

# CAMEROON

## Electoral violence in anglophone regions

Just weeks before the presidential election scheduled for 7 October, thousands of people have begun to flee the Southwest and Northwest regions, fearing an escalation of violence as clashes between secessionists and the army intensify. The anglophone crisis in Cameroon has deteriorated this year, with armed secessionist groups and Cameroonian armed forces both perpetrating brutal attacks and human rights violations. The upcoming election, coupled with the lack of political dialogue to solve the conflict, is likely to fuel further displacement and continue disrupting basic services, livelihoods, and the economy.

### PROBABILITY

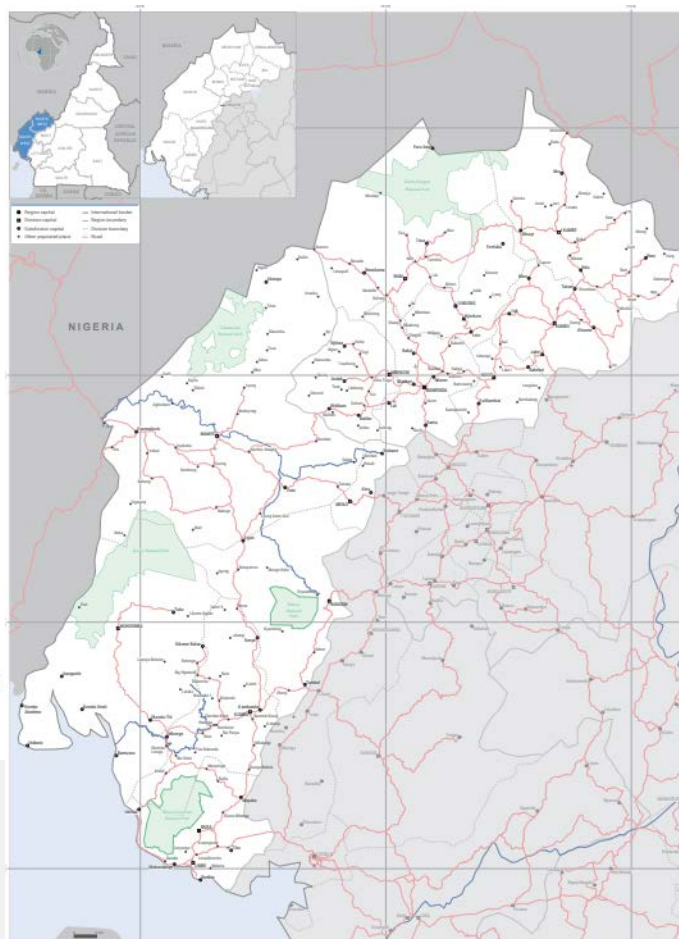


### IMPACT



### Aggravating factors

The spillover from the **conflict in CAR** has negatively impacted eastern Cameroon, as the Cameroonian government increasingly struggles to meet the needs of both refugees and host populations. In addition, **military actions continue against Boko Haram** in the Far North region of Cameroon, maintaining a climate of insecurity. Multiple severe humanitarian crises in the country are likely to complicate response plans. (CICAM 03/07/2018)



Sources: OCHA 09/06/2018

### Predicted developments

With no inclusive national dialogue or peace agreement in sight, **tensions, violence, and mass atrocities are likely to increase**. Intercommunal tensions between the anglophone and francophone populations may also worsen.

An escalation of the crisis in the leadup to the presidential election will likely lead to **further displacement and greater protection, education, and livelihoods needs in particular**.

Instability in the anglophone regions has **economic and security** implications at the wider country level, and potentially regional level, as an increased **influx of refugees** could further strain neighbouring countries' capacities.

### Key priorities



**246,000 IDPs**  
in Southwest region



**400 civilian fatalities**  
between August 2017 – August 2018



**Education**  
severely disrupted

### Limitations

The number of Cameroonians fleeing the anglophone regions in the runup to the election is unclear, making it difficult to accurately assess the scale of this exodus.

## Rationale

### Historical roots of the conflict and escalation of tensions

Almost 20% of the population (five million) of Cameroon are anglophone and reside in the two English-speaking regions of Southwest and Northwest. The anglophone and francophone parts of Cameroon became unified in 1961, and the anglophone minority has been marginalised ever since, both in public institutions and state positions. (Responsibility to Protect 15/09/2018, ACLED 22/07/2018, Gov. of Cameroon 2010) Although the 1972 constitution gave equal status to both the French and English languages, sentiment grew within the anglophone population that the francophone population was better represented politically, economically, and socially. This fueled claims for self-determination within the anglophone population. (ICG 02/08/2017).

Tensions escalated in October 2016, when anglophone lawyers and teachers began to protest the increased use of the French language in courts and schools. The crisis deepened when the Cameroonian authorities violently repressed public demonstrations in November and December 2016, leading to further discontent. (Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 15/09/2018, CICAM 03/07/2018). On 1 October 2017, the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Governing Council (a secessionist group) symbolically declared the independence of the state of 'Ambazonia'. (The Guardian 18/09/2018, The Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 15/09/2018)

### Recent developments

Following the events of late 2016, the anglophone regions in Cameroon have faced an insurrection that has intensified over time. Civilians have increasingly been targeted, fuelling large-scale displacement. (Amnesty International 18/09/2018) By the beginning of 2018, the anglophone crisis had become the overriding security threat and political concern in Cameroon. In the second quarter of 2018, 239 fatalities were reported in the Southwestern and Northwestern regions, as opposed to 89 caused by Boko Haram in the Far North region over the same period. The number of fatalities has likely been underreported and is probably higher. (Cameroon Intelligence Report 23/07/2018)

Violent incidents have multiplied in the runup to the presidential election on 7 October 2018, and the security situation is rapidly deteriorating. (Le Monde 17/09/2018) In recent weeks, a growing number of people have started deserting towns and villages in the anglophone regions, fearing an escalation of violence, from both the armed secessionists who are threatening to disrupt the elections, and the Cameroonian armed forces, which are rumoured to be planning imminent attacks. (The Guardian 18/09/2018, VOA 16/09/2018) By mid-September, at least 30 buses carrying civilians were reportedly leaving the anglophone regions daily, towards the French-speaking town of Douala or to Yaoundé,

Cameroon's capital city. (VOA 16/09/2018) As part of their plan to disrupt the election, armed secessionists have begun to prevent buses from leaving, blocking access into and out of the northwestern English-speaking capital Bamenda. On 9 September, they stopped at least 20 buses carrying 1,000 people in the town of Akum. Some buses were burned, and others damaged. (VOA 09/09/2018) The local authorities, also attempting to contain the exodus, began on 15 September to tighten control on the movement of goods and people at the border with the French-speaking regions. (Le Monde 17/09/2018, BBC 17/09/2018)

## Predicted developments

### Tensions and violence in the context of the presidential election

The 7 October presidential election will likely lead to further violence and insecurity. President Paul Biya, in power since 1982 (and the longest-serving non-royal ruler in Africa), is running for a seventh term. Most political observers agree that the ruling party will probably remain in power, which will likely lead to greater dissent in the anglophone region and an escalation in the level of violence. (Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 15/09/2018, ICG 31/01/2018) Anglophone secessionists have announced on social media that they planned to disrupt the balloting in the English-speaking regions, and potentially elsewhere in the country, posing a threat for security in other parts of the country. (VOA 16/09/2018, ICG 31/01/2018)

A disrupted election risks leading to further militarisation of the conflict, and may prompt the anglophone secessionists to step up their efforts to establish themselves as more of an organised army. (Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 15/09/2018) In early September 2018, it was reported that members of secessionists' armed groups were trading goods for weapons in the Calabar peninsula in Nigeria, on the border with Cameroon. (Jeune Afrique 13/09/2018)

### Political dialogue

A dialogue between the Cameroonian government and secessionist leaders is urgently needed to address longstanding grievances in the anglophone community and to prevent the conflict from escalating further. (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 15/09/2018) There is no indication that this is anywhere close to happening, however. Although the secessionists have repeatedly called for international mediation to resolve the conflict, the government has rejected propositions by the UN and several foreign embassies. (Jeune Afrique 20/05/2018)

Religious institutions appear as the only mediators trusted by both parties to help establish a political dialogue. (Jeune Afrique 20/05/2018) To this effect, a general anglophone conference bringing together the different stakeholders, mainly from the government and

secessionists sides, is set to take place on 21–22 November 2018 at the initiative of four religious leaders from the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the central mosques of Bamenda and Buea. It was originally scheduled for 29–30 August 2018, but was postponed to ensure that all participants were involved. Secessionist armed groups initially refused to take part. It is unclear if they will attend the conference in November. (ICG 17/09/2018) Without a peaceful settlement to the anglophone crisis, repercussions are likely not only on the stability of the region, but across the entire country. (Jeune Afrique 20/05/2018)

## Economic implications

Although the immediate consequences of the anglophone crisis are humanitarian, insecurity also has a severe impact on the country's economy and its external commercial relations. Since the crisis began, the cocoa and coffee industries (representing the anglophone regions' main economic activity) have lost 56 billion CFA francs (USD 100 million), or 20% of Cameroon's export revenue. This is significant, considering that the Southwestern region accounts for 45% of national cacao production and the Northwest region represents 70% of national coffee production. (CICAM 03/07/2018) As the crisis deepens and the security situation deteriorates, there is a risk that the economy in the Northwest and Southwest regions collapses, exacerbating an already severe humanitarian situation.

## Impact by sector

### Displacement

Increased violence and insecurity in the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon has led to both internal displacement and an influx of refugees into neighbouring Nigeria.

As of September 2018, 25,000 Cameroonian refugees were in Nigeria, a significant increase from the 8,500 recorded in December 2017. (UNHCR 04/09/2018, ICG 21/12/2017) The resources of the host communities are strained, and an increase in Cameroonian refugees will likely cause living conditions for both the refugees and the Nigerian host community populations to deteriorate. (UNHCR 09/03/2018; 26/01/2018)

In May 2018, around 160,000 people were internally displaced as a result of the anglophone crisis: 150,000 in Southwest region and 10,000 in Northwest region. (OCHA 27/05/2018) Internal displacement surged between the second and third quarters of 2018, with an estimated 246,000 IDPs in Southwest region alone by mid-August. Information on the number of IDPs currently in Northwest region is lacking, but the trend was probably similar. (IOM 16/08/2018)

The number of IDPs spiked in mid-September 2018, when thousands of people started to desert the anglophone regions by bus, amid fears that violence would escalate ahead of the October election. Most buses have headed to the francophone regions. (Le Monde 17/09/2018, BBC 17/09/2018) Displacement is expected to increase at a faster rate in the upcoming weeks.

### Protection

At least 400 civilian fatalities were recorded in English-speaking Cameroon between August 2017 and August 2018. (Crisis Group 17/09/2018) Conflict escalated sharply in the second quarter of 2018, with 239 civilian fatalities, compared to a total of 425 people, including 142 civilians, killed since October 2016. In addition, 260 security incidents have been recorded in 2018. (Amnesty International 18/09/2018, ACLED 22/07/2018) Secessionists, who previously tended to focus on Cameroonian security forces, are increasingly targeting civilians and civil servants. (ACLED 04/05/2018). Several reports indicate serious human rights abuses committed by government forces against civilians: in July, for instance, several videos surfaced on the Internet showing Cameroonian soldiers executing civilians. (Amnesty International 12/07/2018, ACLED, ICG 21/12/2017). More casualties and abuses are likely as violence from both sides continues.

The October presidential election will probably trigger more protests, which could lead to an uptick in political violence and security incidents. Security forces have targeted peaceful protesters since the crisis began in 2016, and hundreds of people have been jailed while many civilians have been shot and killed. (The Guardian 18/09/2018)

### Education

Education has been a key concern throughout the crisis, as calls for English to be taught in schools in Cameroon's anglophone regions were one of the drivers of the conflict in 2016. (The Guardian 18/09/2018) As part of a boycott of the Cameroonian education system, secessionist armed groups are actively discouraging parents from sending their children to school. In addition, educational facilities have been routinely targeted, with more than 70 schools burned down since 2016 and attacks on schools regularly reported. (VOA 18/09/2018, The Guardian 18/09/2018)

In the Northwest and Southwest regions, the education situation remains worrying. In affected zones, several schools have been unable to function for two consecutive school years (2016–2017 and 2017–2018), and there is no indication that the situation will improve for the upcoming school year, putting thousands of children at risk of missing out entirely on an education. Parents are increasingly withdrawing their children from school due to protection concerns. Out-of-school children are at risk of sexual and economic exploitation, domestic violence, and SGBV. The situation is even more severe



for IDP children, who record dramatically low attendance rates. (The Guardian 18/09/2018, OCHA 27/05/2018)

## Livelihoods

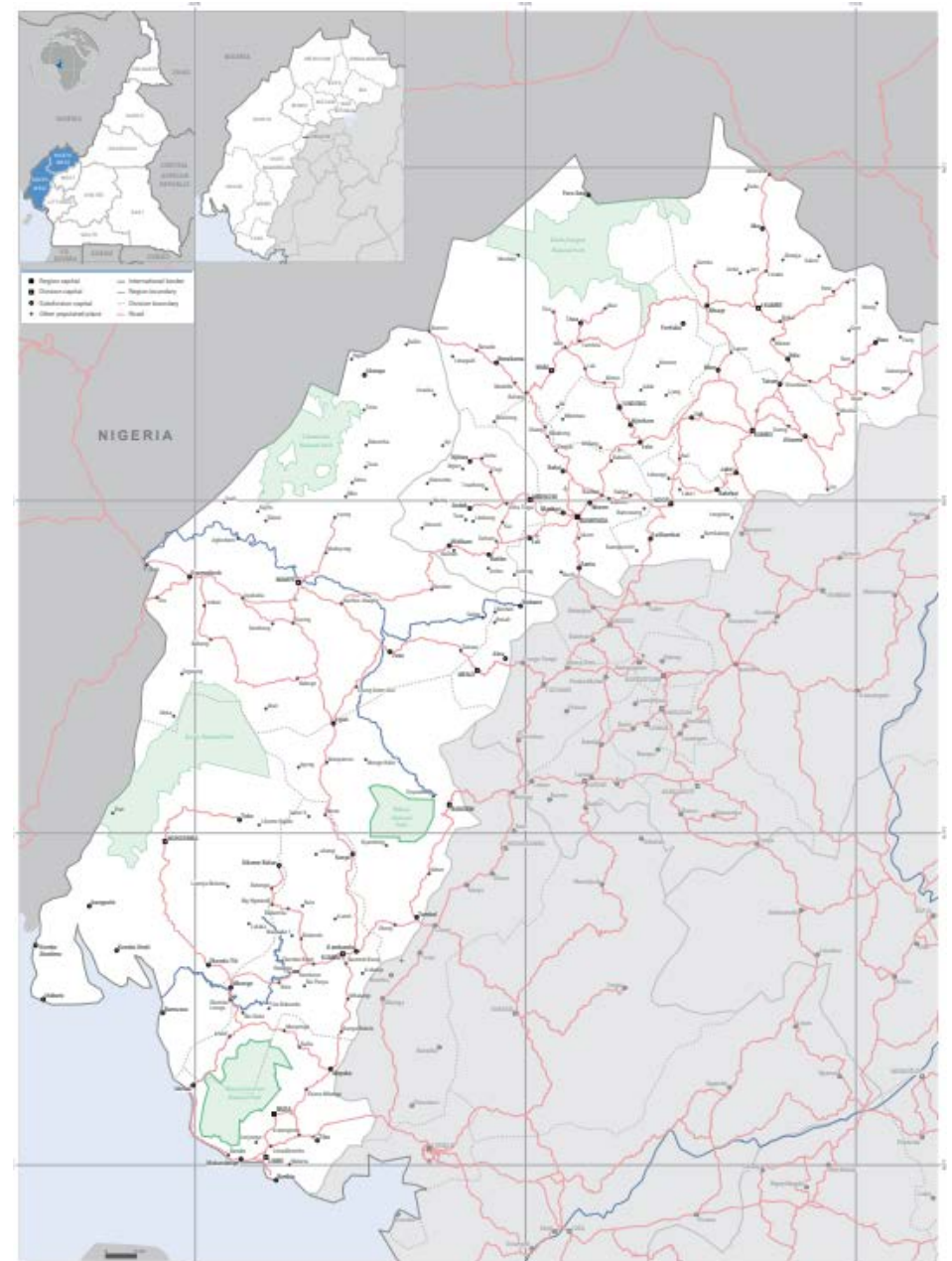
Due to insecurity, access to agricultural production areas and markets has been reduced considerably, depriving a large part of the population of their livelihoods. Some 6,400 jobs in the formal sector have already been lost as a result of the crisis, and at least 8,000 more are expected to be lost in the upcoming months if the conflict continues. (CICAM 03/07/2018, OCHA 27/05/2018)

Attacks have also targeted means of production, especially those considered as easy targets (transport of goods), generating cash flow (small businesses, gas stations) or those with a strategic interest (telecommunication infrastructure). Artisans and merchants were severely affected by repeated complete economic shutdown of towns during 'ville morte' ('dead town') protests. (CICAM 03/07/2018)

## Humanitarian Access

Humanitarian access in Northwest and Southwest regions is becoming increasingly difficult, as newly established checkpoints constrain access to affected areas. An escalation in the conflict could lead to even more militarisation of the English-speaking regions, which would further hamper humanitarian assistance from reaching populations in need. (Jeune Afrique 17/02/2018)

## Cameroon, Northwest and Southwest Regions



Source: OCHA 09/06/2018