

# protect our own



Engaging stakeholders in Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon



## INSIDE THIS EDITION

Edition No. 0001

Understanding Civilian Protection within the context of conflict: The Anglophone Crisis

The Role Of Stakeholders in the Protection of Civilians amidst the Anglophone Crisis

Appraising the Right to Security in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon

Driving Inclusive Participation and Building Synergies to guarantee Civilian Protection and Respect for Security Rights in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon

## Content

- ◆ **Letter from the Editor**, (page 1)
- ◆ **The urgent need for strategic intervention to reinforce civilian protection and respect for the right to security in the anglophone regions: An MDDT Cameroon perspective**; (page 2)
- ◆ **An overview of Civilian Protection within the context of an armed conflict: the Anglophone Crisis**; (page 4)
- ◆ **Appraising the right to security in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon**; (page 7)
- ◆ **The Role of Stakeholders in the Protection of civilians amidst the Anglophone Crisis**; (page 10)
- ◆ **Driving Inclusive Participation and Building Synergies to guarantee Civilian protection and the Respect for Security Rights in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon** (page 13)
- ◆ **Recommendations for effective Civilian Protection**; (page 18)
- ◆ **Gallery**; (page 20)

## Contributors

**Mme. Gladys SHANG VIBAN:**

*Trainer, cultural affair specialist at the US Embassy. She is also a gender and development consultant.*

**Prof. SAMA-LANG Irene:**

*Head of Department - Public Law at the University of Buea*

**Mr. TAMBE Tiku:**

*Pioneer South West Regional Secretary of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, Board Member of ELECAM and passionate human rights defender.*

**Dr. Manka Eileen Akwo:**

*Assistant Lecturer of Communication and Conflict, University of Bamenda*



# Letter From the Editor

**Dear Reader,**

I greet you all On behalf of the Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency (MDDT) Cameroon.

The **“Protect Our Own”** newsletter constitutes an MDDT - OSAF (Open Society Initiative Africa) advocacy initiative, that was conceived as a component of the MDDT-OSAF sponsored project, **“Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon”**. It seeks to promote, inform, and educate on civilian protection and the right to security, as well as communicate best practices within the context of the current crisis.

As with other MDDT publications, it hopes to continue motivating government agencies, inter-governmental organizations, diplomatic missions, local and international NGOs and CSOs, etc. towards amplifying the call for a judicious end to the crisis.

As such, it focuses on the **“Anglophone Crisis”** and targets all efforts by stakeholders who yearn for an end to the conflict and a return of peace to the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, both of which have, for over six years, been engulfed in armed hostilities principally between the state defense and security forces and separatist factions, at the detriment of millions of civilian lives.

Being the first edition, our primary focus is to introduce the fundamental concepts of Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in conflict

situations, particularly against the backdrop of the Anglophone Crisis.

Through project activities and insights from participants and contributors, we hope to demonstrate the relevance and necessity of these concepts as major accountability considerations during armed conflicts, particularly in the quest for and preservation of peace.

Therefore, through this newsletter, we are pleased to continue sharing with you, our activities and perceptions in the search for a peaceful resolution of the Anglophone crisis. MDDT Cameroon, together with her partner, OSAF, hereby invites you to appreciate and promote **“Protect Our Own”** as another contribution towards our collective efforts towards fostering peace and development. On that note, I offer our gratitude to all the selfless personalities who continue to share in MDDT's vision and activities, and who have contributed richly to the material contained herein.

We remain grateful for your time and other considerations that continue to inspire and motivate us.

Sincerely,

*Shashan.mbinglo*

**Walters Shashan B. Mbinglo**  
(Editor)



# THE URGENT NEED FOR STRATEGIC INTERVENTION TO REINFORCE CIVILIAN PROTECTION AND RESPECT FOR THE RIGHT TO SECURITY IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS: An MDDT Cameroon Perspective

The visibility of early warning signals to conflict and insecurity in the Central African Region cannot be over emphasized. Over the last decade, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad have registered political instability, insecurity and conflict. Cameroon is not an exception with the last decade characterized by political upheavals and various regional crisis and terrorist attacks.

For over five (05) years the civilian population of the North West and South West regions of the Republic of Cameroon have registered over 6,000 deaths, 800,000 internally displaced persons, over 14 villages burnt, over 500,000 school dropouts, indiscriminate killing of civilians and students, coupled with consistent reports on the appalling state of human rights in Cameroon. The Anglophone Crisis plaguing the aforementioned regions has closed up spaces for advocacy, civic participation and increased human insecurity, with a disregard for security rights and to a larger extent civilian protection.

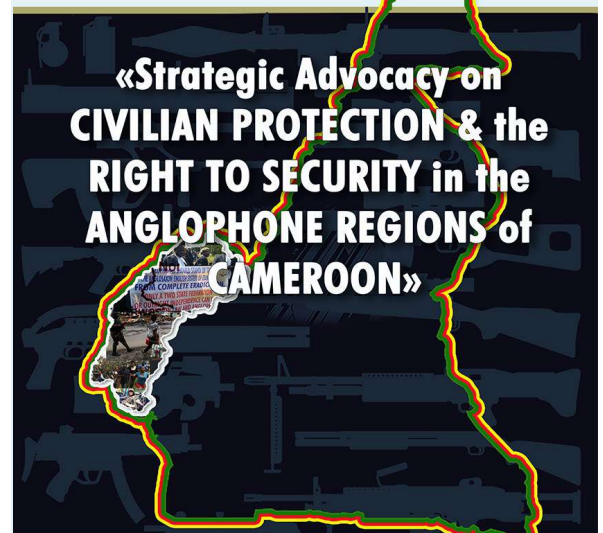
Some of the major causes of the above have been limited safe spaces for advocacy, lack of civilian protection, limited promotion of security rights, lack of effective government policies to guarantee security rights and civilian protection in conflict areas, excessive use of military force, the break down of the rule of law, outright resistance and proliferation of armed group.

MDDT Cameroon, in being part of the solution drive, is utilizing first time Open Society for Africa (OSAF) funding to execute a project on fostering Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The main project objective being, **“To create safe spaces for advocacy on civilian protection and to reduce abuse on the right to security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon”**.



**Barrister Clifford Niba AKONTEH**  
MDDT Executive Director

 **MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPARENCY (MDDT) CAMEROON**  
and  
**OPEN SOCIETY AFRICA**  
Partnership project:



 **Civilian Protection & the Right to Security**





In a bid to achieve this, MDDT Cameroon has identified 10 project hotspot communities, and trained 20 focal points and gatekeepers in these hotspots. Through regional symposiums and workshops, MDDT has trained and engaged at least 100 CSOs, HRDs, Community Leaders on Strategic Advocacy and Civilian Protection in times of Conflict. It is further developing tool kits for teens.

Again, the MDDT Project team is sensitizing, mobilizing and amplifying community actions in the promotion of security rights and civilian protection with the aim of creating self-sustaining cultural civic engagement, synergies between youth groups, women groups, HRDs and local CSOs in 10 hotspots. MDDT is currently organizing cultural sensitization campaigns on the right to Security and civilian protection in 10 hotspots, consolidating efforts towards organizing parent, teachers, student rallies in schools to educate students, teachers and parents on security measures. The organization is also running a media and digital sensitization campaign on the right to security and civilian protection that targets Cameroonians in the Diaspora especially.

This project is directed towards improving law enforcement policies on civilian protection and the respect of civilian protection as one of its key solutions. Within this context, MDDT will organize two (02) round tables with law enforcement officers, members of parliament and government agencies on civilian protection and the right to security, alongside developing a paper on policy recommendations.

MDDT believes that is time to be part of the solution and not the problem, to build strong synergies and strengthen existing institutions to abide by the rule of law and assure civilians of their protection and security across the national territory especially in times of conflict.



**Victorine NFOR**  
MDDT Staff, NWR



**Christelle**  
MDDT Staff, SWR



**TCHAKOUNTE Y. Ines**  
MDDT Staff



*MDDT Staff and focal point heads during capacity building workshop*



# AN OVERVIEW OF CIVILIAN PROTECTION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AN ARMED CONFLICT: THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

## Who is a Civilian?

A civilian could be loosely defined as any body who is not in the armed force, police, fire fighting brigade whose primary activity is non-military. In other words, anybody who is not actively taking part in military hostilities is a civilian and can be called non-combatants.

According to Article 50 of the **Additional Protocol (I)** to the **Geneva Conventions, 1977**, a civilian is any person who does not belong to one of the categories of persons referred to in Article (1)-(3) and (6) of the **3rd Geneva Convention**. Civilians are defined in Article 4 of the Geneva Convention on Civilian Protection as those persons who at a given moment and in any manner, whatsoever, find themselves in the hands of a party to a conflict. Thus, the term, "Civilian", does not only include those who do not carry arms in armed conflict but equally includes civilian property and extends to those trying to help

them, in particular, medical units and humanitarian or relief bodies providing essentials such as food, clothing and medical supplies. The parties engaged in war are supposed to recognize the vital role that such organizations play and allow them access to reach people in need.

**Cameroon Instructor's Manual** defines a civilian as, "persons who do not belong to the Armed forces and do not participate in 'levee en masse'". It is often times difficult to give an all-embracing meaning of the term civilian given the diverse nature of conflicts both internal and international. In this regard, a civilian is any person who is neither in the armed service or the police force or is not a member to any fighting group and who does not take part in hostilities.

Mindful of the asymmetric and unconventional nature of the crisis in the North West, South West and Northern Regions of Cameroon, these definition leaves out a category of persons,

<sup>1</sup>Cameroon, *Droit de conflits armes et droit International humanitaires, manuel de L'instructeur en vigueur dans les forces de Défense*, Ministère de la Défense, Présidence de la République, Etat-Major des Armées, 2006, p. 92 SS 352.11 and p.134, w412.11

Hugo Slim, *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness and Morality in Law*, Hurst, London, 2008. See also Adams Robert, "lives and Statistics: Are 90% of the War Victims Civilians?" *Survival*, London, Vol. 52, No.3. June-July 2010, pp 115-35



Panelists at the South West Regional Symposium on "Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon" (May 2023)



though not actively on the 'battlefield', for example spies, arms traffickers/porters, kidnappers, executioners, cooks, care-givers like bush wives who play strategic roles by giving vital support to the cause. A spy gives strategic information which is impactful as to the outcome of the struggle even though they are not 'combatants' so to speak. They are of course members of non-state armed groups. *Should such be seen therefore as civilians mindful of Additional Protocol I, Articles 45.1, 51.3 and Additional Protocol II Articles 13.3?* In case of doubt as to the status of an individual, such must be considered as a civilian.

While International Humanitarian Law (IHL) protects all civilians without discrimination, certain groups are singled out as needing more protection. These include women and children, the aged and the sick who are highly vulnerable during armed conflict, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees. It should be noted

that IHL prohibits forced displacements by intimidation, violence or starvation.

### What should civilians be protected from?

A person so defined as a civilian should be protected even during political tension or armed conflict, from any violations of, especially, first and second generation human rights. Considering the anglophone Crisis, civilians should be protected particularly against the following: Arbitrary arrest; (even if lawfully arrested, they must be told the reason (s) for their arrest and be cautioned according to the prescriptions of the law). They must be protected against torture, brutality and unlawful detention. They must be protected against unfair or summary trials, against hostage-taking/kidnapping, humiliation and degrading treatment of any sort. They must be protected against forced displacements or movements away from their homes, disappearances,



Top and Bottom: Panelists addressing participants at the North West and South West Regional Symposiums respectively, on the theme: "Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon".





assault, rape, enslavement and murders. They must also be protected against mutilation, scientific experiments, removal of tissue or body organs for rituals or medical transplants.

**Who is responsible for civilian protection?**

Although the state is the duty bearer under international law and human rights Law, one

must be mindful of the fact that the state cannot afford to assign a security officer for each of its citizens. However, the state and state agents must at all times ensure that these rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. Civil societies act as ombudsmen to ensure strict respect of these rights.



Below: Panelists enlightening participants on civilian protection at the North West and South West Regional Symposiums on, "Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon".



**Prof. SAMA-LANG Irene**  
Panelist, S.W. Regional Symposium (May 2023)



**Barrister Kumfa Elvis**  
Panelist, N.W. Regional Symposium (June 2023)



**Justice Kilo Emmanuel**  
Panelist, SW Regional Symposium (May 2023)



**Dr. FOMBO Gregory Fah**  
Panelist, NW Regional Symposium (May 2023)



## APPRAISING THE RIGHT TO SECURITY IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON

The right to security refers to the fundamental human right to live free from violence, aggression, or threats to one's life or safety. It encompasses both physical and psychological security and is enshrined in international human rights law. It is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The state of security rights in Cameroon has been a major concern for decades as it touches on delicate but fundamental human rights. The right to security refers to the fundamental human right to live free from violence, aggression, or threats to one's life or safety. It encompasses both physical and psychological security and applies at all times and in all circumstances. The right to is enshrined in international human rights law as it is concretely recognized in and backed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Within the context of the Anglophone crisis, the right to security has been a major concern especially as reports on human rights violations abound and consistently portray a degrading picture of the state of human rights, particularly in the Anglophone regions over the last 6 years. Indiscriminate killings, rape, arbitrary arrests, abductions, torture, unwarranted prosecutions, etc. have been rife since the onset of the crisis, sparking global criticisms of the state and the warring factions as well as amplifying the call for civilian protection and greater guarantees of the right to security.

From the foregoing, it is undoubtedly clear that the right to security and civilian protection are related but distinct concepts.

Summarily, the right to security is an inherent human right applicable to all human beings regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, nationality, religion or language, socio-political affiliation etc. and incorporates the right to liberty, freedom from torture and slavery, freedom of opinion and expression. Civilian protection, on the other hand, refers to the measures taken to protect civilians, particularly in situations of armed conflict or other forms of violence. It includes the protection of civilians from direct harm, as well as ensuring that their basic needs such as food, water, and shelter are met. Civilian protection is often the responsibility of governments, international organizations, and peacekeeping forces.

While the right to security is a fundamental human right that applies in all circumstances and at all times, civilian protection is a specific responsibility that arises in situations of conflict or violence. Governments and other actors have a duty to protect civilians, including taking all feasible measures to ensure their safety and well-being. However, both concepts are important for ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals and communities especially in a situation of armed conflict as currently prevails in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon.



**Magistrate EKANE  
Kenneth**  
*Panelist, SW Regional  
Symposium (May 2023)*



**Mr. ASAAH-NGU Walters,**  
*Panelist, NW Regional  
Symposium (June 2023)*



**Mr. TAMBE Tiku,**  
*Panelist, SW Regional  
Symposium (May 2023)*



**Barrister ENOW Benjamin,**  
*Panelist, SW Regional  
Symposium (May 2023)*

## The most common examples of security rights:

- 1. The right to life:** This is the most fundamental security right and refers to the right to live free from the fear of being killed or having one's life threatened.
- 2. The right to bodily integrity, freedom from fear or harm:** This right protects individuals from physical and psychological harm, including torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
- 3. The right to freedom from violence:** This right protects individuals from violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and other forms of physical or emotional abuse.
- 4. The right to freedom of movement:** This right ensures that individuals are free to move around without fear of being unlawfully detained or restricted in their movements.
- 5. The right to privacy:** This right protects persons from unwarranted invasions of their privacy, including surveillance, interception of communications, and searches without a warrant.
- 6. The right to access to justice:** This right ensures that individuals have access to legal remedies if their security rights are violated.
- 7. The right to a fair trial:** This right ensures that individuals are granted a fair and impartial trial if they are accused of a crime.
- 8. The right to freedom of speech:** This right protects individuals from censorship and ensures that they are free to express their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation.
- 9. The right to asylum:** This right protects individuals who are fleeing persecution or danger in their home country and seek refuge in another country.
- 10. The right to freedom of religion:** This right protects individuals' beliefs and ensures that they are free to practice their religion without fear of persecution or discrimination.
- 11. Etc.**









## THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AMIDST THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

Generally, armed conflicts involve an array of stakeholders, each of which play a vital role. Typically, the Anglophone crisis, like most armed conflicts, involves a range of stakeholders that includes state actors, non-state armed groups, civilians, humanitarian organizations, human rights defenders and civil society organizations, peacekeepers, regional and international organizations.

Regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union usually play a role in resolving armed conflicts in their respective regions while international organizations, such as the United Nations or are involved in efforts to resolve armed conflicts and protect civilians. On their part,

Peacekeepers such as the forces deployed by the United Nations, are often responsible for protecting civilians and maintaining peace and security in conflict zones.

Civilians are undoubtedly some of the most vulnerable stakeholders in armed conflicts. They may be directly targeted by armed actors, or they may be caught in the crossfire as has been the clear case with the Anglophone crisis.

As stakeholders, humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), provide assistance and protection to civilians affected by armed conflicts.

From the foregoing, certain stakeholders play particular roles such as ensuring civilian protection against the hostilities of conflict, providing assistance and garnering efforts to resolve conflicts. However, as regards protecting civilians' right to security within the context of the current crisis, certain key stakeholders stand out as result of their functions, activities, proximity and influence. These include the State of Cameroon, human rights defenders and civil society organizations, and traditional and religious authorities.

### Cameroon as a State Actor and the role of law enforcement in the protection of civilians

Governments and their security/armed forces are major stakeholders in armed conflicts. States may be involved in conflicts as parties to the conflict or as mediators trying to resolve the conflict. As regards the Anglophone Crisis, the state of Cameroon is a party.





Emerging international norms puts the duty on states to protect its citizens but where states fail, the responsibility falls back on the international community. The right to security as per Article 9 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is the right to liberty and security of a person. It exempts for example, everyone from arbitrary arrest or detention except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law. These rights include the right to be informed of the reason for arrest and any charges, the right to be brought promptly before a court and tried, the right to challenge the lawlessness of detention, amongst others.

As afore-indicated, there are institutional and legal frameworks put in place in Cameroon for the protection of civilians such as the Preamble and section 41 of the Constitution of Cameroon, Law no 90/054 of 14th December 1990 on the maintenance of law and order, Law No.90/053 of 1990 on Freedom of Association amongst others. These laws as well as other domestic laws and legal frameworks such as the Instructor's Manual, (*Droit des conflits armés et droit international humanitaire: manuel de l'instructeur en vigueur dans les forces de défense*) are put in place as an extension of the provisions of Article 9 of the ICCPR for applicability in Cameroon and enforcement mechanisms for the human rights.

Despite this regulatory framework on civilian protection, the challenge many law enforcement officers face in ensuring civilian protection is the lack of collaboration from the civilian population. They often hide the offenders, making it difficult for the officers to differentiate between a civilian and an armed fighter. Another challenge is the nature of the terrain which they are not very versed with, which makes them prey to the armed fighters and it becomes difficult to give civilians the protection most needed.

### **The role of human rights defenders (lawyers, human rights groups, civil society activists and journalists) in the promotion of security rights**

Apart from law enforcement officers, Human rights defenders and civil society organizations, such as human rights groups, may advocate for the protection of civilians and work to hold armed actors accountable for human rights violations.

From a legal perspective, the key tool in this subject matter is for every civilian to know the rights they possess as civilians in the country as enshrined in the laws in force and the remedies for breach of such rights. These laws are categorized into Domestic and International laws.



Some of the domestic laws include: the constitution, the Criminal procedure code, the Penal Code, the Liberty laws of 1990 afore mentioned, amongst others. International laws include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the African Charter of human and people's rights amongst others. Where these rights are infringed, civilians can resort to bringing an action before the competent court as no one is above the law. Unfortunately, many civilians do not access these protective measures for fear of cost involved which is not the case because criminal prosecution in Cameroon is free and accessible to everyone.

Human rights defenders such as human rights groups, may advocate for the protection of civilians and work to hold armed actors accountable for human rights violations.

The Media on its part can be a powerful weapon in civilian protection when used as a medium to create awareness after proper investigation of key facts and not to promote conflict between state and non-state actors. As a result, language plays a key role promoting peace and the right to security as there are some languages used which are more violent than weapons. If journalists and other human rights defenders must protect the rights of

civilians, then language must be checked and used properly.

### **The role of traditional and community leaders in enhancing civilian protection and promoting security rights**

In an all-inclusive approach to civilian protection, the role of traditional, community and religious leaders cannot be neglected. The church and mosques being the most populated organization plays a vital role if religious leaders shift the paradigm from merely seeing themselves as spiritual leaders but as rights activists. Most civilians trust their pastors and Imams more than any law enforcement officer. Thus it is very vital for religious authorities to be trained through capacity building workshops and other formal training on protection of civilians.

In harnessing the role of traditional and community leaders in providing safety for civilians in local communities, community leaders have engaged in advocacy campaigns such as planting in members of the community the sense of civic responsibilities so they can take it to their various spheres of influence, organizing peace projects such as setting up vigilante groups in various communities to serve as spies and report any acts of violation in the community as well as truth commissions in every quarter that encourages accountability to one another.



*Panelists at the NW (above) and SW (below) Regional Symposiums*





## Driving Inclusive Participation and Building Synergies to guarantee Civilian protection and the Respect for Security Rights in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon

To inspire and ensure inclusive participation towards guaranteeing civilian protection and respect for security rights in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon requires a thorough appraisal of the situation on the ground, the roles and commitment of key actors amongst other factors.

For the past six years, the ongoing Anglophone crisis has created a persistent atmosphere of insecurity and widespread fear in the cities, suburbs, and rural communities of the two English-speaking regions due to a systemic cycle of hostilities between state security and defense forces on the one hand and armed separatist fighters on the other.

Existing statistics show that over 6,000 civilians have lost their lives, over 60,000 are refugees in Nigeria, and many more are internally displaced across the national territory, exposed to hunger, sexual and physical abuse, trauma, and other forms of torment. During this period, many children have been unable to access education because it is not safe for them to go to school in certain places. Thousands of schools remain closed, especially in rural areas, as existing threats to life prevent parents from taking the risk of enrolling their kids in such localities. Kidnappings, indiscriminate and tar-

geted killings, arbitrary arrests, summary trials, disappearances, and hostage taking have become the order of the day. Many civilians who have suffered kidnapping for ransom have been left with indelible marks of trauma from their ordeals. The same goes for those who have been used as human shields or who have seen their homes razed to ashes before their very eyes, sometimes losing the lives of family members in the torment.

These heinous crimes are not only an egregious breach of international law, but also a betrayal of humankind itself. The culture of impunity for such crimes must be put to an end. Socio-cultural vices such as hate speech, name calling, the blame game and the deliberate resistance to inclusiveness, stereotyping, gender insensitivity and male entitlement, etc. which are all rife in our society today, are being utilized to further drive the divide among communities even deeper. These social ills are steadily being exacerbated as the conflict ensues. The uncontrolled sporadic attacks witnessed recently and frequently indicate that the Anglophone Crisis has indeed, developed so many unforeseen factions and has literally mushroomed into an octopus whereby no one can clearly see the head from the tail anymore. The development of this situation can be



**Mme. Gladys Viban**  
Keynote Speaker  
Panelist, SW Regional  
Symposium (May 2023)



**Dr. Manka Eileen Akwo**  
Keynote Speaker-Panelist,  
NW Regional Symposium  
(May 2023)



**Dr. Akum Hedwig**  
Keynote Speaker-Panelist,  
SW Regional Symposium  
(May 2023)



**Mme. Ramatu ABDU**  
Moderator-Panelist,  
N.W. Regional  
Symposium (June 2023)



**Dr. Titanji Beatrice**  
Moderator-Panelist,  
S.W. Regional  
Symposium (May 2023)

attributed to increased ethnic and religious tensions, (Sangmelima most recently) the collapse of state structures, the widespread availability of weapons, the escalating rise of acts of terror and the proliferation of so-called asymmetric armed conflicts.

As civilians continue to bear the hideous burden of the crisis, protection from the fighting and excesses of both state forces and separatist groups remains a major concern, let alone ensuring the right of civilians to security.

Despite criticisms and outcries from local, national, regional, and international voices, very little is being done to guarantee civilian protection and enforce their right to security on the ground in the two affected regions. It is not a question of who is to blame but a matter of engaging the relevant stakeholders towards assuming their respective responsibilities, executing their duties, and performing their roles accordingly. After all, parties in armed conflict always officially justify their engagement in fighting as a necessity to secure and protect their population, who are, of course, civilians, as well as property and territory. Among all these, civilians are, as a matter of common sense and our shared humanity, the most important component to protect.

In this light, the role of the state cannot be undermined, a role that is rooted in the Responsibility to Protect. The term **“Responsibility to Protect”** is defined as an emerging international norm, that sets forth the rule that states have the primary responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, but that when the state fails to protect its populations, the responsibility falls to the international community (International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect).

This concept, which has been adopted at the highest decision-making levels of the United Nations, showcases a global consensus around the need to protect civilians against war crimes. In some conflicts, as in the Anglophone crisis, civilians have been specifically targeted and subjected to terrible atrocities, thereby ignoring the very basis of the Geneva Conventions: Respect for the human person. It is for this reason that the state is being called upon repeatedly, not as a party to the conflict but as the guarantor of national security, to ensure respect for the principles of IHL, especially the protection of civilians. It suffices to note that one of the departure points of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) strategy is the call of this universal principle for early warning mechanisms and the prevention of harm rather than intervention.

*Below: Panelists and some participants at the N.W. Regional Symposium on “Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon” pose for a group photo*





Therefore, if peace is genuinely being sought and efforts to resolve the ongoing conflict must bear positive fruit, then guaranteeing civilian protection and respect for security rights in the Anglo-phone regions of Cameroon is an inevitable element that must be prioritized. To attain the desired outcomes, it shall entail engaging and maximizing the efforts of all the relevant stakeholders through inclusive participation and synergies. Thus, from government agencies and law enforcement to human rights defenders and community leaders, the commitment to ensure civilian protection and the right to security demands not just urgent and consistent actions but collaboration as well.

As such, strategic advocacy remains one of the best keys to driving inclusive participation and building synergies. As a matter of fact, advocacy lies at the heart of every effort towards guaranteeing civilian protection and safeguarding the right of civilians to security, especially during periods of conflict.

Within the context of the ongoing crisis, such advocacy entails principally, identifying and connecting stakeholders together under banners that guarantee effective education and sensitization on the concept of civilian protection, defining the roles of stakeholders and effective implementation of policies and strategies to promote civilian protection, safeguard the right to security, and foster the rule of law in the Anglophone regions.

*Below: Panelists and some participants at the S.W. Regional Symposium on “Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon” pose for a group photo*



*MDDT Executive Director posing with State representatives at the SW Regional Symposium*

Strategic advocacy must therefore ensure that stakeholders get a clear-cut and practical understanding of the concepts of civilian protection and the right to security. This can be achieved through townhalls, training workshops, sensitization campaigns that must ensure, for example, that stakeholders are educated on who civilians constitute, why they should be protected, who is responsible for their protection, and how they should be



protected; their various roles as stakeholders, and how such roles are interconnected. Stakeholders, such as law enforcement or protection officers, human rights defenders, community and religious leaders, must be educated on the various mechanisms put in place for civilian protection. This can include training on human rights, conflict resolution, and protection monitoring, among other topics. Such capacity building and training programs can help stakeholders develop the skills and knowledge needed to effectively promote civilian protection.

Secondly, driving inclusive participation and building synergies absolutely implies the establishment and promotion of initiatives for collaboration between stakeholders. Collaboration initiatives create opportunities for dialogue as stakeholders would get to meet and discuss their concerns, ideas, and recommendations for promoting civilian protection.

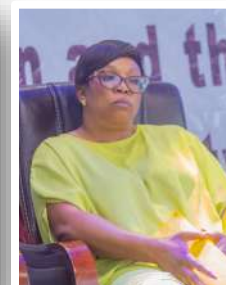
Local communities, for example, are often the first to be affected by conflict and can play a vital role in promoting civilian protection. In this light, more impetus needs to be given towards developing a more inclusive approach to ensuring civilian protection and rights by enabling all parties involved to contribute towards building stable and peaceful communities. Women and youth, and indigenous populations (such as the Bakas, Bororos, etc) for example, generally remain absent from policy dialogues on critical issues regarding peace and security, as well as other issues that have fundamental dimensions and implications for sustainable stability. These segments of the population usually lack political strength and a political framework that could give teeth to their numerical strength. Furthermore, their peace building

activities are usually confined to workshops/seminars and the informal sector, which are very often at the periphery of official peace and security negotiations.

Collaboration can, therefore, be instrumental in offering room to involve not just CSOs and other human rights defenders, but community leaders, including traditional and religious leaders, in the design and implementation of protection initiatives. This will help ensure that local perspectives and needs are taken into account. Thus, by bringing together various stakeholders such as law enforcement, human rights defenders, community and religious leaders, a comprehensive approach can be developed to enhance the effectiveness of civilian protection measures during times of conflict.

Of great importance is the fact that, by encouraging stakeholders to listen to each other, exchange information, share best practices, resources, expertise, find common ground or coordinate efforts to address the complex challenges of civilian protection and developing policy recommendations, collaboration serves as the much needed foundation for building trust and facilitating open dialogue among stakeholders. By promoting collaboration and among the various stakeholders, we can ensure that civilian protection is a shared responsibility, and that all stakeholders are working together to safeguard the rights of civilians at all times of crisis. For effective and sustainable collaboration, there is the need to establish communication and information sharing platforms. Effective communication and information sharing are critical for promoting collaboration. Develop mechanisms for sharing information on protection risks and incidents, and ensure that all stakeholders have access to this information in a timely and transparent

*Moderators-Panelists and state representatives at the Regional Symposiums*





## Dialogue and Effective Advocacy

While it has been understood that inclusive participation and building synergies are inevitable for effective advocacy to address the problem of civilian protection, it is worth understanding the role and relevance of dialogue as a backbone to all strategic advocacy efforts, present and future, on civilian protection.

In Cameroon, effective dialogue and interaction between some key stakeholders, particularly, humanitarian and the state or its military actors, has often been hampered by concerns on the part of humanitarian actors about the impact that closer association with the state or its military may have on their ability to operate in an independent, neutral, and impartial manner, and be perceived as doing so. This is the real problem which needs to be addressed. As long as the cat and dog scenario persists, protection will still remain elusive even with the best strategies conceived. More so, the state needs to play a

focal role by reviewing certain policies and administrative protocols that minimize opportunities for dialogue. The state must also be quick to facilitate and buffer initiatives that strive to promote dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders.

In the same light, stakeholders such as traditional rulers, religious and opinion leaders, and most importantly Civil Society Organizations and human rights defenders, must safely leverage their roles, activities and influence on indigenous populations, towards envisaging and exploring new avenues for reinstating this confidence, so that all the parties concerned should be seen as critical agents for creating stability in the lives of communities and families; promoting reconciliation and peace in their communities, even under very difficult and traumatic situations. Without this, any meaningful or sustainable efforts towards protection, peace and security would be dead on arrival.

*Below: Participants engaging with panelists during the Regional Symposia in the North West and South West regions on “Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon”*



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE CIVILIAN PROTECTION

The Protection of the civilian population remains vital in conflict situations. It is quite clear now, that wherever violent conflict exists, stakeholders must strengthen the protection of civilians, especially when civilians become themselves, the targets of the warring sides. Unfortunately, key stakeholders, particularly state and non-state actors, have either little or no knowledge of the principles enforcing the rights of civilians to protection or simply lack the will to enforce them. As a result, much work remains to be done at all levels to ensure that the security rights of civilians are understood and safeguarded. Apart from driving inclusive participation and building synergies to guarantee Civilian Protection and the respect for Security Rights in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon, there is also the primary need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the situation on the ground by stakeholders, towards proposing relevant recommendations to limit the adverse effects of the conflict on the civilian population.

## Relevant Considerations

As regards the recommendations for effective civilian protection as outlined below, the focus should not be limited merely to enacting policies or implementing strategies. Stakeholders must, as a necessary first step, adopt the right mindset. They must invest in an attitude that recognizes and condemns wrong acts, and not the person.

Secondly, the core objective in the mindset of every stakeholder must be to protect civilians and their communities towards the restoration of peace and harmony. Only under such a mindset can development thrive. Hence, it is not only vital to understand the concept of civilian protection, the legal mechanisms and the role of stakeholders, but is also important to proactively engage in peacebuilding initiatives. As such, one of the major goals motivating the drive for security and civilian protection must be to silence the guns of war as much as possible. The wanton killing of young men, the abuse and maiming of women, girls and children must stop. In addition, stakeholders must all engage in the

effective management of the growing refugee populations in the border regions, as well as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) stemming from the North West and South West imbroglio, the majority of who are women and children. This is fundamental to guaranteeing community cohesion and communal living.



## Recommendations

From the foregoing, one can better appraise some of the diverse recommendations advanced towards the protection and enforcement of security rights, and directed towards different classes of stakeholders to wit:

### A. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE.

- ◆ The state should simulate all the laws on civilian protection into a working document to educate the civilian population and all the law enforcement officers.
- ◆ The state should ensure speedy prosecution of perpetrators of acts of violence, particularly amongst law enforcement officers, so that civilians see that justice is being done and have confidence in the state administrative and judicial processes.
- ◆ More funds should be allocated to CSOs through the Regional Councils so that they can do more work especially at the grassroots level for greater impact in protecting civilians and keeping communities safe.
- ◆ The state should moderate the laws on the registration of CSOs so that more grassroots CSOs can be involved in the advocacy strategies on civilian protection, as opposed to operating clandestinely. However, monitoring



mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the activities of such protection-focused CSOs meet the required legal standards. The state should equally encourage collective efforts and facilitate the creation of synergies to effectively harness resources and harmonize efforts towards more assured outcomes.

## B. HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (HRDs).

In times of conflict, as with the current Anglophone Crisis, advocacy strategies on civilian protection should be all-inclusive.

All human rights defenders should ensure that they carry the message of civilian protection and respect for the right to security to their various spheres of influence. More specifically,

- CSOs should engage in more advocacy strategies that partner grassroots organizations and indigenes to take the message of civilian protection to the suburbs and rural communities, with appropriate follow-up measures put in place. CSOs and HRDs must consistently engage in sensitization and communication of the need for State and Non-state actors to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law during conflicts.
- CSOs are encouraged to reach out to the various communication networks to solicit support under their corporate social responsibility mandates, for example, to obtain toll free numbers, that could be used to inform on Civilian protection, to circulate related information or offer an alternative to the one given by the state to the public for reporting by those whose rights are violated.
- There should be also be wider publicity of toll free numbers, may be in church and school as opposed to only the police station and the

National Human Rights Commission.

- Journalists, as a category of HRDs, should ensure proper use of language in reporting news, in order to propagate advocacy and engage in proper research to ensure the veracity of information sent out. Also, media personnel and specialists should engage in creative media activities, by producing content such as short videos on social media that educate the public on civilian protection and the right to security.
- At individual levels, educators of every sort, should take on personal counselling sessions with youths, especially those who exhibit a certain kind of behavior in society, to ensure that their attitudes are not as a result of abuse of their rights. Educational institutions should equally partner with CSOs to organize workshops that expose the students to the concepts of civilian protection and remedies available for breach.

## C. COMMUNITY LEADERS, TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

- ◆ More religious authorities should be involved in advocacy for civilian protection and should organize activities in collaboration with CSOs to educate their members on civilian protection. Religious leaders should also enroll in training programs to become civil rights activists.
- ◆ Community and traditional leaders should collaborate with grassroots CSOs to engage key informants on the ground, towards fostering activities that preach peace.

By virtue of their access to the grassroots, human rights defenders and community leaders can create greater impact if they can effectively function together. Considering the numerous socio-cultural vices that touch on the daily lives of Cameroonians, some of which are being exploited to aggravate the Anglophone crisis, and have greatly hampered peace-building efforts. These vices which include hate speech, ethnophobia, tribalism, nepotism etc, are further exacerbated during armed conflict and drive the divide among communities even



deeper thereby, playing an adverse role to guaranteeing civilian protection. These would include hate speech, ethnic divides, name calling, the blame game and the deliberate resistance to inclusiveness; as well as building tolerance and mutual understanding among all the parties concerned. Community leaders, Religious and traditional Rulers, as well as civil society need to work together in synergy here, to reinstate harmony and social cohesion.



#### D. NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

- There should be more economic empowerment-driven initiatives to accommodate non-state actors who decide to drop their arms, especially those who joined the conflict out of socio-economic frustrations. The state must lead in this endeavor to ensure that they are provided with sustainable means of livelihood such as engaging them in farming or other gainful economic activities so that they can be motivated to drop their arms. Empowerment programs aimed at enabling them acquire skills or pursue education should be effectively conceived and implemented.
- Non-state armed groups must abide by the rules of engagement as prescribed by international humanitarian law, which protect civilians during conflicts. This includes refraining from attacking civilians, using indiscriminate weapons, and using human shields. As such, non-state armed groups must endeavor to establish clear rules of engagement for their fighters to ensure that civilians are not targeted or harmed. This can include identifying and avoiding civilian areas, as well as ensuring that fighters do not engage in looting or other criminal activities that could harm civilians.

Through their activities, CSOs and HRDs for example, can ensure that non-state armed groups are constantly reminded of these rules and the need to establish mechanisms for accountability for their actions.

- Like other stakeholders, non-state armed groups should engage with local communities to understand their concerns and to build trust. This can include granting access to CSOs to offer assistance to civilians affected by the conflict, such as medical care or food aid, as well as establishing channels for communication and feedback.
- Non-state armed groups should cooperate with humanitarian organizations to ensure that aid can reach civilians in need. This can include facilitating safe access for aid workers, protecting humanitarian convoys, and refraining from interfering with aid distribution.
- Non-state armed groups should monitor their own actions and those of other parties in the conflict to ensure that civilians are not harmed. They should also report violations of international humanitarian law and other abuses to the relevant authorities and advocate for accountability and justice for victims.

By following these recommendations, non-state armed groups can help foster civilian protection during conflicts and contribute to a more sustainable and peaceful resolution of the conflict.







Gallery: The Regional Symposiums on "Strategic Advocacy on Civilian Protection and the Right to Security in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon" in pic-





**FREEDOM FROM INDIGNITY**

**NO TO PROPERTY DESTRUCTION**

**NO TO BRUTALITY AND TORTURE**

**NO TO UNFAIR PROSECUTIONS**

**NO TO ARBITRARY ARRESTS**

**FREEDOM FROM FEAR**





**OPEN  
SOCIETY  
AFRICA**



**PROTECT OUR OWN**

**CONTACT US:**

MDDT Cameroon, Top Floor - Express Exchange Building, Molyko,  
P.O Box 540 Buea, South West Region, Cameroon  
Tel: +237 651 430 669,  
[info@mddtcameroon.org](mailto:info@mddtcameroon.org), [www.mddtcameroon.org](http://www.mddtcameroon.org)