

Nobel Peace Laureates call for end to displacements, violence and killings in Cameroon

As Nobel Peace laureates, we are deeply concerned by the ongoing displacements, violence and killings in Cameroon and by the surge of human rights violations in the context of Cameroon's past and recent elections. This surge of violence did not end with the elections. In fact, people who cast their vote in the Anglophone regions of the country are now facing intimidation, violence and death.

Just last week, on February 14 a massacre took place in the village of Ngarbuh in an Anglophone region of the country. According to the United Nations, at least 23 people were killed, the majority women and children.

The vote on February 9 was marred by low voter turnout in Anglophone areas, opposition party boycotts, voting irregularities and violence. After a number of failed attempts, this was Cameroon's first parliamentary and municipal elections in seven years.

Cameroon is in the midst of two conflicts. One, with Boko Haram in the northern region of the country and the other in two Anglophone regions where the country's armed forces and Anglophone separatists have been fighting for three years.

This conflict has resulted in over 950,000 people displaced from their homes, 4400 schools closed, 800 000 children out of schools and, in the weeks leading up to the election, houses of some political leaders in Anglophone regions were burned to the ground leading to more killings and thousands more displaced. The government of Cameroon is downplaying this crisis, disputes the number of displaced and, in its statements, is inciting violence.

Anglophone armed separatist groups are responsible for human rights violations, including kidnapping and extortion of humanitarian workers and medical personnel, and killings – also with increased frequency in the lead up to the election.

The people of Cameroon, tragically, are caught in the middle.

The Government of Cameroon and separatist forces must stop the violence against civilians. We are calling for Cameroon to, urgently, focus on peacebuilding, demilitarization, and women's rights – where women have a platform to influence the human rights and security issues their country now faces.

In particular, we are calling for:

1. Cameroon to ensure that, in its statements, it does not incite violence, that it protects all citizens and that it investigates and brings to an end human rights abuses committed by security forces.

2. Armed separatist groups to stop killing civilians and allow humanitarian workers and medical personal to do their work free from intimidation and violence.
3. Women and youth participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding to be ensured and enhanced.
4. The United Nations and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to establish a fact-finding mission into all of the human rights violations taking place in Cameroon.
5. The international community to show solidarity with the people of Cameroon and condemn the displacements, violence and killings.

Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Laureate (2011) – Liberia

Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Laureate (2003) – Iran

Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Laureate (2011) – Yemen

Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Laureate (1997) – USA