

Key Figures

Top three violations



633¹

Victims of Human Rights violations



166 Victims

Enforced disappearance/Abduction / Kidnapping



108 Victims

Arbitrary arrests & detentions



84 Victims

Theft or destruction of personal property (incl. livestock & real property)



142

Women (including Girls)



399

Men (including Boys)

Monitored Violations

- 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



04

Protection Monitoring partners

Overview

In Q1 2025, the enjoyment of protection and human rights in the North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions was disrupted by an increase in the use of **Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)** by NSAGs, and human rights violations such as **abductions for ransom, arbitrary arrests and detentions**, and **theft or destruction of personal property**.

Population movements were reported in **Akwaya (Manyu division)**, **Ekondo -Titi (Ndian division)** and **Muyuka (Fako division)** in the SW region, and **Santa (Mezam division)** in the NW region. Triggers were attacks from Fulani herdsman, and armed clashes between non-State armed groups (NSAGs) and State Security Forces (SSF). (Source: International Organization for Migration, Jan – Mar 2025, Displacement Situation Reports)

The announcement in January, of a freeze of US funding for humanitarian projects, and the subsequent cancellation of US-funded projects has had a severe impact on protection activities in the NWSW regions, leading to dire consequences for the affected populations.

¹ Some victims suffered multiple human rights violations.

There has been a reduction or suspension of critical services, including Protection, CP and GBV case management, MHPSS, functioning safe spaces for women and girls and referrals to medical and legal assistance, leading to gaps in the provision of protection services, and leaving survivors without access to vital support. Cash assistance, a vital tool for empowering survivors and other vulnerable populations and enabling them to access essential services, has also been directly impacted by funding cuts.

In January, the protection cluster received protection monitoring information from just two out of its four partners. In February, all four partners provided information, but by March, a key protection monitoring partner had been forced to completely suspend protection monitoring activities, while a second had to reduce monitoring coverage locations.

This suspension and reduction of protection monitoring activities by key protection actors will significantly hinder the Protection Cluster NWSW's ability to monitor and report on human rights violations in the NWSW regions.

Protection monitoring provides vital information about the protection situation on ground, helping to inform humanitarian advocacy, decision-making and programming.

The absence or reduction of regular protection monitoring will not only lead to an information vacuum in the NWSW regions, but also place vulnerable populations including women and children, at increased risk, as the under-reporting of human rights violations and other protection incidents would mean that they do not receive the necessary assistance that they require, in a timely and sufficient manner.

Key Highlights

Tensions between farmers and herders over farming and grazing land in communities in **Manyu (SW)** and **Menchum (NW)** continued to be reported in **January**, and through to March. Armed attacks by Fulani herdsmen from Nigeria led to displacements and population movements in Akwaya, where several attacks have been reported this year.

NSAG fighters who were dislodged from other divisions in the NW region such as Bui, have set up base in **Nkwen, Mezam Division (NW)**, from where they launch attacks against the GDSF. They have also taken to abducting civilians for ransom and extorting large sums of money from them in form of "liberation tax", which they then use to fund their operations.

Security experts predict that, as the GDSF continue to rout out NSAGs from their bases in rural areas, an influx of NSAGs to urban areas such as Buea and Bamenda is going to lead to shift in the theatre of operations from rural to urban areas. This development is particularly worrying as the NSAGs are able to infiltrate the civilian population, continuing to carry out their activities undetected. This situation is regularly referred to by the SSF as justification for their "search and cordon" operations, during which they arbitrarily arrest and detain civilians.

A Cameroonian lawyer in diaspora, who had previously petitioned NSAG leaders in the diaspora to restrain their representatives in the NWSW regions, leading to the arrest of prominent figures such as Ayaba Cho, is reported to have launched a petition against the NSAG leaders currently living in the US. It is not yet known if this will have any impact on the ongoing situation in the NWSW regions.

In Bafoussam, in the West region a group of individuals were arrested for duping IDPs from the NWSW regions - they had extorted money from them under false pretext of getting them jobs abroad and visas to travel. The victims were found in a building without adequate food and sanitary facilities. With the severe drop in humanitarian funding and assistance, needs are expected to rise, and an increasing number of IDPs can be expected to fall prey to this sort of scams, exposing them to human traffickers as they becoming increasingly more vulnerable.

In **February**, despite security measures put in place by the government, NSAGs disrupted a Division One football match by firing indiscriminately. Following this incident, and in a bid to self-protect, civilians chose to respect the NSAG-declared lockdowns for 11 February (National Youth Day) and 21 – 22 February (Mount Cameroon race), despite assurances from the regional governments that adequate security measures had been put in place to ensure their safety and security.

Security sources observed a noticeable increase in security incidents, especially the use of IEDs, in **Mezam (NW)** and **Muyuka (SW)** divisions in February, suggesting that this was indicative of high NSAG presence and resistance in these locations. An increase in protection incidents – abduction for ransom, killings and arbitrary arrests was also reported during this period.

Civilian resistance against NSAGs continued, as patience with NSAGs increasing demands for “liberation tax” and abductions for ransom wanes. Reports have been received of civilians fighting against their would-be abductors, and communities resorting to mob violence.

In **Santa sub-division, Mezam (NW)**, community members apprehended and killed an NSAG fighter. A few days later, six individuals were shot and killed by armed men. It is assumed that the killings were retaliation for the killing of the NSAG fighter. And in **Fungom sub-division, Menchum (NW)**, a group of Fulani herdsmen were reportedly hired by a community to kill the leader of an NSAG that was threatening and extorting money from the community.

Armed conflict, criminality and acts of terrorism including an increase in the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) continued in the NWSW regions in **March**.

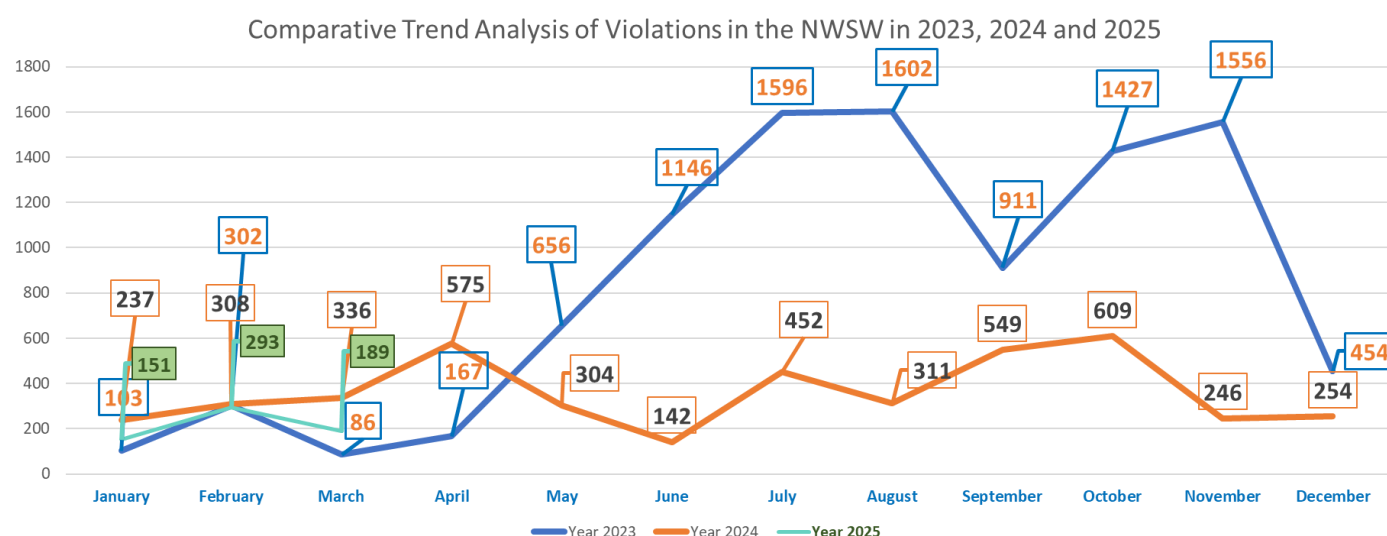
Ayaba Cho, a separatist leader currently in jail in Norway, for his role in instigating violence and other atrocities in the NWSW regions reportedly wrote to NSAG fighters encouraging them to intensify their activities by burning yellow taxis and destroying Cameroonian national ID cards in the NWSW regions. In apparent response to this, NSAG fighters in **Jakiri subdivision (NW)** intercepted civilians at illegal checkpoints and confiscated their national ID cards.

Humanitarian organizations implementing civil documentation activities have been advised to exercise caution when carrying out activities, to avoid being targeted by NSAGs who have previously accused humanitarian organizations of carrying out election registrations on behalf of the government.

While NSAGS did not declare a lockdown for International Women’s Day, civilians in the NWSW regions chose to self-protect by staying home on that day.

With the onset of the rainy season in March, clashes between farmers and herders in the NWSW regions are expected to increase as farmers begin clearing land to plant, and herders seek for fertile areas for their animals to graze.

Comparative Trend Analysis



Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

633 human rights violations were reported in the NWSW regions in Q1 2025 - a decrease of almost **50%** from **Q4 2024 (1,109 victims)**. This low figure falls within the same range recorded during this period in previous years - **881 victims in Q1 2024, 491 victims in Q1 2023**. A possible explanation for this could be late project start dates. Most humanitarian projects end in December, and partners do not receive funding to initiate new ones until mid to ending Q1, which means that a number of human rights violations go un-reported in Q1 of any given year.

In 2025 in particular, the cut in US funding in January led to the suspension of protection monitoring activities in the NWSW regions by a key protection actor, which meant that certain locations were not monitored for human rights violations. Information on population movements – displacement, pendular movement and returns, usually gotten from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), and which contribute to understanding the protection environment, is no longer available, due to the funding cuts.

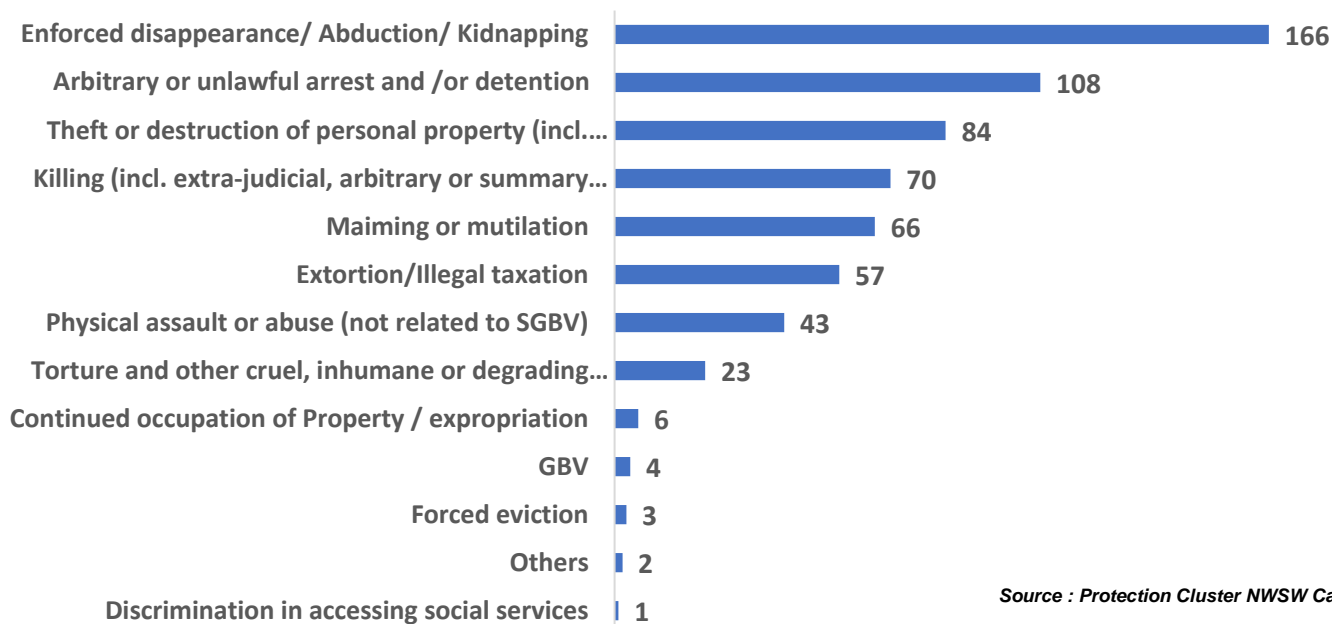
Typology of Violations

Abductions for ransom was the highest reported violation in Q1 2025, unlike previous quarters when arbitrary arrests and detentions took precedence.

A total of **166 victims (Jan: 42 victims, Feb: 61 victims, Mar: 63 victims)** were abducted for ransom by NSAGs in Q1 2025. The locations of these abductions varied from the victims' homes to illegal checkpoints. In some cases, it was evident that the victims were targeted for their perceived financial standing, and their movements had been monitored by the NSAGs before the abductions occurred.

This trend of abducting individuals for ransom rose in Q4 2024, as NSAGs employed this as a medium to increase their dwindling funds. However, it has also been appropriated by criminal groups in the NWSW regions, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between the activities of these two groups.

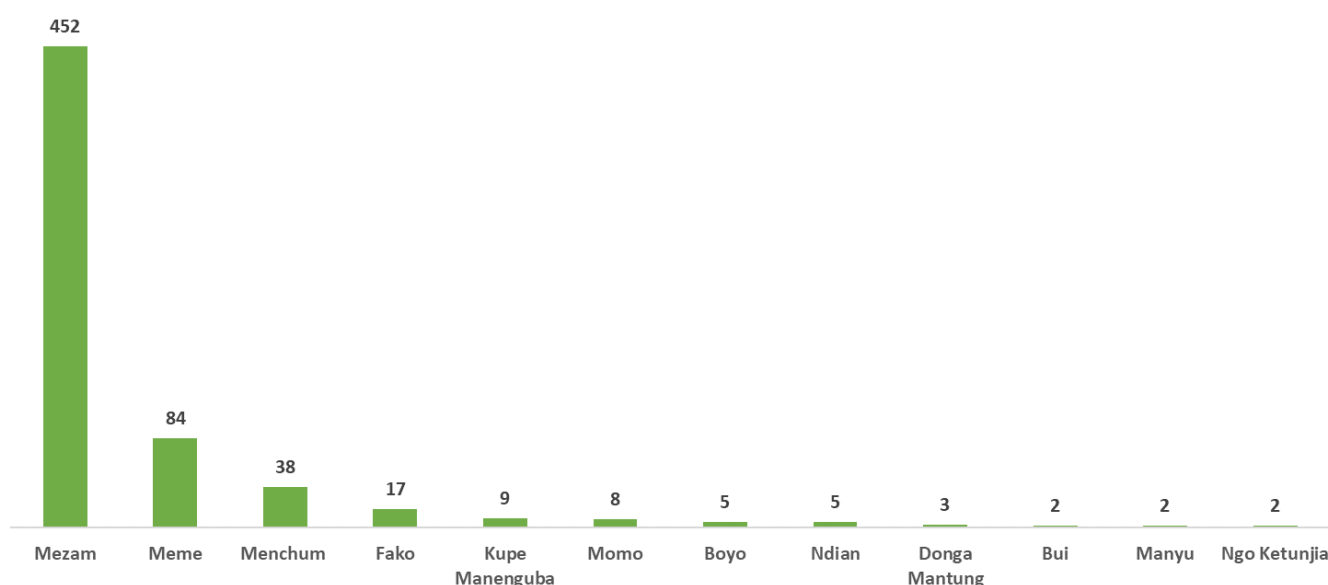
Human Rights Violations . Jan - Mar 2025



Locations of Violations

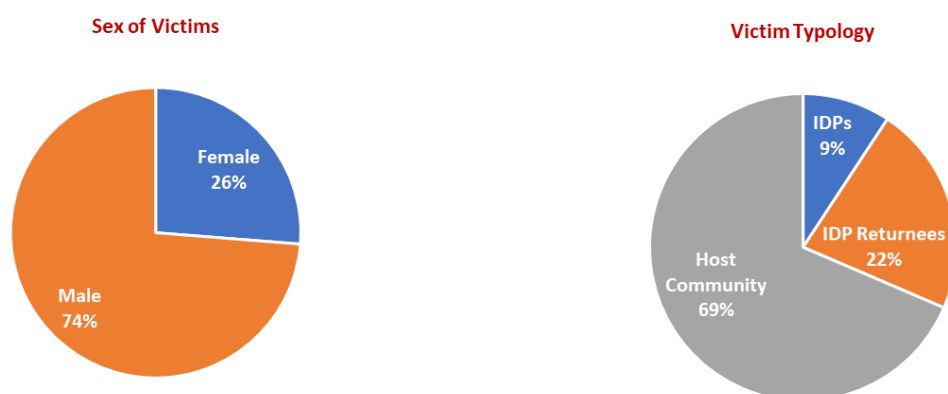
An overwhelming **68.17%** of human rights violations in Q1 2025 were reported in **Mezam, NW region**. Security sources attribute this to the influx of NSAGs to urban areas in the NWSW regions, following their displacement from their hideouts in rural areas by state security forces.

This trend is expected to continue, as military operations in rural areas continue.



Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

Victims

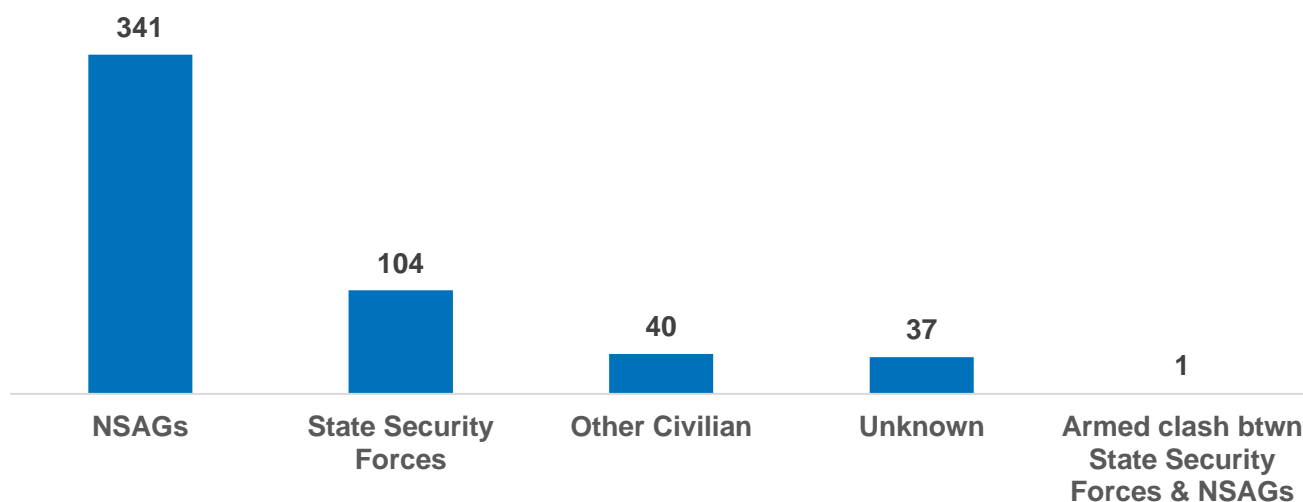


Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

Men and boys continue to be disproportionately affected by human rights violations as they are perceived to be wealthier, stronger and more resilient than women, and girls.

Protection monitoring actors have observed that members of the **host community** make up the bulk of victims of human rights violations and efforts are being made to understand the reasons for this.

Alleged Perpetrators



Source : Protection Cluster NWSW Cameroon

In Q1 2025, **65%** of reported violations were allegedly committed by NSAGs, and this can be attributed to their increased presence in heavily populated areas of the NWSW regions.

20% of reported violations were allegedly committed by SSF, and the remaining **15%** committed by civilians including community and family members, and unknown assailants.

Response

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

Concerns over the increase in abductions for ransom have been communicated to security forces through the OCHA-led CMCoord forum, and they have assured humanitarians that combatting this is a priority for them.

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. Establish effective mechanisms for holding police/gendarmerie officers accountable for human rights violations, including independent investigations, disciplinary actions, and prosecutions	2. Donors should increase funding for protection monitoring and response for victims of human rights violations including SGBV
	3. There is need to provide long-term MHPSS to children and survivors of human rights violations

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

