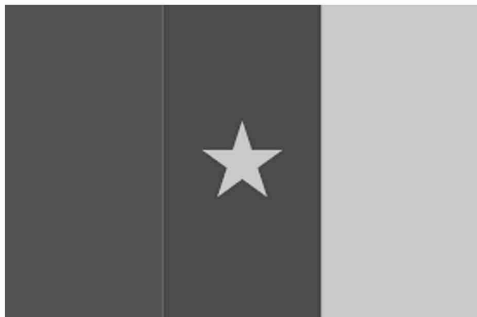


The following 35 pages were given to asylum officers, as part of their training, in April 2020.

# Republic of Cameroon

## Country of Origin Information

April 30, 2020



By the RAIO Research Unit

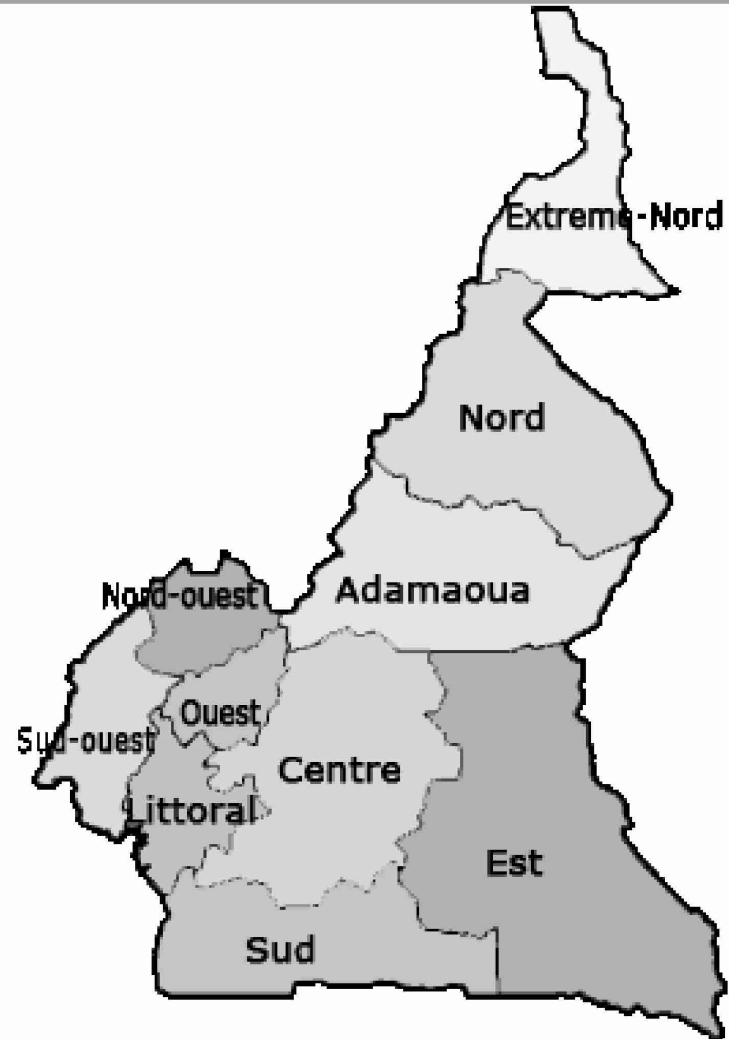
# Cameroon Crises in Brief

- Conflict in Anglophone Region
  - ▣ Several armed groups, dozen self-defense militias
  - ▣ 1.9 million people, mostly children, in need of assistance
  - ▣ About 3K people have died
  - ▣ There are about 437K IDPs, and 35K refugees in Nigeria
- Boko Haram
  - ▣ Thousands joined 2012-16
  - ▣ Killed at least 275 people in 2019
  - ▣ Remains active in the Far North



# General Information

- Divided into 10 regions
- 28 million people (July 2020 est.)
- Anglophone region has 20% of the total population.
- Ranks 150 out of 189 countries (HDI--2019)
- Extreme North = Boko Haram affected area



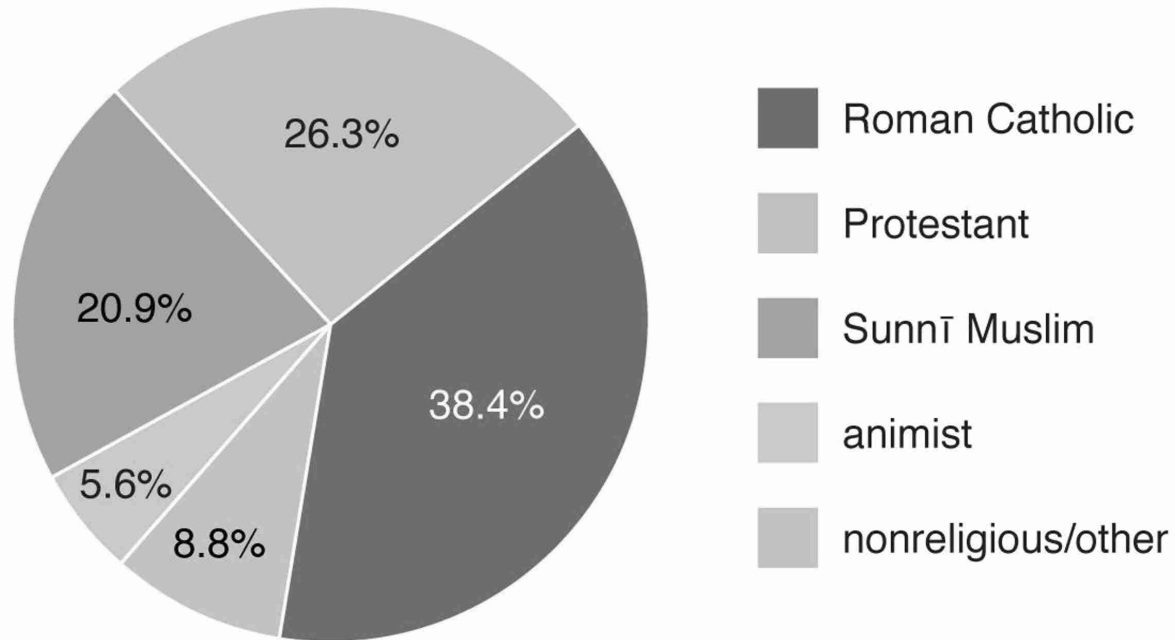
# Languages in Cameroon

- About 250 languages
- Two official languages: English and French
- Anyone with high school-level education speaks French or English, or both
- French largely spoken in the French-speaking Cameroon and English in the English-speaking Cameroon
- Implicit policy of eliminating English or assimilating English speakers?

# Ethnic Groups

- About 250 ethnic groups; major ethnic groups:
  - Housa and Fulani in the north;
  - Bamileke in the west;
  - Beti in center and south;
  - Douala [Basa and Sawa] in south; and
  - Bakwere, Banyangi, and Mankong in Southwest and Northwest region
  
- Note: COI does not indicate that individuals are targeted in Cameroon on account of ethnicity

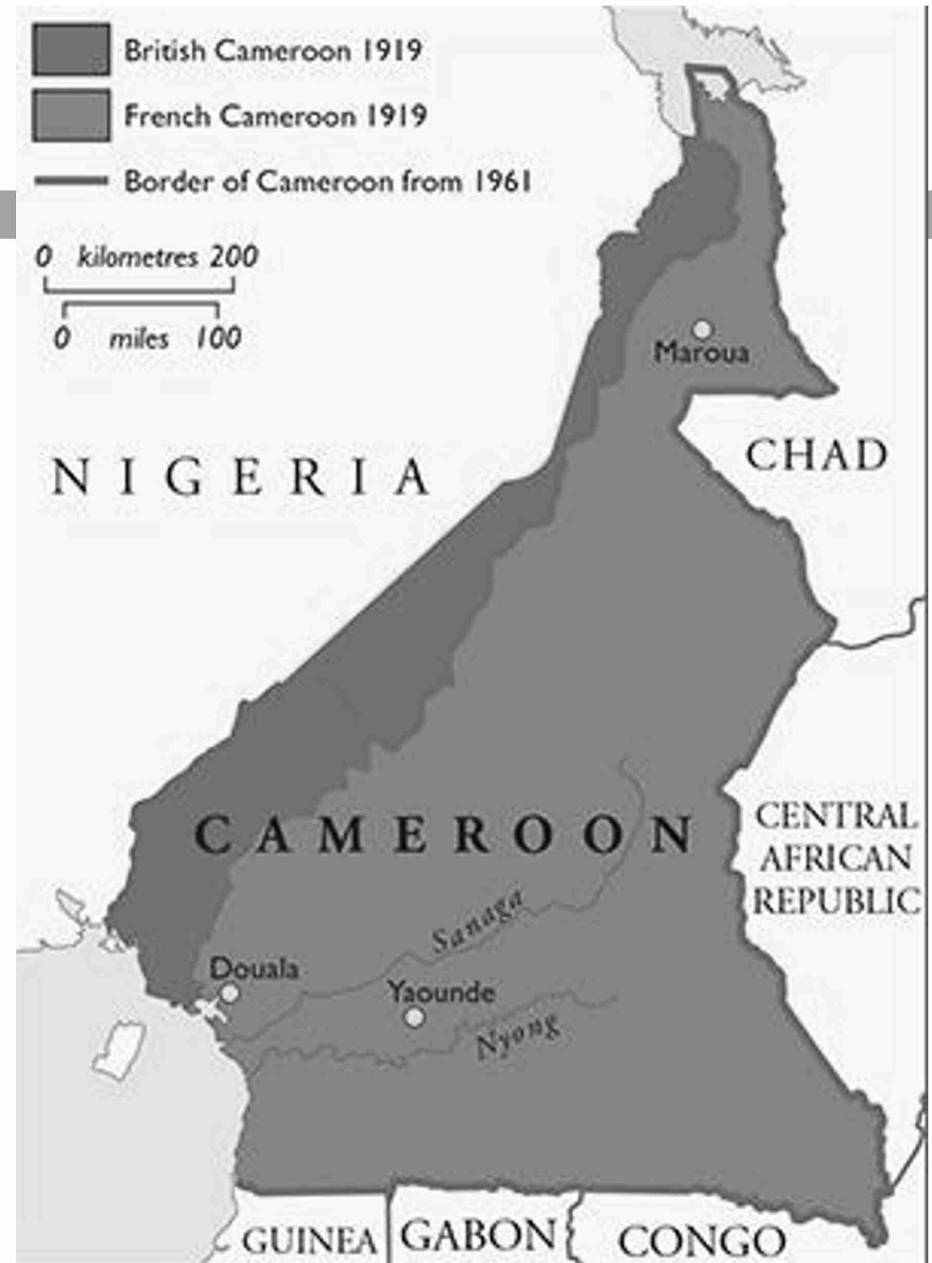
# Religious Affiliation (2005)



Note: COI does not indicate that individuals are targeted in Cameroon on account of religion

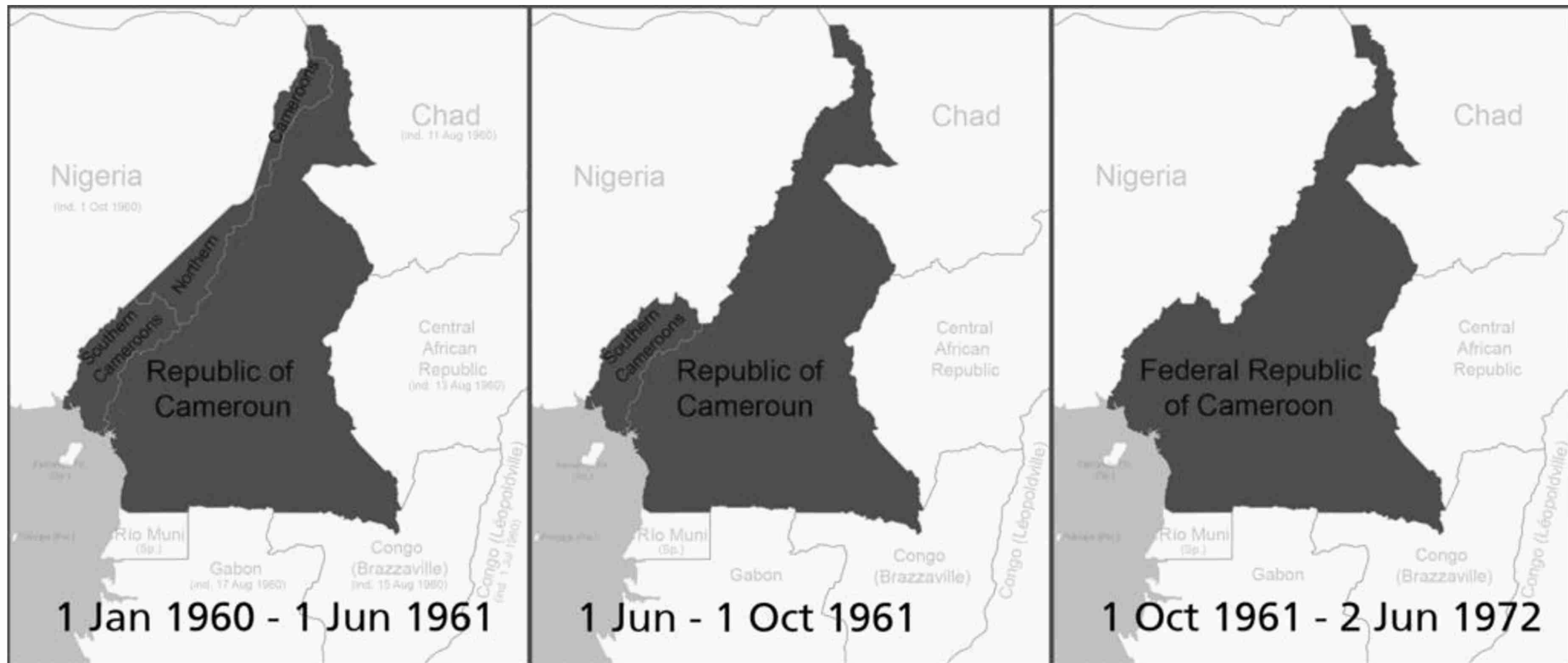
# Pre-independence

- 1919-1960, two distinct Cameroons:
  - ▣ British Cameroon (divided into North and South)
  - ▣ French Cameroon





# Independence and Transition to Federal Republic – 1960-1961



# Post-Independence Cameroon

- 1961: Federal Republic of Cameroon; **two equal states**
- 1972: United Republic of Cameroon  
(result of “unfair” referendum organized by President Ahmadou Ahidjo)
- 1984: Republic of Cameroon  
(as called before federation)



# President Paul Biya (1982 - Present)

- Head of the ruling party, RDPC
- **2008:** President abolished term limits
- 87 years old and 37 years in power
- **October 2018:** “Re-elected” president for 7 years.



# Roots of Anglo-Francophone Conflict



- Combination of:
  - Unique cultural identity
  - Historical grievance
  - Treatment of Anglophones as 2<sup>nd</sup>-class citizens
    - Mistreatment/discrimination in schools, courts, gov offices, gov employment
    - Biya regime favors and elevates Francophone elites
  - Gov. and local interest in oil/resources around Limbe

# Past Anglophone Secession Attempts

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- **1994:** Beginning of statements for independence from the Republic of Cameroon
- **1999:** The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) unsuccessfully declared independence
- **2006:** The Southern Cameroons Peoples Organization (SCAPO) unsuccessfully declared the Republic of Ambazonia

# Current Tensions in Anglophone Region



- The ongoing crisis started with strikes by lawyers and teachers
- October 2016: Protests against imposition of French language (in courts and schools) in English-speaking Cameroon — tip of the iceberg
- Extremists hijacked peaceful protests and turned them violent
- Gov security forces responded with brutality, leading to escalation of violence

# Anglophone Cameroon's Demands

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- Return to the federal constitution of 1961: equal states
- Application of the "Common law" Anglo-Saxon judicial system and the use of English in courts
- Use of English in schools and have students taught by English speakers

# Major Anglophone Parties/Organizations

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- The Social Democratic Front (SDF); major opposition party, founded in 1990
- The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), founded in 1995
- SCNC-affiliated Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL)
- Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP), founded in 2004 in the US



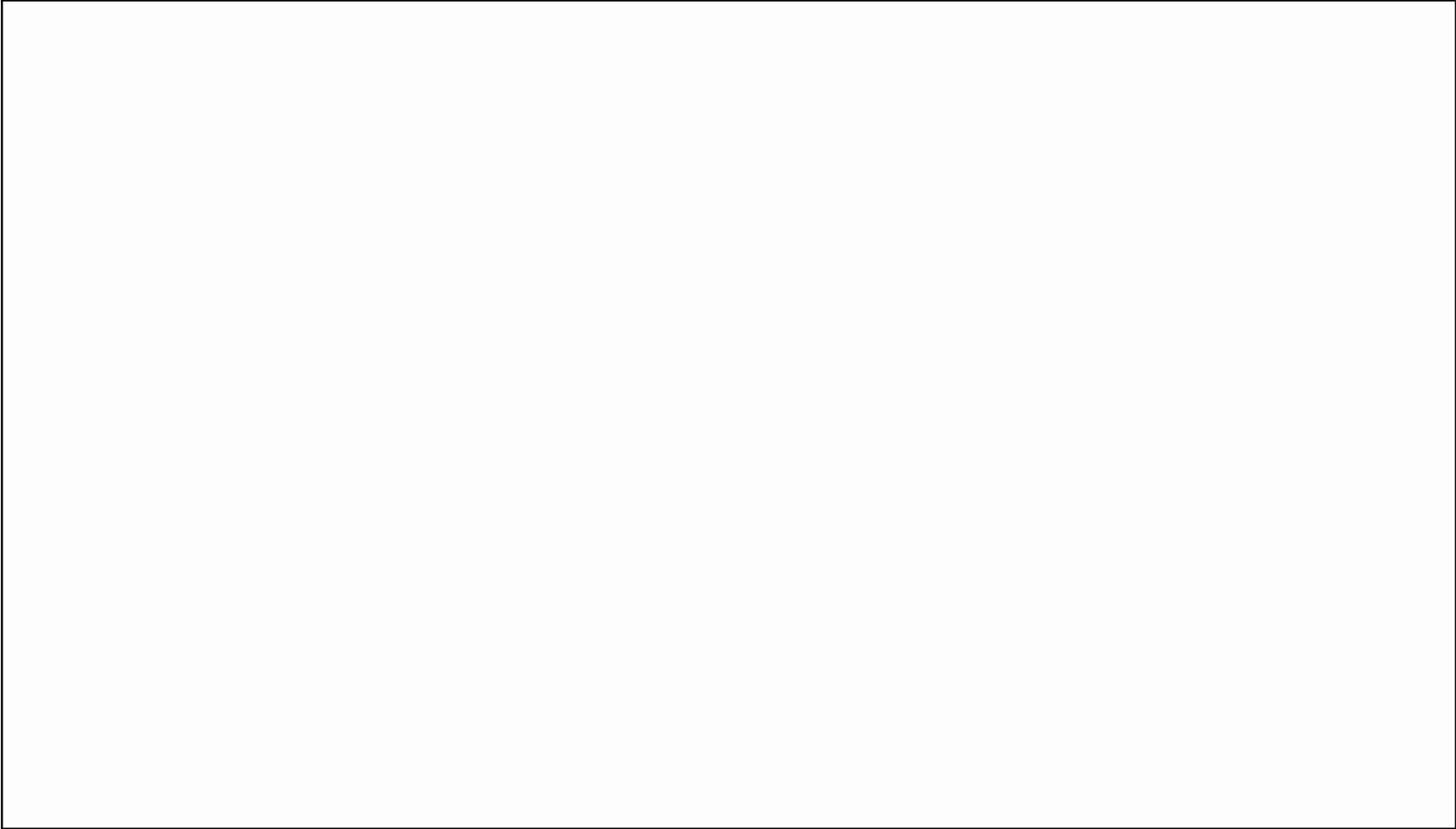
# The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)

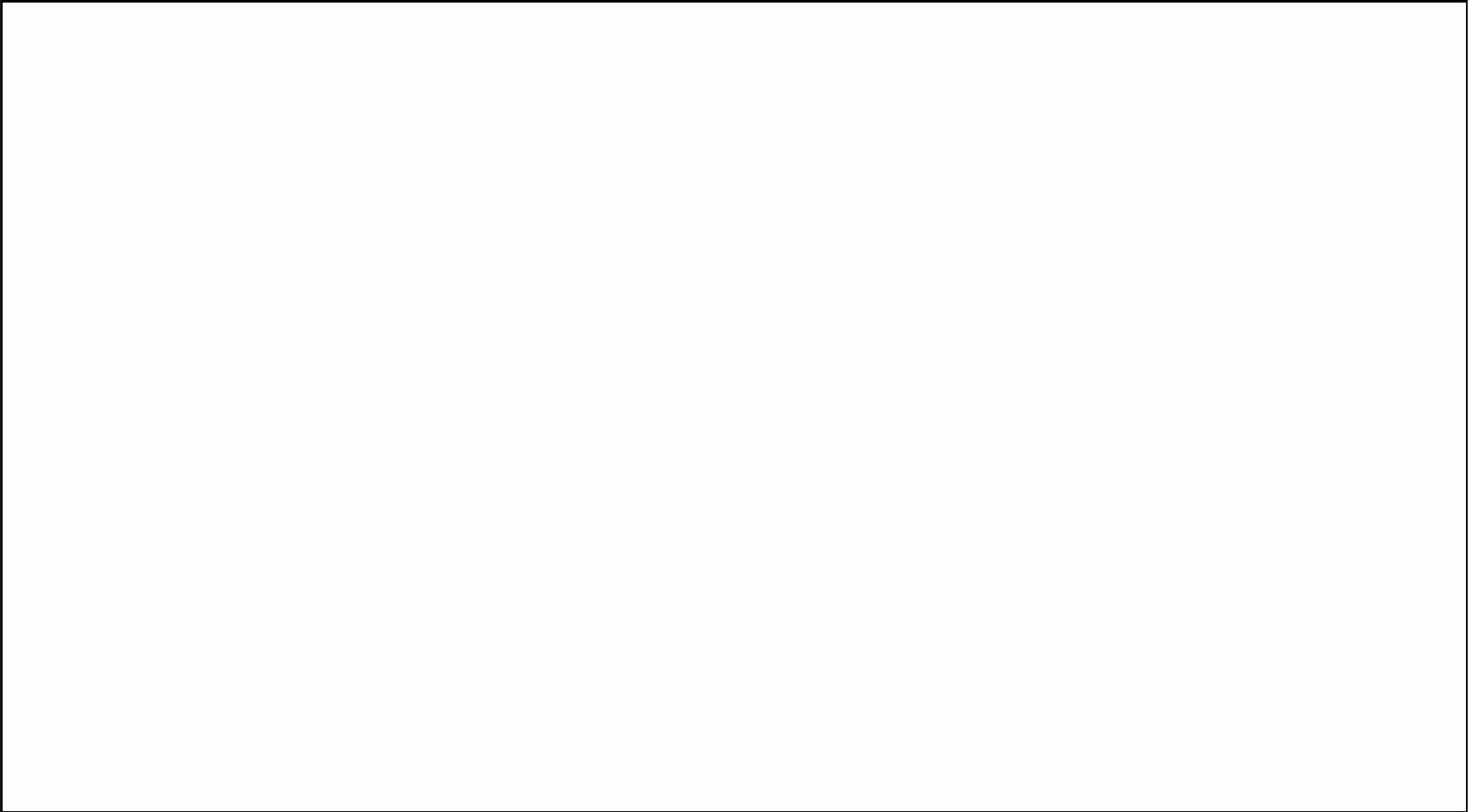


- Advocates for secession
- Banned in January 2017
- SCNC and SCYL activists (not regular members) may be arrested
- SCNC and SCYL generally March on October 1 (“Independence Day”)



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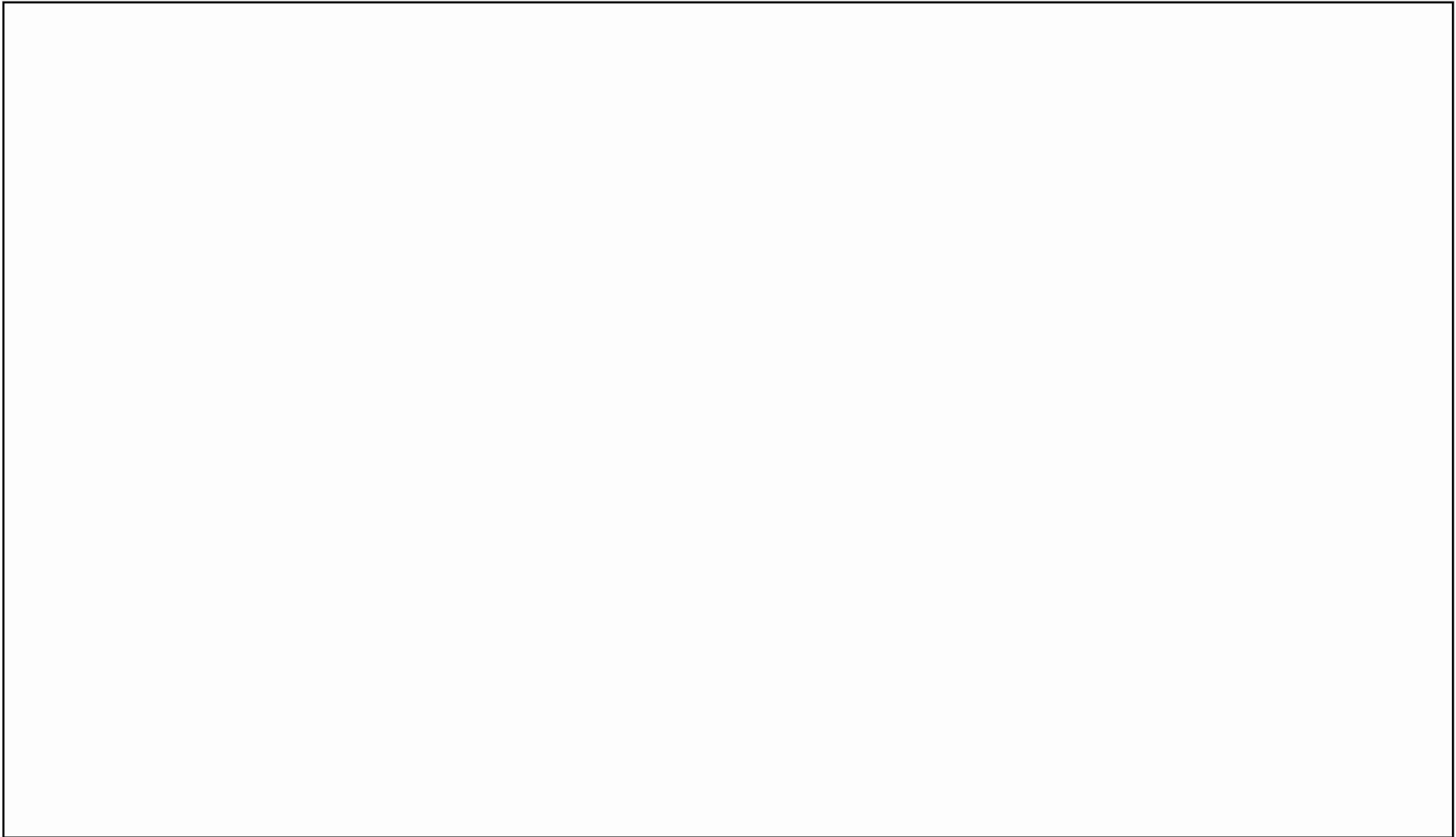


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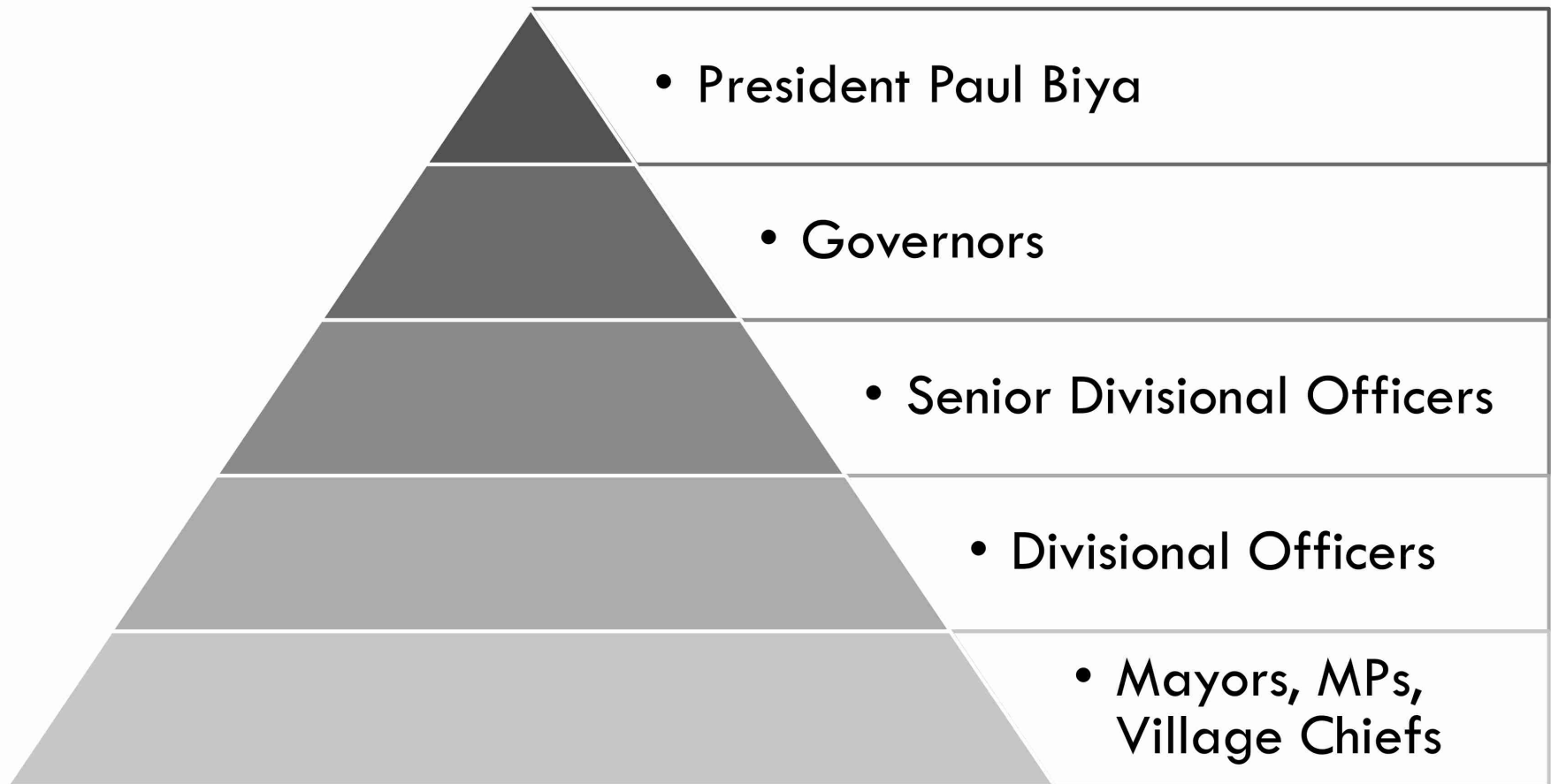


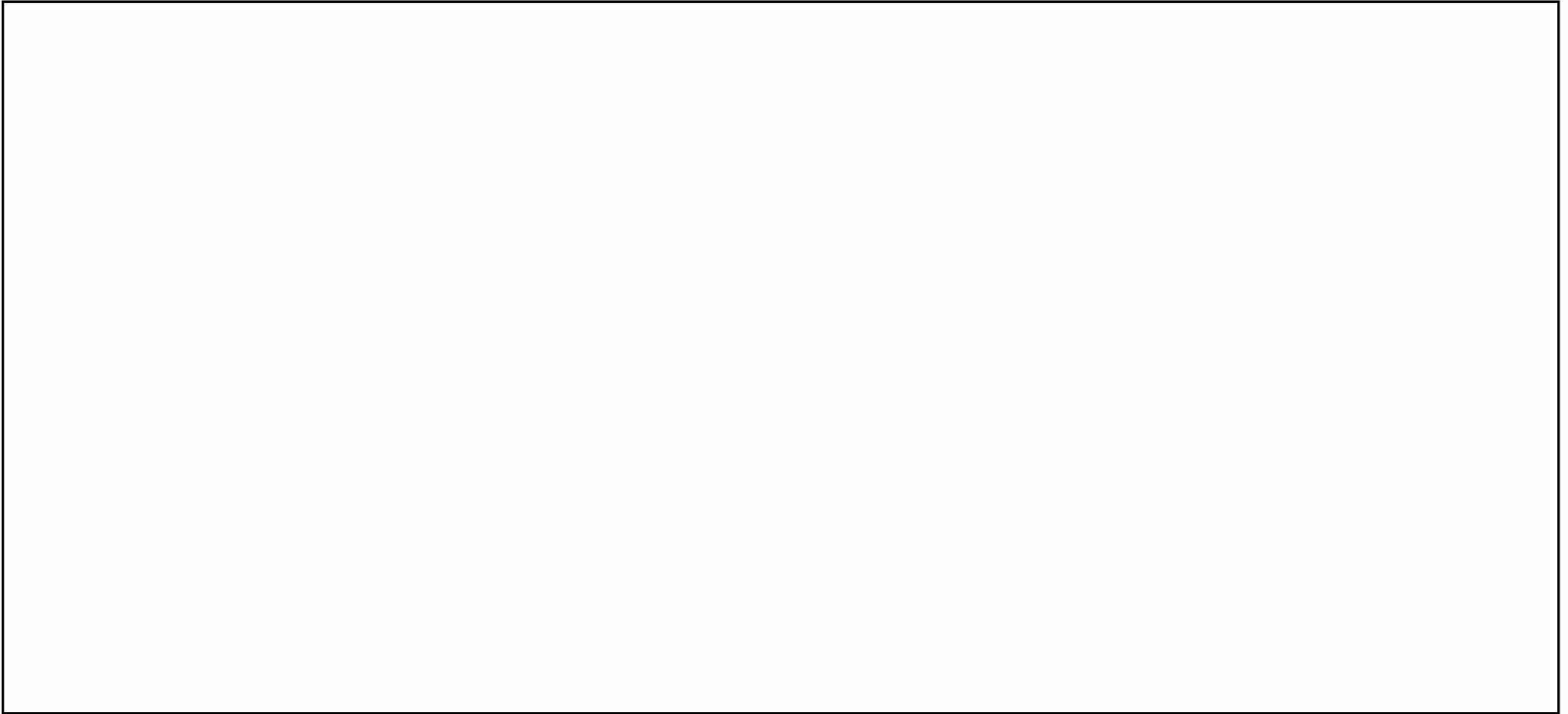
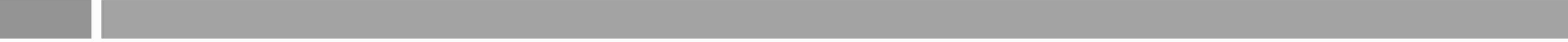


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# Security – Chain of Command





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# Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM)



- ❑ CRM Chairman Maurice Kamto self-declared president elect in October 2018 election
- ❑ Major Francophone opposition party
- ❑ CRM members were not persecuted prior to October 2018 election
- ❑ Maurice Kamto arrested Jan 29, 2019; released on Jan 26, 2020



# Corruption within Security Forces

- Cameroon ranked 153 out of 180 countries surveyed (2019) for corruption.
- Corruption is systemic and bribery is commonplace in all sectors, including in the military
- Bribing prison guards is routine—used to be released or have a family member released from prison—except for those arrested on the order of political leaders: Governor, Senior Division Officer, or Division Officer

# Francophone and Anglophone Military Leaders



- The military is overwhelmingly Francophone (about 90%)—one general out of about 30 generals
- Top military leaders in the English-speaking Cameroon are all Francophone
- The inequality worsened since the outbreak of violence in 2016
- No mistreatment reported against Anglophone members of the military

# Checkpoints at the Border between the Anglophone and francophone regions

- Multiple roadblocks within the Anglophone region and beyond
- The national policy is to ease movements, to show that Cameroon is one and safe
- Checkpoints/roadblocks often serve as a venue for police, military forces, and gendarmes to extort bribes from travelers.

# Targeted People Flying out of Douala

- No-fly lists exist (re. Douala and Yaoundé airports) for high-profile opponents/activists
- The names of listed individuals are dispatched to all checkpoints and airports for arrest
- Listed individuals are generally high-profile individuals/activists/opponents
- Request for listing by political leaders: Governor, Senior Division Officer, or Division Officer
- The government does have a reliable computerized record system to monitor departures.

# How to Obtain Travel Documents

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- Anglophone people have access to passports, but generally have to pay bribe
- Passports no longer issued in Bamenda and Buea, but in Doula and Yaoundé, since 2016
- People who obtain passports and ultimately travel through the airport are **GENERALLY** not at risk of harm

# Are Anglophone IDPs Welcomed in Douala and Yaoundé?



- IDPs are overall well received by the Francophone population
- IDPs have been targeted by security forces: arbitrary arrests in taxis, house searches without warrants

# Types of Violations by Security Forces in Western Cameroon



- Attacks on villages, the burning and destruction of property, and the killings of civilians—the latest example of 21 killed in an attack on Ngarbuh Village in 02/2020
- Arrest of real or suspected rebels and activists
- But no ethnic group is particularly targeted

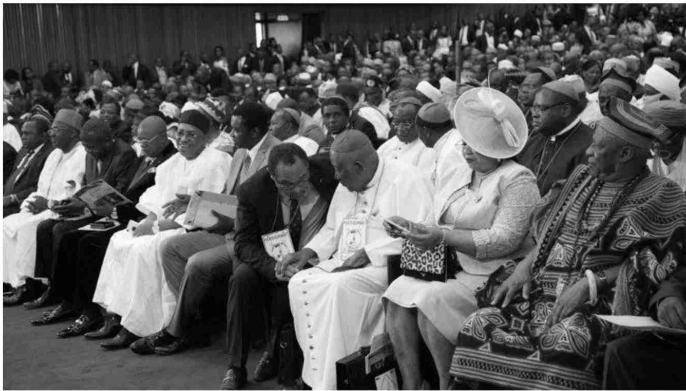
# Boko Haram in Far North Region



- The first attacks occurred in March 2014
- The conflict has caused at least 1,500 deaths, 155K IDPs, and at least 173K refugees
- Internal relocation to South possible re. BH



# National Dialogue in 2019 to end the the Crisis



National Dialogue

- The adoption of a special status for the two Anglophone regions
- The election of the government delegate (not governors) to whom mayor report
- The rapid integration of ex-combatants into society
- The name of the country be returned to former name, the United Republic of Cameroon
- An implementation committee put in place in March 2020

# Internal Relocation

- Not available for prominent activists
- Non-prominent activists from the English-speaking Cameroon may be able to relocate to the French-Speaking Cameroon
- Boko Haram victims may be able to relocate to South
- Job opportunities, ethno-religious differences, and language divide are obstacles to internal relocation

# Cameroon: What to Take Away

- ❑ Persecution of opponents/activists continues, and rebels/militia groups/BH continue to engage in violence
- ❑ Corruption is systemic and bribery is commonplace in all sectors, including in the military
- ❑ Well-known activists (not ordinary opponents) may be on no-fly list and may not fly out of Doula or Yaoundé
- ❑ IDPs are generally well-received in other parts of the country
- ❑ Relocation is not available for prominent activists

# For More Questions?

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Submit query to the RAI0 Research Unit,  
[RAI0Research@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:RAI0Research@uscis.dhs.gov)