



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
26 August 2024

English only

---

## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-seventh session

9 September–9 October 2024

Agenda item 2

### Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

## Written statement\* submitted by Franciscans International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 August 2024]

---

\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Human Rights Situation in Cameroon: Meaningful Conflict Resolution and Accountability Processes Key to Resolve Crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions**

Franciscans International welcomes the visit of Mr. Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to Cameroon for the inauguration of the new premises for the Central Africa Regional Office (OHCHR-CARO) in Yaoundé where he had meetings with the Government officials alongside with various stakeholders including civil society organizations.

We commend his office's involvement to engage in a constructive dialogue to address human rights violations with Cameroonian authorities and look forward seeing concrete steps for improvement (1). In 2019, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the then High Commissioner, conducted an official visit to seek effective solutions to the major human rights and humanitarian crises in the North-West and South-West (2).

We remain concerned over the situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon where clashes between armed separatist forces and the military continue to negatively impact civilians.

State armed forces have responded to separatist attacks with counter-insurgency operations and raids against businesses and homes, causing civilians to flee temporarily or permanently. Reports of sexual and gender-based violence during those raids have not been investigated or even acknowledged. The army is further reportedly engaged in summary executions, arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detentions of suspected separatists or separatists. (3)

Since 2017, separatists have forcibly imposed weekly lockdowns called "ghost town operations" and retaliate violently against any individual not abiding by them. Taxi drivers were recently targeted through imposed bans on their businesses by the separatist forces, as a response to night-time bans of motorcycles proclaimed by the government. Educational and health facilities and personnel are also targeted by separatist forces (4). The start of the 2023 school year was disrupted by calls for a boycott from the separatists followed by the killing of three individuals and two head teachers in Belo, North-West Region. Separatists allegedly kidnapped students, teachers, political leaders, medical staff, humanitarian workers, clergy and religious, and government officials as an intimidation tool against communities to enforce boycotts on education and businesses (5). As a result, 700.000 children's education was negatively impacted by successive boycotts in the two Anglophone Regions (6).

As a result of the clashes, civilians caught in the crossfires either flee or restrict their movement, fearing attacks from both sides. As of June 2024, an estimated 583.112 persons were internally displaced, with at least 2 million people needing humanitarian aid in the North-West and South-West Regions (7). Health centers find themselves targeted by both sides; many UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs were forced to end operations, and those that remain working in the centers fear assaults. There have been allegations that the army has invaded health institutions and taken away suspected separatists for execution – sometimes with corpses later displayed in public.

Accountability for grave human rights violations and abuses committed by both sides of the conflict is yet to be achieved as victims' complaints rarely result in court cases, trials and convictions. Despite the army recognizing its responsibility in several cases of killings and violence, investigations and trials are still pending, eroding citizens' trust in any meaningful justice processes led by the State (8).

The Government has made efforts in addressing grievances from the English-speaking community notably through the adoption of the Special Status providing greater autonomy to the two Anglophone Regions (9). However, the newly formed Regional Assemblies still require the capital's final approval for any decision, and the issue of language equality in educational, legal and public institutions remains largely unaddressed (10).

## Recommendations

While acknowledging the initial steps taken by the Government of Cameroon in addressing the human rights violations related to the conflict in the North-West and South-West Regions, we call on the Government to address the root causes of the conflict and engage in meaningful accountability processes, including by:

- enforcing language equality and representation in all public institutions and ensuring access to education in conflict areas;
- establishing an adequate legal framework to address grave human rights violations and abuses committed by the armed forces and separatist forces, with a victim-centered approach to accountability mechanisms;
- ensuring safe access to adequate humanitarian and medical aid for victims and internally displaced communities and individuals;
- engaging in a constructive dialogue with all parties of the conflict in order to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and end hostilities; and

Finally, we also call on the Government of Cameroon to engage constructively and meaningfully with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights especially with regards to the request of an assessment mission as a follow-up to the technical mission of 2019.

- 
- (1) OHCHR, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk concludes official visit to Cameroon, 7th August 2024 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/08/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-concludes-official-visit-cameroon>
- (2) OHCHR, Bachelet welcomes Cameroon's willingness to cooperate to tackle human rights crises, 6th May 2019 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2019/05/bachelet-welcomes-camerouns-willingness-cooperate-tackle-human-rights-crises>
- (3) University of Oxford, Cameroon Conflict Human Rights Report 2022/23, From January 2021 to April 2023, 2023 [https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Cameroon-Conflict-Human-Rights-Report-2022\\_23.pdf](https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Cameroon-Conflict-Human-Rights-Report-2022_23.pdf)
- (4) International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, June 2024, [https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location\[\]=4](https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location[]=4)
- (5) International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, September 2023, [https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location\[\]=4](https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location[]=4)
- (6) International Crisis Group, Cameroon's Anglophone conflict: Children should be able to return to school, 20 September 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/camerouns-anglophone-conflict-children-should-be-able-return-school>
- (7) Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Cameroon, 31st May 2024 <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/cameroon/>
- (9) International Crisis Group, A Second Look at Cameroon's Anglophone Special Status, 31st March 2023 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/b188-second-look-camerouns-anglophone-special-status>
- (10) Ibid.