

Summary

On October 27, Cameroon announced the re-election of President Paul Biya, aged 92, for an eighth term, extending his tenure until 2032. However, opposition supporters of Issa Tchiroma claim electoral fraud and have organised protests despite bans. Recent days saw deadly clashes in cities including Douala and Garoua, with tensions remaining high amid demands for transparent election results and fears of further violence, affecting major urban centres and posing risks for travellers in these areas.

Recent events and developments

On October 27, Cameroon's Constitutional Court announced that President Biya, the world's oldest president, wins an eighth term with a 53.66% share of the vote, while the opposition, Issa Tchiroma, came second with 35.19%. Within an hour of the election outcome, demonstrations have broken out in Douala, with people chanting against Biya, while in the English-speaking west of the country, streets are deserted with citizens indoors due to fears of unrest. This anxiety comes from the previous day's clashes between security forces and opposition protesters on October 26 across cities, including Douala and Garoua, that left at least four protesters dead and over 100 arrested. Videos showed authorities using tear gas to disperse crowds barricading roads. On October 25, tensions rose as citizens protested in cities like Ngaoundéré, Maroua, Douala, and Bamenda, demanding transparent election results amid fears of a rigged poll on October 12. The October 12 presidential vote was controversial among angered youth and the opposition, who accused Biya of using state machinery to manipulate the election in his favour. In response, protests broke out on October 21, where security forces used tear gas to disperse opposition supporters protesting in Garoua and Yaoundé who carried Cameroonian flags and chanted "Goodbye Paul Biya, Tchiroma is coming". In the months preceding the election, notably in July and August, Biya reshuffled key military posts, promoting several army officers and colonels to higher positions across the military, and barred opposition candidates from elections, raising concerns about the credibility of the electoral process. Nevertheless, protest bans were defied by opposition supporters, resulting in a tense security climate. Meanwhile, other security concerns in Cameroon include ongoing threats from terrorist groups, which remain active in northern regions. For example, on September 6, Boko Haram militants attacked Christian villages in Cameroon's Far North, killing at least four people. The election crisis is thus unfolding against a backdrop of broader security challenges in the country.

Impact assessment

The re-election of President Biya has reinforced existing tensions, increasing the unpredictability of security dynamics across Cameroon. For travelers and businesses, this means likely disruptions and operational challenges primarily in urban centers, including Douala, Garoua, Maroua, Bamenda, and Yaoundé, where opposition mobilisation and government crackdowns intersect. Spontaneous protests remain likely with limited warning, causing disruptions such as road blockages, increased security checkpoints, and potential violent clashes, which elevate physical risks to personnel and assets. The socio-political structure of Cameroon is strained by eroded trust in institutions, particularly among younger demographics and opposition factions. This dynamic mirrors a worldwide surge in digitally organised, decentralised Gen Z protests in 2025, driven by dissatisfaction with governance, corruption, economic inequality, and constrained freedoms. In Cameroon, these tensions are compounded by a government response marked by strict security measures, including detentions, heavily armed security personnel, and restrictions on assembly, which could further exacerbate unrest. In the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions, the persistence of "ghost town" protests, which are spontaneous, large-scale shutdowns that disrupt daily activities, including business operations and access to essential services, adds complexity to the environment. Such protests, while often peaceful, contribute to economic uncertainty and logistical challenges. Meanwhile, in Cameroon's northern regions, the ongoing presence and attacks by Boko Haram and affiliated groups add another layer of risk, particularly for those operating in remote or border areas. These threats manifest in kidnappings, ambushes, and infrastructure damage, requiring heightened situational awareness and contingency preparations. The general security climate, combining electoral unrest and persistent militant violence, means that the operational environment remains volatile for the short-term future.

Advice from Forth Global

- Stay informed of local news and government announcements, especially regarding protest timings and locations.
- Avoid all demonstrations and large gatherings, particularly in urban centers like Douala, Garoua, Bamenda, and Yaoundé.
- Anticipate traffic disruptions and enhanced security checkpoints. Plan travel routes and schedules in advance accordingly.
- Remain alert in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions, where "ghost town" protests may disrupt services.
- Be cautious when travelling near northern border areas prone to Boko Haram activity. Maintain contingency plans for sudden security changes.

Customised advice

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