opportunity exists, and that some individuals within the Cameroonian government may be incentivized not to end the crisis if it sends the self-serving message that a strong military response may be required to address the violence.

²² In 2019, the International Crisis Group estimated between 2,000 and 4,000 armed separatist combatants divided among seven armed militias and about 20 smaller armed groups (“Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?” International Crisis Group, May 3, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-comment-arriver-aux-pourparlers>). See also Tomás F. Husted, “Cameroon: Key Issues and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, September 22, 2021, 6, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46919/2>.

²³ R. Maxwell Bone, “Cameroon’s Forgotten Civil War Is Getting Worse,” *Foreign Policy*, December 2, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/02/cameroon-civil-war-worse-nigeria-ambazonia-anglophone-crisis/>.

²⁴ Bone, “Cameroon’s Forgotten Civil War Is Getting Worse”.

²⁵ Bone, “Cameroon’s Forgotten Civil War Is Getting Worse”.

²⁶ Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Separatists Infiltrate Town, Abduct Youths,” *Voice of America*, September 7, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-separatists-infiltrate-town-abduct-youths/6734751.html>;

Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Says Separatists Disguised as Military Kill, Loot,” *Voice of America*, July 15, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-cameroon-says-separatists-disguised-military-kill-loot/6208288.html>. The International Crisis Group reported the conflict had spread into Cameroon’s Francophone regions by mid-2018 (“Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?” International Crisis Group, May 3, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-comment-arriver-aux-pourparlers>).

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⁶⁴ Hundreds of individuals have been detained by the government throughout this conflict. Releasing arbitrarily detained individuals could be a promising first step towards building trust and peace; “Cameroon: More than a Hundred Detainees from Anglophone Regions and Opposition Party Languishing in Jail for Speaking Out,” Amnesty International, January 24, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/01/cameroon-more-than-a-hundred-detainees-from-anglophone/>.

⁶⁵ Relatively strong research evidence—according to the US Holocaust Museum’s “Tools for Atrocity Prevention” resource—indicates that when there is *international support or coordination* for the mediation effort and the mediation *implementer has strong leverage*, mediation has a greater likelihood of success for helping prevent mass atrocities. For more information, visit “Tools for Atrocity Prevention,” Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, <https://preventiontools.ushmm.org/mediation>.

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⁶⁷ As president Biya has repeatedly pushed back against western interference and highlighted the need for local solutions, the introduction of a new mediation process hosted and facilitated by African countries may be more effective in getting the Cameroonian president to the bargaining table. As actors close to the conflict and representing the interests of civilians, CSOs working on grassroots peacebuilding should also be included in high-level mediation efforts as they bring a valuable understanding of the different separatist groups and the desires of civilians.

⁶⁸ This recommendation reflects several factors a majority of experienced targeted sanctions practitioners indicated as associated with greater effectiveness of targeted sanctions in helping prevent mass atrocities. These factors include (1) *the target’s exposure to the international system*, (2) *the commitment of the sanctions implementer*, (3) *international support or coordination around the sanctions policy*, and (4) *clear communication about the sanctions policy*. For more information, see “Using Targeted Sanctions to Help Prevent Mass Atrocities: Results from Interviews with Experienced Practitioners,” Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, January 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/2023_Report_Using-Targeted-Sanctions-to-Help-Prevent-Mass-Atrocities.pdf.

⁶⁹ One of the main requests the Simon-Skjodt Center has received from CSOs working in Cameroon is for capacity building support so that they may increase their impact.

⁷⁰ Some local civil society organizations have produced encouraging results in their attempts to facilitate dialogue and movement towards peace and meeting the needs of those affected by the conflict (Jess Craig, “In Cameroon’s Neglected Conflict, Local Peace Activists Are Making a Difference,” *The New Humanitarian*, June 3, 2021, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/6/1/peace-activists-in-cameroon-try-to-end-a-brutal-war>). One expert included in our research shared that a local civil society organization has successfully engaged two strong proponents of violence, highlighting the dangerous effects of their actions on their community and persuading them to instead pursue peaceful dialogue. Another women’s group has attempted to begin grassroots peace talks but has faced backlash from both rebel groups and government leaders.

⁷¹ The 2022 US Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent and Respond to Atrocities calls on the Atrocity Prevention Task Force to conduct atrocity risk assessments, and has issued an updated Atrocity Risk Assessment Framework to guide those efforts. “2022 United States Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities,” US Department of State, July 15, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/2022-united-states-strategy-to-anticipate-prevent-and-respond-to-atrocities/#:~:text=Atrocity%20prevention%20saves%20lives%20and,assisting%20in%20recovery%20from%20atrocities>; “U.S. Atrocity Risk Assessment Framework,” US Department of State, December 21, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-atrocity-risk-assessment-framework/>.

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