



AFRICAN CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES (ACDHR)

CENTRE AFRICAINE POUR LA DEMOCRATIE ET LES ETUDES DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

P. O. Box 2728, Serrekunda, Zoe Tembo Building, Kerr Sereign, The Gambia

Tel: (220) 4462338 / 4462340; Fax: (220) 4462338 / 4462339

Email: csec@acdhrs.org; Website: <http://www.acdhrs.org>

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OPEN LETTER

His Excellency Paul BIYA
President of the Republic of Cameroon
Yaoundé, Cameroun

Object: Letter of protest related to the Government's attacks and reprisals against international and regional human rights organizations

Your Excellency Mr. President,

We, the participants at the Forum on the Participation of Civil Society Organizations at the 64th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held in Sharm El Sheikh in the Arab Republic of Egypt, present to you our warm compliments and hereby submit to your attention the following:

1. We are concerned by the Government of Cameroon's lack of political will to adequately respond to the gross and systematic violations of human rights in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. This situation has led to the proliferation of armed groups causing a massive flow of refugees and internally displaced persons, including human rights defenders fleeing violence to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and other parts of Cameroon. These armed groups are gaining ground by committing abuses against civilians, religious, traditional and administrative authorities.
2. We are concerned by the fact that State organs act with impunity; systematically violate human rights and fundamental freedoms and arbitrarily arrest and detain many people in violation of the principles and guidelines on the right to a fair trial.
3. We are deeply concerned by the upsurge in sexual violence against women and underage girls and other numerous violations that could constitute crimes against humanity.
4. Although we recognize Cameroon's continued collaboration with international and regional human rights institutions, we deplore the repeated attacks and threats of reprisals against the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights by some senior State officials.



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Your Excellency Mr. President,

5. We would like to remind the Republic of Cameroon that the Constitutive Act of the African Union puts an emphasis on citizen participation as one of the fundamental principles upon which the Institution is founded. Also, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance guarantees the effective participation of citizens in the democratic processes, local development and governance of their countries. Cameroon is one of the signatory states to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter). The non-governmental organizations that we represent appreciate the tremendous work of promotion and protection of human rights, conflict resolution, peacekeeping and security, carried out by the institutions and bodies of the African Union on the African continent.
6. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is of crucial importance for the promotion and protection of human rights, one of the major objectives of the African Union. Its actions and legitimacy derive from the member States of the African Union, which have unequivocally endorsed the OAU Charter, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the African Charter and many other relevant instruments. While we expected a dialogue on the facts exposed by this august institution, we were surprised by the intimidating and repressive tone used by the Cameroonian Government in response to a press release from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, published on March 6, 2019 and signed by the Honorable Commissioner, Prof. Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, Country Rapporteur of Cameroon and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Focal Point on Reprisals in Africa.



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Your Excellency Mr. President,

7. What we are fighting for is an Africa that respects human rights and the rule of law in our countries in order to ensure people's well-being. For this, States parties of the African Union have an obligation to respect the institutions and instruments of the African Union to which they are parties. Also, the Republic of Cameroon has the obligation to respect the independence of this treaty body. The Cameroonian Government should instead commit to a dialogue on the disputed facts instead of ignoring these verifiable allegations. Finally, the Cameroonian authorities should at all times and in all circumstances treat the members of this august institution with consideration and honor.

Your Excellency Mr. President,

8. We remind the Cameroonian government that all authorities must be close to their populations and countries to the international community through the principle of accountability. The denial of recognition of cases of serious human rights violations in Cameroon as well as the failure to respect the mechanisms of the United Nations and the African Union may lead, by virtue of the responsibility to protect, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the United Nations Security Council to address the socio-political crisis in Cameroon and take steps to strengthen the application of the principle of accountability for the prevention of atrocity crimes.
9. We remain at your disposal to support the work of promotion and protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law by the Cameroonian government, and reiterate our support for the Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, main body of the African Union in charge of monitoring the implementation of the African Charter.



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Accept, Excellency, the expression of our highest consideration.

Done in Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, 22 April 2019

CC :

- *The Secretary General of the United Nations*
- *The Peace and Security Council of the United Nations*
- *The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association*
- *United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders*
- *The Economic Community of Central African States*
- *The Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights*
- *The Country Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Cameroon, Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders in Africa*
- *The President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights*
- *The Peace and Security Council of the African Union*