

SHADOW REPORT

Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the Combined 22nd and 23rd reports submitted by Cameroon under article 9 of the Convention

SUBMITTED JOINTLY BY THE CAMEROON WOMEN'S PEACE MOVEMENT (CAWOPEM) and a coalition of national NGOs¹

With support from INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (ISHR)



¹ List available in Annex 1

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CACSC	Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CHRDA	Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CUSS	Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
DSF	Defence and Security Forces
ENAM	National School of Administration and Magistracy
ENS	ÉCOLE NORMALE SUPÉRIEURE
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
HTTTC	Higher Technical Teachers Training College
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IPSS	Institute for Peace and Security Studies
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (or: queer), intersex
MND	Major National Dialogue
NCDDR	National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
NHRCF	National Human Rights Commission and Freedoms
NICs	National Identity Cards
NSAG	Non-States Armed Groups
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SONARA	SOCIETE NATIONALE DE RAFFINAGE
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This shadow report covers the period between 2017 when the Cameroon state report was due and highlights the prevailing situation with regards to racial discrimination in Cameroon.²

Section two of this report identifies the most vulnerable communities and social groups which bear the brunt of racial discrimination in Cameroon. For the purpose of this shadow report, emphasis is laid on the Anglophone ethnic minority and socially vulnerable groups within this minority such as women and children, the elderly and people with disabilities. This section also examines in general terms cross-cutting issues of minority groups including the statistical composition of the main ethnic groups in Cameroon and LGBTQI persons.

Section three highlights some manifestations of racial discrimination against the Anglophone minorities. The Anglophone crisis is examined alongside ensuing discriminations in various spheres of life ranging from arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life, rights to education and training, rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, opinion and association, rights to equal treatment before the tribunals and the protection of women and girls against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Other cross-cutting issues are equally examined in this section.

In the **final section**, we formulate recommendations and draw together the main findings of the report for conclusion.

² All names of individuals mentioned in this report are already in the public domain or the concerned individuals have given their approval.

1. INTRODUCTION

Minority groups in Cameroon suffer discriminations. Some of these discriminations are longstanding and deep-rooted while others are anecdotal. Since 2017, measures to contain the Boko Haram violent extremism and the Anglophone crisis in the Far North; and North and South West Regions of Cameroon respectively have plagued the daily lives of the ethnic minorities and socially vulnerable groups within these communities with deaths, arbitrary arrests and detentions, kidnappings, maiming, rapes and other forms of GBV, prejudices, marginalization, stereotyping and exclusion. These discriminations persist notwithstanding that Cameroon has ratified a number of international instruments to combat discriminations including the ICERD. Human rights defenders, who play a key role in ensuring the rights of national, racial, ethnic minorities and other fundamental human rights of these minority groups are themselves subjected to attacks such as threats, intimidation, harassment and reprisals, yet Cameroon has not taken adequate measures to provide human rights defenders with a safe and enabling working environment. What's more, some government official have even attempted to impede and out rightly vilified the works of human rights defenders in the course of executing their official duties.

Amongst the communities considered most vulnerable to racial discrimination in Cameroon, one finds the Southern Cameroons English- speaking minorities, socially vulnerable groups such as women and children particularly the girl child, people, with disabilities, the elderly, LGBTQI persons, as well as indigenous peoples. The institutional weaknesses and the lack of political will to halt attacks targeting human rights defenders working to protect the rights of these minority groups by States and non-State actors, have further compounded their vulnerabilities and exposed them to gross human rights violations with impunity.

The findings of this shadow report indicate that, despite measures taken by the Cameroon government in many fields, the failure to translate these measures into action coupled with the failure of the state to commit to its legal obligations under national regional and global human rights frameworks, as well as hate speech, violent communication, shrinking civic space,

marginalization, the use of the excessive and disproportionate military force and other forms of violation, resulting in persistent racial discrimination which continue to impact these ethnic minorities in all the areas of their lives. The unilateral amendment of the federal constitution that brought the formal British Cameroon and the formal French Cameroon together in 1961 as a two-state federation is found to be at the heart of the Anglophone minority crisis, a typical example of ethnic discrimination. In addition, the precarious lifestyles of these minorities have been exacerbated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 global health pandemic and the general worsening humanitarian situation in Cameroon rendering them even more vulnerable.

2. MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN CAMEROON

This section of the report covers the National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities most vulnerable to discrimination in Cameroon. Cameroon is made up of about 250 different ethnic groups originating from the former French Eastern Cameroon and British Southern Cameroons. Added to the Cameroon population are refugees and asylum seekers from neighbouring countries.

This shadow report identifies British Southern Cameroonians (also known for the purpose of this report as Anglophone Cameroonians, English-speaking minorities or North and South West regions of Cameroon) as being particularly vulnerable to racial discrimination. This is informed by their post-colonial, geo-political, and socio-cultural background, its linkages with the Anglophone crisis which erupted in November 2016 and its impact on the lives of this minority group.

Historically, Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun came together as a two-state federation at the July 1961 Founban Constitutional Conference³. In a federal constitution, they guaranteed the independent administration and respected its state's cultural identity calling the then Southern Cameroons West Cameroon, a constituent state of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. In a reversal of the Founban Conference which made Cameroon a two-state federation, President Amadou Ahidjo on May 20, 1972 in a unilateral referendum amended

³ <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/Anglophone-dilemma-cameroon/>

the constitution and transformed the federal state into a “United Republic”,⁴ this followed another constitutional revision in 1984 renaming the country “Republic of Cameroon”.⁵ Following the above metamorphosis, Southern Cameroons/West Cameroon was stripped off its autonomous status and became mere North and South West regions under 1996 constitution.⁶ This has gradually led to the nurturing of and Anglophone consciousness and a feeling of being eroded from their identity by the Francophone dominated state.⁷ These longstanding grievances escalated in to what is known today as the “Anglophone crisis” when a peaceful protest of lawyers and teachers in October 2016 met with extreme violence from the Defence and Security Forces (DSF).

This shadow report further identifies women and children particularly the girl child, people with disabilities, the elderly, LGBTQI persons, refugees, asylum seekers as well as indigenous Peoples and other categories particularly vulnerable to racial discrimination as their social vulnerabilities intersect with their identities either as Anglophone minorities or refugees and asylum seekers.

In addition, this report identifies Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) working on the Anglophone minority thematic particularly or general human rights issues in Cameroon as also being vulnerable. HRDs including some who participated in the production of this shadow report testified to impediments from government officials including threats, intimidations, harassment of their members and others which have greatly hindered their activities and regret that government takes no measures to investigate and punish these threats. Also, although government recently took a decision overturning an earlier one not to allow international human rights groups investigating and publishing findings on human rights cases in Cameroon, our overall finding is that the working environment of HRDs remain absolutely unsecured.

Finally this section of the report also expatiates on other categories of minority groups in Cameroon who suffer from racial discriminations:

⁴ See the History of Cameroon by S N Tita

⁵ Law No. 96-6 of 18 January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2 June 1972

⁶ Art. 61 (1)

⁷ IPSS (2020) CAMEROON CONFLICT INSIGHT, PEACE & SECURITY REPORT (Vol. 1 March 2 020)

Pygmies are the eke nomadic forest people typified by precarious livelihoods in the shrinking forests of the south-west and south-east. They face pressure from the Catholic Church and the government to settle in 'pilot villages' and along roadways for easy accessibility and have been exploited by logging companies which gravely destroy their forest environment.⁸ The government continued long-standing efforts to provide birth certificates and national identity cards to the Baka often fails because reaching them is impeded by the difficulty in accessing their homes deep in the forest.

Montagnards also known as 'Kirdi' are several non-Muslim peoples in the north who make up around 11 per cent of the total population and live in the highlands of northern Cameroon.⁹ They undergo exploitative labour practices amounting to bonded labour or forced servitude; have little or no decision-making power in their communities; and suffer from lack of access to services.¹⁰

Mbororos are an indigenous community situated in the borderlands of Cameroon. There are credible reports from NGOs that the Mbororos, nomadic pastoralists living mostly in the North, East, Adamawa, and Northwest Regions, continued to be subjected to harassment, sometimes with the complicity of administrative or judicial authorities.¹¹

⁸ Minority Rights Group International, <https://minorityrights.org/country/cameroon/>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Report of the Independent Expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák (Mission to Cameroon 2 – 11 September 2013)

¹¹ This information is also reported by the US in Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018 United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor)

3. MANIFESTATIONS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN CAMEROON

This section of the report aims at providing the committee with an overview of the most common and pressing manifestations of National/Racial/Ethnic discriminations in Cameroon. The section is divided into various subsections and provides an outline of key issues that feature on the concluding observations and the implementation of Articles 1 to 7 of the Convention in accordance with the Directives contained in Document CERD/C/2007/1 of 13 June 2008. They include but not limited to the Anglophone minority crisis, arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life, right to education and training, right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, opinion and association, right to equal treatment before the tribunal, Protection of Women and Girls against Gender-Based Violence. Cross-cutting issues such as effective bilingualism and social harmony; Statistics on the main ethnic groups and others are equally examined in this section.

This shadow report welcomes positive and satisfactory legal and institutional progress made by Cameroon in its combined twenty-second and twenty-third reports submitted under article 9 of the Convention, due in 2017 as attested by the committee. The report also expresses both concerns and deeper insights of some gaps and inconsistencies in the Cameroon state report. The findings are based on evidence compiled by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), official and unofficial sources and statistics and other anecdotal pieces of evidence.

Whilst this shadow report emphasizes British Southern Cameroonians as being particularly vulnerable to racial discrimination, informed by their post-colonial, geo-political, and socio-cultural background, its linkages with the Anglophone crisis which erupted in October 2016 and its impact on the lives of this minority group, this is not to, in any way, suggest that other National/Racial/Ethnic minorities do not also face the same or similar problems. Rather, the British Southern Cameroons' situation is used to illustrate the uniqueness of this ethnic minority who joined French /Eastern Cameroon in 1961 to form a two-state federation but which over the years has been stripped off its autonomous status to become a mere North and South West regions in the 1996 constitution under a purported decentralized unitary state.

The other cross-cutting concerns raised in the 2017 concluding observations and Cameroon government's responses to the committee recommendations are also considered alongside issues of multiple discrimination and intersectionality which are persistent.

There are still no existing policies and instruments on IDPs. No access to Health, education, shelter, protection, livelihood opportunities, no access to WASH, access to land and vocational training, corruption in the attribution of IDPs Cards is prevalent and cards are often held by people that are not IDPs. There is Lack of follow up in the implementation and distribution of IDPs cards, difficulties in acquiring documents (Birth certificates, ID cards, Certificates) that were destroyed in the cause of the crises, IDPs living with disabilities, the elderly and other socially vulnerable IDPs whose vulnerabilities are compounded by the conflicts are worst hit. Police and non-state arms group harassment on IDPs is widespread.

Refugees and asylum seekers are still inadequately protected. In August 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that between January and July, Cameroon unlawfully returned at least 800 refugees and asylum seekers to Nigeria. Majority of these refugees are women and children. Cameroon is host to more than 350,000 refugees and asylum seekers, including 260,000 from the Central African Republic and at least 90,000 from Nigeria. Despite its long history of hosting refugees, Cameroon has forcibly returned tens of thousands of Nigerian asylum seekers since 2015. A 2017 Human Rights Watch report documented how soldiers used violence and abuse, including torture, against asylum seekers in remote border regions. Authorities also imposed unlawful restrictions on movement in Cameroon's only official camp for Nigerian refugees. These refoulements completely undermine the Kampala convention of 2009¹² that was ratified by Cameroon. For instance, refugees are still living in Camps and are not integrated into host communities in violation of Art 163; Also Activities mentioned for refugees' economic empowerment are very insignificant as compared to the overall refugees' population in Cameroon Art 170; moreover, refugees do not have access to land. Attribution of refugees' ID cards is handed over to the UNHCR by Cameroon government. Numbers of people that were granted asylum within the period that is taken into consideration in the report are not mentioned.

¹² 2009 Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance Needs of Internally Displaced People.

It is worthy to note that the estimated number of IDPs in Cameroon, from the Anglophone crisis: 711 056; From Boko-Haram: 321 886; Estimated number of Refugees in Cameroon: 425 421; and asylum Seekers: 9332.¹³

Lack of effective participation of all socio-cultural components in political and public life continue to be manifested in the existing discriminations against indigenous groups; sexual and gender minorities, Bororo, the Anglophone Minorities, Albinos and especially the Pygmies. In as much as we do appreciate what the government of Cameroon has done thus far in reducing discriminations against indigenous people; worthy to note is the fact that the indigenous people live in unlocked remote village communities without access to adequate educational, road, health and potable water infrastructures. Failure to guarantee basic minimum social amenities for indigenous people living in unlocked remote communities is still a grave form of discrimination against them. For instance, the Baka pygmies in the Boumba and Ngoko division of the East regions are severely deprived of vital social amenities in the remote village communities. To date, the process to access land title documents for indigenous people is very complex and inaccessible in remote rural communities where they live, and the process is characterized with high costs and lengthy documents requirements beyond the reach of indigenous people. In addition, access to justice is impossible in unlocked remote communities where indigenous people live by virtue of lack of court buildings and trained interpreters in local dialects and parlance. The recruitment of workers in local councils in where indigenous people live do not have a quota system of hiring their staff members that takes into consideration the stakes of the indigenous people in identification and the running of local development projects. The 30 members of the NHRC are not inclusive of vulnerable entities like indigenous people, human rights defenders and consumer protection rights defenders. Most of these indigenous communities live in unlocked remote communities with no access to electricity, no radio signals. For instance, the Baka pygmies, the Bororo community of Nwa in Donga/Mantung Division, North West Region. The content of audio-visual programs are not evenly disseminated amongst State and Non-State media outlets. There is also a language gap because most of the programs are not broadcasted in local languages

¹³ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>

(dialects, pidgin and Fulfulde). The programs are not designed in an inclusive manner, all stakeholders in media body and CSOs are not involved in the process. This has led to the failure to consolidate social harmony and the fight against racial discrimination. Also, failure to fully incorporate the provision of racial discrimination in national legislation is manifested in the law on cybercrime which takes care of only one aspect of racial discrimination which is the cyber space, whereas Racial discrimination goes beyond cyber space.

The lack of effective participation of all socio-cultural components in political and public life is also manifested in government's response targeting only a limited class of indigenous groups. The response completely ignores youths, women and persons living with disabilities. Some specific ethnic groups have never occupied some positions in government whereas the Ewondo, Bulu and Fang, which are in the Beti cluster of peoples of the Southern tropical forest home of the president of the republic unapologetically dominate the political and decision-making spheres of the country.¹⁴ There are no official mechanisms to facilitate the effective participation of the Diaspora in the political life of the country.

Access to citizenship and the risk of statelessness remain a daunting challenge as the duration to obtain the final copy of the National Identity Card is still highly extensive. Citizens still use their acknowledgement receipts for over two years beyond its validity without having their original identity cards notwithstanding the limited use of the receipt. The arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of Anglophone IDPs who do not possess civil status documents is recurrent in French speaking Cameroon.

Competitive entrance examinations into professional schools like ENAM, ENS CUSS and other selection into the public service remain unfair/biased.¹⁵ Failure to consolidate social harmony and the fight against racial discrimination is further compounded by the failure to resolve the Anglophone Conflict which makes social cohesion wanting. High unemployment amongst English speaking Cameroonians spiked the Anglophone crisis and the conflict is ongoing. The National Petroleum Corporation (SONARA) like many other state corporations has never been

¹⁴ Minority Rights Group International, <https://minorityrights.org/country/cameroon/> also confirmed this anecdote in its report

¹⁵ www.atlantichronicles.com/2009/10/04/cheated-ENAM-common-law-candidates-threatened-to-go-voilent

managed by an Anglophone and the greater percentage of the managerial team is over 70% are French speaking, with only one woman out of 13.¹⁶

The reporting mechanism for non-compliance with the constitutional provisions on bilingualism, multiculturalism and togetherness is not available to the public. In addition, no sanctions of how defaulters have been corrected have been published and conflict related discrimination persists.¹⁷

The lack of statistics on the ethnic composition of Cameroon's demographic structures has only aggravated the foregoing discriminations against ethnic minorities. Cameroon is not committed in ensuring to undertake a mapping and census of its more than 250 ethnic groups as to predict trends in democratic collusions and conflict analysis. Laudable initiatives made by Human Rights Defenders working on the minority thematic to facilitate the ethnic groupings in Cameroon has not been heeded to by the government. Cameroon continue to claim that, "Cameroon is among countries that do not take into account racial or ethnic variables... Such data are considered less relevant and discriminatory as per the national unity and integration policy advocated in public life."¹⁸ According to Minority Rights Group International¹⁹ however, the main minority and indigenous communities that make up the population of Cameroon estimated as of July 2016 at 24.4 million include the highlanders (grass fielders) (31 per cent); equatorial Bantu (19 per cent); Montagnards (11 per cent); Fulani / Peuhl (10 per cent); northwestern Bantu (8 per cent); and eastern Nigritic (7 per cent). In addition to this minority group is the Indigenous forest-dwelling hunter-gatherer peoples who make up 0.4 per cent of the population and include the Ba'Aka (around 40,000), BaKola / BaGyeli (around 3,700) and Bedzam / Bedding; and the Mbororos community who are an indigenous community situated in the borderlands of Cameroon. The main minority and indigenous communities that make up the 250 ethnic groups

¹⁶ <https://sonara-cm.cm/en/the-society/board-of-directors/management/>

¹⁷ www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/cameroon

¹⁸ Para. 31 Combined twenty-second and twenty-third reports submitted by Cameroon under article 9 of the Convention, due in 2017

¹⁹ <https://minorityrights.org/country/cameroon/>

and subgroups of Cameroon are further classified into the following major regional-cultural groups:²⁰

- a) The western highlanders, who are also called grass-fielders and form the largest of these regional- cultural groups with about 38 per cent of the population. They include the Bamiléké, Bamoun and other north-western peoples and live in a region of fertile soils, noted and frequently resented for their success in farming and commerce.
- b) The Southern tropical forest peoples who includes the Ewondo, Bulu and Fang, all of which are in the Beti cluster of peoples and unapologetically dominate the political and decision-making spheres of the country. In addition to this regional-cultural group is the Pygmies', eke nomadic forest people typified by precarious livelihoods in the shrinking forests of the south-west and south-east. They face pressure from the Catholic Church and the government to settle in 'pilot villages' and along roadways and have been exploited by logging companies which gravely destroy their forest environment.
- c) The Montagnards are made up of around 15 distinct groups also known as 'Kirdi', a collective name for several non-Muslim peoples in the north who make up around 11 per cent of the total population and live in the highlands of northern Cameroon. Once enslaved by the Peuhl, they were forced to give up some of their lands to escape Islamization and were reportedly marginalized under the Ahidjo regime. According to the UN Independent Expert on minority issues²¹, some Montagnards undergo exploitative labour practices amounting to bonded labour or forced servitude; have little or no decision-making power in their communities; and suffer from lack of access to services.
- d) The Islamic peoples of the northern Sahel include the Peuhl, who are cotton and rice farmers, as well as livestock herders. Peuhl elites have gained national political prominence.
- e) The Coastal tropical forest peoples include Bassa, Douala and smaller groups of the south-west.

The above rich and overlapping Cameroon ethnic diversity notwithstanding, a split between the Anglophone minority and the Francophone majority over linguistic, cultural and

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Report of the Independent Expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák (Mission to Cameroon 2 – 11 September 2013)

participatory discriminations have been in limelight since the two countries came together as a federation in 1961, due to the country's divided colonial legacy. English and French are constitutionally the official languages,²² but French has always dominated in the political arena of the country.

To crown it all, the president of Cameroon Paul Biya confessed in a panel discussion moderated by Mohammed "Mo" Ibrahim, the Sudanese-British billionaire at the Second Paris Peace Summit in France on Tuesday November 12, 2019 that they did attempt unsuccessfully to assimilate the English-speaking regions, thus harmonizing it with the French part of the country. "We tried assimilating their system into the majority francophone system but because of identity differences, it failed."²³

3.1 The Anglophone minority and crisis

The Anglophone minority of Cameroon account for two of its ten regions (20%), namely the North-West and the South-West; which together represent 16,364 square kilometres over a total area of 475,442 square kilometres with approximately 8 million inhabitants out of a total Cameroonian population estimated today at 27 million. Thus far, English speaking Cameroon plays an important role economically, thanks to the petroleum, agricultural and commercial revenue generated from the two regions. The politicization of the conflict and the radicalization of the protagonists have led to a series of events that are all harmful, leading to civil disobedience, ghosts towns, economic meltdown and armed insurgencies between separatists and the regular army that has deprived more than 600,000 children from schooling in the two Anglophone regions, and has claimed more than 3,000 lives, more than 60,000 refugees towards Nigeria, creating more than 800,000 IDPs and with 3.3 million in need of humanitarian assistance. The ongoing armed conflict has equally led to the burning of birth certificates, National Identity Cards and Educational certificates of the victims, rendering them stateless. Concerning IDPs, a greater majority are currently living in bushes, hiding away from crossfires, and some are currently hosted in cities like Buea, Limbe, Kumba, Tiko, Bamenda, Kumbo, Nkambe, Yaoundé, Douala etc.

²² Law No. 96-6 of 18 January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2 June 1972. Art. 1 (2)

²³ <https://panafricanvisions.com/2019/11/cameroon-from-biya-a-mea-culpa-on-the-anglophone-crisis-in-paris/>

Despite measures taken by Cameroon government and claims that, “Cameroon is among countries that do not take into account racial or ethnic variables...”,²⁴ “racial and ethnic variables” have been at the centre of the ongoing Anglophone crisis that commenced in October 2016.

In October 2016, Anglophone lawyers and teachers staged a peaceful protest against longstanding grievances of marginalization, discrimination, inundation of English courts and schools with francophone and the erosion of their cultural heritage. They met with extreme violence and brutality from the government Defence and Security Forces (DSF).

A Prime Ministerial Order No. 124/CAB/PM of 29 November 2016 was set up to lay down the organization and functioning of an ad hoc Inter ministerial Committee to examine and propose solutions to the concerns raised by the English-speaking teachers and lawyers trade union. Whilst we acknowledge additional measures taken by the government to resolve the plight of Anglophone teachers and common law lawyers contained in paragraphs 84-93 of Responses to Committee Recommendations, we also noticed with dismay that the promised ...”holding of a national education forum scheduled for 2017” is yet to see the light of the day in 2020. Also, instead of continuing conversation with the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) a federalist movement founded in 2016 to advocate for the rights of the English-speaking minorities in Cameroon which led the November 21, 2016 strike, government in January 2017 banned CACSC. The movement consisted of civil society organizations, lawyers and teachers’ trade unions in the Anglophone regions and demanded for a federation during initial negotiations.²⁵ After the proscription of CACSC and its activities, government went ahead and arbitrarily arrested and detained its members: Barrister Felix Agbor Balla, Fontem Aforteka’a Neba and Mancho Bibixy. This government’s approach further radicalized CACSC protesters and their demands shifted from representation in a federal state to the creation of an independent state.²⁶ This is the immediate cause of what is known today as the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Failure of government to contain the Anglophone protest led to a symbolic declaration of the “Republic of Ambazonia” by the separatist forces on October 1, 2017 the anniversary of the day British

²⁴ Para. 31 Cameroon Responses to Committee Recommendations

²⁵ <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Cameroon-Conflict-Insights-vol-1.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid.

Southern Cameroon and “La Republique du Cameroon” came together to form a two states federation in 1961. Continued protests led to the killings of both military and civilians and while returning from Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire on November 30, 2017 where he attended the 5th African Union -European Union Summit, President Paul Biya declared to the press that “...Cameroon is victim to repeated terrorist attacks from a secessionist group...I’ll like to assure Cameroonians that measures have been taken to eliminate these criminals and bring back peace throughout the national territory”. The alleged measures by the president of the republic to eliminate what he describes as criminal and terrorist attacks from a secessionist group has subjected Anglophone ethnic minorities to horrendous human rights violations since 2017 from both the Cameroon Defence and Security Forces (DSF) and the separatist Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG), infringing most of their rights guaranteed under Art. 5 and 7 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

The main bone of contention between government and the Anglophone minorities represented by the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) was the use of French and French officials in English schools and courts. To resolve this issue, government in 2017 signed a decree instituting the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.²⁷ Legal documents contested for being produced in French only were translated in to English, English teachers magistrates were transferred to replace those of French origin in English schools and courts, respectively. However, in the public sector the French language incessantly dominates virtually everywhere. For instance, French is the language used in all administrative, military, ceremonial, and other duties of the state including the two English speaking regions. Most decrees, administrative decisions, and all other official documents are prepared, signed and published in French. In public administration in Cameroon, French is the language spoken and written, while English is given very little or no attention.²⁸

A Human Rights Defender popularly called “Mancho Bibixy” who is popular for the ‘coffin revolution’ in Bamenda Cameroon and is presently sentenced for 15 years in jail for advocating

²⁷ Decree No. 2017/13 of 23 January 2017 to lay down the establishment, organization and functioning of the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.

²⁸ Communiqué Radio-Pressé No. 00001093/MINFI du 23 Oct 2020

Anglo-Saxon education. Even his trial was flawed by poor French to English interpretation of his offence tried in the military tribunal using anti-terrorism laws which forced his English college of counsels to abandon the courtroom several times. Other English-Speaking Cameroonians who are also detained in connection with the “Anglophone Conflict”, Sisiko Ayuk Tabe and the rest of the “Nera 10”²⁹ detainees did not have fair trials beginning with lack of provision of interpreters and translators. Lawyers repeatedly walked out of court in protest of lack of fair trials. At the Appeal and Supreme Courts, the “Nera 10” were sentenced to life imprisonment without fair trial and lack of effective bilingualism was notorious.

The practice of bilingualism at the level of professional education and high institutes of education remains grossly ineffective. In the universities, and in public entrance exams, students are asked to write in the most proficient language, but all these is on paper because English-speaking students complain of poor mastery of the English Language by Francophone lecturers. Inappropriate/Lack of translation of texts e.g. some texts translated from French into English are very poorly translated.

The bilingual universities give the impression that lectures are delivered in the two languages whereas in reality they are delivered almost entirely in French. E.g. University of Yaoundé II Soa. Language of interaction on campus is predominantly French. Posting of French speaking teachers who do not master the English language to English-speaking schools. On November 21st, 2016, English-speaking teachers’ trade unions launched an indefinite strike action to a number of problems on the dysfunction of the English-speaking subsystem of education including, the high number of French-speaking students and lectures in professional schools under Anglo-Saxon Universities. As of 2016, approximately 90% at HTTC Kumba and 80% at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Buea.³⁰

The Anglophone Conflict started as a result of ethnic discrimination, especially in the courts where French Speaking magistrates were posted to English-speaking courts and without proper

²⁹ Named after the hotel in which they were arbitrarily arrested in Nigeria before being extradition to Cameroon in January 2018.

³⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/Anglophone-dilemma-cameroon>

knowledge and ability to express themselves in English which caused a lot of coercion that spiked the 2016 Anglophone Conflict.³¹ Most of the Ministries sites are in French and those translated to English are poorly done.³² Even lifesaving information like the country COVID-19 situation report is made available only in French. The President of Cameroon addresses the nation annually predominantly in French. Most French-speaking decision and law makers address Cameroonians predominantly in French. The provisions for bilingualism are on paper but not in practice. The military command is predominantly done by French-speaking commanders and Military command in Cameroon continues to be done in French. The Constitution talks of the promotion of bilingualism, but it is very silent on its practice and implementation. E.g. The utility of the English language begins and ends in the training centres and in the schools as is the case with the bilingual week. Marginalization/domination of leadership and managerial positions by French speaking Cameroonians.³³ There is still the lack of effective bilingualism of media contents and programs.³⁴

Other government's strategic responses to the Anglophone crisis included the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325³⁵ on Women Peace and Security which recognizes the critical role women play in peace initiatives and how conflicts disproportionately affect women, National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR)³⁶ to gather and disarm former Boko Haram militants and armed secessionists and help them be reinserted into the civilian life, the Major National Dialogue (MND) which articulated around themes that will answer the concerns of residents in the South-west and North-west Regions. On September 10, 2019 amid increasing violence and following sustained international pressure, President Biya called for a "national dialogue," a series of nationwide discussions aimed at addressing the crisis. The dialogue ended with the adoption of a special status for the two

³¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/5/cameroon-teachers-lawyers-strike-in-battle-for-english>

³² www.minsante.cm

³³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/anglophone-dilemma-cameroon>

³⁴ <https://mediatudecmr.com/equinoxe-tv/>
<http://www.crtv.cm/category/nos-programmes/>

³⁵ Republic of Cameroon: national action plan for the 1325 resolution and companion resolutions of the united nations security council on women, peace and security (2016-2020), august 2017

³⁶ Decree N° 2018/719 of 30 November 2018 to establish the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee

Anglophone regions and the release of hundreds of political prisoners, and other persons arrested in connection with the unrest in the North-West and South-West regions but with little effects in terms of defusing the human rights abuses and violence current going on in both English speaking regions caused by the warring factions. In addition, the endorsement of the Declaration of Safe Schools, an international political agreement to protect education during armed conflict, Declaration of Economic Disaster Areas acknowledging the structural and durable impact of conflicts in the restive regions which have led to insecurity and grievously affected economic activities in those geographical areas and a reconstruction plan which is pending. These measures notwithstanding, the government has exhibited bad faith by denying to appease the sufferings of the vulnerable masses by not heeding to calls for ceasefire from all angles including a call from the UNSG to ceasefire and national solidarity to combat the COVID19 global health pandemic. Government has persistently failed in its duty of care vis-a-vis the Anglophone minorities in Cameroon preferring a military solution to the crisis.

3.2 Arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life

Anecdotal and other evidence from diverse sources confirm that since 2017, both Cameroon government's agents and non-state armed groups (NSAG) have committed unlawful and arbitrary killings in the ongoing Anglophone minority crisis. The victims include ordinary civilians, women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, human rights defenders, defence and security forces (DSF) and non-state armed groups (NSAG) alike.

From 2017 to present, Cameroon DSF used excessive brutality and violence to many Anglophone citizens. These killings include 40 protesters witnessed by HRDs on the field and confirmed by Amnesty International³⁷ and the International Crisis Group³⁸ in 2017, among others. In 2018, killings included at least 27 people in a village of the Santa Subdivision of the restive Northwest Region of Cameroon called Menka-Pinyin by elements of the Gendarmerie, the 51st Motorized Infantry Brigade, and the Special Operations Group of the National Police during a raid

³⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/search/?q=&sort=date&country=38576&p=3>

³⁸ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>

on a location believed to harbor Anglophone activists.³⁹ Between January and March 2018, security forces allegedly burnt 12 villages in the North and South west regions including Kwakwa, burning to ashes at least four elderly women left behind by their fleeing relatives⁴⁰ The same government forces allegedly killed two clerics during the same period of time,⁴¹ while Anglophone separatist forces attacked and killed several dozens of civilians in the North and South west regions suspected of liaising with the central government and defence forces confronting them as well.⁴² The killings are still ongoing particularly targeting harmless civilians, children and women. The killing and desecration of body parts of Florence Ayafor, the burying alive of 19 years old Nkeng Diane in Kumba, The Ngburh Massacre, the massacre of 8 children in a classroom in Kumba on October 24th, 2020, the killing of two 17 years old teenagers in Akum on Sunday November 8, 2020 and many others represent just the tip of an iceberg. Added to the above killings are also the enforced disappearances of some Anglophone Cameroonians arbitrarily arrested by the defence and security forces. They include the disappearance of Franklin Mowha, a human rights defender who arrived Kumba on August 2, 2018 to monitor human rights abuses and was never seen. It should be noted that the arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life and enforced disappearances mentioned in this report do not include those from the Boko Haram violent extremism in the Far North Region. It is estimated that more than 3,000 lives have been lost in the ongoing Anglophone crisis and counting.⁴³

3.3 Right to education and training

Human rights defenders working on the right to education thematic welcome measures by the Cameroon government to ensure education for all. These measures include free access to education in accordance with article 7 of law No. 98/04 of 14 April 1998 on education guidelines

³⁹ Menka-Pinyin Massacre https://morisc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VID-20180526-A0036.mp4?_e2

⁴⁰ This was also reported by Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/07/20/these-killings-can-bestopped/abuses-government-and-separatist-groups-camerouns>

⁴¹ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018: United States Department of State. (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor)

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch Report 2019

in Cameroon⁴⁴, and Prime Ministerial Order No. 124/CAB/PM of 29 November 2016 to set up and lay down the organization and functioning of an ad hoc Interministerial Committee to examine and propose solutions to the concerns raised by the English-speaking teachers' trade unions on November 21, 2016.⁴⁵ We equally acknowledge additional measures taken by the government to resolve the plight of Anglophone education defenders including the deployment of English-speaking teachers to replace the French dominated teachers in English schools, recruitment of bilingual teachers, alleged disbursement of subventions for private education, creation of a Polytechnique for English-speaking students and others.⁴⁶ However, HRDs notice with dismay that the promised ..." holding of a national education forum scheduled for 2017"⁴⁷ is yet to see the light of the day in 2020. Also, instead of continuing conversation with the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) a federalist movement founded in 2016 to advocate for the rights of the English-speaking minorities in Cameroon which led the November 21, 2016 strike, government in January 2017 banned CACSC consisting of civil society organizations, lawyers and teachers' trade unions in the Anglophone regions for demanding representation for Anglophone Cameroon within a federation during initial negotiations.⁴⁸ After the proscription of CACSC and its activities, government went ahead and arbitrarily arrested and detained its members. This government's approach further radicalized CACSC protesters and their demands shifted from representation in a federal state to the creation of an independent state.⁴⁹ The Anglophone separatists in retaliation advocated for the closure of schools which has seen the disruption of normal operation of schools since then. Both teachers and students have either been killed or abducted. UNICEF and OCHA estimate that more than 700,000 children representing almost nine of every 10 children had been out of school for nearly four years and counting, that 80 percent of schools remain closed in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, more than 60

⁴⁴ See para. 73 of responses to the committee recommendations

⁴⁵ See para.85 Ibid

⁴⁶ See para. 88 Ibid.

⁴⁷ See para. 89 Ibid.

⁴⁸ <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Cameroon-Conflict-Insights-vol-1.pdf>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

schools in the Northwest and Southwest Regions have been damaged since the beginning of the crisis in 2016.

On November 28, 2018, over 85 students of the University of Buea and several other innocent civilians on and off campus were tortured by state security officers (police and gendarmerie) as a result of a protest within the main university campus in Buea, South West Region (Cameroon) at the request of the then Vice Chancellor Dr Nalova Lyonga and actual minister of Higher Education. Students of both genders were brutalized, their rooms vandalized, and their personal items looted. It was even alleged that some female students were raped, but this crime has never been investigated nor the culprits punished.⁵⁰

The recent massacre of 8 children in a classroom in Kumba on October 24th, 2020 are some of the atrocities faced by education in the ongoing Anglophone crisis.

3.4 Right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, opinion and association

This shadow report equally highlights concerns over the shrinking civic space in Cameroon in recent years particularly regarding the Anglophone crisis. Despite the 1990 laws relating to freedom of association,⁵¹ the civil society in Cameroon continue to face various difficulties in and around freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, opinion and association which disproportionately affect the freedoms and liberties that constitute the fundamental human rights. Civic space curtailment in Cameroon takes both direct and indirect forms and include torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of citizens especially targeting Anglophone Cameroonians. For instance, on 28 November 2018 over 85 students were torture by police and gendarmes at the University of Buea, in January 2019, a third-year student at the Technical University of Bambili in the Anglophone Northwest Region 22-year-old Fredoline Afoni was beaten to death by security forces.⁵² In June 2018, security forces forced two girls to

⁵⁰ The Centre for Human Rights conducted a fact-finding mission and confirmed act: CHRDA (2018) Torture of University of Buea Students: 2 years after (Anglophone Crisis, Human Rights)

⁵¹ Law No 90/053 of 19 December 1990 relating to freedom of association, as amended by law No 99/011 of 20 July 1999

⁵² <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/07/20/these-killings-can-be-stopped/abuses-government-and-separatist-groups-camerouns>

crawl in mud at the Cameroon Protestant College of Bali in the Northwest Region referring to them as Ambazonians.⁵³

Administrative restrictions are other means through which civil liberties and freedoms are curtailed in Cameroon generally and the Anglophone regions particularly. Human right defenders, visitors and families need to obtain formal authorization before visiting inmates in prisons or bribe prison staff. This experience of HRDs is corroborated in the United States⁵⁴ Human Rights report on Cameroon and national and international human right bodies. In 2018, even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) and the Commissions for Justice and Peace of the Catholic archdioceses were denied access to some detention centres in Cameroon hosting Boko haram and Anglophone separatists suspects, respectively.⁵⁵ Despite the law on freedom of association, the minister of territorial administration on the recommendation of the prefect may suspend the activities of a registered association or dissolve the association on grounds of public order and security. The right to peaceful assembly is infringed by the use of defence and security forces to suppress or denial of approval for assemblies to hold. Government has particularly targeted the Anglophone protesters and political parties denouncing the ongoing Anglophone crisis, electoral fraud, mismanagement of state institutions and projects.⁵⁶ Even academic and cultural freedoms have been curtailed in order to keep the Anglophone crisis lowkey. For instance, Felix Ningue a teacher at the Government Bilingual High School Mendong Yaoundé was suspended from his duties on March 5, 2019 for proposing an abstract from Maurice Kamto's 1993 book entitled "L'Urgence de la Pensee" (The Urgency of Thought), as one of the topics for student discussion in an examination.⁵⁷ Organisations and individuals are penalized and face reprisal for disapproving or expressing views at odds with government's policy. Journalists are obliged to practice self-censorship to avoid repercussions for criticizing the government, especially on issues regarding the Anglophone crisis

⁵³ <https://twitter.com/mimimefoinfo/status/1006999602401341440?lang=en>

⁵⁴ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018 United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor)

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The Cameroon Renaissance Movement Party of Professor Maurice Kamto has been particularly targeted, and its members arbitrarily arrested, tortured and imprisoned

⁵⁷ Also reported by the US state government

and security matters. Police, gendarmes and other government officials have violently harassed, physically attacked, arrested and detained journalist for reporting on the Anglophone crisis which they spare no effort to subdue. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) for instance reported the police arrest of Pidgin news anchor Samuel Wazizi, who worked for the Buea-based independent station Chillen Muzik and Television. Arrested on August 2 in Buea South west region, Wazizi was kept incommunicado and died in government detention at an unknown date. The arbitrary and unlawful raids and sweeps without warrants in Northwest and southwest regions and in quarters in Yaoundé, and Douala with high concentration of citizens from these regions has become rampant since the outbreak of the crisis in 2016.

3.5 Right to equal treatment before the tribunals

Despite measures taken or promised to be taken by government as contained in paragraphs 84-93 of Responses to Committee Recommendations to settle the claims of Anglophone lawyers and teachers, government resorted to a crackdown.

People suspected of having any links with the Anglophone crisis have been arbitrarily arrested, detained and some torture to death. It started with the arrest and detention of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) leaders who were at odd with government's approach to the resolution of the lawyers and teachers protest for daring to ask for federalism. They are tried in the military tribunal using anti-terrorism laws⁵⁸ which vaguely define terrorism, pass disproportionate penalties and provision for the exclusive trial of purported terrorist acts even by civilians in military courts with disastrous impact on freedom of information as it is implemented in a heavy-handed manner.⁵⁹ They are detained for extensive periods of time without notification of charges. For instance, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, the president of the Anglophone separatist movement, and 46 others were arrested in Nigeria, extradited to Cameroon and detained incommunicado and without official charge for close to six months from January 2018. They are subjected to pre-trial detention for, whereas the law makes provision for a maximum

⁵⁸ Law No 2014/028 of 23 December 2014 on the suppression of acts of terrorism

⁵⁹ Reporters without Borders, "Disproportionate penalties for media in Cameroon's anti-terrorism law 2016" December 2016, <https://www.rsf.org> > node

period of 18 months before trial, most of them stayed for longer periods without trial and applications for unlawful detentions (habeas corpus) are generally rejected.

3.6 Protection of Women and Girls against Gender-Based Violence

Women and children particularly the girl child have been disproportionately affected within the framework of the ongoing Anglophone crisis. They have been victims of all forms of Gender based violence (GBV) including targeted arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life, torture and inhumane treatment, rape, sexual slavery, kidnappings, mutilation and maiming. They have lost loved ones, lost property and livelihood activities, suffered from domestic violence, died in the course of child birth due to lack of health care and others. They have seen their gender roles reversed and unpaid care work increased.

The Cameroon Penal Code⁶⁰ punishes rape with between 5 to 10 years imprisonment. While government partnered with U N Women to put in place structures to mitigate issues of GBV in refugee and IPD camps in East, Adamawa, and Far North regions including gender desks, call centres and female social cohesion forums to provide survivors with psychosocial, medical, legal and security assistance, and form discussion groups amongst them,⁶¹ GBV survivors of the Anglophone crisis are yet to be assisted as the war is still ongoing. Rather government's strategic responses to the Anglophone crisis so far have deliberately and systematically ignored the critical voices of women. For example, Nation Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM)⁶² created with a view to maintain peace, consolidate the country's unity and strengthen the people's willingness and day to day experience with respect to living together failed to reflect the concerns of women who are at the centre of "multiculturalism and living together" as objects of intertribal marriages.

⁶⁰ Section 296 Cameroon Penal Code

⁶¹ Para. 187-193 Concluding Observations of the Combined twenty-second and twenty-third reports submitted by Cameroon under article 9 of the Convention, due in 2017

⁶² Decree no 2017/013 of January 23, 2017 to create Nation Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism

Also, in the heat of the ongoing Anglophone crisis, Cameroon launched its first National Action Plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325⁶³ on Women, Peace and Security and accompanying resolutions for the period 2018-2020. It should be remembered that in the year 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formally acknowledged through the adoption of Resolution 1325 that women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes, notwithstanding the critical role that they can play in peacebuilding efforts and the way conflicts disproportionately affect women and girls. It also affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace. The wisdom, of the landmark UNSCR 1325 notwithstanding, women have been left out in peace initiatives in Cameroon though they bear the brunt of crisis.

In addition, A National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) was created on November 30, 2018 to gather and disarm former Boko Haram militants and armed secessionists and help them be reinserted into the civilian life. Considering that women and girls are not only victims of armed conflicts but also active participants as combatant with differential needs from those of men in the event of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, the failure to list the Ministries of Women's Empowerment and the Family, and Justice as key ministries to implement the decision, the relegation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to partners if needed and not active participants to effectively monitor and evaluate the effective implementation of the process considering the different needs of female and male ex combatants raises concerns on what protection is in the Cameroon model DDR for women who bear the brunt of armed conflicts.

Also, the Major National Dialogue (MND) of September 10, 2019 articulated around answers to the concerns of residents in the South-west and North-west Regions failed to include the women, peace and security commission highly advocated for by women. Only 15 (18%) of all the 120 members of the 8 commissions were women, and only one youth was represented. A percentage that completely undermines all instruments and commitments signed by Cameroon

⁶³ National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security (2018-2020)

UNSCR 1325,⁶⁴ 2250,⁶⁵ CEDAW,⁶⁶ SDGs,⁶⁷ AU Aspiration 2063⁶⁸ and others. This underrepresentation also corroborates existing gender discrepancies in Cameroon in political, leadership, economic and social spheres.

In September 2018, Cameroon government endorsed the Declaration of Safe Schools an international political agreement to protect education during armed conflict. This declaration notwithstanding, teachers and school children have continuously been kidnapped, molested, maimed and some killed leading to grievous impediments to the education of the girl child particularly and exposing her to harmful practices such as teenage pregnancy, forced prostitution and, early marriage and others. Incidences of teenage pregnancies have surged in some of the grassroots communities in the restive regions by up to 30%. Parents in raw desperation prefer to marry off their daughters to a single stranger than allow her to be raped by several men. As attacks on schools increase like the horrendous murder of 7 children in a classroom in Kumba Meme Division of the South West Regions on October 24, 2020, the stripping of children in a school in Limbe the same region 3 days after, the kidnappings and others continue to keep children particularly the girl child away from school, reducing their chances of acquiring education which is said to be a development multiplier.

In September 2019, Cameroon government through a Prime Ministerial Order Declared the Far North, Northwest and Southwest Regions Economic Disaster Areas.⁶⁹ According to 121 of the Cameroon General Tax Code, an Economic Disaster Zones, is defined as a geographical area in which economic activities is structurally and durably affected by insecurity or disaster of any kind. By this definition, government acknowledged the extent to which prevailing armed conflicts have impeded economic activities in the said regions. Ongoing conflicts have destroyed property, livelihood activities, health infrastructure and the social fabric. Insecurity has exposed women and

⁶⁴ UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security

⁶⁵ UNSCR 2250 on youth, peace and security

⁶⁶ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations against Women

⁶⁷ Sustainable Development Goal (Agenda 2030)

⁶⁸ African Union Agenda 2063 for the Africa we want

⁶⁹ Prime Ministerial decree N02019/3179 of 02 September 2019 the status of economic disaster zone as granted to the Far North, Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon.

girls to VAWG and intersected with the vulnerabilities of the elderly, those with disabilities; those living with HIV/AIDS have been on perpetual move and cannot access their antiretroviral drugs. Women and children have been targeted, killed or forced to displace in bushes, urban slums or to neighbouring Nigeria. Yet government has taken no adequate measures to rehabilitate these women. Women give birth in their hideouts in bushes without medical assistance. Children born under such conditions are deprived of lifesaving vaccines and birth certificates.

The administration in the restive regions has resorted to extended restrictive orders restraining movement of people and goods since 2017. These administrative orders alongside extended ghost towns imposed by the non-state armed groups in the Northwest and Southwest regions have cause untold hardship to inhabitants including inability of women in labour to access health facilities during child birth. Many women have died in the course of child birth and many patients because of these restrictions. Despite all these hardship, government has ignored all calls for ceasefire. The major national dialogue resolutions contain no clear-cut provisions for women who are majority of the vulnerable masses.

Women human rights defenders and peace builders have also been a particular target in ongoing armed conflicts. They have been threatened, molested, bullied by both warring parties, their family members have been kidnapped and ransom paid for their release, some have been obliged to relocate or at least relocate their families. WHRDs have been attacked online and offline, using disinformation campaigns, patriarchal norms, social constructs and gender stereotypes, some have been quelled, yet they are at the forefront of grassroots peace building, organizing and staging lamentation campaigns, relenting no effort in calling for ceasefire, full, equal, genuine, meaningful and inclusive dialogue. They have also occupied the front seat in providing lifesaving information and resources to the vulnerable grassroots masses during the corona virus pandemic, making preventive measures available in local languages, producing and providing homemade masks and hand sanitizers, providing food and coping mechanisms to the neediest with little or no funding.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations add to recommendations made by the committee in the previous concluding observations

4.1 Anglophone minorities

- Urge government to heed to the calls for ceasefire
- Ensure the release of all political prisoners relating to the Anglophone crisis
- Encourage the holding of genuine, meaningful and inclusive dialogue.
- Ensure that deep-rooted and longstanding Anglophone grievances are legitimately and genuinely addressed.
- Permit without delay the conduct of an independent inquiry by the UN, AU, INGOs and local civil society organisations into human right violations affecting the Anglophone minorities
- Ensure there is quota for Anglophones representation in decision making at all levels in government and state institutions.
- Ensure the effective and genuine implementation of the constitutional provision on the bilingual nature of the country.

4.2 The rights of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

- Call on the Parliament to legislate on the situation of HRDs in Cameroon.
- Establish a mechanism to effectively protect Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Cameroon.
- Ensure that all applicable international human rights treaties are effectively domesticated as envisaged in the national Constitution (article 45) and transposed through a revision of the 1990 laws on civil liberties.
- Prohibit threats against Human Rights Defenders and punish perpetrators

- Ensure inclusive and intensive dialogue with organizations of civil society working in the area of human rights protection, in particular those working to combat racial discrimination, in connection with the preparation of the next periodic report.

4.3 Rights of women, girls and other socially vulnerable groups

- Urge the government of Cameroon to honour its commitments to women's rights and make use of women's agency and resourcefulness to achieve sustainable peace in the country.
- Call on the government to acknowledge and address the unique wartime needs and experiences of women, girls and other socially vulnerable groups.
- Ensure there is 50% quota for women's representation in decision making at all levels in government and state institutions.
- Mainstream gender in mediation and all conflict resolution and peace building processes.
- Ensure the building of lifts, wheelchair ramps and tactile paving in all public spaces to guarantee the safety of people with disabilities, particularly women.
- Increase incentives and subsidies to promote women in agricultural and other informal sectors.

4.4 General cross-cutting issues

- Undertake a census to enumerate and map out the ethnic compositions in Cameroon's demographic structures.
- Ensure that laws are enacted to address every aspect of racial discrimination; not only limited to cyber space and the law should take into consideration hate speeches, ethnic exclusion and tribalism in workplaces.
- Promote the broadcast of audio-visual programs using local languages and screen translation notes for the wider public.
- Promote an inclusive approach by involving indigenous persons, CSOs, media practitioners and HRDs in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- Ensure that all ethnic and racial considerations are equitably included in government's actions and programs and reflect the diversity of the country.
- Ensure the implementation of the laws on hate speech, contempt of race and religion and discrimination.
- Allocate parliamentary seats to Cameroonian Diaspora and ensure a specific Diaspora Agency is created to facilitate diaspora participation in governance.
- Systematize, digitize and decentralize birth registration (birth certificates) upon incorporating ethnicity information.
- Ensure civil status registry services are located in all chieftaincies, hospitals and local councils in Cameroon.
- Decentralize and speed up the production of National Identity Cards by opening production centres in all 10 regions in Cameroon.
- Domesticate the Kampala Convention to ensure the enjoyment of the right to identity for IDPs.
- Promote an inclusive approach to recruitment in the public service to ensure the effective participation of minorities in the management of public affairs.
- Increase the membership of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission to 40 members to include indigenous people, human rights defenders and the consumer protection rights defenders.

4.5 Guarantee of effective Bilingualism

- Ensure the effective implementation of the official policy of bilingualism, and upon building an enabling environment whereby the English-speaking population is not subject to inequality, particularly in the areas of employment, education and judicial procedures.
- Ensure the recruitment of competent and bilingual staff to translate the texts: those who read and write both languages, to ensure that documents are designed accurately and disseminated simultaneously.

- Ensure that legal interpretation and translation should be done effectively in all spaces. Also, for allowance to be made to include local languages.
- Ensure that, where the University or training centre is English speaking, students and lecturers should be predominantly English-speaking by at least 75%.
- Promote the equal distribution of media airtime to both English and French program contents in both public and private media.
- Popularize the reporting mechanism of the bilingualism commission and ensure defaulters are punished.

ANNEX 1: Logos of Cameroonian contributing organisations

