Since the 1960s, Cameroon’s Francophone-dominated government has instituted policies aimed at marginalizing the country’s minority Anglophone community. In late 2016, state security forces cracked down on Anglophone lawyers and teachers as they peacefully led civil rights demonstrations. This government repression animated Angophone nationalism and led to both the formation and mobilization of an armed separatist movement.

The separatist movement fractured into a number of smaller militias, including the Ambazonia Defense Forces (ADF) and the Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SOCACDEF). In October 2017, the separatist groups collectively declared independence for the breakaway Republic of Ambazonia. President Paul Biya responded with force, declaring war on the secessionist movement and its supporters, which he labeled as “terrorists” and “extremists”.

Since 2016, fighting between government forces and militant separatists has claimed more than 3,000 lives and displaced more than 679,000 Anglophones, with at least 60,000 Anglophones fleeing as refugees to neighboring Nigeria. The conflict has also decimated critical infrastructure in the Anglophone regions, with many schools and hospitals shuttered and nearly two million Anglophones, one-third of the total Anglophone population, now in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

The violence currently shows no signs of abating as attacks continue by both government forces and separatists. In February 2020, government officials and allied militia members slaughtered 21 civilians, including 13 children in Ngarbuh village in Northwest Cameroon. So far in 2020, fighting has killed an estimated 285 Anglophone civilians.

Genocide Watch recognizes the alarming situation in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions as Stage 9: Extermination and Stage 10: Denial. The government maintains that it has not engaged in a systematic campaign of targeted violence against perceived separatist supporters, despite widespread evidence to the contrary, claiming any violence is a result of legitimate counterterrorism operations.

As violence by both security forces and armed separatists continues, Anglophone civilians are at an increased risk for future genocidal massacres. Genocide Watch recommends:

- International actors recognize the urgency of the Anglophone crisis and encourage the government of Cameroon and separatist groups to reach a diplomatic resolution through the implementation of targeted sanctions on those most responsible for ongoing violence.
- Both the government and separatist groups follow UNSG Guterres’ call for a global ceasefire to help combat COVID-19, and immediately end attacks on civilians and reach a ceasefire agreement.
- Both the government and separatist groups agree to participate in mediation efforts, sponsored by a third-party, aimed at achieving meaningful dialogue.
• An investigation be launched in conjunction with the AU or UN into crimes against humanity and other international crimes committed during the Anglophone crisis to end the ongoing cycle of impunity.
• Humanitarian channels be reopened to allow for the inflow of necessary medical supplies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as essential aid for Anglophones suffering as a result of the continued violence and destruction of critical infrastructure.