



ADISI - CAMEROUN



**National Endowment  
for Democracy**

*Supporting Freedom Around the World*



# **REPORT ON THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS IN THE NORTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON**

**2016-2020**

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## Executive Summary

Freedom of the press is vital importance especially as it determine the quality of information generated and distributed by journalists in different parts of the world. It is assumed that where press freedom exist, media men and women carry out their duty more efficiently without any fear. The main aim of this report has been to produce a detailed report on the situation of media freedom and journalists in the English speaking regions of Cameroon from 2014 and 2022. The report has as key interest to know the number of journalists who have gone on exile because of the crisis, those that have been internally displaced, and the gender representation in the displacement. Also, the reported was designed to document the state of press freedom in the two English regions of Cameroon (NWR and SWR), document the interference press media who have suffered since the emergence of the Anglophone crisis, violations journalists have suffered at a personal level as well as violations suffered by individual media houses.

The report noted that the state of press freedom in the NWR and SWR could be described as limited, or drastically reduced to low levels especially since the advent of the Anglophone crisis. Furthermore, the press has been, and is being significantly interfered upon by the warring camps of the Anglophone crisis as the media has received intimidation, restriction, suspension, warnings, forced to censor information by state officials, state forces as well as separatist forces.

In continuation, press operators have suffered untold violations due to their coverage and reporting of the crisis. They have been subjected to violations such as threats, loss of jobs, suspension, abduction, kidnapping, arrest, interpellation, molestation, detention, imprisonment and even death. This has caused them to adjust their way of reporting as well as engage in information censoring in order to be on the safe side.

This has cause **21** journalists (male=12, female=9) to go on exile in the SWR and **24** **journalists** (male=11, female=13) to go on exile in the NWR. Similarly, this has caused the internal displacement of **32** **journalists** (male=21, female=11) in SWR as compared to **65** (male=39, female=26) in the NWR.

Similar to this, media organs located in the two regions reported to have suffered major violation in the course of covering and reporting on the crisis. Media organs reported to have suffered suspension, summons, destruction of properties, threat, confiscation of equipment, abduction of staff, killing of staff, and repression from both camps engaged in the Anglophone crisis.

A set of recommendations were drawn up from the conclusions of this work, the most poignant of which are addressed to the Government on the one hand and to journalists on the other.

It emerged that the Government of Cameroon, through its various organs (administration, defence and security forces), should conduct its activities without infringing on the right of the press. The government should ensure that the Cameroonian state respects press freedom to the maximum, as is the case in law-abiding countries around the world.

Journalists operating in the affected areas should strive to respect journalistic principles in the exercise of their profession, both in normal times and in times of crisis. They should ensure that they are apolitical in their operations so as not to get into trouble with anyone, and they should be as transparent, responsible and accountable as possible.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, Cameroon's Anglophone region has been marred by a cycle of civil unrest and serious human rights violations that have claimed more than [3,000](#) lives. In response to legal measures introduced by the Cameroon government, teachers, lawyers, students and activists took to the streets demanding greater recognition of their political, social and cultural rights.

A casual observation of journalistic practices around the world reveals deep-seated abuses on journalists and media organizations. While this is a universal state of affair, the situation in Africa is particularly dire due to poor democratic practices and human rights situations. In Cameroon, abuses on journalists and media organizations prevail and have often been blamed on government actors. However, with the advent of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016, a [non-state actor](#) (Seperatists) emerged to compliment government actions against the free practice of journalism in the country's North West and South West Regions Region.

Journalism plays a pivotal role in every society. In fact, the cutting-edge role journalists play in society assigns them a delicate responsibility of either making or marring the society in which they operate. Journalism is thus a very powerful but at the same time delicate profession. Journalists possess the power to maintain stability in society or to disrupt it.

Overall, the situation for journalists in Cameroon remains bleak. Where journalists report on the ongoing tensions between the government and separatists, or where they are critical of the government generally they face charges of terrorism and national security crimes, often ending up being tried before military courts and held in pre-detention for lengthy periods without proper access to a lawyer. Lawyers representing journalists have increasingly been targeted by authorities and have faced arbitrary arrest, called before military tribunals as well as being forced to go into hiding.

This report seeks to uncover the state of media freedom in the restive North West and South West Regions of Cameroon through primary evidences of violations perpetuated against media houses, the effects it has on the media profession and brings out the number of displaced and exiled journalists.

## II. HISTORICO-LEGAL CONTEXTS OF JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE IN CAMEROON

Cameroon's checkered history and the judicial environment have greatly influenced the evolution of its press. In fact, the Cameroonian press is a product of its historical and legal environment. Contemporary journalism in Cameroon is a phenomenon strongly influenced by the pattern of the nation's past. High and low points in quantity and quality of journalistic output have corresponded to periods of crisis, regime changes, and the whims of those in power. This is a succinct description of the practice of journalism in Cameroon. This profession has greatly been influenced by the country's history, as well as national and international legal instruments. Though the journalistic practice began in the country as far back as the 1900s, colonialism and post-independent politics also greatly shaped the evolution of journalistic practice in Cameroon. A remarkable feature of the Cameroonian press is its bicultural background that was directly the result of the country's history.

The earliest press organs in Cameroon were founded and ran by missionary bodies, who used newspapers to "teach the norms and values of the 'new civilization' being introduced to the local tribes... and also encouraged the people to respect and serve the colonial authority". The press was firmly in the hands of the colonial authorities who used it to promote their interest in the territory. As such, private press was virtually inexistent and the government (colonial) interests as spelled out in the press went unchallenged. The masses therefore got just one side of the story.

However, a new wave of journalistic practice that took an antigovernment form began to appear in Cameroon during the period of French Mandate in the 1920s. This happened with the emergence of a cream of Cameroonian press men at home and abroad who used the press to challenge colonial administration. Professor Nga Ndongo captures this view, when he posits that the press became a "means of expression, a weapon for the colonized Blacks, and in the final analysis, played a role in the integration of the dominated African masses". A typical example of such indigenous press organ was the [Mbale \('The Truth'\)](#) which was operated by French Cameroonians in France and became so critical of the French administration in Cameroon.

Consequently, the paper was systematically shut down in 1929 and the journalists dispersed by the French government who felt uncomfortable and edgy with the truths uncovered by the paper. It is thus evident that as far back as the colonial period, the Cameroonian press was placed in a situation of difficulty and attempts were rife to hinder the free practice of the press. This phenomenon invariably spilled over into the post-independent era and further compounded by the emergence of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016.

Government's attempts to muzzle the press especially those that were very critical of government actions became a common phenomenon in post-independent Cameroon. At first blush, this phenomenon took place amidst the proliferation of media organs like Radio and TV Stations and Newspapers in the country. To achieve the aim of gag ordering the press, the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, AHIDJO, resorted to the passage of the first ever Press Law in post-independent Cameroon in December 1966.

This Law was amended five (5) times between 1969 and 1981 by Decree No. 69/LF/13 of November 1969, by Decree No. 73/6 of December 1973, by Decree No. 76/27 of December 14, 1976, by Decree No. 80/18 of July 14, 1980 and Decree No. 81/244 of June 22, 1981. The 1966 Press Law and its amendments generally imposed administrative, financial and territorial surveillance which formed the basis of the muffling of the Cameroonian press. In actual fact, as summarized in the following statement, the press was subject to strict censorship by government departments.

The rise of Paul Biya to power in 1982 launched a new phase of press freedom in the country. Apparently, the Biya administration followed in the footsteps of Ahidjo in efforts to contain the free practice of the press in Cameroon. The main difference however was that press censorship took place amidst a perceptible impression that there was free press while journalists repeatedly complained of government efforts to place limits on their practice.

As part of his democratization impulse, President Biya passed Law **No. 90/052 of December 19, 1990** related to the promotion of a wide range of freedoms in the country. These freedoms included freedom of communication. Its emphasis on the promotion of different freedoms earned it the sobriquet of "Liberty Laws". Radio communication was liberalized and private radios were



springing up in great numbers, particularly in Yaoundé, Douala and Bamenda as from the 2000s when the law took effect. There were also rural radios geared towards support for community development projects. The written press was also diversified. Apart from opening up the media landscape to private press, the Law also simplified the process of setting up a press organ in the country by scrapping off the administrative, financial and territorial requirements for publishing newspapers. It also extended the freedom to communicate to the audio-visual medium as well. All these meant that the Law was an improvement of the former legal instruments that regulated journalism practice in the country. In spite of this, the free practice of journalism in Cameroon under Paul Biya still left much to be desired. The reaction of the government towards the free practice of journalism after 1990 seemed to suggest that the government took the form of a proselytizer to democracy in Cameroon but refused the power inherent in same. This explains why journalists continued to face challenges including arrests and detentions, threats, suspension and even closure of media organs through the National Communication Council (NCC), the government-created media regulatory organ.

### **III. THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS AND THE PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM**

Cameroon has recently been stunned by a wave of disturbing events largely from within the ranks of the Anglophone community (and/or those who imbibe their values and sympathize with them) that have trapped the entire Nation. This was the escalation of violent protests from among the English-speaking communities of the North West and South West Regions.

These events that began manifesting from November 2016 was a result of accumulated grievances among the Anglophones in Cameroon who since reunification in 1961 and the putting in place of the Unitary system of government in 1972 felt marginalized administratively, economically, politically and even socially.

By 2017, the Anglophone Question became violent with the emergence of armed groups to defend the course of the Anglophones especially secession and independence and the creation of the so called State of Ambazonia. Interestingly, journalists also played a significant role in the escalation of the crisis.

In the midst of this deadlock, journalists and unarmed civilians who chose neutrality and/ or either supported one of the camps also became targets. Worse of all, the armed separatist groups opted for ‘No Schools’ in the affected Regions while the government on her part was bent on seeing the effective resumption of schools in these Regions. Thus, journalists who advocated for back-to-school became targets of the separatist groups and if they joined in calling for ‘No Schools’ until a lasting solution was sought for the Anglophone issue, they were clamped down by the government as they were accused of complicity with the secessionists. Journalists and media organizations had become victims in the intensifying crisis producing collateral damage.

#### **IV. ABUSES ON JOURNALISTS DURING THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS**

The advent of the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon saw journalists being pushed to a tight corner and victimized by both government agencies and separatist groups in the North West Region of Cameroon. It may be worth mentioning that just at the exordium of the Crisis in 2016, the Minister of Communication had written to Journalists to stop all roundtable discussions concerning the political atmosphere in the country. It went without saying that the Minister’s missive was to become a snare for journalists in these Regions throughout the period of the Crisis. Based on the Minister’s injunction, journalists and media organs began to bear the brunt of practicing during the Crisis period.

It has almost been established (at least among a cross section of Cameroonian journalists) that abuses on press men had always been initiated and perpetuated by government. While this assertion is arguable, the Anglophone Crisis introduced a non-conventional actor in the abuses of press men in the Northwest and Southwest regions. This was particularly the separatist armed groups who took up arms to defend the course of the Anglophones in Cameroon as the Crisis escalated. These groups also targeted and committed reprehensible abuses on some media men, their equipment and their outlets.

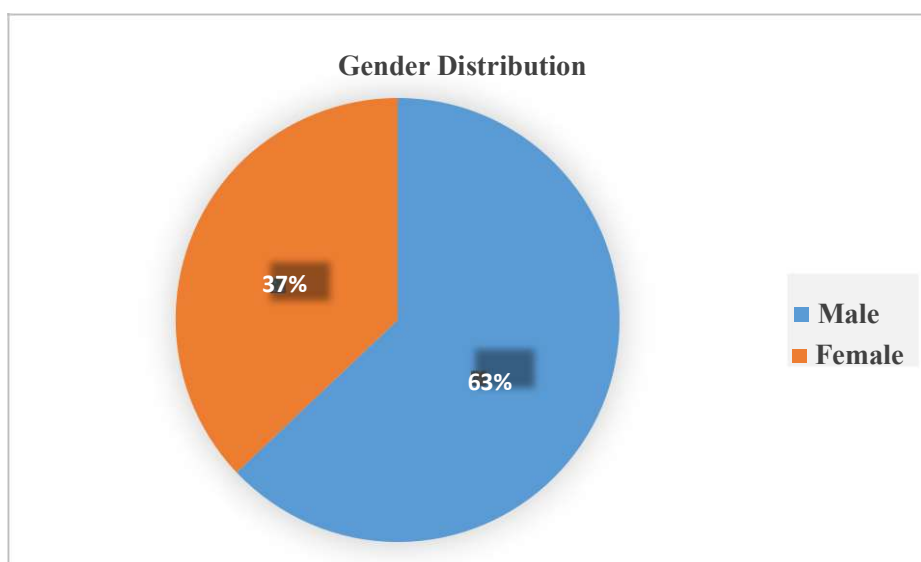
The wedging of journalists and media organs from both ends was a veritable difficult situation which could aptly be described as journalists caught between the Scylla and the Charybdis. The situation of journalistic practice in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon had indeed been atrociously targeted and abused by both government and the separatist groups operating in

the area. This situation has put to question the reputability with which press freedom is being pursued in Cameroon. The journalist in these two regions have since 2016 indeed been caught in a snare that has virtually pushed some to be displaced, exiled or completely out of the profession.

## **V. FIELD WORK ANALYSIS**

### **a) Section One: Demographic Characteristics**

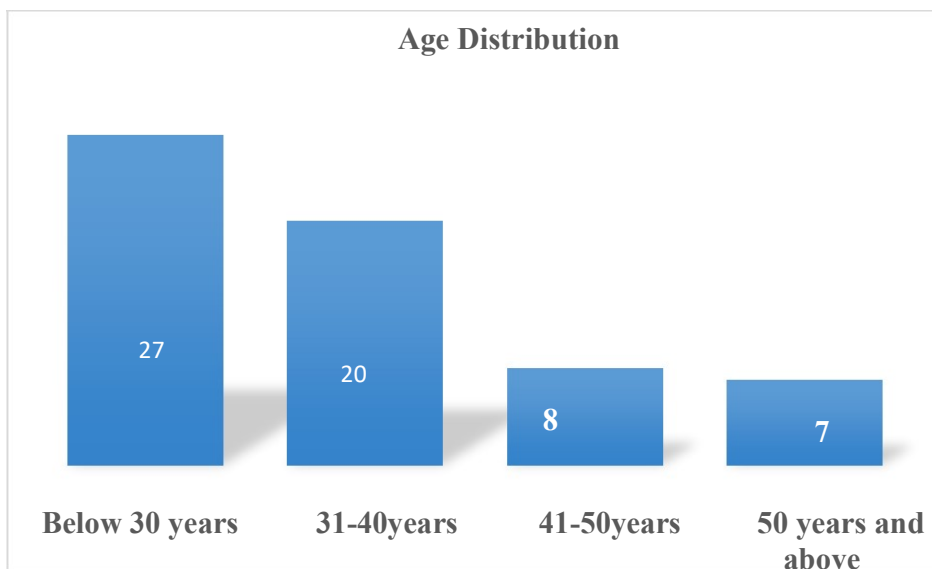
This section presents the demographic characteristics of respondents who took part in the fieldwork. Data was successfully obtained from 70 journalists in the two English regions of Cameroon. But upon closed evaluation, 8 questionnaires were rejected for non-completion and 62 retained for further analysis. Below is a presentation of the demographic characteristics.



**Figure 1: Gender of respondents**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

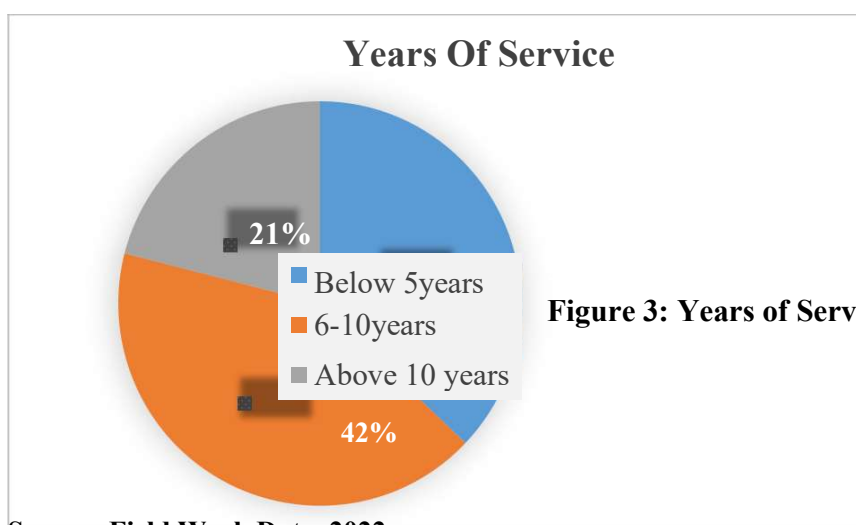
According to the gender distribution of participants, the male population outnumbered the female population as presented on the above figure. This is off course the expected given the gender differences in some professions.



**Figure 2 : Age of Respondents**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

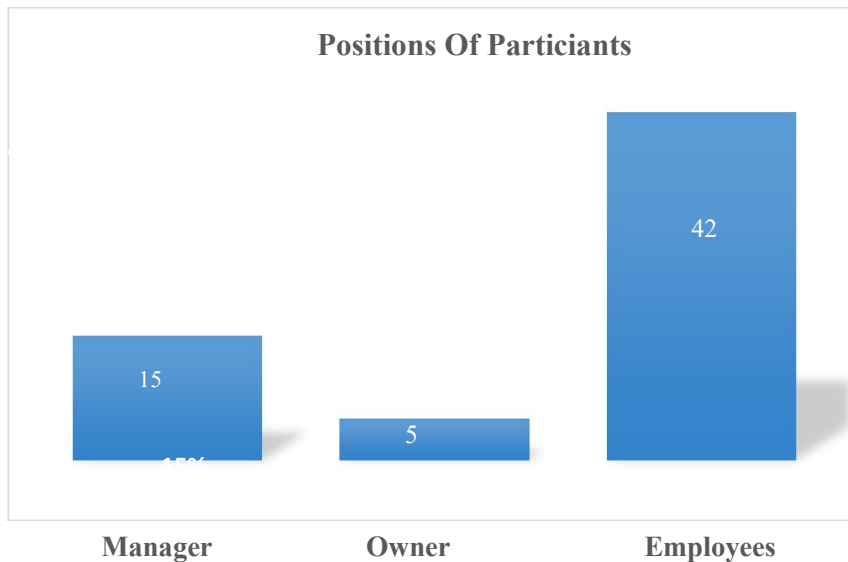
In addition, the age distribution of participants showed about one third were below 30 years old, below one quarter between 31-40 years old, 8% between 41-50 years and 7% at 50 years and above. The participants were predominantly young people between 40 years and below as presented on the chart named age distribution.



**Figure 3: Years of Service**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

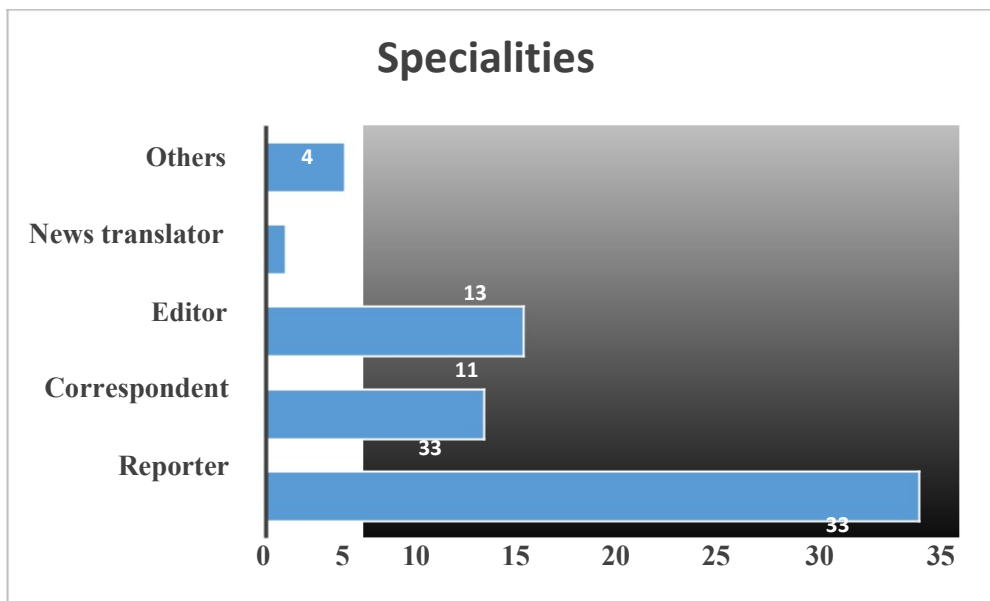
Furthermore, information on the number of years of service revealed that nearly half of the participants have worked between 6-10years, 37% have worked below 5 years and only 21% have worked for 10 years and above as presented above.



**Figure 4 : Position of Respondents**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

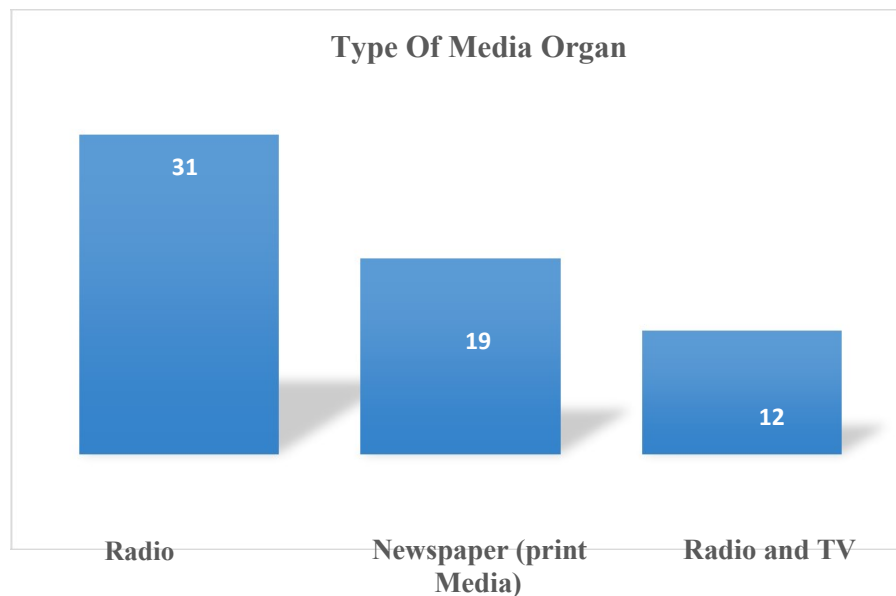
Findings on the positions held by participants in their various media organs showed that most of them were employees (42%), followed by managers (15%) and then owners (5%) as presented above.



**Figure 5: specialties of Respondent**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

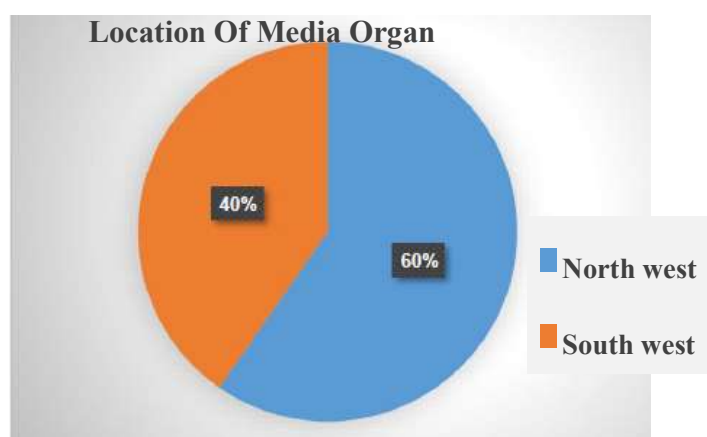
Findings on the specialties of participants revealed that majority (33 out of 62) were reporters, followed by editors (13 out of 62), correspondents (11 out of 62), news translator (1) and then others like broadcasters(3), columnists, (1).



**Figure 6 : Position of Respondent**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

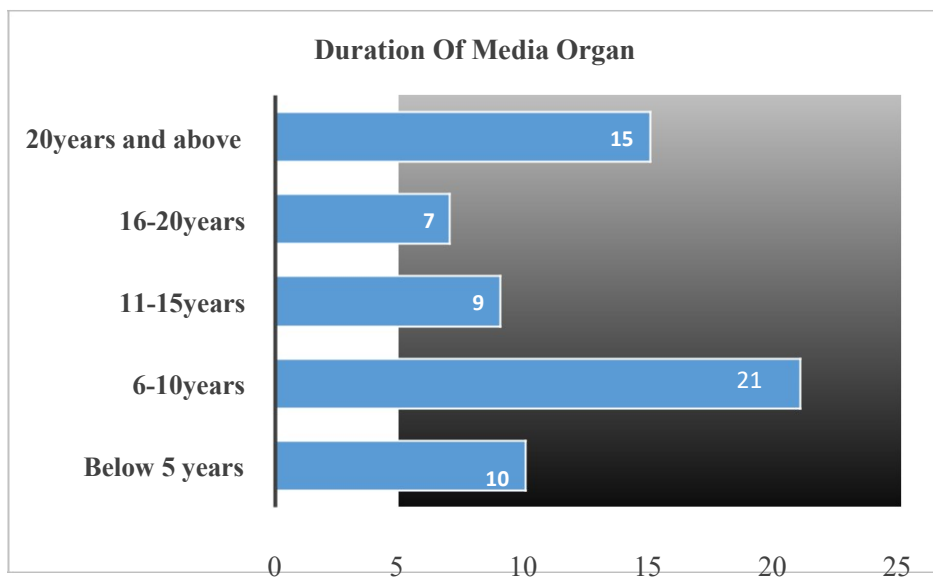
Furthermore, findings on the type of media organ showed that most of the media organs surveyed were community radio houses (31 out of 62), followed by the print media (19 out of 62) and then radio and TV (12 out of 62).



**Figure 7 : Location of media houses**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

More to this, many more of the media organs were located in the North West Region (60%) in comparison with those from the South West (40%).



**Figure 8 :  
Duration of  
media organ**

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

Again, information were gathered on the duration these media organs have existed and findings showed that, 10 of them have been in existence for less than 5 years, 21 have been in existence between 6-10 years now, 9 have existed between 11-10years, 7 have existed between 16-20 years and 15 out of the 62 media houses that responded have been in existence for 20 years and above.

## b) Section Two: Focus On Displacement of Journalist between 2014 -2022

This section presents findings on the displacement of journalists in the South West and Northwest from 2014 to 2022.

**Table 1: Statistics on the Total Number of Journalists, those who have gone on exile, and those who have been displaced from the Southwest 2014-2022**

Media houses in the south West	Total number of journalists	Male	Female	Number gone on Exile 2014-2022	male	female	Number displaced 2016-2022	male	female
SW1	10	7	3						
SW2	1000	800	200						
SW3	7	3	4	1	1				
SW4	14	6	8						
SW5	5	2	3	2		2			
SW6	8	6	2	3	1	2	3	2	1
SW7	25	7	18						
SW8	8	2	6						
SW9	17	14	3						
SW10	14	12	2				4	4	
SW11	25	10	15				4	1	3
SW12	9	4	5						
SW13	20	14	6						
SW14	4	3	1	2	2		2	1	1
SW15	5	2	3						
SW16	7	4	3						
SW17	6	3	3						
SW18	8	5	3						



SW19	30	24	6	1	1		4	3	1
SW20	5	3	2	2	1	1	2	1	1
SW21	11	4	7						
SW22	5	3	2		1	0	13	2	1
SW23	7	5	2		2	2	02	2	
SW24	7	3	4		4	3	13	1	2
SW25	9	6	3		3	1	25	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Field Work Data, 2022

**Table 2: Statistics on the Total Number Of Journalists, Those that have gone on exile and or Displaced from the northwest 2014-2022**

<b>Media Houses in the NW</b>	<b>Total number of journalists</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Number gone on Exile 2014-2022</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Number displaced 2016-2022</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>female</b>
NW1	5	3	2	2	1	1	2	1	1
NW2	30	12	18	2	1	1	5	3	2
NW3	4	3	1	1	1		3	1	2
NW4	6	3	3	2	1	1	3	2	1
NW5	35	25	10	2	1	1	3	1	2
NW6	8	5	3	2	1	1	2	1	1
NW7	4	3	1	2	2	1	4	1	3

NW8	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
NW9	5	4	1	3	1	2	2	1	1
NW10	3	2	1				1		1
NW11	4	3	1				2	1	1
NW12	7	7							
NW13	14	7	7	1		1	8	6	2
NW14	6	2	4						
NW15	6	4	2				1	1	
NW16	7	5	2				5	4	1
NW17	8	6	2				2	1	1
NW18	4	2	2						
NW19	5	3	2				1	1	
NW20	3	2	1				1	1	
NW21	6	4	2						
NW22	6	3	3				1	1	
NW23	7	5	2						
NW24	5	3	2				3	2	1
NW25	8	5	3				2	1	1
NW26	9	4	5						
NW27	15	7	8				4	3	1
NW28	8	5	3						
NW29	5	2	3						
NW30	7	3	4						
NW31	4	2	2				1	1	
NW32	6	3	3	2	1	1	3	1	2
NW33	5	4	1						
NW34	8	5	3				4	3	1

NW35	7	4	3	1		1			
NW36	6	5	1	1		1			
NW37	7	3	4	2		2			
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26</b>

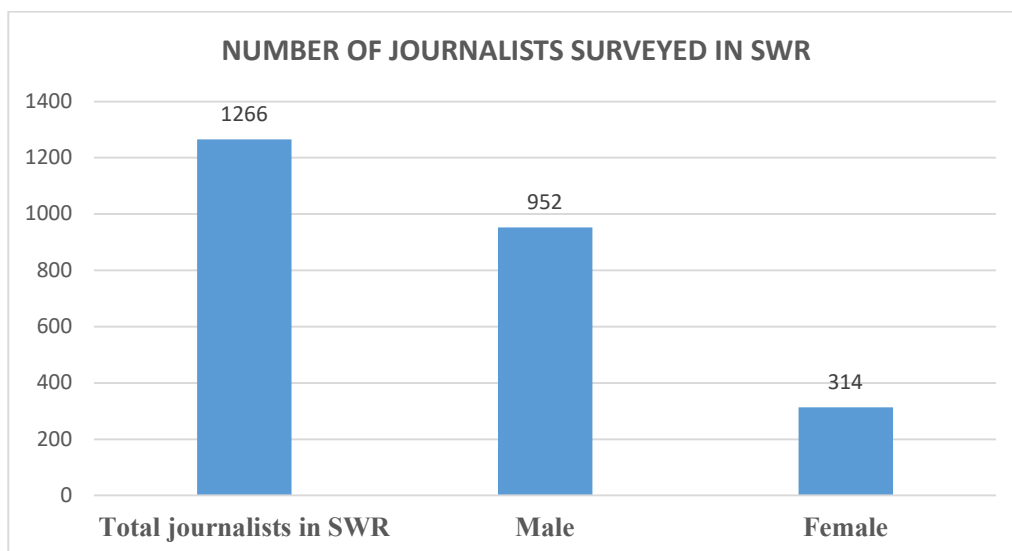
**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**

Based on the above statistics on the number of journalists from the different media organs surveyed within the two regions (NW/SW), it is observed that the sum total of the journalists is below 600 excluding the about 1000 university of Buea internship students who were counted at the university media organ. It is equally observed that in the two regions, the male population outnumber the female population. Almost a similar trend is observed on the number who have gone on exile. We found that **21 journalists (, male=12, female=9)** have gone exile in the **SWR**. Similarly, **24** journalists have gone on exile in the **NWR (male=11, female=13)**.

On the number internally displaced, we found that many more journalist have been displaced from the NWR as compared to the SWR. Specifically, a total of **32 journalist (male=21, female=11)** have been internally displaced from the SWR due to the anglophone crisis as compared to **65 (male=39, female=26)** journalists displaced from the **NWR**. **This information is further presented below using charts.**

**Total number of journalists from surveyed media organs, SWR: Total=1266, male=952, female=314.**

**Note:** this number includes about 1000 university of Buea students who were on internship. The actual number journalists in media organs surveyed in the SWR is about 270 journalists. This is presented below.

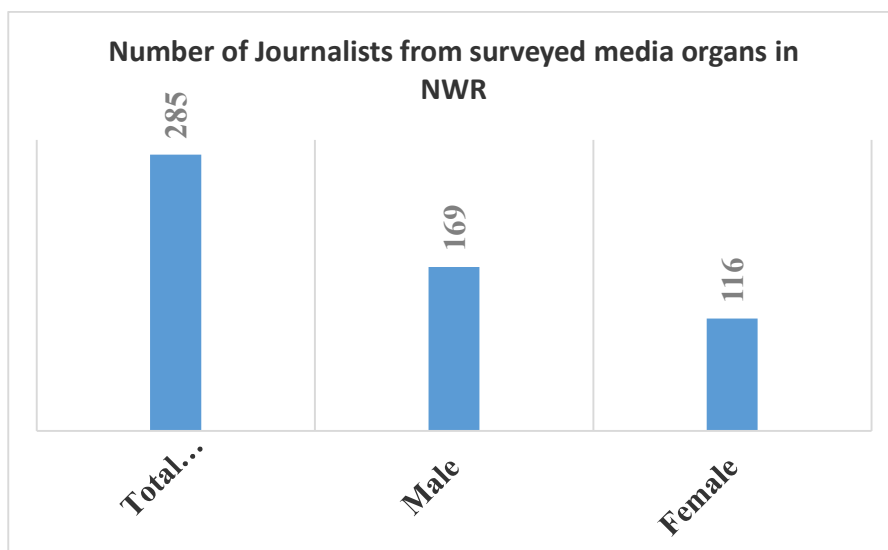


**Figure 9 : Number of Journalists**

**Source :** Field Data, 2022

**Total number of journalists from surveyed media organs in the NWR: Total number=,285  
male=169, female=116**

This is presented on the chart below.



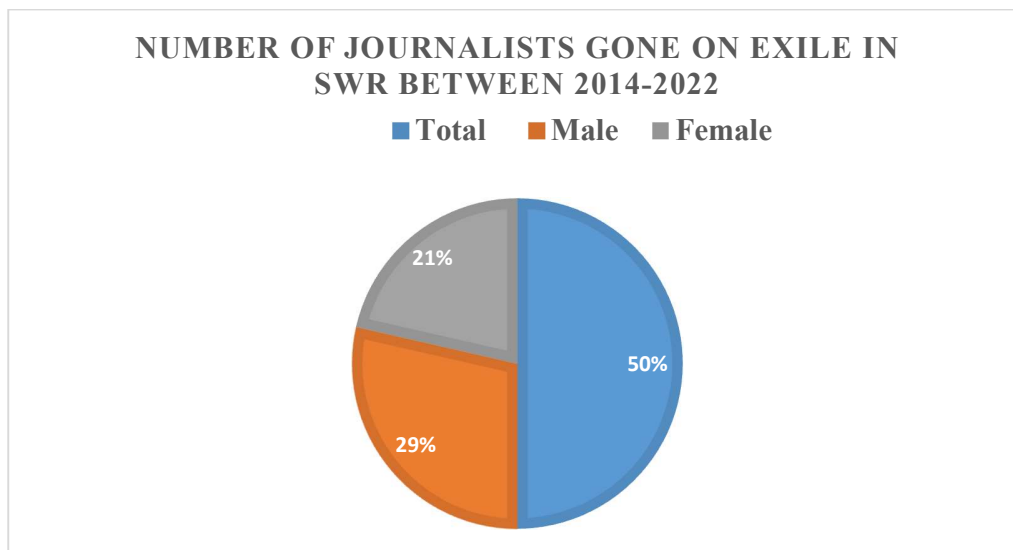
**Figure 10 : Number of Journalists from surveyed media organs in NWR**

**Source :** Field Data, 2022

c) **Section Three: Focus on Displacement of Journalist between 2014-2022**

**1. Part One: Number of journalists who have gone on exile 2014-2020**

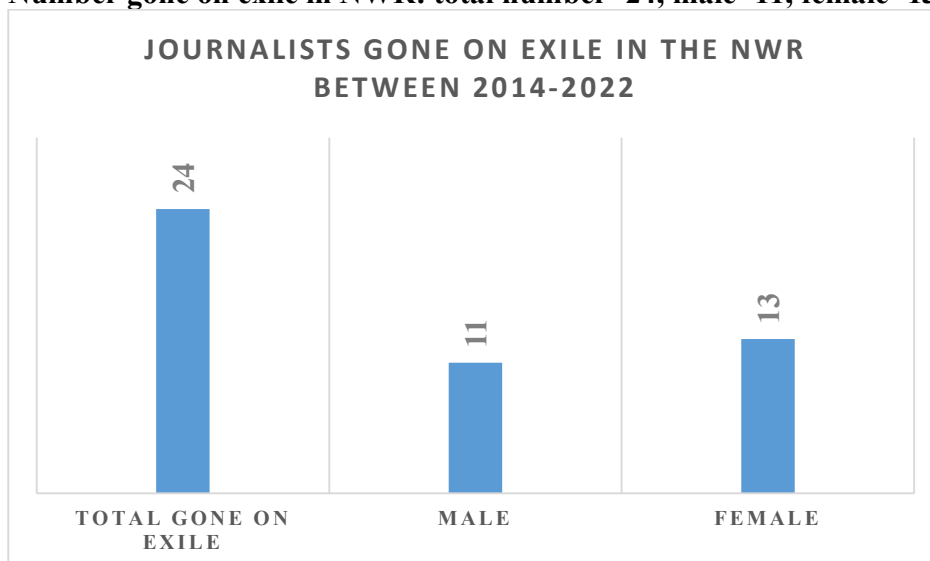
This section presents findings on journalist who have gone on exile in the two regions between 2014 and 2022. **Number gone on exile, SWR: total number=21, male=12, female=9. This is shown on the figure below.**



**Figure 11 : Number of Journalists Gone on Exile in SWR Between 2014-2022**

Source: Field Work Data, 2022

**Number gone on exile in NWR: total number=24, male=11, female=13**



**Figure 12 : Number of Journalists Gone on Exile in NWR Between 2014-2022**

Source: Field Work Data, 2022

## 2. Part Two: Focus on Internally Displaced Journalists 2016-2022

Total number displaced from the SWR: **total=32, male=21, female=11**. This is presented on the figure below.

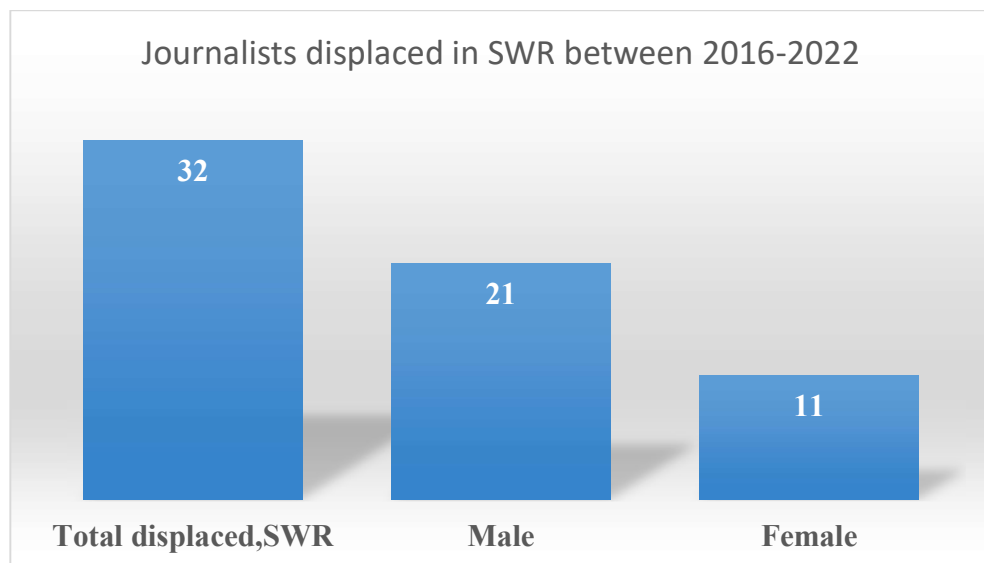
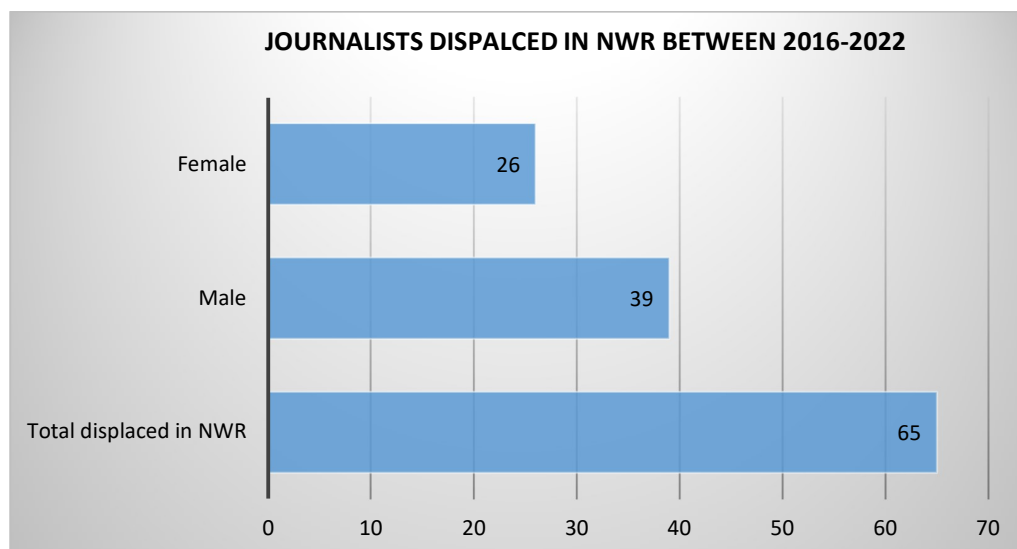


Figure 13 : Journalists displaced in SWR between 2016-2022

Source: Field Work Data, 2022

**Number internally displaced from the NWR 2016-2022: total=65, male=39, female=26**

This is presented on the chart below



**Figure 14 : JOURNALISTS DISPALCED IN NWR BETWEEN 2016-2022**

Source : Field Data, 2022

**d) Section Four: Focus on Press Freedom in the Two English Regions of Cameroon**

**Table 3: participants' views on press freedom in reporting the Anglophone crisis**

Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
The Anglophone crisis has not affected the reporting of our media organ	7 (11.3%)	6 (9.7%)	49 (79.0%)	62
Reporting is design to suit government and separatists	8 (12.9%)	26 (41.9%)	28 (45.2%)	62
Strict adherence to journalistic principles in reporting without fear of warring parties	32 (51.6%)	23 (37.1%)	7 (11.3%)	62
My media organ adjusted it reporting since the emergence of the crisis to avoid sanctions from the state and separatists	31 (50.0%)	19 (30.6%)	12 (19.4%)	62
My media organ hesitate to criticize the state and the separatists for fear of consequences	22 (35.5%)	25 (40.3%)	15 (24.2%)	62

We report just what the government is comfortable with	6 (9.7%)	18 (29.0%)	38 (61.3%)	62
My media organ has been restricted from reporting on violation of human rights perpetuated by the two warring parties	10 (16.1%)	11 (17.7%)	41 (66.1%)	62
There is limited press freedom in Cameroon	45 (72.6%)	13 (21.0%)	4 (6.5%)	62
Journalists are caught up between two fighting lions and are bound to report in the interest of the two parties	22 (35.5%)	28 (45.2%)	12 (19.4%)	62

**Source: Survey Data, 2022**

Based on the gathered information as presented on table 4 above, 49(79.0%) journalists overwhelmingly affirmed that the Anglophone crisis has greatly affected the reporting of the different media organs in the regions with only 6(9.7%) taking a neutral stand. This suggest that the practice of journalism has been greatly affected by the crisis including readjusting reporting to meet the current realities. Thus, indicative that press freedom has been tampered with in the two regions adding to the already limited press freedom in the country as whole.

In addition, an equal proportion of 28(45.2%) the surveyed journalist remained undecided as well as disagreed that reporting has been designed to suit the government and the separatists with only 8(12.9%) admitting this to be true. This is suggestive that participants were either afraid to take a stand on this aspect.

Despites this, majority (51.4%) of the surveyed journalists attest that they have maintained strict adherence to journalistic principles in the midst of the challenging moments without any fear from the warring parties. However, 11.3% of them have not been able to adhere to journalistic principles since the emergence of the crisis probably for their own safety.



Also, half (50%) of the participants admitted that their different media organs has had to adjust their reporting to suit the warring parties in order to avoid sanctions from them. In contrast, a less significant proportion (19.4%) maintained they had not adjusted their reporting to suit either of the parties. The findings suggest that the freedom of the press has been greatly limited in the face of the crisis.

Furthermore, 35.5% of the participants agreed and another 35.5% remained neutral on whether their media organs hesitate to criticize either of the warring parties with only 24.2% of the total participants objecting to this while the rest 40.3% remained undecided. This is suggestive that these media men and women to some extent would seldom criticize the state or the separatists for acting against fundamental human rights. This further imply that the journalists in the two regions are not free to uphold the standards of their profession.

More to this, majority (61.3%) of the participants claim they do not report just what the government is comfortable with only 9.7% admitting this is true for them. By implication, even though press freedom is a far fetch reality in Cameroon as a whole, some media organs attempt to be objective in their reporting without reducing the analysis to suit the state.

Similarly, most of the respondents (66.1%) reported they have been restricted from reporting on human rights violations perpetrated by the warring parties with just 16.1% affirming otherwise. The findings suggest that media organs in the two regions can freely report on human right violations as it is the case on paper, but in reality, since the onset of the crisis, either of the warring parties keep striving as much as they can to block the gross violations on human rights incidences from the global community. This is indicative that anyone reporting on such highly classified violations automatically becomes a target implying the press is not free.

To substantiate the above point, majority (72.6%) of the participants admitted that there is limited press freedom in Cameroon with only 6.5% thinking otherwise. This indicates that total freedom of the press in Cameroon is still something to be rethought. Furthermore, this suggest that the reporting on the Anglophone crisis is subjected to limited press freedom where media men/women filter report to avert punishment from the warring parties.

To support the above point on the limits of press freedom, about one third (35.5%) of the participants admitted that there are caught between the warring parties and are bound to report in their interest with only 19.4% objecting to this. Interestingly either out of fear or distrust, nearly half (46.6%) of them took a neutral position on this point.

Investigating further on the subject of press freedom and degree of interference suffered by the media in the two Anglophone regions since the advent of the crisis, participants resulted to deep revelations as presented below.

### **1. The State of Press Freedom in the Two English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon since the Emergence of Anglophone Crisis**

Investigating the views of journalists on the state of press freedom in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon since the emergence of Anglophone crisis gave birth to a diversity of opinions. The surveyed press media houses generally maintained that there is limited press freedom in the regions, others said there is restricted press freedom, press freedom is only on paper, there is no press freedom, limited access to information, adjusted reporting, the crisis drastically dampened the little press freedom that existed before the crisis, freedom has been replaced with fear, carefulness, constant threats, intimidation, journalist forced to report just parts of analysis among others. Below are some comments made by respondents in their own word with relation to press freedom in the regions. Below are some comments made by journalists in their own words.

*"There is freedom to report but there is no freedom after reporting. Most journalists in some cases are self-censoring themselves in presumptions that they will be targeted after reporting. However, there is a lot of administrative interference regarding messages journalists are propagating. There is press freedom in Cameroon, is just that journalists are not reporting the truth and so the government is not bothered about it (newspaper Editor, SW)."*

*"First, I think press freedom is the ability of the press or media to report on a particular issue without being interrupted or punished for what was said. In the case of Cameroon, I will say there is no press freedom because since the emergence of the Anglophone crisis, journalists*

*have suffered numerous arrests and punishment from the warring camps after doing their report (radio and TV Broadcaster, SW)."*

*"The level of press freedom in Cameroon is so tempting especially with the introduction of the anti-terrorism law in 2014. With regard to the law, it is so challenging because journalists are placed at a tight corner especially when it comes to balancing of report reflecting the crisis. With the 2014 anti-terrorism law, if a journalist is opportune to interview an Amba fighter and the government notice it, the said journalist will be locked up for not letting them to where the Amba camp is (Newspaper Reporter, SW)."*

*"Press freedom has greatly been affected negatively by the crisis. Government is on the neck of the journalists and separatist fighters are doing same. The situation is bad. The moment you say what government official do not like; they call you "Amba journalist". Separatist fighters call you black leg when you say what they do not like (radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"Press freedom in Cameroon (NW +SW) ever since the crisis has been greatly affected as most journalists report with fear of being killed by separatists or arrested and jailed by the government (Newspaper editor)."*

*"Press freedom is only on paper with the arrest, torture and in some cases murder of journalists like Samuel Wazizi, freedom of the press in Cameroon is bogus and very unrealistic (newspaper reporter NWR)."*

*"Journalists are caught between the devil and the sea as both the government and separatists want them to give only their own side of the story. Samuel Wazizi was killed while Eli Smith lost his job for propagating the separatist narrative (reporter, Newspaper, NWR)."*

*"It has been restricted by the warring parties. The warring camps do not want to hear a report relating to their opponents. Journalists out of fear of being kidnapped, killed or arrested turn to censor information (correspondent, Radio, NW)."*

## **2. Interference Suffered by Media Organs in the NWR and SWR since the Emergence of the Anglophone Crisis**

From the field work with media houses, participants narrated different instances of interference from the warring camps that has so negatively influenced their covering and reporting on the crisis. Participants generally mentioned that they have received threats, warnings, summons, suffered suspension, calls, administrative censorship, and confrontation among others. This only goes to explain or booster the fact that there is limited freedom of the press in the country as a whole and in these two regions in particular especially since the advent of the crisis. Below are some comments made by journalists from the two regions on the inferences they have had to encounter.

*"Calls come from the presidency each time a story is published which does not please government and the author of the article is quarried or punished. Some have even seen fired from their jobs (newspaper reporter, NWR)."*

*"We have received threatening notes, some dropped in front of the door threatening us about a reporting issue linked to one group or the other. This made us more cautious about sensitive issues (Radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"We did a talk show program one time and officials of the regional delegation of communication came out even asking for the recorded version. They took it and at the end of the day, the management of the radio was summoned. The case later died (radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"Yes, from separatists who threatened to burn down our offices and or kill our reporters wherever they meet them (Newspaper editor, NWR)."*

*"We covered a fire incident story in one of the markets and before interview a local Administrator promise to deal with any media house that will report that the fire wasn't a short circuit but man made as the separatist had insinuated. The instances abound (News editor, Radio, NWR)."*

*"Yes, there is interference but we have vowed to remain professional no matter what (Newspaper Reporter, SW)."*

*"Yes, we received information on the killing of some youths in a village and when we got this, information, top government officials called our editor and the story line which we had changed (TV Reporter, SW)".*

*"Equinox television, the case of Mimi Mefo' s 2016 /17 report on anglophone crisis, And Samuel Wazizi ' s case whom up till date we still do not know of his where about, after arrested by security forces (TV reporter, SWR)".*

*ncensement threats from the government by threatening journalists that they will be imprisoned for their reporting that is not favorable to them. For the separatists, they hijack our front-page with their propaganda. They project screaming headlines on our front-page and share, misleading our readers and members of the public (newspaper reporter, SWR)".*

**e) Section Five: Focus On Violations Perpetrated On Journalists in the Two English Regions of Cameroon In The Course Of the Arm Conflict**

This section of the analysis presents findings on the violations that have been committed on press men and women in the two English regions of Cameroon between the periods 2016 till present.

**Table 4: Participants Views on the Violations Perpetrated On Journalists between 2016 till Present**

Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Neutral
<b>Intimidated by the state and separatists</b>	34 (54.8%)	6 (9.7%)	22 (35.5%)	62
<b>Suffered torture because I am a journalist reporting on the crisis</b>	16 (25.8%)	12 (19.4%)	34 (54.8%)	62
<b>Arrested and detained because of my reporting that do not favour the government</b>	4 (6.5%)	3 (4.8%)	55 (88.7%)	62

<b>My colleague(s) have been tortured and detained</b>	35 (56.5%)	1 (1.6%)	26 (41.9%)	62
<b>My media organ has been sealed and or/suspended by the state because of our reporting on the crisis</b>	7 (11.3%)	4 (6.5%)	51 (82.3%)	62
<b>Journalists from my media organs have been kidnaped and /or lost body parts by separatists due to our reporting on the crisis</b>	11 (17.7%)	6 (9.7%)	45 (72.6%)	62
<b>Journalists from my media organs have been killed because of their reporting on the crisis</b>	6 (9.7%)	4 (6.5%)	52 (83.9%)	62
<b>Journalists from my media house have been imprisoned because as a result of reporting on the crisis</b>	11 (17.7%)	4 (6.5%)	46 (74.2%)	62
<b>Equipment of my media house have been confiscated in the course of gathering information and /or reporting Son the crisis</b>	14 (22.6%)	4 (6.5%)	44 (71.0%)	62
<b>Journalists from my media organ has gone on exile because of threat to their safety</b>	17 (27.4%)	5 (8.1%)	40 (64.5%)	62

Source: Survey Data, 2022

### **1. Findings on the violations perpetrated on journalists in the two regions since the advent of the Anglophone crisis in 2016 till 2022.**

Based on the findings on level of intimidation, slightly over half (54.8%) of the surveyed journalists affirmed they have personally been intimidated by either the warring parties because of their covering and reporting on the crisis. However, over one third (35.5%) said they were not intimidated with as few as 9.7% choosing a neutral posture on this question. This is suggestive that journalists reporting on the Anglophone crisis have had to suffer intimidation from either of the warring parties some even life threatening.

Furthermore, about one quarter (25.8%) of the journalists reported to had suffer torture because of their reporting on the crisis. In contrast, over half (54.8%) had not suffered torture even though some of the participants (19.4%) chose to remain neutral on this. This suggest that there some degree of violations on journalists as a result of their reporting on the crisis.

In addition, majority (88.7%) of them reported that they have not suffer arrest and detention due to their reporting on the crisis. Despite this, 6.5% reported to suffer arrest and detention while three remained undecideds. The findings suggest that only a limited proportion of the surveyed participants have suffered arrest and detention due because of their reporting on the crisis.

However, over half (56.5%) of them affirmed that their colleagues have been tortured and detained because of their reporting on the crisis even though this was not true for 41.9% of them. By implication, reporting on the Anglophone crisis has exposed journalists in the two regions to torture, arrest and detention.

Also, only 11.3% of the respondents affirmed that their media organs have been be sealed and /or suspended by the state because of their reporting on the crisis. On the other hand, over three quarters of the respondents could not independently affirm that their media organs have been sealed or suspended by the state due to their reporting on the crisis with some 6.5% taking a neutral stand on this. The findings suggest that only a few media organs in the two regions have suffered suspension as a result of their covering and reporting on the crisis.

In continuation, most of the respondents (72.6%) could not affirmed that journalists from their media organ have been subjected to kidnap with some even losing body parts as a punishment for their reporting on the crisis. Despite this, there have instances of kidnap and /or loss of body parts as affirmed by 17.7% of the respondents even though some chose to be neutral on this.

Consistent with the above, 9.7% respondents affirmed that journalists from their media organs have been killed just because the wee reporting on the crisis probably targeted killings or victims of cross firing between the warring camps. This was not true for most (83.9%) of the media houses surveyed. Under normal circumstances, press men/women are not supposed to be targeted during war otherwise, it is considered violations.

Apart from being killed, up to 1.7% of total respondents agreed that journalists from their media houses have been imprisoned because they were covering and reporting on the crisis. It is interesting to know that some of these press men are still serving their sentences. However, this was not true for most of the participants (74.2%) of this survey even some were neutral (6.5%).

Also, there were as many as 22.6% reported instances of confiscation of equipment from journalists by the powers that be in the course of gathering and dissemination of information on the crisis. This is gross violations that the press has been exposed to between 2016 till present. The number here is not absolute as some dangerous and enclave parts could not be reached to obtained data. Despites this, most media houses have not experienced these violations.

At the peak of it, this report registered as many as 27.4% participants that journalists from their media have gone on exile because of their safety as a result of reporting on the crisis. This is great violations to journalists, their legal rights to live and practice in their motherland. These violations come along with emotional and psychological trauma on the victims, families and colleagues. In contrast, majority of the media houses operating in the regions have not had such instances.



## 2. Violations Suffered by Journalists 2016-2022

Investigating further to know the violations journalists have suffered from their own mouth, the survey gathered deep and touching revelations from the participants. Journalists reported to have suffer personal violations including telephone threats, physical torture, arrests, detention, suspension, abduction, imprisonment, restriction of access, lost of jobs, confiscation of equipment, summons, death among others. All of this add up to support that the level of press freedom and security situation of press men and women in the two regions is chaotic. Below are some comments made by journalists in relation to the violations they have suffered.

*"The night barrister Agbor Balla and Dr.Fontem were arrested, my colleague and I went to the police station alongside lawyers and teachers to get information on their arrest but instead were sprayed tear gas and received gunshots after running for our dear lives we were hiding below a bridge, only the surrounding bushes saved our lives that night. We had several bruises (reporter, newspaper NWR)."*

*"Our colleagues have been suspended from practicing for a month. Personally, I recently suffered an unlawful detention. I wanted to tell a story that will protect the interest of the population and when I got into the site of an abandoned hospital project I was labeled a spy for separatists' fighters. It took a lot of intervention before state forces could let me go. Also I got slapped by a separatist fighter who accused me for being a journalist (TV correspondent NWR)."*

*"The highest gravity for me has just been threats on social media and phone call threats by alleged separatists where after posting an information in relation to the civil-military humanitarian actions, they warned and threatened me saying as a journalist, they know me well and I should desist from ever posting or talking about such which is a retardation to their plight (radio Reporter, NWR)."*

*"Well, trauma should be the major impact of this crisis. Being in the unknown, seeing watching eyes of people who threaten your peace is traumatizing. seeing journalists killed*

*and arrested others tortured or maimed isn't a favourable sight to any journalist anywhere (newspaper reporter, NWR)."*

*"I have been abducted twice by the amba fighters for talking about the negative side of ghost town operations. My recorder and camera were once confiscated and destroyed by soldiers around mile six Nkwen. I have also been tortured by the military (Radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"When the crisis started, Oku community never knew it until mid-2018. As a journalist, I was kidnapped by separatists, beaten and ransom paid simply because I reported about the council development issues. According to separatists, our report meant they are not existing (Radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"Dangerous threats from government officials and forces of law and order Also threats from separatists that I will be kidnapped and killed. Attacks by unidentified persons on social media (Newspaper Reporter, SWR)."*

*"I was tortured in kumba in January 2022 by elements of the BIR while on an investigative story on the paralyzed nature on the Kumba-Mbanga rail road due to the crisis (newspaper Reporter, SW)."*

*"First, violations from none state armed groups who post our pictures online and threaten us. Some news sources refuse journalists to access certain establishment for reporting (Tv reporter SW)."*

### **3. Violations Suffered by Media Organs in the NWR And SWR, 2016-2022**

Based on the gathered information, media organs in the two regions have suffered and are still suffering from many violations. Some of the top mentioned violations include but not limited to confiscations of equipment, threat to life, deaths, destruction, abduction of staff, molestation of staff, suspension, stoppage of some programs, name calling among others. All of these add up to

suggest that their state of press freedom in Cameroon is only a thing on the paper and not realistic. Herein are some points made by journalists on the extent of violations against their media organs.

*"For my media, we don't receive state subvention again. This has affected us so badly. my media's recorder has once been confiscated by the soldiers (Radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"Suspension, threats from ministers, insults from colleagues who think differently, confiscation of equipment (TV correspondent, NWR)."*

*"As an institution, we have been labelled by separatists as a bad organization as they accuse us of supporting the state. All our work ends only in the center of the subdivision since they target radio staff (Radio reporter, NWR)."*

*"The burning down of our head office in Bamenda and death threats on the manager and reporters (Newspaper editor, NWR)."*

*"My media house has been under constant threats. Reports kidnapped while going home from work because they are reporting on the crisis (Tv reporter, SW)."*

*"A colleague of mine who used to present the pidgin news, was arrested, tortured, molested and detained in 2018 by the Cameroon government, allegedly killed and /or transferred to Yaounde till date, we have not heard a word from him. This has affected my media house in that pidgin news was one of the most watched programs but at the moment, we do only entertainment (TV Correspondent, SW)."*

*"Confiscation of equipment and interpellation (radio reporter, SW)."*

*"The only incident a staff of my office faced was when he was kidnapped by the separatist fighters. This was gross violation to his person as he was beaten and tortured. Nonetheless, he was freed at last (newspaper Editor, SW)."*

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings above demonstrate that there is limited press freedom in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon as witnessed by journalists between 2016-2022 as the anglophone crisis rages on. This demonstrates gross violations against the rights of journalists and violations on internationally recognised rights freedom of the press of which Cameroon is a party to. President Biya passed Law No. 90/052 of December 19, 1990 related to the promotion of a wide range of freedoms in the country. These freedoms included freedom of communication. Its emphasis on the promotion of different freedoms earned it the sobriquet of “Liberty Laws”. This report recorded instances in which government forces, administrators and the separatists all bridged the rights of the journalists. This is because many of them have suffered one form of violations to the other including detention, abduction, interference, among others. Mindful of the fact that journalists have internationally recognised rights to press freedom, this report makes the following recommendations.

- This report recommends that the government of Cameroon through its various arms (administrators, defense and security forces should carry out their activities without infringing into the right of the press. The government should ensure that the state of Cameroon respects press freedom to the later as it is the case in law abiding countries around the world.
- Similarly, the leaders of separatist groups, separatist fighters, and supporters of the Anglophone movement make sure that they do not violate the right of the press in the cause of making their voices heard in matters related to the Anglophone crisis. The press is a neutral body and should be allowed to function without any interference or intimidation.
- Journalists operating in the regions concerned should endeavour to uphold journalistic principles in practicing their profession both in normal and in crisis moments. They should ensure they are apolitical in their operations so as not to get into trouble with anyone, they should be as transparent, accountable and responsible as they can.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This report presents detailed investigations of the practice of journalism in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon since the exacerbation of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016. From the outset of the Crisis, journalists in these two regions have been exposed to a wide range of abuses from both the government and the separatist groups operating in the Region. The abuses on media houses took place amidst an avalanche of national and international legal instruments duly signed by the Cameroon government. The report brings out primary information on the violations of journalists and their media organizations, and how the conflicting parties squeeze them from both ends.

Journalism remains an inviolate profession and should be allowed to function unscathed even in crisis in line with the national and international legal instruments in place. This is because crises are periods when the hankering for information invariably increases among the masses. Consequently, while journalists must continue with rigor and tenacity the pursuit of objective reporting based on the principles of ‘fairness’, ‘professional distance’, ‘detachment’ and ‘impartiality’, the burden is on the government and conflicting parties to uphold the inviolability of journalistic profession in Cameroon and the world at large.

## VIII. APPENDIX

**Table 5: Demographic characteristics**

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Frequency (N=62)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	39	62.9
	Female	23	37.1
<b>Age range</b>	Below 30 years	27	43.5
	31-40years	20	32.3
	41-50years	8	12.9
	50 years and above	7	11.3
<b>Years of service as a journalist</b>	Below 5years	23	37.1
	6-10years	26	41.9
	Above 10 years	13	21.0
<b>Position</b>	Manager	15	24.2
	Owner	5	8.1
	Employees	42	67.7
<b>Specialty</b>	Reporter	33	53.2
	Correspondent	11	17.7
	Editor	13	21.0
	News translator	1	1.6
	Others	4	6.5
<b>Type of media house</b>	Radio	31	50.0
	Newspaper (print media)	19	30.6
	Radio and TV	12	19.4
<b>Location of media house</b>	North west	37	59.7

	South west	25	40.3
<b>Duration of media organ</b>	Below 5 years	10	1.1
	6-10years	21	33.9
	11-15years	9	14.5
	16-20years	7	11.3
	20years and above	15	24.2

**Source: Field Work Data, 2022**



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