

## *Timeline to the anglophone crisis*

*We call on Cameroonian authorities to investigate allegations of human rights violations and other crimes under domestic law committed in the context of the armed violence in the Anglophone regions*

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*With the war against the separatists still at its height in anglophone regions in Cameroon, the arbitrary arrest and detention of secessionists, opponents and human rights activists became common.*

Several thousand people joined teachers to express grievances on marginalization of Anglophones

After the golden age of the 1990s, dissent weakened and the focus switched to the Anglophone diaspora's advocacy in the international community and the creation of an Anglophone consciousness through the education system, writings of Anglophone intellectuals, the churches, associations and the local media.

The roots of the Anglophone problem lie in a badly-organized reunification that was based on centralization and assimilation, and in economic and administrative marginalization

The current crisis began on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in Bamenda when lawyers from the Northwest and Southwest regions went on strike. Their demands were ignored by the justice ministry, were related to the justice system's failure to use the Common Law in the anglophone regions. The lawyers demanded the translation into English of the Code of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) and other legal texts.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016, the lawyers mobilized hundreds of people for a march in Bamenda and reiterated their demand for the full restoration of the Common Law system as it was at the time of the federal system. They added a demand for federalism.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> November, teachers went on strike as well. They organized a rally against the lack of Anglophone teachers, the appointment of teachers who did not have a good command of English and the failure to respect the "Anglo-Saxon" character of schools and universities in the Anglophone regions.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> November, the crisis, which had until then been limited to the Northwest region, spread to the Southwest region. Students at Buea University organized a peaceful march on the campus to call for the payment to students of the president's achievement bonus, denounce the banning of the University of Buea Student Union (UBSU) in 2012 and protest at the introduction of a penalty for late payment of education fees and the additional fee charged for accessing examination results.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> December in Bamenda when the CPDM tried to organize a pro-government rally in the Anglophone regions. The angry crowd prevented the rally from taking place. In violent clashes, four died, several were wounded and around 50 arrested.

The violence in Buea on 28 November and in Bamenda on 8 December aggravated the crisis and led to extensive media coverage. Images of abuses by the security armed forces quickly spread on the internet and on to international television channels. They had a decisive impact on public opinion and "open a can of worms". of the Anglophone problem

Further incidents took place in January and February 2017 in Bamenda and other towns such as Ndop. They led to riots that left at least three dead, while government buildings and vehicles were set on fire.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> November, the prime minister unsuccessfully conducted a first mission to Bamenda to open negotiations. He arrived without concrete proposals, perhaps expecting that the promise of dialogue and his presence would be enough to end the strike.

Around December 2016, the ad hoc committee conducted several missions to Bamenda. The list of union demands increased from eleven to 25 between November and January but negotiations nearly reached an agreement, with the government saying it was ready to meet 21 of the 25 demands. However, on 13 January, police abuses, against a backdrop of rumors, provoked riots in Bamenda and the negotiations collapsed.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> January, the Consortium canceled a meeting with the committee, condemned the violence perpetrated by the security forces and declared a two-day Operation Ghost Town in the anglophone regions.

The government responded by shutting down the internet in the anglophone regions on 17 January, banning the Consortium and the SCNC and arresting Consortium leaders and several activists such as Mancho Bibixy.

In fact, the tension in the anglophone regions, the repression by the security armed forces and the radicalization of public opinion had put Consortium leaders in a difficult position. They were forced to go beyond their own sectoral demands especially as the 21 points accepted by the government only included the teacher's demands not the lawyer's demands and to deal more broadly with the Anglophone problem. According to a Consortium leader, repression by the regime has opened a "to open a can of worms". and the public has forced us to put the Southern Cameroons issue on the table"

Negotiations were difficult because of the deep distrust between the government and representatives of the Anglophone community. *The ad hoc committee did not inspire much confidence, because most of its members were Francophones.*

In an attempt to avoid the crisis spreading to the Francophone part, the government brandished the spectre of secession by conflating Anglophone grievances and the division of the country. Some Francophone intellectuals said that federalism was only a step on the road to secession.

After the arrest of Consortium leaders on 17 January, school closure continued Operation Ghost Town intensified, the government took measures in the justice and education sectors to try to calm the situation. In December 2016, it had already announced the recruitment of 1,000 bilingual teachers, a FCFA2 billion (€3 million) grant to private schools and the redeployment of Francophone teachers away from Anglophone regions. On 23 January 2017, the president of the Republic created a National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.

The pressure forced the government to announced other measures on 30 March, including the creation of new benches for Common Law at the Supreme Court and new departments at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (Ecole nationale d'administration et de magistrature, ENAM), an increase in the number of English language teachers at ENAM, the recruitment of Anglophone magistrates, the creation of a Common Law department at Francophone universities and provisional authorization for Anglophone lawyers to act as notaries in the Northwest and the Southwest regions.

On 20 April, the government turned the internet back on after a 92-day cut. Although these measures were a significant first step, they did not meet the concerns of the trade unions or resolve the political component of the Anglophone question.

Anglophones continued to take action. When the internet was cut, protesters used text messages and phone calls to organize protests. When it was restored they reverted to mainly using WhatsApp.

Operation Ghost Town. Country Sundays take place every Monday and every national holiday or commemoration day. Anyone not adhering to the movement faces harassment and threats.

The government in particular has exploited the idea of false news to sow doubt and avoid responsibility for human rights violations by casting doubt on their veracity, even in confirmed cases.

The Anglophone in the diaspora did not initiate this crisis, contrary to previous challenges to the government. It only took a dominant role after the 17 January arrest of Consortium leaders.

Internet-based campaigns contributed to mounting public anger and increased the popularity of secessionist ideas. The diaspora helped to give the crisis a higher profile at the international level by organizing demonstrations outside the parliaments of Western countries and through diplomatic initiatives.

Although the great majority of the Anglophone diaspora probably supports the current protest movement, a minority has reacted in a hostile manner to calls for secession and to the movement as a whole, to the extent of sometimes writing to the authorities of the countries where the leading exponents of the secessionist currently are living to call for their expulsion.

The secessionist movement is also weakening because of internal divisions over power, ideology, strategy and actions. Within the secessionist movement, divergences persist about strategy and operational methods. Some want to prioritize diplomatic talks, while others put the emphasis on supporting Operation Ghost Town.

There are also different opinions on the use of violence, which are intensified by rivalries and the struggle for power. Since March, several small violent groups have been formed. On social networks, they circulate contact details of people and organizations failing to observe Ghost Town days, as well as those of local authorities and senior Anglophone officials hostile to the strike. They call on the public to burn down their properties. These groups also call on citizens not to pay tax and encourage attacks on Francophones

Bilateral responses and the European Union (EU)'s response has been the weakest. Except for the US, Cameroon's Western partners, such as France, the UK, Germany, Canada and the EU have not made any public statement, saying they are exercising discreet diplomatic pressure on the government. The strongest reactions have come from international civil society, especially from the UK Bar and organizations like Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders (MSF), Human rights watch (HRW).

As the violence continue, and the ravage in its path from November 2016 aspects of the crisis remain, radicalization and anger from the diaspora and parts of the population, a loss of confidence in the government and targeted social violence. The trial of Anglophone militants arrested is flawed in ways that illustrate persistent problems. it has been repeatedly postponed and conducted in French, with only rough translations provided if at all, and this for offenses committed by Anglophones in Anglophone regions.

There is overwhelming evidence that the Francophone-dominated government of Cameroon is committing war crimes against its Anglophone civilians in North West and South West. There is also overwhelming evidence that armed separatist groups, although they began in self-defense, are now doing the same.