

# Protect Our Own



**THE MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT, AND TRANSPARENCY IN CAMEROON IN COLLABORATION WITH OPEN SOCIETY AFRICA**



## INSIDE THIS EDITION

Understanding civilian protection and the right to security in the Northwest and South West Region of Cameroon

Legal and Institutional Framework guiding the rule of law in Cameroon

The Duty to protect

Existing threats to civilians protection in the Anglophone regions

MDDT and OSAF action towards improving Law enforcement policies

Challenges faced by law enforcement officers in ensuring civilians protection in the anglophone regions



# CONTENT

**PART 1: UNDERSTANDING CIVILIAN PROTECTION AND THE RIGHT TO SECURITY IN THE NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON** *(Page 2)*

**PART 2: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE RULE OF LAW IN CAMEROON** *(Page 4)*

**PART 3: THE DUTY TO PROTECT** *(Page 8)*

**PART 4: EXISTING THREATS TO CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS** *(Page 10)*

**PART FIVE: MDDT AND OSAF ACTION TOWARD IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT POLICIES** *(Page 12)*

**PART SIX: CHALLENGES FACED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN ENSURING CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS** *(Page 15)*





# LETTER FROM EDITOR:

Dear readers,

As we delve deeper into the complexities of civilian protection and the right to security in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, our newsletter seeks to shed light on the challenges faced by law enforcement officers in fulfilling their duty to protect. Through the various sections of this newsletter, we have explored the legal and institutional frameworks guiding the rule of law in Cameroon, examined existing threats to civilian protection, and highlighted the efforts of organizations like MDDT and OSF in improving law enforcement policies.

The dedicated focus on understanding civilian protection and the right to security in the Northwest and Southwest regions has provided valuable insights into the realities faced by both law enforcement officers and the civilian population. The duty to protect remains paramount, yet the obstacles of limited resources, inadequate training, language barriers, lack of trust, infiltration of armed groups, political interference, and the psychological impact on law enforcement officers present formidable challenges.

As we approach the recommendations and conclusions of this newsletter, it is essential to emphasize the collaborative nature of addressing these challenges.

The state, law enforcement officers, civilian population, civil society organizations, and armed/separatist groups all have vital roles to play in ensuring a safe and secure environment for all individuals in Cameroon. By embracing the recommended strategies and working together towards a common goal, we can pave the way for a more just and secure society.

We hope that this newsletter sparks dialogue, inspires action, and fosters a greater understanding of the complexities surrounding civilian protection and the right to security in Cameroon. Together, let us strive towards a future where the rule of law is upheld, civilian rights are protected, and security is a shared responsibility.

Sincerely,



**BARISTER WALTERS SHASHAN  
B. MBINGLO**  
(Editor)





# PART 1: UNDERSTANDING CIVILIAN PROTECTION AND THE RIGHT TO SECURITY IN THE NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON

The Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon have been experiencing a complex security situation, leading to significant challenges in civilian protection and the right to security. Understanding the dynamics of this issue is crucial for addressing the humanitarian crisis and promoting sustainable peace in the region.

## **Historical Context:**

The current crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon has its roots in historical grievances related to

governance, representation, and resource allocation. The Anglophone population in these regions has long felt marginalized by the central government, leading to demands for greater autonomy and recognition of their cultural and linguistic identity.

## **Armed Conflict and Civilian Protection:**

The escalation of tensions into armed conflict has had severe implications for civilian protection. Both state security forces and non-state armed groups have been implicated in human rights abuses.





, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and displacement of civilians. The targeting of schools, healthcare facilities, and other essential services has further exacerbated the vulnerability of civilians.

### **International Legal Framework:**

The right to security and civilian protection is enshrined in international humanitarian law and human rights law. Cameroon is a party to various international treaties and conventions that obligate the government to ensure the safety and well-being of its civilian population, regardless of their linguistic or cultural background.

### **Humanitarian Response:**

Addressing the humanitarian needs arising from the conflict requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes civilian protection. Humanitarian organizations play a critical role

in assisting affected populations, including access to healthcare, shelter, food, and psychosocial support. However, persistent insecurity and access constraints pose significant challenges to delivering aid effectively.

### **Pathways to Peace:**

Resolving the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions necessitates inclusive dialogue, respect for human rights, and meaningful participation of all stakeholders. Efforts to address grievances, promote reconciliation, and foster social cohesion are essential for building sustainable peace in the region.

In conclusion, understanding civilian protection and the right to security in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon requires a nuanced appreciation of historical context, legal frameworks, humanitarian imperatives, and pathways to peace.





# PART 2: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK GUIDING THE RULE OF LAW IN CAMEROON

## Introduction:

The rule of law is a fundamental principle of governance that emphasizes the importance of legal frameworks and institutions in ensuring public order and security. In Cameroon, the legal and institutional framework guiding the rule of law is a complex and dynamic system that has evolved over the years to address the country's unique social, political, and economic challenges. This article will provide an overview of the legal and institutional framework guiding the rule of law in Cameroon, highlighting its key features and how it supports the protection of civilians and their right to security.

## Sources :

The legal framework guiding the rule of law

in Cameroon is based on international laws as well as national laws which include:

## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 10th of December 1948 following the end of the second World War. The dangers suffered, the destructions, and the loss of lives recorded were a great motivation for the adoption of these norms. The UDHR calls on all member states to promote civil, economic, and social rights non-discriminatively. The protection of individuals is a guarantee of the respect of their safety and dignity as civilians.





## **The Constitution of Cameroon, 1996**

The Constitution of Cameroon, adopted in 1996, provides the foundation for the country's legal system and establishes the principles of democracy, equality, and human rights. The Constitution also establishes the judiciary as an independent and impartial institution responsible for interpreting the laws and ensuring their application.

In addition to the Constitution, Cameroon has several other sources of law, including:

- Civil law, which is based on the French civil code and is applied in all courts in the country.
- Common law, which is a legacy of British colonial rule and is applied in some courts, particularly in the northern region of the country.
- Customary law, which is based on traditional practices and is applied in rural areas, particularly in the southern region of the country.

## **Institutional Framework:**

The institutional framework guiding the rule of law in Cameroon is composed of several key institutions, including:

- **The Courts(judiciary)**, which is responsible for interpreting the laws and ensuring their application. The judiciary is made up of three branches: the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the High Court.
- **The Ministry of Justice**, which is responsible for the administration of justice and the enforcement of the laws.

- **The National Assembly**, which is the legislative branch of government and is responsible for passing laws.

- **The Constitutional Council**, which is responsible for ensuring the constitutionality of laws and acts of the government.

## **Key Features of the Legal and Institutional Framework**

The legal and institutional framework guiding the rule of law in Cameroon has several key features that support the protection of civilians and their right to security. These features include:

- The independence of the judiciary, which ensures that the courts are impartial and free from interference by the executive or legislative branches of government.
- The separation of powers, which ensures that the three branches of government are distinct and that



no one branch has too much power.

- The protection of human rights, which is enshrined in the Constitution and is protected by the judiciary and other institutions.
- The rule of law, which ensures that all citizens are equal before the law and that the laws are applied equally to all.

### Challenges and Opportunities:

Despite the strengths of the legal and institutional framework guiding the rule of law in Cameroon, several challenges and opportunities need to be addressed. Some of the challenges include:

- Corruption, which undermines the rule of law and the protection of civilians.
- Political instability, which can lead to the erosion of the rule of law and the violation of human rights.
- Limited access to justice, particularly in rural areas, which can leave many civilians without access to the legal system.

Opportunities for improvement include:

- Strengthening the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, which would improve the protection of civilians and their right to security.

- Increasing access to justice, particularly in rural areas, which would ensure that all citizens have access to the legal system.
- Improving the enforcement of the laws, particularly in the context of corruption and political instability, which would increase the effectiveness of the legal and institutional framework.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the legal and institutional framework guiding the rule of law in Cameroon is a complex and dynamic system that has evolved over the years to address the country's unique social, political, and economic challenges. The framework is composed of several key institutions, including the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, the National Assembly, and the Constitutional Council. Despite the strengths of the framework, there are several challenges and opportunities for improvement, including corruption, political instability, and limited access to justice. By addressing these challenges and opportunities, the legal and institutional framework can be strengthened to better protect civilians and their right to security.









# PART 3: THE DUTY TO PROTECT



## Who has to protect?

The concept of protection is fundamental in the context of the rule of law, civilian protection, and the right to security in Cameroon. The government is the primary duty bearer when it comes to the protection of citizens as the responsibility to protect rests entirely on the shoulders of the government. The government however executes this protective role by employing the services of some of her governmental institutions and agents. These include the parliament, the judiciary, the security, and the armed forces. Through the services of these institutions and agents, civilians are largely protected.

## The Parliament

The parliament is the law-making body in Cameroon. The primary duty of the parliament is to enact laws that govern the smooth functioning of the country. In the performance of this duty, the parliament is bound to take into consideration measures that keep the citizens of the country safe. Moreover, the laws passed must conform with international norms and laws that

functioning of the country. In the performance of this duty, the parliament is bound to take into consideration measures that keep the citizens of the country safe. Moreover, the laws passed must conform with international norms and laws that seek to promote and protect human rights and also guarantee civilian protection.

## Security Forces

The role of the security forces in the protection of civilians can hardly ever go unnoticed. Law enforcement agencies, military personnel, and other security entities are very active amongst civilians and almost play a supervisory role in their day-to-day activities and ensuring order.

Their protective role however goes above that. These security forces are primarily responsible for maintaining public order, preventing crime, and responding to security threats in a manner that excludes harm from being done to civilians. Security forces must operate within legal frameworks and adhere to international norms governing the use of force and the



treatment of civilians. Hence whenever civilians may be at fault, the security forces must treat them in such a manner that does not infringe on their rights and safety.

### **The Judiciary**

The immediate function of the judiciary is to uphold the rule of law and ensure proper enforceability. The judiciary is tasked with protecting civilians by ensuring that fair trials are being conducted, preventing and addressing instances of forced arrest and detention of civilians by security forces, and also ensuring that civilians who bring harm to other civilians are addressed following the proper laws.

Besides these governmental arms, other faculties take up positive action for the protection of civilians. These include:

### **International Organizations**

International organizations also have a role in contributing to civilian protection and the right to security in Cameroon. Entities such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), and regional bodies may provide support through peacekeeping

operations, capacity-building initiatives for local institutions, advocacy for human rights compliance, and diplomatic efforts aimed at conflict resolution. These organizations can exert pressure on national authorities to fulfill their obligations regarding civilian protection and security.

### **Civil Society and Non-governmental Organizations**

Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations also have a great engagement in promoting civilian protection and security. Civil society groups often serve as watchdogs, advocating for accountability and transparency in governance while assisting vulnerable populations. Non-governmental organizations on their part tend to foster a sense of collective responsibility for safety and encourage grassroots initiatives that contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. This is noticeable and often appreciated as they continue to penetrate hinterland areas and local communities, bringing realistic



peace-building initiatives and unifying activities to the civilians in these areas. In conclusion, the duty to protect in the context of the rule of law, civilian protection, and the right to security in Cameroon is a shared responsibility among various actors. While the government bears primary accountability, collaboration among the parliament, members of the judiciary, security forces, international organizations, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations is essential for the effective safeguarding of civilians from harm, upholding their rights, and guaranteeing their protection.



## PART 4: EXISTING THREATS TO CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS

The Anglophone regions of Cameroon have faced numerous threats to civilian protection in recent years, jeopardizing the safety and well-being of innocent civilians. These threats have been perpetrated by various actors, including the state and non-state actors, and have had devastating consequences for the local population. In this article, we will explore the existing threats to civilian protection in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and the impact they have had on the population.

### Threats to Civilian Protection

**1.State-sponsored violence:** The Cameroonian government has been accused of using excessive force against peaceful protesters and civilians in the Anglophone regions, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. The government has also been accused of targeting civilians in their homes and communities, leading to the displacement of thousands of people.





**2. Separatist militias:** Separatist groups in the Anglophone regions have also been accused of committing human rights abuses, including kidnappings, torture, and extrajudicial killings. These groups have been fighting for independence from Cameroon, and their actions have resulted in the displacement of thousands of civilians and the destruction of infrastructure.

**3. Armed conflict:** The ongoing armed conflict between the Cameroonian military and separatist groups has led to the displacement of over 500,000 civilians, with many living in makeshift camps or hiding in the bush. The conflict has also destroyed homes, schools, and healthcare facilities, leaving civilians without access to necessities.

**4. Violence against women and children:** Women and children have been disproportionately affected by the conflict in the Anglophone regions, with reports of sexual violence, child soldier recruitment, and forced marriage. The lack of access to education and healthcare has also had a significant impact on children, with many forced to drop out of school and many others suffering from malnutrition and diseases.

### **Impact of Threats to Civilian Protection**

The existing threats to civilian protection in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon have had a devastating impact on the local population. The ongoing violence has resulted in the displacement of over 500,000 civilians, with many living in dire conditions.

civilians, with many living in dire conditions. The lack of access to necessities, such as food, water, and healthcare, has also had a significant impact on the population, leading to malnutrition, diseases, and death.

The violence has also had a long-lasting impact on the social and economic fabric of the region, with many communities and families torn apart by the conflict. The destruction of infrastructure, including schools and healthcare facilities, has also had a lasting impact on the region, making it difficult for civilians to access necessities and services.

### **Conclusion**

The existing threats to civilian protection in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon are a major concern, with the local population facing numerous challenges to their safety and well-being. The state-sponsored violence, separatist militias, armed conflict, and violence against women and children have had a devastating impact on the population, resulting in the displacement of over 500,000 civilians and the destruction of infrastructure.



To address these threats, the Cameroonian government and the international community must take immediate action to protect civilians and ensure their safety and well-being. This includes the establishment of a ceasefire, the provision of humanitarian aid, and the holding of perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable.



## PART 5: MDDT AND OSF ACTION TOWARD IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

Throughout the year 2023, **MDDT Cameroon** in collaboration with OSF has taken significant steps towards improving law enforcement policies in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the various initiatives and activities undertaken by these organizations to enhance the rule of law, civilian protection, and the right to security in Cameroon.

### **Round Tables Discussions with Law Enforcement Officers:**

One of the key initiatives undertaken by MDDT and OSF is the organization of round table discussions with law enforcement officers in the Northwest and Southwest Region.

These discussions serve as a platform for open dialogue and exchange of ideas between law enforcement officials and representatives. The goal is to foster a better understanding of the challenges faced by law enforcement officers in upholding the rule of law and protecting civilians. Through these discussions, MDDT and OSF aim to identify areas for improvement and collaborate with law enforcement agencies to implement effective policies that prioritize civilian protection and security.

### **Meeting with Stakeholders:**

In addition to engaging with law enforcement officers, MDDT and OSF have also organized meetings with various stakeholders involved in promoting the rule



of law and ensuring civilian protection. These stakeholders include government officials, legal experts, human rights activists, Civil society activists, and community leaders. By bringing together diverse perspectives, these meetings facilitate constructive discussions on ways to strengthen law enforcement policies and enhance civilian protection mechanisms. The insights gained from these meetings inform the advocacy efforts of MDDT and OSF, guiding their actions toward meaningful policy reforms.

### **Newsletters:**

MDDT and OSF have recognized the importance of disseminating information on law enforcement policies and civilian protection to a wider audience. As part of their outreach efforts, they have regularly published newsletters that highlight key issues related to the rule of law and security in Cameroon. These newsletters serve as a valuable resource for raising awareness among the public, policymakers, and other stakeholders. By providing in-depth analysis and updates on relevant developments, MDDT and OSF aim to promote informed discussions on improving law enforcement practices and safeguarding civilian rights.

### **Manual:**

Another noteworthy initiative undertaken by MDDT and OSF is the development of a comprehensive manual addressing best practices for law enforcement agencies. This manual serves as a practical guide for law enforcement officers, offering insights into effective strategies for upholding the rule of law while prioritizing civilian protection. The manual covers a wide range of topics, including human rights standards, conflict resolution techniques, and community policing approaches. By equipping law enforcement personnel with this valuable resource, MDDT, and OSF aim to promote professional conduct and ethical behavior within the ranks of law enforcement agencies.

### **Pro-Bono Services:**

Recognizing the need to support individuals who have been affected by human rights violations or unjust treatment by law enforcement authorities, MDDT and OSF have offered pro-bono legal services. Through their network of legal experts and advocates, they provide legal representation to individuals facing challenges in accessing justice or defending their rights. By offering pro-bono services, MDDT and OSF





demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that all individuals have access to fair legal processes and are protected from arbitrary actions by law enforcement agencies.

In conclusion, MDDT Cameroon in collaboration with OSF has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving law enforcement policies in Cameroon through

a multifaceted approach that encompasses dialogue, advocacy, capacity building, and direct support to individuals in need. Their initiatives underscore the importance of collaborative efforts in promoting the rule of law, civilian protection, and the right to security in Cameroon.





# PART 6: CHALLENGES FACED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN ENSURING CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN THE ANGLOPHONE REGIONS



## Introduction:

Law enforcement officers play a crucial role in maintaining peace, and security, and protecting civilians. However, they face various obstacles that hinder their ability to effectively carry out their duties. This article will explore the challenges faced by law enforcement officers in ensuring civilian protection in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

**1. Limited Resources:** One of the primary challenges faced by law enforcement officers in the Anglophone regions is limited resources. Insufficient funding and inadequate infrastructure hamper their ability to respond promptly to security threats and protect civilians. The lack of modern equipment, vehicles, communication systems, and

**2. Inadequate Training and Capacity Building:** Law enforcement officers often face challenges related to inadequate training and capacity building. Many

officers lack the necessary skills and knowledge required to handle complex situations, especially in conflict zones. Insufficient training on human rights principles, conflict resolution, community policing, and crowd control techniques can lead to ineffective responses or even human rights abuses.

**3. Language Barrier:** The Anglophone regions of Cameroon predominantly speak English, while the rest of the country is primarily French-speaking.

This language barrier poses a significant challenge for law enforcement officers from French-speaking regions who are deployed to Anglophone areas. Communication difficulties between law enforcement officers and civilians can hinder their ability to understand and address security concerns effectively.



**4. Lack of Trust and Cooperation:** The breakdown of trust between law enforcement officers and the local population is another significant challenge in ensuring civilian protection. Historical grievances, perceived marginalization, and allegations of human rights abuses have eroded trust between communities and law enforcement agencies. This lack of trust hampers cooperation, making it difficult for officers to gather intelligence, investigate crimes, and maintain law and order effectively.

**5. Infiltration of Armed Groups:** The presence of armed groups in the Anglophone regions further complicates the task of law enforcement officers. These armed groups often target civilians, leading to a heightened sense of insecurity. The ability of law enforcement officers to protect civilians is hindered by the constant threat posed by these armed groups, as well as their ability to blend in with the local population, making it challenging to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

law enforcement officers to protect civilians is hindered by the constant threat posed by these armed groups, as well as their ability to blend in with the local population, making it challenging to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

**6. Political Interference:** Political interference can undermine the independence and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies. In some cases, political considerations may influence decision-making processes, compromising the rule of law and civilian protection efforts. Law enforcement officers may face pressure to prioritize certain political interests over the safety and security of civilians.

**7. Psychological Impact on Officers:** The ongoing conflict in the Anglophone regions takes a toll on the psychological well-being of law enforcement officers. Constant exposure to violence, trauma, and loss can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues among officers. This can negatively impact their ability to carry out their duties effectively and maintain civilian protection.





Law enforcement officers in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon face numerous challenges in ensuring civilian protection. Limited resources, inadequate training, language barriers, lack of trust, infiltration of armed groups, political interference, and psychological impact all contribute to these challenges. Addressing these obstacles requires a comprehensive approach that includes adequate funding, improved training programs, community engagement initiatives, and efforts to rebuild trust between law enforcement agencies and the local population.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For a better approach to civilian protection the following recommendations to the following stakeholders can be considered;

### To the State

-The state should compose a working document of civilian protection. This document should contain all laws that touch on civilian protection as it can be used as a proper tool for educating the civilian population and agents working to ensure that civilians are protected.

- The state should ensure the speedy prosecution of perpetrators of acts of violence amongst law enforcement officers so that civilians can see justice

being done and be confident in the state.

-More funds should be allocated to the CSOs and regional councils so that they can do more work, especially in grassroots regions as they engage greatly in the protection role of far-off communities.

- The state should make the registration of CSOs less stringent and also ensure that their protective role is performed to the best of their ability.

### To CSOs

-CSOs should work towards acquiring toll free numbers at various communication networks. These numbers should further be made public so that victims of all sorts of violations can easily reach out to them.

-CSOs should engage in more advocacy strategies that will prompt grassroots organizations to spread messages on civilian protection widely across suburbs and rural communities.

-CSOs can take up engagements with religious communities in organizing educative activities with the members. These activities include training sessions that would be beneficiary to members of these religious communities as they shall grasp knowledge on civilian protection.



## To Civilians

Civilians must be ready at all times and bear a conscious duty of abstaining from harm's way. Civilians must act in a manner that seeks to ensure that their safety is met.

## To Members of Armed Groups

-Members of non-state armed groups should wilfully drop their weapons and embrace rehabilitation in disarmament centers. Embracing counseling and restructuring of their mindsets and participating in trainings that are of economic benefits, can qualify them to re-establish in the society as regular civilians.

In conclusion, the road to achieving effective civilian protection in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon is rife with challenges for law enforcement officers. Issues such as limited resources, inadequate training, language barriers, lack of trust, infiltration of armed groups, political interference,

and the psychological impact of their work all contribute to the complexities they face. To overcome these obstacles, it is imperative for the state to allocate more resources, provide comprehensive training, and ensure independent oversight of law enforcement activities. Law enforcement officers must engage in community-building efforts, receive adequate mental health support, and implement strategies to combat infiltration by armed groups. The civilian population, civil society organizations, and armed/separatist groups all have vital roles to play in supporting and collaborating with law enforcement to uphold the rule of law, promote accountability, and prioritize civilian protection. Ultimately, by working together and embracing these recommendations, we can strive towards a safer and more secure future for all citizens in Cameroon.





