



Cameroon: A Worsening Anglophone Crisis Calls for Strong Measures

Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°130

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I. Overview

The crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, now one year old, escalated on 1 October 2017, when militant secessionist groups symbolically proclaimed the independence of Ambazonia. Violence left dozens of protesters dead and over 100 injured. This sharp deterioration in the situation requires an urgent response from Cameroonian President Paul Biya, as well as a strong reaction from international partners.

The events of 1 October (a date commemorating the 1961 reunification between the Cameroon under French mandate and the British Southern Cameroons) are the culmination of a new, intensified phase of the crisis. It is marked by the failure of official government missions abroad in August, which led to increased cases of arson and sporadic violence by unidentified splinter groups, violent repression of Anglophone activists by security forces on 22 September, bomb blasts in the Northwest, and a de facto state of emergency from 29 September to 3 October.

Due to such murderous repression, secessionist ranks are growing by the day, and some are more firmly evoking the idea of an armed struggle or "self-defence". If he hopes to avoid an armed uprising in Anglophone regions, which would without doubt have an impact in the Francophone zone, the Cameroonian president must go beyond superficial measures and take responsibility in order to find political solutions to the crisis. The recommendations detailed in the August 2017 Crisis Group report still stand, but the gravity of the situation means that more urgent action must be taken. Reforms should be preceded by an inclusive dialogue at the highest level to develop long-term solutions. Following this bloody repression, the worsening crisis now calls for the intervention of a credible mediator, such as the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) or the African Union.

International partners, who have until now been passive or complacent vis-à-vis the regime, should strongly condemn such state violence and terrible killings. They should also request an independent investigation and sanctions against the perpetrators, as well as the launch of an inclusive dialogue on decentralisation and federalism. Finally, they should clearly point out that renewed, widespread violence

perpetrated by the security forces will lead to a reassessment of military cooperation with Cameroon.

II. Deadly 1 October: A Predictable Conflagration

On 1 October, tens of thousands of people began a peaceful march (holding a plant symbolising peace and chanting “no violence”) to proclaim the independence of Ambazonia (the name given by secessionists to their hypothetical state). In Bamenda, Buea and across dozens of towns and communities, people marched and hoisted Ambazonian flags at intersections and atop the residences of traditional chiefs as well as onto a police station and a gendarmerie post. Independence was symbolically proclaimed in chiefs’ compounds.

Defence and security forces responded with disproportionate force, leading to at least 40 deaths and over 100 injured protesters between 28 September and 2 October.¹ This death toll is the result of live ammunition and excessive use of tear gas, including in homes and against the faithful as they left church.² Defence and security forces arrested hundreds of people without warrant, including in their homes. They made use of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. Sexual abuse, destruction of property and looting of homes by soldiers and police, as well as shooting from helicopters at protesters in Kumba, Bamenda and near Buea were reported by a dozen residents, local politicians, senior officials, the press, human rights organisations and the Catholic bishops of the two regions.³

¹ Five inmates from the prison of Kumbo (in the Northwest), who had reportedly tried to escape, are among those killed. “Cameroon: lourd bilan humain après la proclamation symbolique d’indépendance”, *L’Express*, 2 October 2017.

² The number of people killed could be much higher. The Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa (REDHAC) estimates that more than 100 protesters were killed. The largest opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), estimates that several hundred people died and speaks of genocide. Senior Anglophone officials told Crisis Group that at least 100 people had been killed. Cacophony reigns within the structures of power. The two regional governors have evoked seventeen deaths, while the communications minister has mentioned ten. The Anglophone bishops have also spoken of massacres and genocide. “Declaration of the Bishops of the Bamenda Episcopal Conference ...”, 4 October 2017. Crisis Group established a minimum number of 40 deaths based on around a dozen cross-checked video recordings of violence, a list of 30 victims drawn up by REDHAC, interviews with the families of these victims, and finally by counting numerous bodies discovered at identifiable locations in the Southwest and Northwest, many of which displayed gunshot wounds and lacked identity documents. Crisis Group has also received several witness statements, including those of a police officer and a soldier, regarding the numerous bodies carried away by the military. “South and North-West Regions of Cameroon: Human Rights Violations and Serious Crimes”, statement, REDHAC Douala, 3 October 2017; “Statement of the Social Democratic Front on the sad events of 1 October 2017”, statement, SDF, Bamenda, 5 October 2017; “Le Cameroun anglophone, en ébullition, compte ses morts”, *Le Monde*, 3 October 2017. Crisis Group emails and interviews, senior officials, residents, police officers and gendarmes, Yaoundé, Buea, Bamenda, October 2017.

³ Crisis Group emails and interviews, residents, mayors and senior officials, October 2017. “Declaration of the Bishops of the Bamenda Episcopal Conference ...”, op. cit.; “Cameroon: Death toll rises in Anglophone regions after severe repression”, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), 7 October 2017; Reuters, “Cameroon army helicopters shot separatist protesters”, 6 October 2017.

The villages of secessionist leaders such as Ewele, Akwaya, Eyumodjock and Ekona were targeted by the defence and security forces, forcing thousands of young men to flee to the bush for fear of being killed or arrested and tortured. According to the witness statements of locals, a policeman and a soldier deployed in the zone, “soldiers are murdering some people in their homes and shooting at the feet of others”.⁴ On his Facebook page, the former Supreme Court judge, Ayah Paul Abine, claims to have escaped assassination at his home in Akwaya, which was also reportedly looted by soldiers. Violence, arrests and looting by military and police continued throughout the following week, notably in the department of Manyu. Suspected of secessionism, Deputy Mayor of Ndu was reportedly killed at home by the military on 2 October.⁵

This widespread violence took place during a de facto state of emergency and martial law, imposed by the two regional governors from 29 September to 3 October: they enforced curfews, banned demonstrations and gatherings of more than four people, closed regional land and sea borders, brought in military reinforcements, banned all movement from one department to another, banned motorcycling, and cut off social networks, followed by the internet and electricity. On 1 October, people were also forbidden from leaving their homes.

Some senior officials and high-ranking officers explain the need for these excessive measures by a lack of police officers, which had to be compensated through military reinforcements, untrained in crowd control. They also point to insufficient police equipment, the lack of blank cartridges and an inadequate stock or misuse of tear gas. Their claim is that gendarmes and police officers mismanaged their stock of tear gas – insufficient to begin with – by using it in homes, and ran out when facing protesters.

These high-ranking officers also accuse protesters of inciting unrest by burning vehicles that belonged to the sub-prefect and prefect in Boyo and Fundong (in the Northwest), snatching weapons from gendarmes in Kumba (in the Southwest), ransacking the police stations of Ikiliwindi, Mabanda Teke and Kongle, and reportedly throwing stones at police and military in Buea and Bamenda. Finally, they point out that some police officers and military personnel refused to participate in the violence, which meant that the security apparatus was understaffed.⁶

The conflagration of the crisis and the massacre of 1 October were predictable, especially since the declaration of independence and demonstrations were announced beforehand. The violence follows an intensification of the crisis which had grown throughout August. On 5 August, on the orders of President Biya, delegations of ministers travelled on missions abroad. But these missions were disrupted by secessionist militants, sometimes violently. In Belgium, the meeting organised by the justice minister was marred by several incidents. In the U.S., the ministerial delegation was heckled by the diaspora. In South Africa, a member of the delegation narrowly escaped a lynching and the embassy was vandalised. Other incidents

⁴ Crisis Group emails and telephone interviews, Anglophone residents and officials in Yaoundé, October 2017.

⁵ SDF, “Statement of the Social Democratic Front on the sad events of 1 October 2017”, op. cit.

⁶ Crisis Group emails and phone interviews, high-ranking officers in Yaoundé, police and military in Bamenda and Buea, October 2017.

occurred in Cameroonian embassies in the UK and Canada, where secessionist militants swapped the flag of Cameroon with that of Ambazonia.⁷

These acts of defiance by secessionists among the diaspora have helped renew the vigour of Anglophone mobilisation. General strikes (or “ghost town”) operations have increased from one to three days a week. Secessionist militants have torched a growing number of schools and stores. Moreover, in August authorities announced the discovery of arms caches in the Northwest.

The government responded to this renewed mobilisation with new repressive measures (arresting seven journalists and a dozen Anglophone militants, and increasing the military presence in August). But this repressive apparatus has seemingly failed to stem the civil disobedience of part of the population and violence by secessionist splinter groups that have formed on the margins of the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Governing Council, currently the largest secessionist group. It now seems to be supplanting the Southern Cameroons National Council, which was the main secessionist group since the 1990s.

Given the risk of postponing the start of the school year, on 30 August Paul Biya finally agreed to release certain Anglophone leaders and activists, hoping to halt the ghost town operations and prevent the school year being jeopardised for the second year in a row. But these releases had no effect. The ghost towns operations have continued unabated and, one month after the start of the school year, enrolment rates remain very low.

The president’s decision was inadequate and came too late. Leading figures of the Anglophone movement and dozens of protesters already detained for eight months are still in prison. Moreover, many Anglophones and Francophones see this decision as further proof that the Cameroonian president retains control over the judiciary. In reality, by imprisoning moderate activists (those who are pro-decentralisation and pro-federalism), the government has indirectly strengthened the most radical (secessionist groups and violent splinter groups). Several analysts believe that this approach is the result of a deliberate strategy aimed at discrediting the Anglophone mobilisation among Francophones and international partners by conflating it with a secessionist movement.

In September, the Ghost Town operations continued three days each week, several stores and seven schools were torched, and classes could not get underway as normal. All of this no longer necessarily implies that local populations endorse such tactics of civil disobedience. Although support for federalism and secessionism is growing, many are now merely going along with the ghost town operations for fear of violent reprisals from splinter groups. Hence thousands of Anglophone families are sending their children to bilingual schools in Francophone areas, while some tradespeople and business owners are moving to Douala.⁸

⁷ Hans De Marie Heungoup, “Cameroun: le risque d’embrasement de la crise anglophone inquiète les francophones”, *Jeune Afrique*, 8 September 2017 ; Richard Moncrieff, “Cameroon anglophone crisis is escalating. Here is how it could be resolved”, *African Argument*, 27 September 2017.

⁸ Crisis Group interviews, residents, pupils and traders, Douala, Buea and Bamenda, June-September 2017.

A new line was crossed mid-September with the first use of home-made bombs. Between 14 and 20 September, two bombs exploded in the Northwest with no casualties, a third exploded by a police station in Bamenda, wounding three police officers, and a fourth nearly exploded in Douala.⁹ While nobody has claimed responsibility, the government, as well as a majority of Cameroonian public opinion, attributed the blasts to the secessionists.¹⁰

Following the explosions, the governor in the Northwest took drastic measures, imposing a curfew, cutting off internet access for 24 hours, and banning gatherings and demonstrations. But these measures did not stop between 30,000 and 80,000 people from protesting across thirty Anglophone towns and communities (Bamenda, Buea, Kumba, Kumbo, Limbe, etc.) on 22 September to demand the release of Anglophone political prisoners, the departure of President Biya, the implementation of federalism, and secession. The demonstrations were organised to coincide with President Biya's speech to the UN General Assembly. Initially peaceful, these marches turned violent in some areas. In Buea, some protesters vandalised the home of the town's mayor (an Anglophone but a fierce opponent of protesters). In Mamfe, a police station was set on fire. Overreaction on the part of the defence and security forces in Santa, Bamenda, Ekona and Limbe resulted in at least four protesters being shot to death, with dozens more injured.

The scale of the demonstrations on 22 September, the largest in Cameroon since February 2008, seems to have surprised authorities, who had until now underestimated Anglophone discontent and the weight of the secessionist movement. This is probably what prompted the government to deploy a further 1,000 soldiers and impose a de facto state of emergency and martial law (with the military arresting civilians who are then judged in military courts). In total, since the start of the crisis in October 2016, at least 55 people have been killed, several hundred injured and hundreds more arrested in the Anglophone regions.¹¹

III. Reactions by the Government, the Ruling Party and the International Community

Cameroon's president, visiting Switzerland since 23 September, has yet to respond to the outbreaks of violence in September and October, except for a post on his Facebook page: "I condemn all acts of violence, regardless of their sources".¹² The communications minister and members of the government have conflated the tens of thousands of protesters with terrorists or armed assailants. Denial still remains the norm in official statements since the start of this crisis, and the authorities have used official

⁹ "Trois policiers grièvement blessés à Bamenda", BBC, 21 September 2017.

¹⁰ Some analysts do not exclude a government set-up (but provide no proof), done in order to paint Anglophone militants as terrorists and justify a purely military response. Crisis Group interviews, academics and researchers, Yaoundé, Bamenda, Buea, September-October, 2017.

¹¹ Amnesty International estimates that more than 500 people have been arrested in the Anglophone regions during demonstrations on 1 October 2017. "Cameroon. Inmates 'packed like sardines' in overcrowded prisons following deadly Anglophone protests", Amnesty International, 13 October 2017.

¹² "Anglophone crisis: president Paul Biya connects through social media", CRTV, 2 October 2017.

or pro-government media outlets as well as social networks to give credence to the theory of an international plot.

The Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), the country's ruling party, organised rallies at short notice in Francophone towns on 1 October, in the name of national unity and in support of Paul Biya. In the eyes of the Anglophone population, the staging of these unprecedented, impromptu events while Anglophone regions have been banned from holding demonstrations and targeted by violence, is symptomatic of the Francophone elite's arrogance and contempt. Paradoxically, the ruling party and the government waited until Ambazonia's proclamation of independence before it organised its first apparent celebration of Cameroon's reunification, 56 years after the event.

Despite several warnings – including those issued by Crisis Group and reports in the international press – only the UN had called on the parties to exercise restraint before the clashes of 1 October. Most of the major powers and international organisations, on the other hand, only reacted to the violence afterwards, and on occasion even showed lenience toward the government.¹³ The UN, the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Commonwealth, the International Organisation of la Francophonie, the U.S., France and the UK have urged the parties to refrain from violence and to engage in a dialogue to find long-lasting solutions to the crisis. Only the UN and the U.S. have called on the parties to refrain from disproportionate use of force against the protesters and demanded an inquiry and talks to be held on the underlying issues “with respect for Cameroon's territorial unity”.¹⁴

As Crisis Group explained in its previous report, the international community faces with a dilemma. Wary of offending an army that is playing a vital role in the struggle against Boko Haram, and one of the most stable states in a volatile subregion, its response has been exceedingly cautious. Above all, it fears that instability in Cameroon may spread across the region. Nonetheless, for decades the regime has interpreted this passivity as giving it *carte blanche* for all kinds of anti-democratic actions and human rights violations.

Indeed, over the past decade the regime has managed to neutralise international actors' capacity to intervene politically. It has spread the theory of an external plot to destabilise the nation and it plays the victim card in order to generate a mood of nationalism among some Cameroonians, and to declare itself as the sole guarantor of stability. Moreover, those close to the president often congratulate themselves in private, boasting that they are supported by a favourable public opinion that they have had the time to manipulate.¹⁵

¹³ “La francophonie préoccupée par les tensions dans les régions anglophones du Cameroun”, journalducameroun.com, 2 October 2017.

¹⁴ “Cameroon: UN chief Secretary-General urges dialogue to resolve grievances”, UN News Centre, 3 October 2017; “Violence in Cameroon”, U.S. State Department, 3 October 2017.

¹⁵ Crisis Group interviews, high-level officials from the president's office, Yaoundé, 2016-2017.

IV. The Serious Political Consequences of the Violence

The violence seen in September and October is unprecedented in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. It has opened up a rift between the government and the population, exacerbating the climate of mistrust and making the idea of secession more attractive.¹⁶ The secessionist movement probably still lacks support from the majority, but its proponents are now no longer an insignificant minority. Anglophones increasingly take the view that secession offers the best solution and it will be difficult to ignore their opinion within the framework of an inclusive political dialogue, particularly since the secessionists are now at the forefront of the Anglophone dispute.

The violent incidents have also increased backing for federalism, which has traditionally enjoyed Anglophone support. In June, several federalists told Crisis Group that, in the absence of the federalism they desired, they would settle for genuine decentralisation. But since the clashes some of them no longer consider decentralisation as an acceptable middle-ground solution.

Recent violent unrest has also aggravated pre-existing social tensions between Anglophones and Francophones. Hate speech and attacks on Anglophones have both proliferated since September, creating a palpably tense atmosphere. In state media, the Southwest's governor referred to the protesters of 22 September as "dogs" and the minister of communication described them as "terrorists". The pro-government media and certain Francophone intellectuals imply that Anglophones are all secessionists.¹⁷ Some journalists working for Vision 4 – a television channel financed by powerful backers of the regime – consider the demonstrators to be terrorists and, in September, advised the government "to call a state of emergency in the Anglophone regions, make mass arrests, search houses (including those belonging to ministers), and conduct surveillance operations on the Anglophones of Yaoundé".¹⁸ On Facebook, some Francophones have celebrated the repression and number of deaths, while also vowing more deaths on subsequent occasions.¹⁹

After 22 September, Anglophones living in the Francophone parts of the country, particularly in Yaoundé and Douala, have been targeted: arbitrary arrests in taxis,

¹⁶ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°250, *Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads*, 2 August 2017.

¹⁷ "Governor Okalia Bilai called Southern Cameroonians dogs. Listen excerpt of the audio", YouTube, 29 September 2017, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=IR1UQImF4lc>; "Issa Tchiroma traite les sécessionnistes de terroristes", YouTube, 3 October 2017, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=S1IKMzjuzWY>.

¹⁸ Crisis Group observations, around 40 televised weekend debates on Cameroonian television channels in September and October. The call for violence and hate speech on Vision 4 were condemned by one of the opposition parties and Francophone civil society. A total of 43 Anglophone journalists also filed a complaint with the National Communications Council (CNC) to demand the suspension of the journalists responsible and the channel itself. One of the journalists involved has already apologised to the Anglophone population. "Cameroun: un journaliste accusé d'incitation à la haine contre les anglophones", Radio France Internationale (RFI), 4 October 2017; "Ernest Obama suggère l'état d'urgence dans la partie anglophone", YouTube, 23 September 2017, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=dWIAQzzpuKQ>.

¹⁹ Crisis Group observations, a dozen Cameroonian Facebook groups, each one with tens of thousands of members, such as "Cameroun c'est le Cameroun", "Cameroun c'est le Cameroun qui gagne", "English Cameroon for a United Cameroon", September-October 2017.

house searches without warrants, and mass detentions of Anglophones have taken place in Yaoundé neighbourhoods with large English-speaking communities such as in Biyem-Assi, Melen, Obili, Biscuiterie, Centre administratif and Etoug-Ebe. Many of these arrests were made by police officers and gendarmes on 30 September. A number of Anglophones have reported being insulted by Francophones in the markets. In their places of work, Francophones have asked them “what were they still doing in Yaoundé and why didn’t they go back home to their filthy Bamenda?”²⁰

Anglophones are suffering a deep malaise as a result; they feel hated and more marginalised than ever before. In the words of one Anglophone public official: “Perhaps the Francophones are right about us spoiling their country. Now we need secession so that we can all live in peace. That will bring back the peace”. High-ranking Anglophones officials feel under surveillance, and one of them said: “Here in the ministry everyone is suspicious of everyone else. You have to be discreet, and keep to yourself”.²¹ Feeling watched, this elite has become more discreet and inward-looking.

The pro-federalist Social Democratic Front (SDF) – the largest opposition party, winning 11 per cent of votes at the presidential elections of 2011, and with an Anglophone leadership – has been subjected to strong pressure since the start of this crisis. Initially it attempted to strike a moderate and conciliatory tone in order to avoid losing support from its national Francophone base, but after the recent violence, many of the party’s deputies have symbolically announced their resignation from the Cameroon parliament, without initiating the legal processes. The SDF’s national president has described the government’s bloody repression of October as genocide, calling for Paul Biya to be put on trial before the International Criminal Court (ICC).

V. The Winding Path Toward a New Cameroon Consensus

Just as the government appears in denial about the depth of discontent facing it, some leaders of the Anglophone protest movement appear detached from the country’s reality and international dynamics. Hence their often unrealistic demands, including the call for secession.²² Meanwhile, the radicalisation of the dispute and increasing support for secessionism is the fruit of the regime’s initially disdainful approach to corporatist demands, and of the bloody repression of protests since 2016, the three-month internet shutdown (perceived by the Anglophones as a collective punishment), and of the arrests of hundreds of protesters.

The regime allowed the situation to worsen as it hoped that protests would lose momentum, while it alternated between violent repression and cosmetic concessions.

²⁰ Crisis Group interviews, approximately thirty Anglophone residents, Yaoundé, September-October 2017.

²¹ Crisis Group email correspondence, high-level official at the ministry of higher education, Yaoundé, October 2017.

²² Since the experience of South Sudan, international actors have become less willing to support separatist movements.

Currently the most powerful hardliners are betting on repression, and criticise the president for having released some 50 militants in August; they are against participating in any talks about federalism or even decentralisation, and some say they are no longer willing to wait for the Anglophones to mount an armed insurrection before “crushing” them.²³ The more moderate see an effective decentralisation or even a ten-state federation as a solution, though they don’t dare say so in public as they lack influence and fear being marginalised and considered as supporters of the protest movement.²⁴

President Biya holds the cards needed to resolve this crisis, but he does not appear genuinely interested in doing so. It falls to him to prevent a stalemate in Cameroon that could lead to a political impasse one year before the presidential elections. Signs exist of a possible armed uprising, given the continued multiplication of violent groupings, acts of civil disobedience, and sporadic outbreaks of violence (arson and home-made explosives). Some sources suggest that small groups of young people have gone to Nigeria to be trained in guerrilla warfare, despite opposition from Abuja to the principle of an independent Anglophone state, as it would risk becoming a rear base for Nigerian secessionist movements.²⁵

Cameroon, which is engaged in a struggle against Boko Haram in the Far North and against militias from the Central African Republic to the east, cannot afford a new front, especially since an insurrection in the Anglophone region would probably have repercussions in Douala and Yaoundé. The economic cost of overcoming such an insurrection would be severe for a country currently under IMF adjustment measures²⁶ and that must organise general and presidential elections in one year’s time, as well as the African Cup of Nations Football competition.

International credit rating agencies are already concerned about Cameroon’s political climate. Fresh political troubles could lead to a downgrading of its sovereign credit rating and make borrowing on the financial markets difficult. The political cost will be high if the crisis drags on and more violence breaks out, because of the difficulty of organising elections in the Anglophone regions. If the elections do take place, the ruling party will most likely face a rout in those regions. Moreover, any further violent clashes will only increase calls for international justice.²⁷

²³ Crisis Group interviews, high-level government officials from the justice and higher education ministries; departmental commissioners, Yaoundé, September-October 2017.

²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, high-level officials from the president’s offices and ministries, June-September 2017.

²⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomats, non-commissioned information officers, high-level officials from the foreign relations ministry, Yaoundé, 2017.

²⁶ “Cameroun: les conséquences du retour du FMI sur l’investissement et les programmes sociaux”, *Jeune Afrique*, 29 June 2017.

²⁷ Secessionist leaders have seized on the idea of using the ICC on 12 October to demand the start of investigations into “genocide and crimes against humanity”, in connection to the violence in the Anglophone regions after October 2016. “Cameroun: les sécessionnistes traduisent Paul Biya et certains membres du gouvernement devant la CPI pour génocide et crime contre l’humanité”, Cameroon-info.net, 15 October 2017.

A. *Next Steps for Cameroon's President*

To resolve the crisis, the president must restore calm, take conciliatory measures and organise an inclusive dialogue, with the presence of a mediator, on decentralisation and federalism.

- For this to be possible, the president should return to Cameroon without delay and give a speech calling for calm and recognising the existence of the Anglophone problem. He must also ensure that the judiciary launches an inquiry, supervised by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms, on the violent clashes of September and October, with sanctions applied to those found responsible.
- High-level talks on long-lasting solutions to the Anglophone problem should also include reaching out to the militant Anglophone diaspora to encourage their return. If such measures are not taken, even if a federalist course of action were to be taken, angered exiles would risk everything to make the two Anglophone regions ungovernable.
- Finally, the president should remove from their posts all government members and high-ranking officials from the Anglophone regions whose irresponsible pronouncements have fuelled the crisis.

B. *The International Community's Responsibility*

The UN, the EU, the AU, and Cameroon's partners can still make efforts to prevent the crisis from escalating into an armed conflict. The stakes are high, since the country is a point of stability in the sub-region and a key player in the fight against terrorism. The discreet approach taken by international partners has now reached its limits and is insufficient to dissuade the government from using real bullets against protesters, just as they did in February 2008.²⁸ From now on, the international community must use diplomacy while proposing a firm response, combined with threats of sanctions against Cameroon's government and against violent Anglophone splinter groups. This diplomatic repositioning requires a series of progressive decisions:

- Initially there must be a strong condemnation of September and October's violence, a demand for an independent inquiry and for sanctions against the high-level officials and government authorities involved in the violence. International actors must then clearly stipulate that any further violence would lead to a reassessment of military cooperation with Cameroon and its official development assistance, with the exception of those projects directly linked to the fight against poverty at a national level and the development projects in the Far North and east. They must also demand that Cameroon's army no longer participate in domestic peacekeeping activities.

²⁸ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°160, *Cameroon: Fragile State?*, 25 May 2010.

- ❑ The international community must unequivocally condemn violent acts committed by splinter groups, whether this means arson or other sporadic actions or calls for armed combat.
- ❑ As part of an international mediation, Cameroon's international partners could propose sending an information-gathering mission from the UN or the AU, in order to investigate the events of September and October, in conjunction with the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms.
- ❑ Cameroon's partners could also offer to bolster their technical training for police and gendarmes in crowd control and human rights. If those responsible for the recent violence face sanctions, these partners could consider providing blank cartridges to Cameroon's security forces.

The secessionist leaders must also shoulder their share of the blame. They must allow schools to operate properly and strongly condemn all violent actions, whether this involves arson or the use of handmade explosives, committed by splinter groups in the name of their cause.

VI. Conclusion

After the violence of September and October 2017, Cameroon now faces its hour of truth. In addition to political uncertainty, it must now also deal with two pockets of conflict, numerous points of social tension, and a worrying economic outlook. Until, now, the population's impressive resilience has made relative stability possible. But a worsening Anglophone problem could plunge the country into a much deeper crisis. In this well-endowed country with considerable human potential, it is urgent for Cameroonians (Anglophones and Francophones alike) to reach a new national and social consensus. To reach this consensus, the country needs to take the route of effective decentralisation or federalism.

Nairobi/Brussels, 19 October 2017

Appendix A: Map of Cameroon



Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Mark Malloch-Brown. Its Vice Chair is Ayo Obe, a Legal Practitioner, Columnist and TV Presenter in Nigeria.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, served as the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations from 2000-2008, and in 2012, as Deputy Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria. He left his post as Deputy Joint Special Envoy to chair the commission that prepared the white paper on French defence and national security in 2013.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in ten other locations: Bishkek, Bogota, Dakar, Kabul, Islamabad, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Sanaa, Tblisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Defence, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, German Federal Foreign Office, Global Affairs Canada, Irish Aid, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Crisis Group also holds relationships with the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Henry Luce Foundation, Humanity United, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Robert Bosch Stiftung, and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

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Appendix C: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2014

Special Reports

Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

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