



COI QUERY

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – CAMEROON

Impact of the conflict on availability and accessibility of healthcare facilities, in the Southwest region

1. Brief background information

In October 2017, English-speaking separatist armed groups proclaimed independence, establishing an interim government called the ‘Republic of Ambazonia’ in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, areas populated by the country’s Anglophone minority.¹ These events led to violent confrontations between armed separatists and Cameroonian security forces, ‘resulting in atrocities against civilians by both sides.’² In 2023, Human Rights Watch (HRW) denounced that, ‘humanitarian access was restricted in the Anglophone regions and humanitarian workers have been victims of attacks by both government forces and armed groups.’³

For more information on the security situation in the Anglophone regions, see the [EUAA Query response on security situation in the Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions](#) published on 11 October 2023.

2. Availability and accessibility of healthcare facilities

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in a report covering the period between January and June 2023, that the health sector in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, ‘have seen a collapse or significant strain in essential services and infrastructure’.⁴ An academic article published in 2023 in PLOS Glob Public Health Journal mentioned that the ongoing conflict between separatist groups and the Cameroonian government ‘has significantly impacted the health system in the Northwest and Southwest regions’.⁵

According to a report jointly written by Insecurity Insight and Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC),⁶ ‘access to health care in Cameroon is compromised by violent conflicts and

¹ GCR2P, Cameroon: Population at risk, 31 August 2023, [url](#); HRW, Cameroon: Killings, Destruction in Anglophone Regions, 19 July 2018, [url](#)

² GCR2P, Cameroon: Population at risk, 31 August 2023, [url](#)

³ HRW, World Report 2022 - Cameroon, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

⁴ UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 - Reporting Period 1 January to 30 June 2023, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵ Aliyou Chandini, M. et al., “It is because of the love for the job that we are still here”: Mental health and psychosocial support among health care workers affected by attacks in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

⁶ Insecurity Insight is a non-profit organisation collecting data on threats facing people living and working in dangerous environments; Insecurity Insight homepage [url](#). SHCC is a group of international nongovernmental



threats against health workers and health facilities.⁷ Security incidents led to an ‘immediate reduction in medical staff’ and the temporary closure of health facilities, depriving thousands of people of essential healthcare.⁸

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) indicated that around 18 % of healthcare establishments in the Northwest and Southwest regions have closed their operations between April and July 2023, and the remaining centres are ‘struggling to function’.⁹

UNICEF noted that when health facilities closed, mobile clinics operated by humanitarian workers have been essential to address disease outbreaks and provide medical services ‘in remote areas and hard-to-reach communities’.¹⁰ However, according to the same source, mobile clinics ‘remain under-resourced and face immense challenges, including attacks on personnel and infrastructure’.¹¹

Concerning humanitarian assistance and services in general, UNOCHA reported that during February 2022 non-state armed groups (NSAGs) enforced lockdowns and limited ‘the movements of humanitarian actors’, as they did not have any exemptions to continue their activities.¹² UNOCHA also mentioned another lockdown in the same regions imposed for three weeks in August and September 2022, during which humanitarian activities requiring physical presence were suspended, preventing access to primary healthcare for over 125 000 people.¹³

In the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview, UNOCHA stated that ‘the main constraints to the access of affected people to services and assistance and of humanitarians to affected populations are insecurity, poor road conditions, natural hazards, such as floods, and restrictions by the authorities or the NSAGs on the freedom of movement of people, goods, and services, and underfunding of the humanitarian response’.¹⁴

3. Security incidents

According to UNOCHA, civilians and healthcare providers ‘continue to be at high risk when accessing facilities or delivering services’ in the Northwest and Southwest regions.¹⁵ From

organizations working to raise awareness of the problem of attacks on health workers, facilities, transport systems, and clients; About the Coalition [url](#)

⁷ Insecurity Insight, Safeguarding Health in Conflict, Cameroon: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022, 28 June 2023, [url](#), p. 32

⁸ Insecurity Insight, Safeguarding Health in Conflict, Cameroon: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022, 28 June 2023, [url](#), p. 32

⁹ UNOCHA, Cameroon: Crisis causes health-care challenges, 21 July 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰ UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 - Reporting Period 1 January to 30 June 2023, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹¹ UNICEF, Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 - Reporting Period 1 January to 30 June 2023, 22 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹² UNOCHA, Cameroon: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 40, 28 February 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹³ UNOCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (March 2023), 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁴ UNOCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (March 2023), 11 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 19 – 20

¹⁵ UNOCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (March 2023), 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 13



January to July 2023, UNOCHA reported 12 incidents of violence or obstruction against healthcare infrastructures and personnel in the Northwest and Southwest regions. ‘These incidents included threats, violence, and kidnappings’ as well as damages to health infrastructures and theft of medical equipment.¹⁶ According to the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GSR2P), ‘separatists and government forces have perpetrated targeted attacks on health facilities and humanitarian workers’ in the Northwest and Southwest regions, limiting the delivery of humanitarian aid and obliging international organisations to suspend their operations.¹⁷

UNOCHA also mentioned that during 2022 there were ‘reports of hospitals and health posts being occupied by security forces, armed incursions by security forces into hospitals, abductions of health workers by NSAGs, attacks and threats to health personnel as well as the detention of health workers continue to be registered on a regular basis’.¹⁸

Data reported by SHCC indicated that, in Cameroon, attacks against healthcare tripled in 2022 compared to 2021.¹⁹ According to Insecurity Insight and Safeguarding Health in Conflict, in the Northwest and Southwest ‘much of the increase in incidents in 2022 was attributable to incidents where health workers and healthcare providers were accused of bias towards either government forces or separatists’.²⁰

UNOCHA also noted that the government was generally suspicious of humanitarian workers’ activities in the in the Northwest and Southwest regions, detaining several humanitarian workers between 2021 and 2022.²¹ For instance, on 18 July 2022, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) communicated the decision to close their operations in Kumba and Mamfe, in Southwest Region, after the Cameroonian government detained four members of their staff in December 2021 and January 2022 over the accusation of being complicit with separatists.²² Two employees were released in May 2022, while the other two remained in detention until December 2022, following the decision of the Military Tribunal in Buea to acquit all MSF staff of their charges. MSF did not resume their activities in Southwest of Cameroon as of 10 January 2023.²³

Incidents of targeting healthcare facilities, humanitarian workers, and healthcare personnel in the Southwest region of Cameroon, as reported by sources, include:

¹⁶ UNOCHA, Cameroon: Situation Report, 26 October 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷ GSR2P, R2P Monitor, 1 September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁸ UNOCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (March 2023), 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 14, 15

¹⁹ Insecurity Insight, Safeguarding Health in Conflict, Cameroon: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022, 28 June 2023, [url](#), p. 28

²⁰ Insecurity Insight, Safeguarding Health in Conflict, Cameroon: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022, 28 June 2023, [url](#), p. 27

²¹ UNOCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (March 2023), 11 May 2023, [url](#), p. 20

²² MFS, MSF closes project bases in Kumba and Mamfe in South-West Cameroon, 18 July 2022, [url](#)

²³ MFS, All MSF staff acquitted in military tribunal in Cameroon, 10 January 2023, [url](#)



- On 26 June 2022, the ‘integrated health centre’ in Ballin, Manyu Local Government Administration (LGA),²⁴ was burned during intercommunal clashes.²⁵ Information on the operational status of the centre could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.
- On 8 June 2022, the Mamfe District Hospital, in Manyu LGA, was set on fire during clashes between non-state armed groups and security forces.²⁶ According to sources the hospital was attacked and burnt down by alleged separatists.²⁷ According to the US Department of State (USDOS), ‘the entire structure was destroyed, including all hospital equipment and materials. The hospital was the largest health facility in Manyu division, serving a population of more than 80,000 individuals’.²⁸ In September 2023, media sources reported that the Mamfe District Hospital was still not operational.²⁹
- In April 2022, the police arrested four people working with international organisations ‘over accusations of complicity with secessionists’.³⁰
- On 15 February 2022, non-state armed groups kidnapped a healthcare worker, who was transporting cholera test samples, between Mbonge and Kumba town. The individual was released after two days but testing kits were seized and destroyed.³¹

Information on incidents involving healthcare facilities and personnel in 2023 could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

²⁴ Local Government Administration (LGA) stands for an administrative unit in Cameroon.

²⁵ UNOCHA, Cameroon: North-West and South-West - Situation Report No. 44 (June 2022), June 2022, available at: [url](#), p. 3

²⁶ UNOCHA, Cameroon: North-West and South-West - Situation Report No. 44 (June 2022), June 2022, available at: [url](#), p. 3

²⁷ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 21; HumAngle, Anglophone Separatists In Cameroon Raze Mamfe District Hospital, 9 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁸ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 21

²⁹ CAN, Manyu: Suspected separatists shot priest, teachers, kidnap others, 26 September 2023, [url](#); Actu Cameroun, Attaque armée dans un village du Sud-Ouest : un prêtre et trois enseignants blessés [Armed attack in a village in the South-West: a priest and three teachers injured], 27 September 2023, [url](#)

³⁰ Insecurity Insight, Safeguarding Health in Conflict, Cameroon: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2022, 28 June 2023, [url](#), p. 31

³¹ UNOCHA, Cameroon: North-West and South-West Situation Report No. 40, 28 February 2022, [url](#), p. 2

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