

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

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MINISTERE DE L'ADMINISTRATION
TERRITORIALE



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace – Work – Fatherland

*MINISTRY OF TERRITORIAL
ADMINISTRATION*

**Statement by the Minister of Territorial
Administration on the activities of Non-governmental
Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations and
Human Rights Associations in Cameroon.**

Yaounde, 09 March 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media,

Against a backdrop of promoting proximity development that meets the aspirations of Cameroonians and which permits them to receive support from our partners, the Government of Cameroon, through the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT), gives authorisations to NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and Human Rights Associations to legally carry out their activities. These structures have offices or representatives in certain regions of our country.

Generally, we feel that NGOs and these associations are in Cameroon for the wellbeing of the population. They give food items to vulnerable people, and give healthcare to people in distress.

However, it could be difficult to imagine that most of these NGOs based in Africa, especially those operating in conflict zones, have hidden agendas which often have the tendency to destabilize sovereign States and their institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media,

The attention of the Minister of Territorial Administration has been drawn to the recurrent manipulations of some NGOs and Human Rights Associations in Cameroon.

Under the enlightened leadership of H.E. Paul BIYA, President of the Republic, Head of State, Cameroon is known to be a State of law, free, stable, democratic, one and indivisible.

The Head of State, does not spare any effort in consolidating peace, stability and national unity as well as strengthening living together among all sociological components of our beloved country.

By 1982, when H.E. Paul BIYA took office, barely (05) international NGOs, three (03) national NGOs and two (02) Civil Society Organisations were operating in Cameroon.

Thanks to the law on the freedom of associations adopted by the National Assembly and promulgated into law by the President of the Republic in 1990, Cameroon today counts over 40 international NGOs, several national NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and Human Rights Associations.

H.E. Paul BIYA as you can see has opened Cameroon widely to the rest of the world. The government of Cameroon supports NGOs, national and international associations, on condition that they respect the legal provisions put in place.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I continue, let me remind you of the legal instruments guiding the activities of NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and Human Rights Associations in the country.

According to Section 4 of Law N°90/53 of 19 December 1990 on the Freedom of Association and **I quote:**

Associations built on something else or with an objective contrary to the Constitution, as well as those that will jeopardise the security and territorial

integrity, national unity and the Republican form of the State are null and void. End of quotes.

Concerning NGOs, they are guided by Law N°99/014 of 22 December 1999. Authorisations of NGOs likewise those of associations are issued by the Minister of Territorial Administration who is also vested with the powers to ensure the follow up of these structures.

In accordance with Section 13 Paragraph 2 of Law N°90/53 of 19 December 1990 and 22 Paragraph 2 of Law N°99/014 of 22 December 1999, the Minister of Territorial Administration can, through an executive order, dissolve all associations or NGOs that derail from their original objectives and whose activities pose a threat to public order and State security.

The law equally provides for fines and prison terms to officials of associations and NGOs who go off-track.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media,

It is regrettable that for the past three years of political upheavals in the North West and South West Regions, some NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and Human Rights Organisations have completely derailed from the objectives for which they were authorised by the Minister of Territorial Administration.

I must underline here that there are some NGOs and associations that have kept to their objectives and respect the laws of the land. We encourage them to continue to be law-abiding.

However, we have noticed with dismay that many NGOs have clearly revealed themselves as enemies of our country, regularly propagating information that is completely false on the management of crisis by our government in the above-mentioned Regions. Moreover, they have become laboratories of fake reports with the sole objective to tarnish the image of the country's defence and security forces.

The Minister of Territorial Administration affirms here that these NGOs have received over 05 billion CFA F from dubious networks within and out of the country to:

1. Destabilise State Institutions
2. Regularly publish, through certain media and social media, fabricated information to discredit the efficient management of the crisis in the North West and South West Regions by the government;
3. Give the impression that Cameroon is not managing internally-displaced persons properly;
4. Demonstrate by all means that the crisis in the two regions is going from bad to worse;
5. Show through fake reports that Cameroon army is carrying out acts against the civilian population.

This is simply unacceptable! These teleguided NGOs and Human Rights Associations must readjust before it becomes too late.

The government of Cameroon vehemently condemns this irresponsible behaviour of teleguided NGOs, who deliberately minimise the numerous atrocities committed by terrorists in the North West and South West Regions.

Amongst the teleguided NGOs paid to tarnish the image of Cameroon, publish fake reports against the National defence forces, the Minister of Territorial Administration can cite « Human Rights Watch », « Amnesty International », International Crisis Group, OCHA, REDHAC and others.

For three years now, Cameroonians can bear testimony of many civilo-military actions in the North West and South West Regions undertaken by our brave defence and security forces. We have seen defence and security forces giving healthcare to the population, victims of barbaric actions of the terrorists, distributing food items to those in distress and even cleaning the streets of huge garbage that Hysacam would have cleaned if not of threats on their lives and equipment by the terrorists.

Cameroonians have saluted the efforts of the military and gendarme officials who have gone as far as teaching in some schools in localities where teachers have been brutalised and killed by terrorists. Curiously, these NGOs are not unaware of these humanitarian activities of our defence and security forces; but because of their hidden agenda, they have decided never to make mention of them in their reports.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media,

Each time Cameroon is wrongly accused by teleguided NGOs, the government has always reacted by giving the true facts, either through Government's Spokesperson, the Minister of Communication or the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence when it concerns issues under his competence.

At his level, the Minister of Territorial Administration has received several heads of diplomatic missions and officials of international NGOs to whom he gave reports on actions carried out by government to resolve the upheavals in the North West and South West Regions.

I personally gave to Mr. Philippe Bolopion, Senior official of « Human Rights Watch », a report detailing the atrocities of terrorists in the North West and South West Regions.

This report, at the time, had the following details:

- Over 300 soldiers killed by terrorists;
- Over 280 young girls aged below 14 years raped by the terrorists in schools;
- Teachers wounded and killed for teaching in violation of terrorists' call for school boycott;
- Schools, houses, hospitals health centres and other public and private structures vandalised and burnt by the terrorists;
- Inter-urban transport buses burnt down by terrorists after depriving the passengers of their valuable belongings;
- Supporters of the ruling CPDM party burnt alive by the terrorists for attending a political meetings and rallies.

Despite these atrocities committed by terrorists in the North West and South West Regions, Human Rights Watch and other deliberately decided to put this information into the dustbin as it does not meet the aspirations of their hierarchy.

The Ministry of Defence recently produced a detailed report with verified and verifiable facts, with images on the atrocities committed by terrorists. It takes a lot of courage to even watch the documentary produced by the Ministry of Defence. Regrettably, these teleguided NGOs operating in Cameroon prefer to look elsewhere and say nothing about this documentary.

I wish to solemnly announce that the ploy against Cameroon by some NGOs has been uncovered.

I invite all NGOs, Human Rights Associations and others who are playing games against Cameroon to toe the line before it is too late.

In the humanitarian sector, MINAT through the Humanitarian Assistance Plan decided by the Head of State, has already assisted over 170, 000 internally displaced persons in the North West and South West Regions as well as those living in other regions (West, Centre, Littoral).

Some internally displaced persons have already gone back to their respective localities thanks to the implementation of the Head of State's recommendations to Defence and Security forces who have succeeded in establishing state authority in some divisions and subdivisions of the two regions.

Some NGOs claim that more than 10,000 people have been killed in the North West and South West Regions during the past three years. This is completely ridiculous! Who gave them those statistics? Where is this malicious information coming from?

I wish to make it clear that the propagation of false information is an offence punishable by Cameroon's Penal Code. We have been very lenient on the fake news propagated against Cameroon and the Defence Forces by some NGOs. This can no longer continue.

In the past, we have discovered humanitarian convoys of some NGOs carrying weapons destined for terrorists in the North West and South West Regions. This is irrefutable evidence of connivance.

The resident representative of OCHA in the North West region who published a fake report against the defence and security forces was received by administrative authorities in the Region. He disclosed that he got instructions from his hierarchy to fabricate the report to tarnish the image of Cameroon's defence and security forces.

This official left Cameroon unceremoniously. If he wasn't guilty, why did he leave the country in that way?

It is clear that NGOs with hidden agendas conspiring against Cameroon have received huge sums of money. Today, we have uncovered this ploy.

I also wish to remind officials of NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and Human Rights Associations that they are obliged to submit annual reports to the Ministry of Territorial Administration. It is a legal obligation.

These annual reports, must contain details of the funds received each year, the identities of donors and how the funds are used in Cameroon.

We need to know the beneficiaries of their activities who must not, on any occasion, be terrorists who have been disrupting public order.

The Head of State is his fatherly attitude has repeatedly called on the terrorists who are still in the bushes to drop their arms, come out and integrate the DDR Centres. It is regrettable that our children have been fooled and manipulated by impostors and adventurers to take up arms against their fatherland. By creating the DDR centres, the Head of State has given them the opportunity to come back like the prodigal son.

More than 300 detainees linked with the social unrest in the North west and South West Regions have been released by the Head of State.

So many ex-fighters have dropped their weapons and are in the centres. They are not in prison because Cameroon is a State of Law and the prescriptions of the Head of State are respected to the letter. Instead of continuously supporting the terrorists, the NGOs should rather encourage them to leave the bush and come back to the Republic.

For two years, MINAT has not received any report from NGOs, even those of the UN System. Before making press declarations, NGOs have the obligation to submit annual reports to MINAT. It is also important to note that these annual reports must take into account information communicated to the public by government through its spokesperson, the Minister of Communication or by the Minister of Defence and MINAT's reports on the humanitarian activities.

That would be the best way to give out reliable information to their respective countries and superiors. NGOs tell us that they have to be neutral in the discharge of their duties; YES!! But as the Minister of Territorial Administration, I must emphasize that neutrality does not exclude transparency.

In the case of Cameroon, it is clear that some NGOs have never been neutral. They have taken sides with terrorists. It is also evident today that some international and national NGOs have exercised a lot of sympathy for terrorists, covering most of their atrocities.

I wish therefore to seize this opportunity to remind the media to stop being vectors of malicious reports from teleguided NGOs against our defence and security forces.

Equinoxe TV, STV and Radio Balafon, Le Jour newspaper should take special note.

To make myself very clear, I will quote this maxim, « He who sells eggs should never engage in a fight ».

Cameroon does not need a remake of *Radio Mille Colline*. It is not the role of the media to add salt to an injury. In matters of law, he who buys or keeps stolen objects is punishable in the same way as the thief. A word to a wise is sufficient.

Before broadcasting any information, a responsible journalist has the obligation to verify its authenticity. Most of the time, the local media, for financial incentives, air unverified information from NGOs intended to tarnish the image of the country.

After the twin elections of 9 February 2020, some NGOs, without any proofs, affirmed on private radios and TV channels that the polls were not free and fair, and were conducted in a manner to favour the ruling party to massively win seats at the National Assembly and councils.

These NGOs are far from the truth because any objective person will agree that the elections were free, credible and transparent.

Some NGOs even claimed that the government did everything to exclude some main political stakeholders from the elections. Let me remind here, that many members of the CPDM were in favour of holding Regional elections with the old political map. The CPDM would have been sure to largely carrying the day with their 305 councils from the 2013 elections. I don't know if the situation is different today:

But to demonstrate that Cameroon does not operate the way some of these NGOs or diplomats portray, the President of the Republic, who puts general interest above partisan politics, opted for new legislative and municipal elections before putting in place the regional councils.

After the twin elections of 9 February 2020, we all saw the new political map of Cameroon with new faces who will be present at the National Assembly and Councils, notably: Cabral Libii, Paul Eric Kingué, Pierre Kwemo, Serge Espoir Matomba, Pastor Afanwi, etc.

Paradoxically, the political actor whose liberation was much clamoured for by diplomats decided to boycott the electoral process.

Whose fault? There is therefore no democracy of exclusion in Cameroon but rather leaders of « small political parties » who exclude themselves from the political arena.

On Saturday 7th breaking Sunday 8th March 2020, terrorists attacked a Police Station and a Gendarmerie Brigade in Galim, Bamboutos Division, West Region, killing two policemen, two female gendarmes and four civilians.

On March 8, 2020, seven of our brave security and defence forces assigned to protect women during the International Women's Day activities in Bamenda were seriously injured in a planned terrorist attack targeting women.

Two well-known terrorists, Ayaba Cho and Tapang Ivo living in total impunity abroad and in friendly countries have claimed responsibility for these attacks.

Teleguided NGOs saw the horrible images of the brutal assassination of a wardress, Mrs Florence Ayafor, in her village of birth by terrorists as she went for a burial. As usual, that did not attract any compassion or condemnation from teleguided NGOs and the so-called Human Rights Associations.

Where is OCHA? Where is Human Rights Watch? Where is International Crisis Group? Where are the International Community lesson givers?

The silence of these NGOs in the face of such atrocities committed against our defence forces and citizens is suspicious and it is clear proof of connivance with terrorists.

Divine Justice will catch up with plotters, even after retirement. Their consciences will live to judge them.

To conclude, I call on all NGOs to be responsible, impartial, and objective.

I note that all reports on our activities given to the Coordinator of the UN System in Cameroon have never been published. On the contrary, our figures are contested and false statistics published by NGOs. I think this is not fair.

I want to believe that this statement constitutes a new beginning and that NGOs and Human Rights Associations will henceforth work in the strict respect of their declared objectives and not with hidden agendas.

I give NGOs 60 days to submit to my services, notably the Department of Political Affairs, their annual reports of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

Thanks for your kind attention.

ATANGA NJI Paul
Minister of Territorial Administration.