

Cameroon: Unclaimed act of violence in the Western region

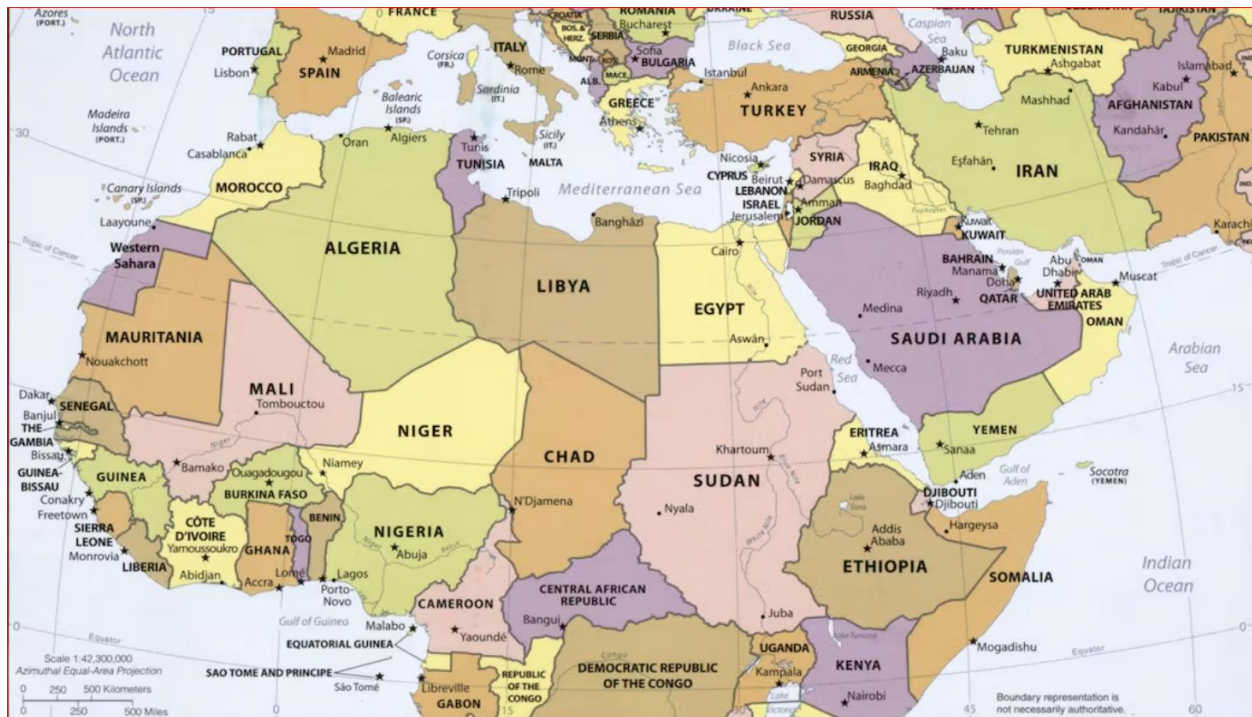
November 7, 2023

Please see the Editorial Comments by www.DiGiNews360.com on the last page.

Please also see a *BACKGROUND ON THE History of Cameroon from January 1, 1960 on pages 2-10.*

November 6 2023: Mamfe, capital of **Manyu**, a division of **SouthWest region, Cameroon**: At about 3.00 AM on Monday, attackers set houses on fire, in the district of **Egbekaw**, while people were sleeping.

November 7, 2023: Nineteen men, five women and an eight-year-old child were killed during the attack and nine injured, some of whom are in "a critical condition", said **Emmanuel Rene Sadi**, the Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson. The attack was carried out by a separatist faction known as **Manyu Unity Warriors.**, said Sadi. Many houses had been burnt down by the attackers. Mamfe Mayor **Tabenchong Robertson Ashu** said a search is continuing to see if there are any other victims and the death toll could rise.



Cameroon with neighbours: Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea; Population: 30 Mn, Area: 475,442 Km²
GDP: \$49.3 Bn (89th), GDP per capita: \$1,721 (150th)

Local residents suspect that the **Egbekaw** attack was intended to disrupt the celebrations marking **President Paul Biya's 41st anniversary as Cameroon's President** on November 6, 2023.

ANGLOPHONE CRISIS: The country's **South-West and North-West regions**, where the English-speaking minority is concentrated, have been ravaged by the crisis **since late October 2016**. English-speaking separatists have been engaged in a struggle to establish an independent state called **Ambazonia** in western Cameroon.

The Prefect Viang Mekala assured the public that the situation is under control and urged them not to panic. He said that the Security forces are currently conducting a search operation in the area to apprehend the attackers.

The Anglophone crisis has claimed more than 6,000 lives and forced more than a million people to move, according to the **International Crisis Group (ICG)**. Earlier this year, **Amnesty International** condemned both government troops and militias/separatists for committing various atrocities, including killings, rapes, torture, and house burnings, in Cameroon's English-speaking regions.

----A BACKGROUNDER on CAMEROON after INDEPENDENCE----

Cameroon, located in Central Africa, gained **independence from France on January 1, 1960**. **Ahmadou Ahidjo** became the first president of the country **on May 5, 1960**.



ABOUT Ahmadou Babatoura Ahidjo: In 1942, Ahidjo joined the **civil service**, at the young age of 18, as a **radio operator for a postal service**. As part of his job, he worked on assignments in several major cities throughout the country, such as **Douala, Ngaoundéré, Bertoua, and Mokolo**. He was from a Muslim family from **Garoua**, a major river port along the Benue River in **northern Cameroun**.

In 1946, **Ahidjo**, 22, entered politics. He progressed fast, as the French set up the Legislative Assembly of Cameroon and stated giving power to the local people in the area, which was a UN Trusteeship.

In February 1958, Ahidjo became Prime Minister at the age of thirty-four.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS after **January 1, 1960**: France outlawed the pro-independence political party, the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (**Union des Populations du Cameroun; UPC**), on **13 July 1955**, because it was pro USSR. This prompted a **long guerrilla war** waged by the UPC.

To face the UPC war, Ahidjo recruited an army of mainly Muslims from the North.

The country was initially divided into two parts: the French Cameroon and the British Cameroon. The **British Cameroon became independent on October 1, 1961**.

The two parts were united to form the **Federal Republic of Cameroon** on **October 1, 1961**, a date which is now observed as **Unification Day**.

Ahidjo used the ongoing war with the UPC to concentrate power in the presidency, continuing with this even after the suppression of the UPC in 1971.

His political party, the **Cameroon National Union (CNU)**, became **the sole legal political party** on 1 September 1966. On 20 May 1972, a referendum was used to abolish the federal system of government in favour of a United **Republic of Cameroon**, to be ruled from Yaoundé.



Capital: Yaounde, Population: 2.8 Mn

Largest City: port city of Douala, Population: 5.8 Mn

When **President Ahidjo, 58**, resigned suddenly on 4th November 1982, citing health reasons. **Paul Biya** became the 2nd President of Cameroon on 6 November 1982, according to the constitution.

Biya has been **the President of Cameroon since then till today**, winning several elections that have been criticized for being rigged.

ABOUT PAUL BIYA: Paul Barthélemy Biya'a bi Mvondo, a Christian from Cameroon's south, joined the civil service as a bureaucrat. Then he rose rapidly under President Ahmadou Ahidjo in the 1960s, till he was appointed as the Prime Minister in 1975. On 6 November 1982, he took over as the President. Today, he is the **longest consecutively serving current non-royal national leader in the world** and at the age of **90 years, the oldest head of state in the world**.



Paul Biya, the 2nd **President of Cameroon** since 6th November 1982
The 1st **Prime Minister of Cameroon** from 30 June 1975 to 6 November 1982.

After **Biya** became President, **Ahidjo** initially remained head of the ruling **Cameroon National Union** (CNU). Biya was elected as the Vice-President of the CNU. On 11 December 1982, he was placed in charge of managing party affairs in Ahidjo's absence.

During the first months after Biya's succession, he continued to show loyalty to Ahidjo. But in 1983, a deep rift developed between the two. **Ahidjo went into exile in France**, and from there he publicly accused Biya of abuse of power and paranoia about plots against him.

After Ahidjo resigned as CNU leader, Biya took the helm of the party at an "extraordinary session" of the CNU party held on 14 September 1983. consolidated power

Biya introduced political reforms within the context of a one-party system in the 1980s.

In November 1983, Biya announced that the next presidential election would be held on **14 January 1984**; it had been previously scheduled for 1985. He was the sole candidate in this election and won 99.98% of the vote.

In February 1984, Ahidjo was put on trial *in absentia* for alleged involvement in a 1983 [coup](#) plot, along with two others; they were sentenced to death, although Biya commuted their sentences to life in prison. **Ahmadou Babatoura Ahidjo** died on 30th November 1989 (aged 65) at Dakar, Senegal.

On 6 April 1984, a coup was attempted by the Republican Guard, consisting mostly of Northern Muslim officers. Paul came to know about the coup before the scheduled date and he distributed the Republican Guard Officers to different units. It forced the coup plotters to act earlier than they had planned. The coup proved to be a failure and a number of army officers lost their lives. **Ahidjo** was widely believed to have orchestrated the coup attempt.

In 1985, the CNU was transformed into the **Cameroon People's Democratic Movement** (French: Rassemblement démocratique du Peuple Camerounais, **RDPC**), in **Bamenda** and Biya was elected as its President. The CPDM has remained the **dominant political party** in the country, with opposition parties facing harassment and intimidation.



Commercial Avenue, Bamenda, Cameroun

*Bamenda, also known as **Abakwa** and **Mankon** Town, is a city in **northwestern Cameroon** and capital of the Northwest Region. The city has a population of 2 Mn. It is located 366 km **north-west of the Cameroonian capital, Yaoundé**. Bamenda is known for its cool climate and scenic hilly location.*

Paul Biya was also re-elected as President of Cameroon on **24 April 1988**. Biya initially took some steps to open up the regime, culminating in the decision to legalize opposition parties in 1990. According to official results, Biya won **the first multiparty presidential election**, held on **11 October 1992**, with about 40% of the vote. The second placed candidate, **John Fru Ndi** of the opposition **Social Democratic Front (SDF)**, officially received about 36%.

In 1996, in response to pressure from Anglophone Cameroonian groups advocating a return to the federal system, a new constitution was adopted in 1996. It grants greater autonomy to the provinces (renamed regions) and established a Senate as the upper house to the National Assembly.

In the **October 1997 presidential election**, which was boycotted by the main opposition parties, Biya was re-elected with 92.6 percent of the vote. He was sworn in on 3 November 1997. Biya won another seven-year term in the **11 October 2004 presidential election**, officially taking 70.92 percent of the vote. Biya was sworn in on 3rd November 2004.

After being re-elected in 2004, Biya was barred by a two-term limit in the 1996 Constitution from running for President again in 2011.

In his 2008 New Year's message, Biya expressed support for revising the Constitution, saying that it was undemocratic to limit the people's choice. Disregarding **violent protests in late February 2008**, the National Assembly voted to **remove the term-limit on 10 April 2008**. Another change in the constitution provided for the **President to enjoy immunity from prosecution for his actions as President after leaving office**.

Paul Biya won the Presidential elections by a large margin in 2011 (Paul got 77.9% of votes cast. **John Fru Ndi** was his nearest rival, polling 10%, according to official data.)

The same happened in 2018 also, when Paul Biya won with 71.3% of the vote, according to official data.



*2009: Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA: (From Right to Left) US President **Barack Obama**, **Paul Biya**, US First Lady **Michelle Obama** with Biya's wife **Chantal***

POLITICAL INSTABILITY and VIOLENCE in recent years: In 2016, protests erupted in the Anglophone regions of the country, with English-speaking Cameroonians demanding greater autonomy and recognition of their cultural identity. The government responded with a crackdown, leading to the arrest of several activists and the deaths of dozens of people. The crisis has escalated into a full-blown conflict, with **separatist groups fighting government forces**.

Cameroon has also been dealing with the threat of **Boko Haram**, an Islamist extremist group based in Nigeria. The group has carried out several attacks in Cameroon, leading to the deaths of hundreds of people.

BAKASSI PENINSULA BORDER DISPUTE with NIGERIA: The Bakassi Peninsula had been a bone of contention between Nigeria and Cameroon, since the colonial times. Biya filed a suit at the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** on **29 March 1994**. On **10 October 2002**, after more than eight years of hearings and deliberations, the court ruled in favour of Cameroon, instructing Nigeria to withdraw immediately from the region.



June 12, 2006: Greentree estate, Long Island, New York:
 Nigeria's President **Olusegun Obasanjo** with President **Paul Biya**
 In the presence of UN Secretary-General **Kofi Annan**
 ICJ's decision caused significant unrest in Bakassi, on June 12, 2006.



Detailed map of the **border between Nigeria and Cameroon**
 in the **coastline touching the Gulf of Guinea:**

***Bakassi:** area in green was transferred by Nigeria to Cameroon on August 4th 2008*

Nigeria and Cameroon signed the **Greentree Agreement**, which required Nigeria to withdraw its troops from Bakassi **by 4 August 2008**, and also required Cameroon to **protect the rights of the Nigerian citizens who lived in Bakassi.**

(Reference: <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/bakassipub.pdf>)

The transfer of the territory to Cameroon proceeded peacefully under the agreement. The Cameroonian government now presents the dispute as a "misunderstanding", and its resolution as "a model of peaceful conflict resolution in Africa."

At the request of **Biya** and **Obasanjo**, **Kofi Annan** established the Cameroon–Nigeria Mixed Commission to negotiate a smooth implementation of the International Court of Justice's 2002 ruling. The commission was chaired by **Mohamed Ibn Chambas**. It was required to establish an estimated 2,100 Km of boundary between the two countries and to finalize the maritime boundary. This has helped Nigeria and Cameroon to settle the Bakassi dispute in an amicable manner.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS: www.DiGiNews360.com calls upon President Paul Biya to work for fair and transparent elections in 2025. He has ruled over Cameroon as the President since 1982, having ruled over Cameroon as its Prime Minister from 1975-82.

Let Paul Biya give back a little to the people and his country, which has given him its highest honours.

www.DiGiNews360.com also calls upon the African Union and the rest of the world to persuade President Paul Biya to conduct fully fair elections so that a properly elected government can come to power in 2025.
