

## HRW condemns 'hasty' verdict in terrorism trial

Ten leaders of Cameroon's separatist group have lodged an appeal against their 20 August convictions and life sentences by a military court. The leaders of the Ambazonia Interim Government who were charged with terrorism and rebellion went on trial in December. However, [Human Rights Watch](#) (HRW) notes that the evidence against them was only presented to the defence during a single 17-hour overnight hearing that began the day before their conviction. The court admitted thousands of pages of statements and documents as evidence and more than 1 000 items of forensic evidence, including firearms, spears and laptops. **Defence lawyers told HRW they were unable to examine or effectively challenge the evidence.** 'It appears that the military court handed down a hasty verdict and sentence without giving the accused any meaningful opportunity to defend themselves,' said HRW's Central Africa director Lewis Mudge. He said the process was plagued by 'pretrial abuses and serious allegations of fair-trial breaches that warrant independent and impartial judicial review, which we hope will happen under appeal'. Sisiku Tabe, the head of what is known as the 'Ambazonia government,' and nine other leaders were arrested in January 2018 in Abuja in an extrajudicial transfer that was denounced by the UN Refugee Agency.