

Human Rights Council 40: Cameroon

The UK expressed its deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation in North-West & South-West Cameroon, due to high levels of violence, and called on Cameroon to engage fully with OHCHR.

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Thank you Mr Vice-President

I am delivering this statement on behalf of 38 countries.

Technical assistance from the international community can support partner nations to ensure the protection and realization of human rights across a range of contexts. In Cameroon, we encourage the Government to accept offers of assistance from regional and international partners to prevent further erosion of the human rights of those living in the North-West and South-West of Cameroon, resulting from the conflict between armed separatists and the Government of Cameroon.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, marked by human rights abuses and violations and high levels of violence including a recent attack on a hospital. There are concerning reports of armed separatists committing kidnaps for ransom, killing non-collaborators, burning schools and committing acts of sexual violence. There are concerning reports of security forces burning villages, shooting unarmed civilians and committing acts of sexual violence.

We call on all actors to end this cycle of violence. The humanitarian impact is worsening, and has led to over 1,000, mostly civilian, deaths, since September 2016. It has displaced 437,000 people from their homes and forced over 32,000 to seek refuge in neighboring countries. We call on all sides to ensure safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to the affected population.

Taking note of Cameroon's previous positive engagement with the UN, regional and multilateral organizations, and as a member of the Human Rights Council, we urge Cameroon to work alongside the international community, including with regional partners, to ensure prompt and thorough investigation of all violations and abuses. We stand ready to offer assistance in this regard.

Moreover, an inclusive political dialogue to address the root causes of the crisis is essential. As a first step, the Government of Cameroon could build confidence towards dialogue and reconciliation by ensuring the timely, fair trial or release of political detainees, and initiating a meaningful dialogue with the participation of all sectors of society, in particular women, the youth and representatives of religious communities.

Mr Vice-President,

We encourage the Government of Cameroon to accept coordinated offers of international technical assistance and cooperation. This includes the offer of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct an urgent assessment mission to the North-West and South-West regions, and engaging with any future regional led initiatives to find a path towards peace and reconciliation.

We remain committed to dialogue and look forward to bilateral, regional and international cooperation in this regard.