

# CAMEROON

## Anglophone crisis

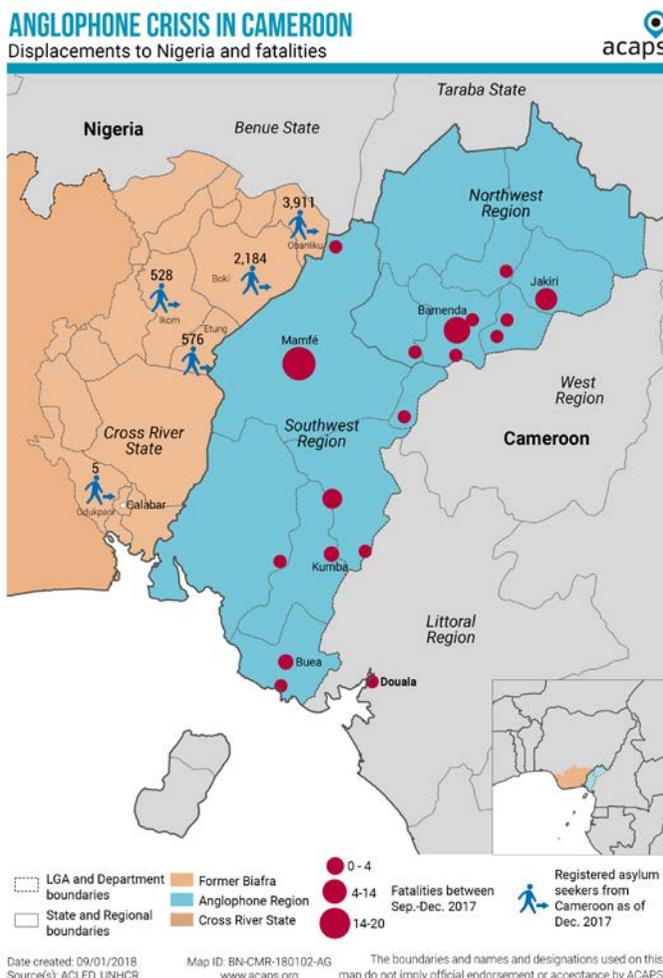
The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon escalated on 1 October 2017, when secessionists of Southwest and Northwest regions symbolically declared their independence. Tens of thousands of people marched in support of the declaration, fueling further tensions and violence between the government secessionists. Severe human rights violations are reported. Over 8,000 people have fled to Cross River State in Nigeria, and up to 20,000 people are estimated to have been internally displaced due to the crisis.



### Limitations

Low international presence in Southwest and Northwest regions results in a lack of detailed information on the impact of the crisis. A UNHCR mission to Cross River and Benue states in Nigeria took place in January, but further assessments are needed.

Estimates of the number of refugees in Nigeria should be taken cautiously, as registration has been slow and predicted numbers are significantly higher than registration figures. Estimates of the number of IDPs need to be verified.



### Predicted developments

**Tensions and violence** between secessionists and the government are likely to increase, as retaliatory actions continue to be carried out. The risk of **Biafran involvement** in the crisis remains unclear, but would significantly exacerbate the level violence. Instability in Anglophone regions could have **broader implications**, both on national elections scheduled for 2018 and regional stability. Escalation of the crisis will likely **increase displacement**, and enhance protection, education and livelihoods needs.

### Key sectors impacted



**+8,000 refugees in Nigeria** and an estimated 20,000 IDPs



**71 fatalities** between Sept.-Dec. 2017



**Schools closed** for over one year



**Villages burned** in Mamfé, Southwest region

## Rationale

### Historical background

Five million Anglophones – about 20% of the total population – live in Cameroon, mainly in the two English-speaking regions of Southwest and Northwest. The marginalisation of the Anglophone minority has been a feature of the economic and political dynamics since the country became unified and centralised in 1972. Prior to this, the French-speaking Eastern Cameroon and the English-speaking Western Cameroon had existed as a federal state since 1961 (IRIN 04/10/2017; Gov. of Cameroon 2010). The 1972 constitution gave equal status to both the French and English languages. However, sentiment grew among the Anglophone population that the Francophone population were better represented politically, economically and socially (ICG 02/08/2017).

### Escalation of tensions

Tensions escalated in October 2016, when Anglophone lawyers and teachers began protesting against the increased use of the French language in courts and schools. Violent repression of public demonstrations throughout November and December 2016 triggered further discontent, and led to at least five civilians being killed and over 100 people being arrested (IRIN 15/12/2017). The government's tactics of repression further politicised the Anglophone movement. Stronger calls for secession in 2017 were met by a more militarised government response (ICG 02/08/2017; IRIN 04/10/2017). Protests by the Cameroonian diaspora in Europe and North America have given further impetus to protests on the ground. Another indication of the escalating tensions has been an increase in number of “ghost town” operations – when civilians shut down all economic activity as a form of protest (ICG 19/10/2017).

### Recent developments

On 1 October 2017, the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Governing Council, a secessionist group, made a symbolic declaration of independence. Tens of thousands of people across Northwest and Southwest regions marched in the streets in support of an independent state of Ambazonia. Government forces responded with force: between 28 September and 2 October, 40 protesters were killed and over 100 were injured, and more than 500 arrests were reported (ICG 19/10/2017; Amnesty International 13/10/2017). Police and military also searched properties in several localities (FIDH 07/10/2017).

Tensions increased again at the beginning of December after secessionists killed 10 police and military personnel within a month. The government response forced the evacuation of 15 villages in Manyu department, Southwest region; civilians who refused to leave were considered hostile and accused of being involved in attacks (Africetime

04/12/2017). As of mid-December, media sources reported that the Cameroon army was preparing “massive” operations in the Anglophone regions (Daily Nation 09/12/2017).

## Predicted developments

### Tensions and violence

Government tactics of violent repression have fuelled secessionists' resistance rather than quelled it, escalating the crisis throughout 2017. This vicious circle has led to unprecedented levels of violence in Southwest and Northwest regions. With few indications that the government is prepared to engage in any form of dialogue with whom it calls “terrorists”, the violence is likely to escalate further. There is also a risk that violence spreads to the Francophone part of the country, broadening the impact of the crisis (DW 08/12/2017; ICG 21/12/2017).

Political tensions have also widened the pre-existing social tensions between Anglophones and Francophones. Pro-government media tend to implicate all Anglophones in the secessionist movement. As a result, much of the Anglophone population report feeling marginalised by the rest of the population. Such feelings are likely to manifest in tensions and potentially violence as support for secession grows and support for federalism wanes (ICG 19/10/2017).

### Biafran involvement

Buoyed by their growing popularity, there is a risk that Anglophone secessionists seek to raise a more professional army. If they receive support from Biafran separatists in neighbouring Nigeria, the risk of violence would be significantly exacerbated. Though both groups officially deny being linked, they share similar sentiments of exclusion from central government as well as ethnic and linguistic affinities, which has generated speculation that they cooperate. Moreover, groups of young Cameroonians are thought to have travelled to Nigeria to be trained in guerrilla warfare (Daily Nation 09/12/2017; ICG 19/10/2017; ICG 21/12/2017).

### Broader implications

The crisis is also likely to have broader political impacts, particularly in the run-up to the Presidential elections planned for October 2018. The main opposition party Social Democratic Front (SDF) has an Anglophone leadership and is known to be pro-federalist. However, some of its deputies threatened to resign from the parliament in protest against the government's repression and accused the President of genocide. Political impasse at the national level is likely to exacerbate tensions in the Northwest and Southwest regions as well as spread tension throughout the country (ICG 19/10/2017). This risks not only further destabilising Cameroon, but also affecting Cameroon's capacity to combat Boko

Haram in Lake Chad region as well as to respond to refugees from Nigeria and the Central African Republic (ICG 21/12/2017).

## Impact by sector

**Displacement:** Increased insecurity and violence in Southwest and Northwest regions has induced displacement since the end of September 2017. Displacement accelerated in early December when 16 villages were evacuated ahead of military operations. UNHCR has registered over 8,050 Cameroonian refugees in the Nigerian state of Cross River. (UNHCR 11/01/2018) Some 2,000 crossed the border on 3 December alone and numbers continue to rise. Local authorities have referred to the presence of over 28,000 refugees in their territory and projections estimate up to 40,000 Cameroonians could flee into Nigeria (UNHCR 07/12/2017; Reuters 06/12/2017; ICG 21/12/2017). Some sources also indicate that about 20,000 people have been internally displaced by the crisis, but precise information on the number of IDPs and their locations is lacking (ECHO 23/12/2017).

**Protection:** A total of 71 fatalities have been recorded in English-speaking Cameroon between September and December 2017. More casualties are likely to be recorded as violence from both sides continues. Several reports indicate serious human rights abuses committed by governmental forces against civilians (ACLED; ICG 21/12/2017).

**Education:** Several schools have been burned down and many others, including the two universities of Buea and Bamenda, have been closed down due to strikes and insecurity. Some facilities have been closed for over one year, severely impacting on children’s access to education. Some Anglophone families attempt to cope by sending their children to school in French-speaking regions, which is likely to have a negative impact on their learning outcomes (VOA 04/09/2017; ICG 27/09/2017).

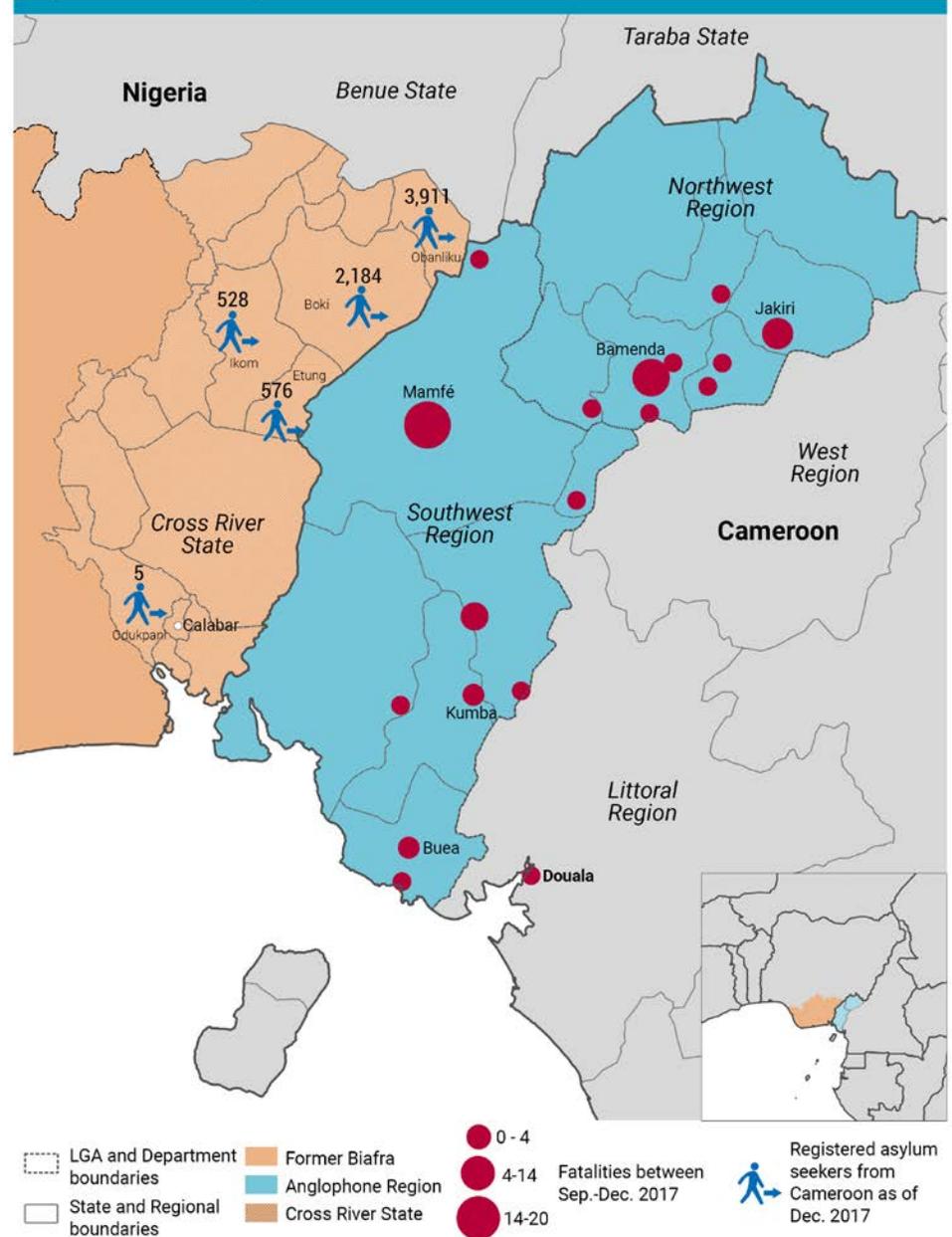
**Shelter:** In the area of Mamfe, which is located on the border with Nigeria in the Southwest region, reports indicate several villages were burned down by the Cameroonian army in December (VOA 19/12/2017).

**Livelihoods:** Many economic activities have been put on hold due to the insecurity. Across the Anglophone regions, 41% of businesses report turnover reducing since the onset of the crisis, with small businesses being most affected (Africatime 12/10/2017).

**Access:** Cameroonian government has set up checkpoints in the Anglophone regions which are increasing access constraints in the area (VOA 13/12/2017).

## ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON

Displacements to Nigeria and fatalities



Date created: 09/01/2018  
Source(s): ACLED, UNHCR.

Map ID: BN-CMR-180102-AG  
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