

REF N°130-CA/SG/23**SUBJECT MATTER: ALLEGED ABDUCTION OF FIVE ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS
PERSONNEL IN CAMEROON'S NORTH WEST REGION****I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Credible reports received on 19 June 2026 indicate that five Roman Catholic religious personnel were abducted by armed individuals alleged to be Separatists along the Bamenda–Fundong Road near Bambui in Cameroon’s North West Region.

The victims were reportedly returning to Bamenda after attending the ordination ceremony of two Mill Hill Missionary priests at Saint Jude Parish, Fundong, when their vehicle was intercepted and the occupants forcibly taken away according to reliable source closer to the Catholic Church.

Multiple local sources attributed the abduction to armed separatist fighters commonly referred to as “Amba Boys.” However, at the time of this report, no group has claimed responsibility for the act and there has equally not been any official reaction neither from the Catholic Church nor from the local authorities.

The incident raises serious concerns regarding the protection of civilians, religious personnel, and respect for international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in Cameroon’s North West and South West Regions.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

According to information gathered from local sources and media reports, the abduction occurred on Friday, 19 June 2026, along the Bambui stretch of the Bamenda–Fundong Road.

The victims were reportedly returning from the ordination of two Mill Hill priests held at Saint Jude Parish Fundong when armed men intercepted them and forcibly removed them from their vehicle.

At the time of publishing this report, their whereabouts remained unknown.

The individuals reportedly abducted include:

- Rev. Brother Huub Walters, MHM, a Mill Hill missionary in his seventies who has served in the North West Region for several years.
- Rev. Fr. Ignatius Nshing, MHM.
- Rev. Fr. Alex, MHM.
- Sr. Elizabeth.



- One additional religious sister whose identity had not yet been publicly confirmed and we learned among victims were 02 foreigners.

Reports circulating within local communities further alleged that the victims may have been subjected to mistreatment while in captivity. These allegations remain unverified and require urgent independent investigation.

III. HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

The reported abduction raises serious concerns under both international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

The principal concerns include:

- Violation of the Right to Liberty and Security of Person
- The forcible seizure and detention of civilians by non-state armed actors constitutes a grave violation of the right to liberty and security of person.
- Protection of Religious Personnel

Religious workers engaged in pastoral, humanitarian, educational, and community service activities are civilians and must not be targeted, abducted, threatened, or subjected to violence.

Risk of Torture and Ill-Treatment

The disappearance of the victims and reports alleging abuse in captivity create serious concerns regarding their physical and psychological integrity.

Protection of Civilians During Armed Conflict

Under international humanitarian law, civilians and persons not participating in hostilities must be protected from violence, intimidation, kidnapping, hostage-taking, torture, and arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

IV. CONTEXT

The Bamenda–Fundong corridor has experienced recurrent security incidents linked to the ongoing armed conflict affecting Cameroon’s North West and South West Regions.

Since the escalation of the Anglophone crisis in 2017, civilians have borne the greatest burden of the conflict. Communities have experienced killings, kidnappings, extortion, forced displacement, attacks on schools and health facilities, restrictions on movement, and other serious human rights violations committed by various parties to the conflict.



The persistence of insecurity continues to undermine the protection of civilians and the delivery of essential humanitarian, educational, religious, and social services throughout affected communities.

V. PATTERN OF ATTACKS AGAINST RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL

The reported abduction of five Roman Catholic religious personnel is not an isolated incident but forms part of a broader pattern of insecurity affecting religious leaders and faith-based institutions in conflict-affected areas of Cameroon.

Throughout the armed conflict, religious personnel—including priests, pastors, missionaries, religious sisters, catechists, and other church workers—have repeatedly faced threats, intimidation, abductions, assaults, arbitrary restrictions, and, in certain documented cases, unlawful killings.

Churches and religious institutions have often found themselves operating under difficult conditions as insecurity has expanded across parts of the North West and South West Regions.

Religious leaders frequently play an essential role in peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, mediation efforts, psychosocial support, education, and community reconciliation. Consequently, attacks against religious authorities affect not only the direct victims but also the broader civilian populations that depend upon their services and protection.

The recurring nature of these incidents has contributed to a climate of fear among religious communities and has negatively affected the exercise of freedom of religion, freedom of movement, humanitarian access, and civilian protection.

Under international humanitarian law, religious personnel who are not directly participating in hostilities are civilians and are entitled to protection from violence, kidnapping, hostage-taking, torture, cruel treatment, and other abuses.

The continued targeting of religious authorities undermines peacebuilding efforts, weakens social cohesion, and deepens the humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

VI. HUMAN RIGHTS ASSESSMENT

If confirmed, the abduction of the five religious personnel would constitute a serious violation of fundamental human rights and may amount to hostage-taking under international humanitarian law.

The targeting of religious personnel who are not participating in hostilities violates internationally recognized principles protecting civilians during armed conflict.

Such acts undermine freedom of religion, threaten humanitarian and pastoral activities, restrict access to community services, and increase fear and insecurity among already vulnerable populations.



The incident further highlights the urgent need for all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Perpetrators:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release all abducted religious personnel.**
- **Guarantee their physical and psychological integrity.**
- **Respect international humanitarian law and the civilian status of religious workers.**
- **Cease all attacks against civilians, religious personnel, and religious institutions.**

To the Government of Cameroon:

- **Take all lawful and necessary measures to secure the immediate and safe release of the abducted religious personnel.**
- **Conduct a prompt, independent, impartial, thorough, and effective investigation into the abduction and ensure that those responsible are held accountable in accordance with the law.**
- **Strengthen the protection of civilians, religious personnel, humanitarian workers, and civilian infrastructure in conflict-affected areas of the North West and South West Regions.**
- **Enhance security measures along major transport corridors and ensure that such measures are implemented in full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law.**
- **Provide appropriate support and protection to victims, affected families, and communities impacted by conflict-related violence.**
- **Promote an inclusive, credible, and sincere dialogue process involving all relevant stakeholders aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict in the North West and South West Regions.**
- **Prioritize peaceful and negotiated solutions capable of addressing longstanding grievances related to governance, political participation, justice, equality, and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.**
- **Take concrete measures to advance reconciliation, social cohesion, accountability, and confidence-building among affected communities.**
- **Recognize the urgent need to bring an end to the armed conflict, which has persisted for nearly a decade and continues to cause significant loss of life, widespread human rights violations,**



displacement, destruction of property and public infrastructure, economic decline, disruption of education and healthcare services, and untold hardship for civilian populations.

- Work in collaboration with national and international partners, civil society organizations, religious leaders, traditional authorities, women, youth, and affected communities to develop sustainable pathways toward peace, justice, and recovery.

To Armed Groups Operating in the North West and South West Regions:

- Respect the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants.
- Refrain from abductions, hostage-taking, torture, intimidation, and attacks against religious personnel and civilians.
- Comply fully with international humanitarian law.

To National, Regional, and International Human Rights Mechanisms:

- Closely monitor developments surrounding this incident.
- Advocate for the immediate release of the victims.
- Support efforts aimed at protecting civilians and promoting accountability for human rights violations.
- Encourage all parties to respect human rights and humanitarian law obligations.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The reported abduction of five Roman Catholic religious personnel near Bambui on 19 June 2026 represents a deeply troubling incident within the broader context of the armed conflict affecting Cameroon's North West and South West Regions.

The targeting of religious personnel, who serve communities through spiritual guidance, humanitarian assistance, education, and peacebuilding initiatives, constitutes a serious threat to civilian protection, freedom of religion, and social cohesion.

Human rights organizations, civil society actors, religious communities, and international partners should continue to advocate for the immediate and safe release of the victims, accountability for those responsible, and full respect for the rights and dignity of all civilians affected by the conflict.

While the immediate priority remains the safe and unconditional release of the abducted religious personnel, lasting protection for civilians can only be achieved through a genuine, inclusive, and sincere peace process that addresses the root causes of the conflict and promotes justice,



accountability, reconciliation, and sustainable peace in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

The protection of religious personnel and civilians must remain a priority, and all parties to the conflict must uphold their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Done at Douala, this June 20, 2026

Signed



*Amadu TARNTEH
Executive Secretary*