

**REF N°135-CA/SG/26**

**SUBJECT :REPORT ON THE URGENT NEED FOR A PROTECTION MECHANISM FOR UNARMED CIVILIANS AND WITNESSES  
IN THE CONFLICT ANGLOPHONE REGIONS OF CAMEROON**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

This report highlights the urgent necessity for the establishment of an effective and independent protection mechanism to safeguard civilians and witnesses affected by the ongoing armed conflict in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon. Since the outbreak of the crisis, the civilian population has been subjected to widespread and systematic human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by both State security forces and non-state armed separatist groups.

These violations constitute serious breaches of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, particularly principles relating to the protection of civilians in non-international armed conflicts.

**II. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VIOLATIONS**

Since the escalation of the conflict in 2017, unarmed civilians have increasingly found themselves trapped between two opposing forces, often accused by each side of collaborating with the other. As a result, civilians have become direct targets of violence.

Documented patterns of violations include:

- Arbitrary arrests and prolonged unlawful detention
- Summary and extrajudicial executions
- Enforced disappearances
- Kidnappings and hostage-taking
- Torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment
- Destruction of property, including burning of homes
- Forced displacement and internal/external refugee flows

Civilians are frequently targeted by State defense and security forces on allegations of providing intelligence or logistical support to armed separatist groups. Conversely, armed separatist groups accuse civilians of collaborating with State authorities, leading to retaliatory attacks.

**III. PATTERN OF RETALIATORY VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS**

The situation has been exacerbated by public calls from government authorities urging civilians to collaborate with defense and security forces in identifying separatist fighters. While some civilians, acting out of perceived patriotism or coercion, have complied, this has exposed them to grave risks.

Evidence indicates that:

Civilians who assist security forces are often later subjected to suspicion, abandonment, or even execution by those same forces.

Once security operations conclude, these civilians are left vulnerable within their communities.

Armed separatist groups subsequently identify and target such individuals, subjecting them to abduction, torture, execution, and destruction of property, often extending reprisals to family members.

#### IV. DOCUMENTED INCIDENTS

Several illustrative cases underscore the gravity and recurrence of these violations and among hundred of cases documented are:

- In Ndop (Ngoketunjia Division), a cameraman by name Basil was reportedly executed in June 2, 2025 by defense forces on allegations of transmitting images to separatists during the 2025 National Day celebrations.
- In October 4, 2023 at Batibo (Guzang Market) Momo Division, North-West, two unarmed civilians Mbanyasig Hansel Ndi and Aburo Cletus Njohgo were publicly executed by armed separatist for alleged collaboration with State authorities.
- In Muyuka (South-West Region), a young man identified as Jack was kidnapped this month of July 2026 and publicly accused by separatists of aiding military operations against a separatist commander ("General Sagat") and subjected to reprisals, his faith after the public displacement remains unknown.
- In Baba I (Ngoketunjia Division), a teacher and businessman, Mohfesame Smella (alias Wandoro), was arrested, tortured, and killed by security forces in 2024.
- In Ngoketunjia and Ndonga Mantung Divisions etc, numerous civilians have been forced to flee due to threats from separatists over alleged collaboration.
- The case of Melo Inusa, reportedly kidnapped and killed by separatists in 2024, further demonstrates the lethal consequences of perceived allegiance etc

These incidents reflect a broader pattern of violence targeting civilians based on mere suspicion, often without due process or credible evidence.

#### V. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The conduct of both State and non-state actors must comply with:

International Humanitarian Law (IHL), particularly Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits violence to life and person, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity against civilians.

International Human Rights Law (IHRL), including:

- The right to life
- The prohibition of torture
- The right to liberty and security of person
- The right to a fair trial

The principle of distinction, requiring parties to distinguish at all times between civilians and combatants.

The acts described herein may amount to war crimes and, in certain circumstances, crimes against humanity if proven to be widespread or systematic.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Civilians in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon are caught in a vicious cycle of violence, where perceived neutrality is no longer a guarantee of safety. The absence of an effective protection mechanism has resulted in widespread impunity and continued violations.

There is an urgent need for a structured, credible, and independent system to protect civilians and witnesses, particularly those accused of collaboration by either party to the conflict.

#### VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To the Government of Cameroon:

- Establish an independent civilian protection and witness protection mechanism in conflict-affected regions.
- Issue clear directives to defense and security forces reinforcing compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law.
- Investigate all allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detention, and prosecute those responsible.
- Cease public policies or rhetoric that expose civilians to retaliation without ensuring their protection.
- Provide safe relocation, protection, and assistance to at-risk civilians and witnesses.

2. To Armed Separatist Groups:

- Immediately cease attacks against civilians and comply with international humanitarian law.
- End practices of kidnapping, torture, and execution of persons accused of collaboration.
- Respect the principle of distinction and ensure civilians are not targeted under any circumstances.

3. To the International Community (UN, AU, EU, and Partners):

- Support the establishment of a civilian protection and monitoring mechanism in Cameroon.
- Increase diplomatic pressure on all parties to comply with international law.
- Provide technical and financial support for victim protection, documentation, and accountability initiatives.
- Consider targeted sanctions against individuals responsible for serious human rights violations.

4. To Civil Society Organizations:

- Strengthen documentation and reporting of violations for accountability purposes.
- Provide legal aid, psychosocial support, and emergency assistance to victims.
- Advocate for protective policies and engage in community awareness on civilian rights.

#### VIII. FINAL REMARK

The protection of civilians is not optional, it is a legal and moral obligation. Failure to act decisively will continue to expose innocent populations to grave harm and deepen the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon's Anglophone regions.

Done in Douala, this July 25, 2026

**Signed**

**Amadu TARNTEH**

*Executive Secretary*



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