








Key Figures

 <p>1,109¹ Victims of Human Rights violations</p>		 <p>444 Victims Arbitrary arrests & detentions</p>		<p>Top three violations</p>  <p>228 Victims Enforced disappearance/Abduction/Kidnapping</p>		 <p>132 Victims Theft or destruction of personal property (incl. livestock & real property)</p>	
 <p>216 Women (including Girls)</p>	 <p>893 Men (including Boys)</p>	<p>Monitored Violations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violations of access to basic services Violations of physical integrity Violations to the right of life Violations of freedom and security of the person Violation of property rights 				 <p>04 Protection Monitoring partners</p>	

Overview

In Q4 2024, the protection environment in the North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions was marred by **ad-hoc lockdowns**, **armed clashes** between non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and State Security Forces (SSF), **abductions for ransom**, **extortion and harassment** of the civilian population by NSAGs, and an increase in the use of **Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)** by NSAGs.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project reports that a total of **455 (NW:256, SW:190) security events** (battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, etc), resulting in **360 fatalities (NW:105, SW:255)** occurred in the NWSW regions in Q4 2024.

Population movements, including pendular movements, IDP and refugee returns, were reported across both regions. **IDP displacements (1,354 indiv. (274HHS))** were recorded in **Boyo, Donga Mantung, Kumbo, Menchum and Mezam** in the NW region, while **IDP returns (790 indiv. (205HHS))** from the West and Centre regions were recorded in **Bui, Donga Mantung, Menchum and Mezam**. In the SW region, **107 individuals (28 HHS)**, returned to four communities in **Akwaya sub-division, Manyu Division**, from **Obudu, Cross Rivers state, Nigeria**. (Source: *International Organization for Migration, Oct./Nov.2024, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)*)

¹ Some victims suffered multiple human rights violations.

Pendular movements triggered by military operations, fear of attacks/retaliation from NSAGs and armed clashes between SSF and NSAGs were recorded in **Fako** (SW region) - **800 indiv. (200HHs)** and **Bui, Boyo, Donga Mantung** and **Momo** in the NW region – **2,807 indiv. (623HHs)**. (Source: *International Organization for Migration, Oct./Nov.2024, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)*)

Repeated attacks from suspected Fulani herdsmen were reported in Ndu and Misaje sub-divisions in Donga Mantung Division in the NW region. Reasons for the attacks were usually disputes over grazing and farming land.

With the approach of the festive season, an increase in abductions for ransom by NSAGs was observed in the two regions. Menchum and Manyu Divisions in particular, which border Nigeria and serve as major trade routes between Cameroon and Nigeria, experienced a significant surge in kidnappings for ransom. Security analysts report that the protracted state of the crisis has led to reduced funding for NSAG activities from supporters in the diaspora, causing them to seek alternate means to fund their battles against SSFs. They have thus resorted to abductions for ransom, imposition of illegal taxes on the civilian population, and mounting of illegal checkpoints where they extort travelers and traders as fundraising tactics.

This situation has led to the creation of disorganized splinter groups of NSAGs, and criminal gangs pretending to be NSAGs have copied these tactics, leading to a further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation and shrinking the existing humanitarian space.

Children continued to be exposed to protection risks due to the volatile security situation and weakening of traditional protection mechanisms, and access limitations continued to hinder Child Protection actors' ability to reach conflict-affected children in all 13 divisions of the NWSW regions.

Key Highlights

Following the arrest of a key separatist leader in Norway in September, the combatant arm of his organization intensified their acts of violence in the NWSW regions, calling on the international community and the UN to intervene in the crisis and guard against his repatriation to Cameroon. SSF responded by attacking their strongholds in Momo division, NW region, resulting in the death of one of the NSAG leaders – “General “Jackson, and a close aide.

In **October**, NSAGs threatened to close the borders between Cameroon and the NWSW regions from 30 October 2024, requesting that the civilian population turn to “Biafra” for all commercial activities. Reasons given included imminent attacks on civilian populations by forces of the Republic of Cameroon and measures to curb hyperinflation emanating from Cameroon. It has been observed that NSAGs traverse the Nigeria and Cameroon border regularly, to either avoid attacks from SSF or trade in arms.

SSF continued their “*search and cordon*” operations in the NW region, forcing their way into civilian homes and allegedly carting away household appliances such as gas cylinders, television sets, and bicycles, which the owners could not provide receipts for. They are reported to have also found and seized guns, ammunition, military uniforms, and shoes. **186 individuals (159 men, 27 women)** were arrested during two operations in Bamenda II sub-division, Mezam, NW region, and some of them are reported to have been tortured.

In **November**, SSF killed another NSAG commander “General” Weapon, and two close aides in Mezam, NW region triggering a response from his group, who then announced lockdowns every Saturday in December, to mourn their fallen leader. NSAGs intensified the use of IEDs in urban areas such as Bamenda in the NW region, and Owe in the SW, and in-fighting was reported of an NSAG in Bui, leading to suspicions of a split, which could further complicate humanitarian access negotiations in that division.

Attacks against education continued - in October, NSAG fighters on motorbikes, fired multiple gunshots at a secondary school in Ndu sub-division, Donga Mantung (NW region), demanding payment from the school authorities for allowing the school to operate. SSF were deployed to the area, and they were soon dispersed. No casualties or damages were reported. In November, three secondary school principals were abducted from Mezam (NW region) and Fako (SW region), and large sums of money were demanded for their release. The Mayor of Bafut was also reported abducted after distributing educational supplies at a school in Bafut, NW region.

In **December**, NSAG fighters from Meme, Kupe Manenguba, Ndian, and Mezam divisions reportedly surrendered to SSF posts in the NW and SW regions. However, another group repeated their call for the UN to intervene in resolving the crisis and promised to continue “*to fight till the last one man standing*”.

The presence of senior military officials in Bamenda led to an intense period of targeted shootings and IED detonations in downtown Bamenda, during their stay, and the extortion of civilians by NSAGs continued.

In Tubah sub-division, Mezam, NW region, a “liberation tax” was imposed on travelers along the Bambui-Babanki road by NSAGs operating in the area: XAF50,000s for drivers, XAF25,000 for motorcycle riders, XAF10,000 for male passengers and XAF5,000 for Women.

The civilian population continues to grow weary of the atrocities committed by NSAGs and have taken measures to return to some degree of normalcy, holding celebrations and sometimes ignoring ad-hoc calls for lockdowns. This has led to reprisals from the NSAGs who continue to insist that they are “*fighting for the people*”. On 29 December, NSAGs fired gunshots sporadically in Bamenda, and tried to blow up the town’s main power supply, as part of attempts to disrupt end-of-year celebrations.

Comparative Trend Analysis

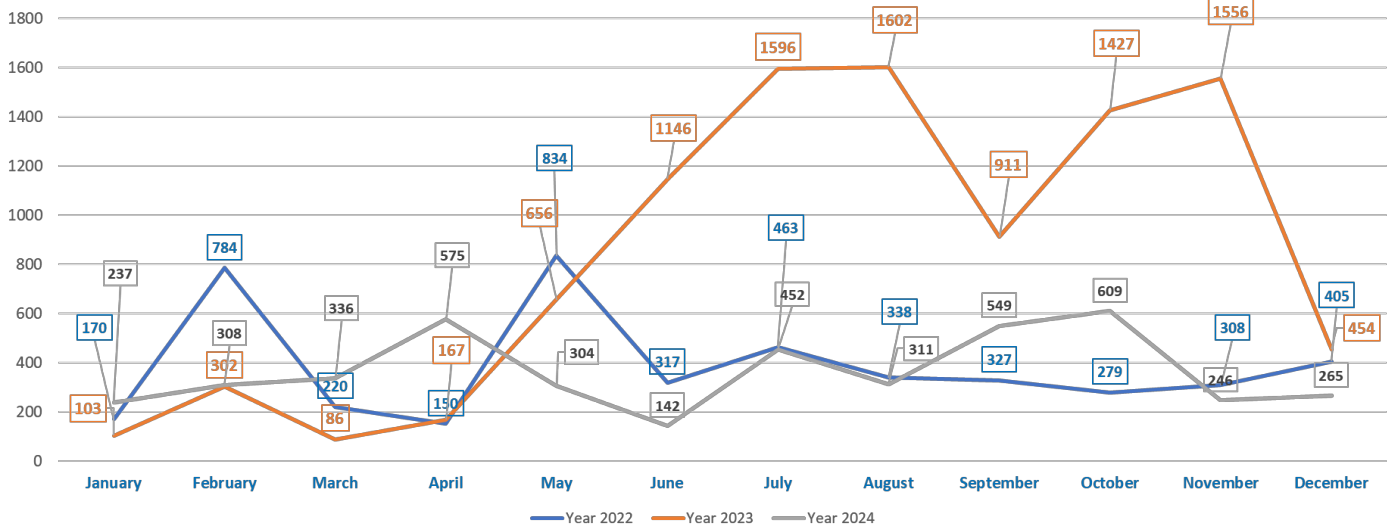
Human rights violations in the NWSW regions dropped by **27% in Q4 2024, (from 1,929 victims in Q3 to 1,109 victims in Q4)**, however, the highest number of violations for 2024 were recorded in **October**, with **609 victims**. This spike could be attributed to increased NSAG activity to commemorate October 01 – the self-proclaimed “Ambazonia Independence Day” leading to an increase in SSF presence in the NWSW regions.

The decrease in human rights violations can be attributed to self-protection strategies implemented by the civilian population.

Lockdowns were declared on 01 and 05 October, and the civilian population was warned by NSAGs not to participate in public viewings of a documentary on the life of President Paul Biya.

As in previous months when lockdowns were declared, harsh reprisals were meted out against civilians for refusing to participate in the October 01 activities planned by NSAGs. On 30 October, about 100 individuals were abducted and three men were killed by NSAGs in Alabukam and Nchualum, both in Bamenda 2 sub-division, Mezam division, NW region for refusing to participate in an NSAG-planned march-past on 01 October. In Bolo Moboka, Konye sub-division, Meme division in the SW region, four businessmen were reportedly tortured and extorted of a large sum of money by SSF who accused them of supporting NSAG activities.

Comparative Trend Analysis of Violations in the NWSW in 2022, 2023 and 2024



Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

Protection actors have observed that human rights violations tend to peak during months with specific commemorative dates for both parties to the conflict e.g. 11 February, 20 May, 01 October, 05 October, during the September back-to-school lockdown periods and so on. NSAGs take extra measures to enforce compliance to lockdowns during these periods or coerce the civilian population into participating in their planned activities, while the SSF go to lengths to discourage the civilian population from adhering to NSAG instructions.

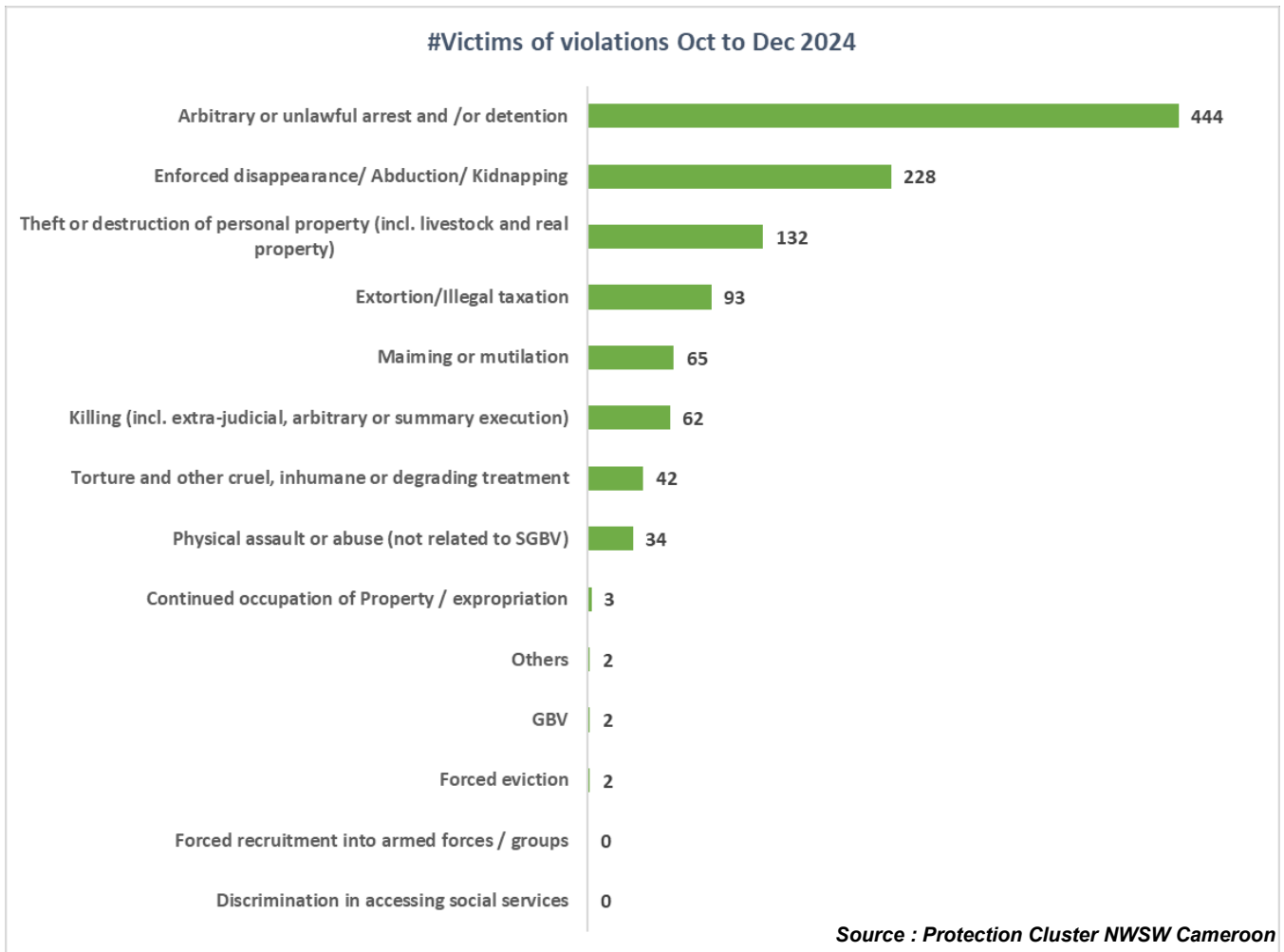
Typology of Violations

Q4 2024 saw an increase in abductions for ransoms, maiming/ mutilations and extortion from previous months. NSAGs increased abductions, illegal taxations and set up illegal checkpoints which were then used to extort money and goods from civilians, in a bid to raise funds for their activities and the festive period. Criminal gangs also took advantage of this to exploit civilians, as it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two groups.

Individuals who were unable to pay either the ransoms or extortion fees suffered physical abuse including maiming and destruction of their properties.

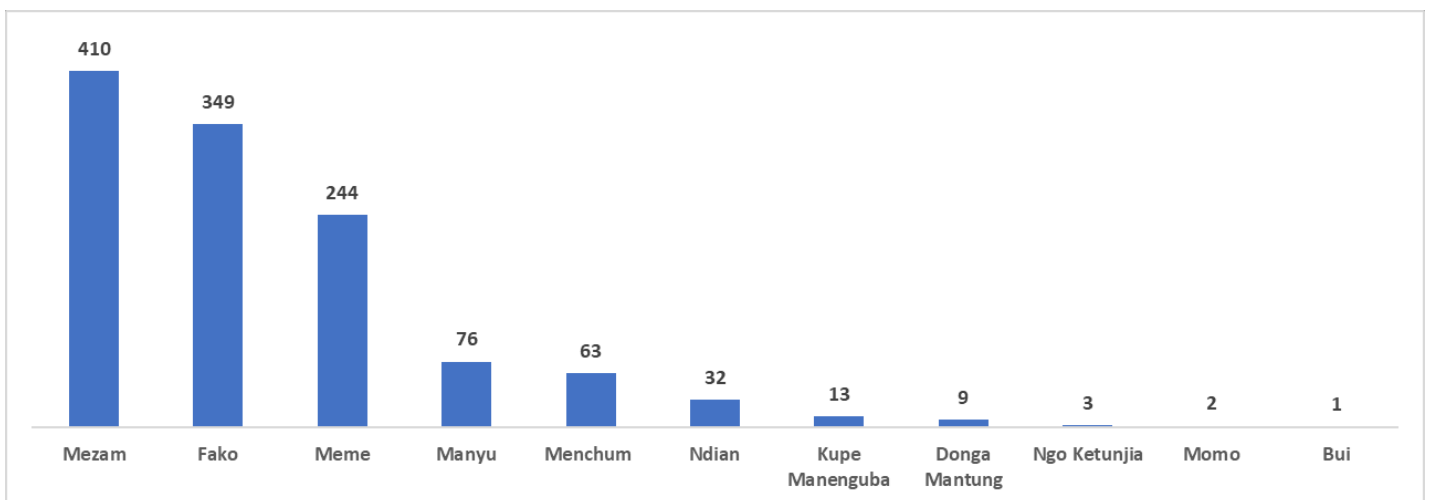
On 19 October, about **650 individuals (150HHs)** fled **Ande village** in **Ako sub-division, Donga Mantung division, NW region** due threats from NSAGs following their inability to pay a compulsory contribution demanded by NSAGs. Civilians in Asah village, also in Ako sub-division were taxed XAF 2,000,000 per household as “liberation” and retaliation tax for reportedly supporting the SSF in the capture of an NSAG commander in the area.

This update is published by the Protection Cluster NWSW. Kindly direct enquiries to the cluster coordinator: aninyei@unhcr.org



Arbitrary arrests and detentions which peaked in **July (326 victims)**, experienced a lull in August and September, before rising again in **October (241 victims)** and then remaining steady until the end of the year (101 victims in November, 102 victims in December).

Locations of Violations



The highest number of violations were recorded in **Mezam, NW region (410 victims)** unlike in Q3 2024 when Fako had the highest number of violations (**681 victims**). The increase of violations in Mezam corresponds with the ACLED data which shows there were more security events (battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians, etc.) in the NW region than in the SW region (**NW:256, SW: 190**) in Q4 2024.

Fako and Meme divisions in the SW region retained their positions in the top three, with 349 and 244 victims respectively: a significant drop from Q3 when the number of recorded violations in both locations 681 and 417 victims was respectively.

Protection actors attribute this to weariness on the part of the civilian population. Having observed the harsh reprisals meted out by both NSAGs and SSF during the September/ October lockdown periods, most civilians chose to self-protect by staying home during the lockdowns in November and December, limiting their interactions with NSAGs and SSFs. In rural areas, some communities displaced themselves temporarily, to avoid attacks from NSAGs, or getting caught in the crossfire during military operations / armed clashes.

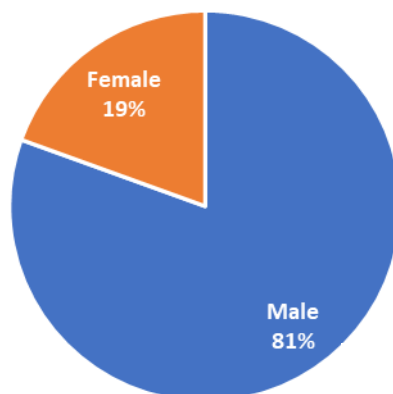
Between October and November, about **2,807 individuals (623HHs)** in **Bui, Boyo, Donga Mantung, Menchum, and Momo**, all in the NW region, sought safety in the bushes and neighboring villages to avoid **military operations, attacks from NSAGs and Fulani herdsmen and armed clashes between NSAGs and SSF**. The majority traveled on foot and then returned to their homes a few days later.

These divisions recorded lower human rights violations than in Q3, demonstrating that the communities' self-protection strategy worked.

In the SW region, **800 individuals (200HHs)** from **Ikata village, Muyuka subdivision, Fako division** sought refuge in the bushes near their village to avoid military operations.

Victims

Gender of Victims



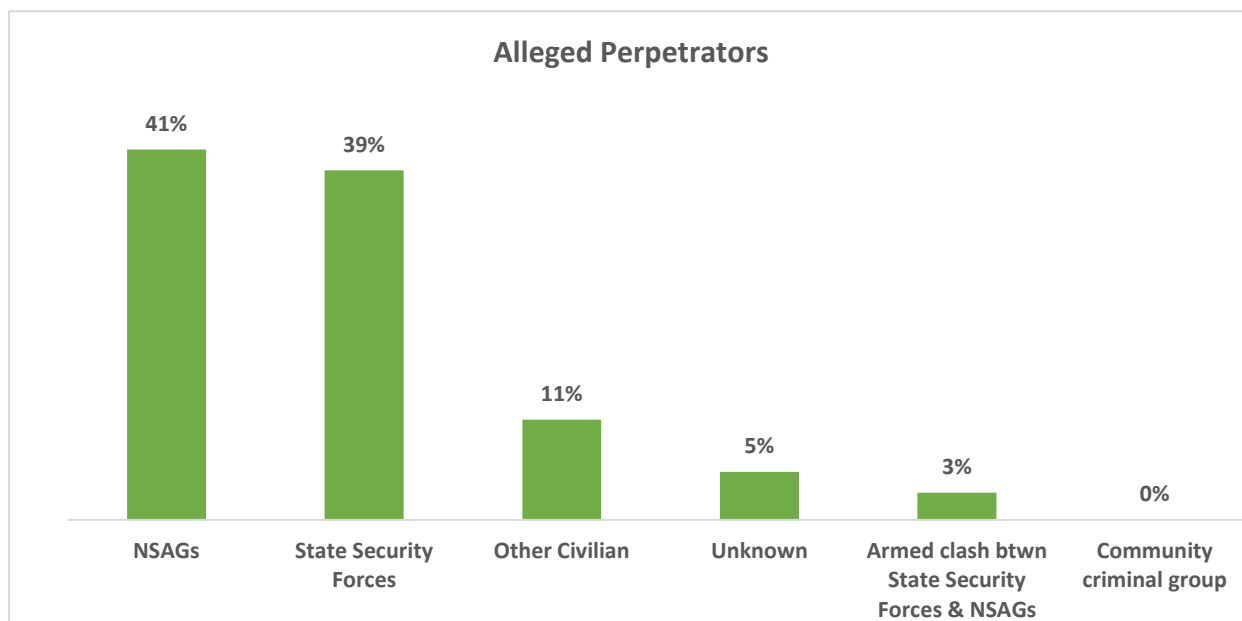
Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

Men and boys continue to be disproportionately affected by human rights violations. Protection actors are taking steps to better understand the underlying reasons for this, so they can be supported to strengthen their resilience.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) reveal that men are more susceptible to human rights violations as they are considered strong and more resourceful. SSF consider them accomplices of NSAGs, and NSAGs target them for abduction due to their perceived resilience and ability to endure the long journey to remote NSAG hideouts.

In addition, cocoa farms are majorly owned by men, further exposing them to extortion attempts, as they are considered high-net-worth individuals in the communities.

Alleged Perpetrators



Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

In Q4 2024, 41% of reported violations were allegedly committed by NSAGs while 39% were allegedly committed by SSF. This can be attributed to the increased attacks by NSAGs including the use of IEDs, due to increased SSF presence in the NWSW regions in the Q4. An increase in SSF presence tends to trigger reactions from NSAG factions or lead to increased armed clashes between both parties.

There have also been indications that the civilian population has grown weary of the atrocities being committed by NSAGs and are reported to be cooperating with the SSF in some locations.

11% of the violations were committed by other civilians, 5% by unknown assailants, and these can be assumed to be criminal gangs who have taken advantage of the on-going insecurity to exploit the civilian population.

Response

Protection actors provided services ranging from Psychological First Aid (PFA), awareness raising and sensitization to profiling for cash for protection, NFIs and Shelter.

Cases of arbitrary arrests and detention in the NW region have been successfully referred to the Cameroon Human Rights Commission. However, a lot more still needs to be done, and both budget and access constraints make it difficult to provide more long-term support.

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2025 Outlook

The **ACLED Conflict Index 2024²** ranks Cameroon #9 in the top 50 countries currently experiencing conflicts, ahead of Colombia, Haiti, Ukraine and Yemen, with the security situation considered to be “**consistently concerning**”.

245 countries were assessed against four indicators: four indicators – **deadliness** (*how fatal are political violence events?*), **danger to civilians** (*how many political violence events are targeted towards civilians?*), **geographic diffusion** (*what proportion of the country experiences a high level of violence?*), and the **number of armed groups** (*how many non-state armed, organized groups are operating within the conflict?*), and then ranked in order of severity.

Cameroon was ranked 17th in terms of deadliness of the violence, 12th for geographic diffusion, 10th regarding danger to civilians, and 16th for fragmentation of armed groups. (Source: <https://acleddata.com/conflict-index/index-december-2024/>)

In 2025, the security and humanitarian situation is expected to deteriorate further, marred by continuous human rights violations, repeated calls for ad-hoc lockdowns as in previous years, access restrictions, increased farmer-herder conflicts along the border with Nigeria, and continuous pendular displacements.

Presidential, parliamentary, and municipal elections are planned for 2025 in Cameroon, and NSAGs in the NWSW region have threatened that attempts to engage the NWSW population in political activities would be met with swift reprisals. They have already begun to obstruct civil documentation activities, accusing protection actors of supporting the Government of Cameroon (GoC) to register affected populations in the NWSW regions for the elections.

As SSF intensify efforts to rout out NSAGs from their hideouts in rural areas, the killing of NSAG commanders is expected to lead to internal power tussles and a proliferation of splinter groups, further complicating humanitarian access negotiations and shrinking the already small humanitarian space.

Reports have been received of communities forming vigilante groups to protect themselves against NSAGs, and as the civilian population’s patience with NSAGs wanes, more of these groups can be expected to crop up, forcing NSAGs into conflict on multiple fronts – against the SSF on one hand, and against communities on the other.

Tensions between farmers and grazers have been reported in communities in Menchum and Wum divisions in the NW region, and attacks by Fulani herdsmen from Nigeria, continue in Donga Mantung, NW region, along the border with Nigeria.

Climate change is expected to lead to irregular rainfall, flooding and longer dry spells, further aggravating farmer-herder clashes in both regions.

² The ACLED Conflict Index calculates variances in conflicts around the world using four indicators – deadliness (*how fatal are political violence events?*), danger to civilians (*how many political violence events are targeted towards civilians?*), geographic diffusion (*what proportion of the country experiences a high level of violence?*), and the number of armed groups (*how many non-state armed, organized groups are operating within the conflict?*). Countries are then assessed according to their rate of deadliness, danger, diffusion and fragmentation based on event data on political violence from the previous 12-month period.

Protection actors will continue to monitor the protection environment, engaging closely and remotely with communities to provide evidence-based reports to guide and support humanitarian programming and decision-making.

Advocacy

To the Government of Cameroon	To the Humanitarian Community
1. State Security Forces (SSF) should respect due process under both national and international legislation concerning the arrest and detention of civilians.	1. There is need for increased advocacy to both parties to the conflict for the respect of IHL and IHRL and the protection of civilians
2. SSF should consider the IHL principles of military necessity and proportionality, to limit the civilian casualties of their operations	2. Donors should increase funding for protection activities to respond to victims of human rights violations including SGBV
3. Establish effective mechanisms for holding police/gendarmerie officers accountable for human rights violations, including independent investigations, disciplinary actions, and prosecutions.	3. There is need to provide long-term MHPSS to children and survivors of human rights violations
4. Measures should be put in place to curb drug abuse, including the ban of drugs like Tramadol, and State medical facilities should implement drug rehabilitation programs	

This quarterly update was drafted using protection monitoring data collected by the following partners:

