

# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CAMEROON:

AN URGENT CALL FOR CHANGE

25 November - 10 December 2024



The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a global campaign that runs annually from November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to December 10, Human Rights Day.

With the Global theme for 2024 being "UNiTE to End Violence Against Women", this campaign seeks to raise awareness on the pervasive nature of violence against individuals based on their gender and to galvanize action to combat this critical human rights issue. In Cameroon, a country grappling with deep socio-economic and cultural challenges, the fight against GBV is more urgent than ever.

## GBV IN CAMEROON: A DIRE SITUATION

In Cameroon, gender-based violence is alarmingly prevalent. According to a report by the World Health Organization, approximately 1 in 3 women in Cameroon have experienced physical and/or sexual violence.

The situation is exacerbated by persistent patriarchal norms, which dictate that women should be submissive to men. Cultural beliefs and practices often stigmatize survivors, making it difficult for them to seek help or report incidents of violence.

## WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS ?

In Cameroon, a range of actors, including civilians, government forces, non-state armed groups, separatist factions, militias have been implicated in committing sexual violence against civilians.

The ongoing Anglophone crisis, which erupted in 2016 due to grievances over marginalization

has significantly heightened the proliferation of sexual violence in conflict-affected regions.

Reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented numerous instances of sexual violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors, underscoring the multi-faceted nature of the crisis.

**10TH DECEMBER**

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

2024 THEME :

**OUR RIGHTS, OUR FUTURE,  
RIGHT NOW**



<https://pro.drc.ngo/where-we-work/west-north-africa/cameroon>



<https://twitter.com/drcwestafrica>



## A TRIVIALIZED HUMAN RIGHT VIOLATION

**Physical Violence and Incidents of Sexual Violence:** Between January and March 2024, nearly 500 cases of rape and sexual or physical assault were documented in Cameroon's Anglophone regions. Additionally, more than 500 other cases of GBV, including forced marriage, denial of economic resources, and emotional abuse, were reported (7).

A rapid needs assessment conducted by UNFPA in 2019 revealed that 87% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reported experiencing GBV, with 52% of these cases involving psychological violence, 21% domestic violence, and 13% sexual violence

**Child Marriage:** The prevalence of child marriage in Cameroon further complicates the issue of GBV. According to UNICEF (2021), 30% of girls in the country

are married before the age of 18, which often leads to early pregnancies and an increased risk of domestic violence.

**Gender-Based Violence during Crises:** The ongoing socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions has also led to a spike in GBV. A report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) noted that during conflicts, sexual violence often becomes a weapon, further eroding the safety and dignity of women and girls.

## AN ONGOING FIGHT

### Legislative Reforms

The Cameroonian government has enacted legal reforms aimed at addressing sexual violence, including the adoption of the 2016 Penal Code, which criminalizes rape and other forms of sexual assault. Despite these legislative strides, challenges persist in translating laws into tangible justice for survivors.

### Humanitarian Assistance:

National and international non-governmental organizations

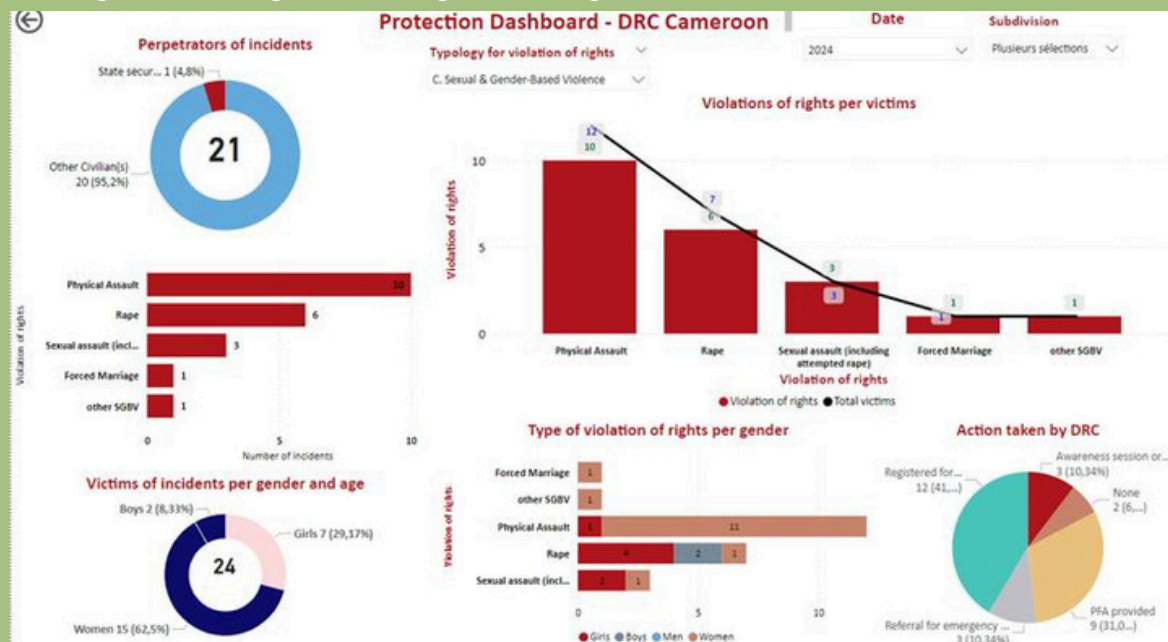


have played a pivotal role in providing essential support to survivors of sexual violence, including medical care, psychosocial support, and legal aid<sup>5</sup>. These efforts aim to alleviate the immediate and long-term consequences of trauma and empower survivors to address grievances.

The international community, through entities such as the United Nations and regional bodies like the African Union, has exerted pressure on the Cameroonian government to investigate allegations of sexual violence and hold perpetrators accountable<sup>6</sup>.

## Community Mobilization

Grassroots initiatives led by civil society organizations and women's groups have been instrumental in raising awareness about sexual violence, challenging gender norms, and providing solidarity and support to survivors<sup>7</sup>. Community-driven efforts are indispensable for fostering societal change and building resilience against sexual violence in conflict.



### References

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