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[Ambazonia Fighters Reportedly Raze Drinking Spot in Limbe](#)

By Journal du Cameroun | April 29, 2021

A popular drinking spot in Limbe, Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon was completely razed by fire on the night of Wednesday breaking Thursday. According to locals, the bar was reportedly set up in flames by suspected separatist fighters who have warned against the sale of liquor from a certain brewery company in the English-speaking parts of Cameroon. At the scene of the fire incident, a note was reportedly left by the arsonists claiming to be of the "Fako Action Restoration Forces" and warning against the sale of beer. Sporadic violence has been recorded in parts of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon for the past weeks a Cameroon goes past the fourth year of a deadly conflict in that part of the country.



[Africa's Forgotten War-- Photos and Stories from Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis](#)

By Elisa Iannacone | May 03, 2021

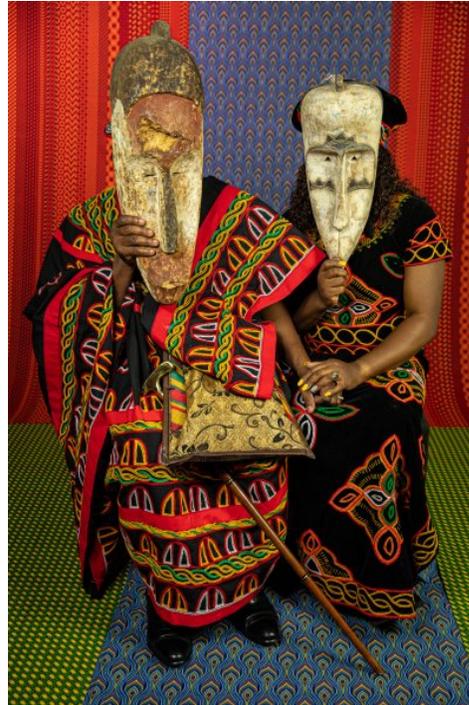
Cameroon is concurrently fighting an internal war commonly known as the Anglophone Crisis. After World War I the country was divided into 80 percent French and 20 percent British territories. The latter was further separated into Northern and Southern British Cameroons. In the 1960s, part of the British territory joined Nigeria, and the rest was annexed to French Cameroon. Both territories retained a certain level of autonomy as a federation. In 1972, the federation was dismantled, giving French Cameroon executive power over both English and French regions. When the current president, Paul Biya entered into power in 1982, he changed the country's name to La Republique du Cameroun. A progressive erosion of the Anglophone culture began to take place, with English speaking teachers being replaced by Francophones; and French magistrates taking over the English common-law judicial system. Protests by teachers and lawyers in 2016 turned violent when French military officials were sent in response to the uprisings. A new wave of separatists was formed, declaring independence over the Anglophone side. They refer to this self-declared country as Ambazonia, in reference to the Amba Bay, a body of water separating the Southern Cameroons region from the republic of Cameroon. The violence has escalated to the point where civilians often get caught in the cross-fire between military and armed separatists in the country. Villages have been burned, and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. Many are forced to live in the jungle and seek asylum in neighbouring countries. Others have made it further afield, entering countries like South Africa through the Kruger National park, facing natural predators like lions, leopards and rhinoceros along their journey. "Humans of the Forgotten War" is an umbrella project created by Reframe House for the Victoria Relief Foundation, that will be released in staggered stages to raise awareness on the current situation on the ground. It makes use of conceptual photography and film to interpret the stories of asylum-

Cameroon Group Calls for President's Son to Succeed Father

By Moki Edwin Kindzeka | April 30, 2021

Cameroon's President Paul Biya has been in power for nearly four decades and is Africa's oldest and second longest-serving leader. Critics of Biya's long rule suspect he is seeking a family dynasty after newly established groups this month started calling for his son, Franck, to succeed him. The most prominent of the four groups asking Franck Biya to replace his father is the Citizens Movement in Support of Franck Biya for Peace and Unity in Cameroon. Its coordinator, Alain Fidele Owona, says the movement was created at the request of young Cameroonians to support a young man to take over from the 88-year-old president. He says his movement supports Franck Biya because of his high sense of patriotism and love for nation. He says Franck Biya is a very serious and discrete young man who works very close to his father Paul Biya for the development of Cameroon. He says Franck Biya is very polite, does not squander state resources and is a trained political scientist, which makes him highly qualified to succeed his father. He says he does not think Franck Biya will be able to decline ceaseless calls from the Cameroonian people to be president. Owona leads groups of young people every weekend to Cameroon towns and villages. He says civilians must be informed that Cameroon will have a peaceful transition only by rallying behind Franck Biya should Paul Biya leave power. Owona said his movement and others calling on Frank to be president are neither influenced by President Biya nor his close collaborators. Secondary school teacher Fidelis Njomo in the city of Douala doesn't believe that, and says he opposes the attempt to establish a family dynasty. "Cameroon is not a monarchy. Cameroon is a state of law, and should the 88-year-old Paul Biya die, the constitution says the president of the Senate, not Franck Biya, takes over leadership. Paul Biya and his supporters should stop this manipulation that is intended to maintain their grip on power," Njomo said. Franck Biya, who is 49, currently serves as one of his father's advisers but has not expressed any interest publicly in becoming president. Prudencia Ngeh, a political analyst and visiting lecturer at Ndi Samba, a private university in Cameroon, says the trend in Central African states is for the sons of long-serving leaders to succeed their fathers. "It is as if leaders in Central Africa want to stay in power until they die, and before they die, they prepare their children to take over. Omer Bongo in Gabon handed over to his son Ali Bongo. In Chad, Idriss Deby died, and his son Mahamat Deby wants to succeed him," Ngeh said. Paul Biya, who has been Cameroon's president since 1982, is rarely seen in public these days. Ngeh said she would not be surprised if the octogenarian president one day proclaims Franck Biya as his successor.

seekers, refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDPs), and prisoners of war through artistic means. Collected here are some of the photographs that feature in the project. These images are part of the "Humans of the Forgotten War: Stories" series, with some of the real names changed for safety purposes.



"I can't take my mask off because my family, friends or property can be targeted back home." This family left Cameroon before the conflict between Francophones and Anglophones erupted. They wish to be able to return to their homeland and take their children, but fear being caught up in the violence. They wear traditional Cameroonian attire set against a South African Shweshwe fabric backdrop, representing the country that they now reside in.

Many have been living hiding in the jungle for months. Those who manage to escape to neighboring countries often live in exile. "For the past ten years I haven't had a home. I'm still under refugee status, which makes it very difficult to do certain things. It's like you're in an open prison. You feel that you're free but you're not free because you're limited in so many things," said Ben, one of those who spoke to Reframe House for the project. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has identified 4.4 million people in need in Cameroon, with 53 percent of those being children. "There is a complete lack of visibility of the crisis," said Carla Martinez, Head of Office, OCHA Cameroon. "The underfunded response means that many of our humanitarian partners are having to close down because they don't have funds to continue," added Martinez. The loss of resources will translate into a population that continues to live without adequate medical support, education, shelter or food. Journalists on the ground are often targeted and turned into victims of torture and violence. They operate in fear, often risking their life to get the stories out. Most people in the anglophone region feel caught up between two evils—the separatists who say they're fighting for independence, and the soldiers who say they're trying to protect them. The already complex conflict of the Anglophone Crisis is further compounded with a rather vast number of belief systems at play in the area. There are those who wish for independence and the creation of an Ambazonian nation, others advocate for effective decentralisation, there are federalists who wish

Woman, On Her Knees, Begs PM to Stop Violence in Cameroon

By Nick Bonyhady | May 4, 2021

A desperate woman has implored Prime Minister Scott Morrison to intervene in a violent conflict in the Central African nation of Cameroon that she said had claimed the lives of much of her family. The woman, who has not been named by media outlets, fell to her knees crying in front of Mr Morrison as he toured Rockhampton's Beef Week expo with reporters on Tuesday morning. "I have no family left in this country. Help me, help me. Every day my people are being killed. I go through trauma every day, every day. Please help me," the woman said to Mr Morrison. She later told Nine News she had lost eight family members to the violence in Cameroon, which foreign media reports say has claimed thousands of lives in clashes between groups associated with the Francophone majority and an Anglophone minority. "The youngest one was 22-years-old, he was supposed to come to Australia and he was buried alive," the woman said. "I asked [Mr Morrison] if Australia can intervene to stop the genocide – if this thing doesn't stop I will be left alone in this world." Mr Morrison said that Australia was taking in refugees, including from Africa, and helped the woman to her feet. "Thank you, thank you," she said, shortly before the Prime Minister departed. Local MP Michelle Landry, who was also present, said she would follow up with the woman. "This lady has been into my office and spoken to staff, we have sent on her concerns to [the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade] but I'll certainly be following up with another meeting and we'll contact the relevant people to see what can be done about this," Ms Landry told reporters. "We obviously take these things with great concern but we can't actually tell other countries what they can do either, so a lot of this will depend on what relationship Australia has with these other countries and how much weight we have in those places." Australia last year slashed its refugee intake by thousands because of the coronavirus pandemic.

for two, four to six, and ten state federation, as well as con-federalist view points. As a result of the conflict, there are many who have become prisoners of war — such as journalists, separatists and civilians. Conditions in prison are deplorable, with food being used as a means to control inmates. The following conceptual images were created with South Cameroonians displaced people representing the sentiments and emotions that prisoners in Cameroon have expressed. They wear animal masks predominantly from Cameroon, alluding to the feeling of despair and abandonment that many of them experience behind bars. Those being photographed need to protect their identity out of fear of being targeted. They wear Ndop cloth, traditional Cameroonian attire which was once exclusively used for nobility, but later popularised in other regions of the country. For this project, contact with the French military was established, but they refused to comment. The government did not respond.



Sexual Violence Pervasive in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions

By Jess Craig | April 29, 2021

Every day, Gladys, a 33-year-old vendor in Buea, the capital of Cameroon's Southwest region, heads to Muea market to sell vegetables, sweets and other food items. "But only after the sun rises," she said. "All day I worry it will be the day I am attacked by those boys [or] the military." Gladys's fear and anxiety are shared by many women across Cameroon's Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions, where an armed conflict between separatist groups and government forces has been ongoing since 2016. Al Jazeera interviewed women across the regions, including victims, who spoke of a pervasive fear of sexual assault and violence perpetrated by armed separatists, military personnel and civilians. "Children and women are becoming more and more targeted," said Esther Omam, a peace advocate based in Buea. "They are becoming the soft spot for this war." Nkongho Christy Ayuk, a gender-based violence case manager at Reach Out, a local humanitarian organization, said after nearly five years of low-level fighting, the regions have devolved into a state of "lawlessness". Consequently, sexual and gender-based violence including rape, sexual assault and abduction have become commonplace, according to several local and international human rights and aid groups. And the situation is worsening. Between January and March of this year, there have been nearly 500 cases of rape and sexual or physical assault documented in the two regions, and more than 500 other cases of gender-based violence including forced marriage, denial of

economic resources and emotional abuse, data provided by the United Nations showed. Last year, between February and December 2020, the UN documented 4,300 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence across the two regions. Almost half of those were cases of sexual or physical assault or rape, and in more than 30 percent of those cases, the victims were children. In 2019, the UN had documented only 1,065 cases, 289 of which involved sexual assault or rape. “Girls and women will just be walking around; I have witnessed it, my daughter has witnessed it, you just see the uniformed people and they have their guns with them, and they are calling you. You are helpless, you are scared, because they can just pull the trigger,” said a local human rights advocate in Bamenda, the capital of the Northwest region, who asked not to be identified. “So you approach them to hear what they are saying and it’s about ‘Oh you are beautiful,’ or they create a motive asking, ‘Where is your ID card?’ or something that will put you with them and they corner you – they do what they want to do with you.” ... Both sides have been accused of committing atrocities against civilians. Government security forces have razed hundreds of houses and markets across the two regions while separatist groups have carried out abductions and attacked schools and police stations, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the UN. In late February, HRW reported that at least 20 women in Ebam village in the Southwest region were raped by Cameroonian security forces in an attack on March 1, 2020. In a statement last month, Cameroon’s Ministry of Defence acknowledged that the military had carried out operations in Ebam and detained 34 residents for questioning. The statement discredited HRW stating that “this organization has, to the detriment of its credibility, never reported objectively on events in the North-West and South-West Regions, but always opting [sic] at the slightest opportunity for a systematic relentlessness and demonization of the Cameroon’s Defence Force,” but it did not explicitly deny the allegations of rape and human rights abuses. Cyrille Serge Atonfack, the head of the ministry’s communication division, declined to provide further comment to Al Jazeera about this incident or any other allegations that government security forces have carried out sexual or gender-based violence. Armed separatists have also increasingly targeted girls and women, according to rights groups, while gender-based violence perpetrated by civilians has also spiked in the past year, perhaps due in part to national lockdowns imposed by the government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; similar pandemic restrictions have caused an increase in gender-based violence worldwide. Nancy Bolima, executive director of the Bamenda-based Health Development Consultancy Services NGO, said in the face of growing economic hardship due to the prolonged crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, struggling girls and women have been looking “for any kind of business”. “Just anything that they can do in order to have money or have food. And because of that, they have been violated. Even women who are elderly,” said Bolima. Meanwhile, many traditional rulers who would normally enforce law and order in their villages have fled to major cities after being targeted by separatists, leaving a gaping security gap behind. A representative from Cameroon’s Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) also cited rising poverty, homelessness, and widespread school and business closures as factors contributing to an increase in sexual and gender-based violence in the conflict-hit areas in recent years. “The women suffer more when it happens like that because all the anger that the men have is geared towards the women,” the representative said. “And we also have this issue of rape. Because so many houses have been burned down, many young girls are homeless and ... are looking for means to earn a living. And so they have this issue of the separatists – some violating them, sleeping with them and even impregnating them,” the representative added. “And then there is this other issue where you also have the military who come and settle in a particular area because of the crisis to guard whatever thing that is happening in that area. They fall into the hands of these young men who sleep with them randomly and make them pregnant.” The MINPROFF representative declined to comment further on specific allegations of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by government security forces and separatists. Fombat Forbah Dieudonne, a United Kingdom-based spokesperson for the Ambazonia Restoration Forces, one of the major separatist groups, said any allegations that separatists were perpetrating sexual or gender-based violence against civilians are “false.” Before 2018, Reach Out documented about one case of



Between January and March of this year, there have been nearly 500 cases of rape and sexual or physical assault documented in the two regions [File: Marco Longari/AFP]

separatist groups have carried out abductions and attacked schools and police stations, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the UN. In late February, HRW reported that at least 20 women in Ebam village in the Southwest region were raped by Cameroonian security forces in an attack on March 1, 2020. In a statement last month, Cameroon’s Ministry of Defence acknowledged that the military had carried out operations in Ebam and detained 34 residents for questioning. The statement discredited HRW stating that “this organization has, to the detriment of its credibility, never reported objectively on events in the North-West and South-West Regions, but always opting [sic] at the slightest opportunity for a systematic relentlessness and demonization of the Cameroon’s Defence Force,” but it did not explicitly deny the allegations of rape and human rights abuses. Cyrille Serge Atonfack, the head of the ministry’s communication division, declined to provide further comment to Al Jazeera about this incident or any other allegations that government security forces have carried out sexual or gender-based violence. Armed separatists have also increasingly targeted girls and women, according to rights groups, while gender-based violence perpetrated by civilians has also spiked in the past year, perhaps due in part to national lockdowns imposed by the government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; similar pandemic restrictions have caused an increase in gender-based violence worldwide. Nancy Bolima, executive director of the Bamenda-based Health Development Consultancy Services NGO, said in the face of growing economic hardship due to the prolonged crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, struggling girls and women have been looking “for any kind of business”. “Just anything that they can do in order to have money or have food. And because of that, they have been violated. Even women who are elderly,” said Bolima. Meanwhile, many traditional rulers who would normally enforce law and order in their villages have fled to major cities after being targeted by separatists, leaving a gaping security gap behind. A representative from Cameroon’s Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) also cited rising poverty, homelessness, and widespread school and business closures as factors contributing to an increase in sexual and gender-based violence in the conflict-hit areas in recent years. “The women suffer more when it happens like that because all the anger that the men have is geared towards the women,” the representative said. “And we also have this issue of rape. Because so many houses have been burned down, many young girls are homeless and ... are looking for means to earn a living. And so they have this issue of the separatists – some violating them, sleeping with them and even impregnating them,” the representative added. “And then there is this other issue where you also have the military who come and settle in a particular area because of the crisis to guard whatever thing that is happening in that area. They fall into the hands of these young men who sleep with them randomly and make them pregnant.” The MINPROFF representative declined to comment further on specific allegations of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by government security forces and separatists. Fombat Forbah Dieudonne, a United Kingdom-based spokesperson for the Ambazonia Restoration Forces, one of the major separatist groups, said any allegations that separatists were perpetrating sexual or gender-based violence against civilians are “false.” Before 2018, Reach Out documented about one case of

gender-based violence per month across the Southwest region, but since 2019, they have documented about 3 cases per week. Any statistics on the number of sexual and gender-based violent crimes are likely a severe underestimation of the true burden. Crimes go unreported because of fear and social stigma and a lack of access to health facilities in which to seek care. Some 40 percent of healthcare facilities in the Southwest region are not functioning, according to UNICEF, and many of those that are, do not have protocols or infrastructure to treat victims of sexual and gender-based violence. ... In Ekona, a hard-hit village in the Southwest region, the community has banned girls and women from travelling to their farms alone to prevent further attacks in the area, according to a local resident and Reach Out. For Gladys, the Buea vendor, freeing women from the constant fear of being attacked will take a long time. "No matter what is the resolution of this crisis, how it ends, women in this place will be scarred," she said. "Every day we are living in fear."

Cameroon Bishops Criticize Violent Campaign to Quell Independence Movement

By Ngala Killian Chintom | April 29, 2021

Several Catholic bishops in Cameroon's English-speaking regions are sharply criticizing President Paul Biya's violent, yearslong campaign to quell an independence movement in those regions. In recent NCR interviews, three prelates suggested that Biya's government had initially underestimated the growing influence of those calling for the creation of a new, separate state and then responded with disproportionate force. Retired Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua, who led Cameroon's Bamenda Archdiocese from 2006 to 2019, said Biya had erred drastically in late 2017 when he pledged to "eliminate" independence fighters. "Violence only begets violence," Esua told NCR. "The moment the government started using live bullets on peaceful protesters, it was evident that things would simply go out of hand." ... The Catholic bishops said the government has been too violent in its response to those seeking to form an English-speaking state. Esua said Biya's 2017 pledge effectively made clear that "anybody who identified himself with the

Anglophone cause was considered a terrorist." After two years of fighting between the two sides, Biya called for a one week "Major National Dialogue," held Sept. 30-Oct. 4, 2019. However, the president said the dialogue would not only consider the insurgency but also "issues of national interest such as national unity, national integration and living together." Bishop George Nkuo, who has headed the Kumbo Diocese in the Northwest Region since 2006, said that approach was wrong because it didn't address the urgency of the Anglophone problem. Nkuo said the forum should have been used to discuss the Anglophone problem and not all the problems of the nation. He said it was necessary to use that dialogue to revisit the root causes of the conflict as the only possible way of bringing forth a sustainable solution. And the causes of the problem, he said, are rooted in Cameroon history. Initially colonized by Germany in 1884, Cameroon would be divided between Britain and France after the defeat of the Germans in World War I. Britain got one-fifth of the formerly German territory, which it administered as part of Nigeria until 1961 — when through a plebiscite, the British Southern Cameroons (as the British administered entity of Cameroon was then called) voted to reunite with the part formerly administered by France (which had gained its independence in 1960). The two entities went into a federal structure of government, with each entity allowed to freely run its affairs in line with the systems inherited from the colonial powers. But in recent years, some people in the English-speaking regions had accused the central government of trying to quash their traditions. In 2016, four Catholic bishops in the English-speaking regions accused Biya's government of trying to strangle their culture. "Anglophone Cameroonians are slowly being asphyxiated as every element of their culture is systematically targeted and absorbed into the Francophone Cameroon culture and way of doing things," they wrote at the time. Nkuo said the 2019 dialogue



A woman walks past a soldier of the Cameroon army's elite Rapid Intervention Battalion in the city of Buea in the Anglophone Southwest Region Oct. 4, 2018. (Newscom/Reuters/Zohra Bensemra)

should have revisited these historical perspectives to come up with the right answers to the problem. The current archbishop of Bamenda, Andrew Nkea Fuanya, criticized the format of the dialogue, saying it didn't involve the appropriate representatives of the English-speaking regions. "That wasn't a dialogue at all," Fuanya told NCR. Esua was invited to participate in the dialogue. "To be frank, it was a monologue," he said. "In a dialogue, you take two people to dialogue. And in a dialogue, you have different opinions. You have to listen to the other person and the other person listens to you, and gradually you come to an agreement." "Ninety percent of the participants at the National Dialogue were all government people, or people with government allegiance, but the real persons with whom you had to dialogue were not there," said Esua. Separatist leaders weren't part of the dialogue. Sesseku Ayuk Tabe, the recognized leader of the movement to form a new country of Ambazonia, was arrested in 2018 and is now serving a life sentence. "You couldn't talk of a dialogue if these people weren't there," Esua said of the separatist leaders' absence at the negotiating table. Nevertheless, the dialogue came up with a number of recommendations, including the adoption of a special status for the two Anglophone regions, the immediate relaunch of certain airport and seaport projects in the regions, the rapid integration of ex-combatants into society, and a hastening of decentralization of power away from the central government. Esua said none of these recommendations responds to the demands of Cameroon's English speakers. "The whole problem of Cameroon and the sociopolitical situation in the Northwest and Southwest regions is about the form of government. It's about the two systems of education, it's about the two systems of law, the two systems of administration. That was not part of the discussion," the cleric told NCR. He said he was frustrated that a "special status" for Anglophone regions should even come up as a recommendation, since it's something already enshrined in the country's 1996 Constitution. "It's not a question of a special status, because it's not a gift they are giving to the Anglophones. The Anglophones have a right to organize themselves according to their customs and cultures as inherited from the British," said Esua. He also blasted the recommendation about hastening the decentralization process, noting that it was paradoxical that the government keeps the centralized structures in place and continues talking about decentralization. "I'm afraid they are not giving the right solutions to the problem," said the retired archbishop.



A view of the Catholic cathedral of Kumbo, in Cameroon's English-speaking Northwest Region (Wikimedia Commons/Kintong)