

Cameroon Deploys Troops to Anglophone Region Ahead Of Polls

By NDI EUGENE NDI

JANUARY 8 2020



Cameroon has deployed troops to the restive English speaking regions to ensure security before, during and after next month's general election.

A contingent of 350 security forces arrived in Buea, headquarters of the Southwest region, Tuesday and were due to be re-deployed to all the six administrative divisions of the region.

Colonel Henry Nchinda, National Gendarmerie Legion Commander for the Southwest, said the forces will be sent to “all parts of the region to ensure the vote takes place hitch-free.”

“We want everybody to go out and vote knowing that the forces are there to protect them,” Col Nchinda told reporters.

Cameroonians will go to the polls on February 9 to elect parliamentarians and municipal councillors amidst threat from armed separatists that the vote will not take place in the English speaking regions that have been rocked by a bloody conflict since 2017.

Separatist leaders have announced a one-week lockdown on the regions beginning February 7 intended to stop the vote from taking place. Armed separatist fighters have also kidnapped over 30 candidates for the twin elections in the regions in another bid to frustrate the process, promising to release them after the poll.

The latest kidnap was that of the Mayor of the Babessi municipal council in the Northwest region on January 5.

Mayor Issa Chou and four councillors who are seeking re-election were kidnapped and taken to unknown destination according to Mr Momoh Dero, a journalist in the area.

“He was kidnapped in his refugee abode, and despite the sympathy demonstrated by inhabitants of Mambim, he and others are still in captivity,” Mr Momoh told The East African.

The conflict in the English speaking South West and North West regions of the country has since 2017 been a threat to stability in the country. The bloody conflict has left

3,000 people dead, over half a million others internally displaced and 40,000 have been forced into exile in Nigeria, according to relief organisations. The government, however, claims the figures have been inflated.

In his New Year address to the nation, President Paul Biya admitted the security situation in the two English speaking regions remains a major concern.

He maintained the February 9 elections will go on countrywide, including in the troubled areas.

“Security measures have been taken to ensure that all our fellow citizens countrywide exercise their voting rights. Where necessary, such measures will be ramped up. Therefore, I urge all Cameroonians who are registered on the electoral roll to go and vote,” President Biya said in his address.

Culled from The EastAfrican