



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

**GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE
PUBLICATION OF A PRESS RELEASE BY THE U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF STATE ENTITLED
"*CAMEROON: CALL FOR RESTRAINT, CONCERNS OVER HUMAN
RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS*"**

PRESS CONFERENCE

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY
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MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaoundé, December 02, 2016

Distinguished Journalists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish you all a warm welcome to this exchange on an issue of utmost importance.

As a matter of fact, the U.S. Department of State has just published a Press Statement alleging infringement on fundamental freedoms in Cameroon, notably in the management of demonstrations in Bamenda and Buea.

In a bid to avoid any controversy on the allegations contained in the press statement and in order to enlighten national and international community, the Government of Cameroon would like to draw attention on some issues.

With regard to the action of Public Authorities in the management of recent demonstrations which took place in Bamenda and Buea, the Government has made efforts to maintain dialogue and cohesion, to seek appropriate solutions to the grievances of English-speaking lawyers and teachers. In this vein, appropriate measures have been taken as follows:

- The **Prime Minister, Head of Government**, paid a working visit to Bamenda, from November 25 to 27,

2016 to discuss with representatives of lawyers and teachers ;

- The Prime Minister, Head of Government has set up an Ad Hoc Inter-ministerial Committee tasked with examining and proposing solutions to the concerns raised by teachers ;
- Sector-based negotiations have been open under the due diligence of the Minister of State, Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seal, on the one hand, and the Minister of Higher Education, on the other hand;

The Prime Minister, Head of Government, announced in addition:

- The setting up of an ad hoc committee to be chaired by the Director of Cabinet of the **Prime Minister, Head of Government**, to propose solutions to the concerns raised by English-speaking teachers ;
- The granting of a special allocation of FCFA 2,000,000,000 (two billion CFA francs) to private secular and denominational schools ;
- The special recruitment of one thousand perfectly bilingual graduates of higher general and technical education;

It should be underscored that concomitantly, the Minister, Secretary General at the Presidency of the Republic, on Special Instruction of the President of the Republic, received on November 28, 2016, the English versions of the OHADA Treaty and Uniform Acts, which are some of the cogent grievances of the lawyers. The translated documents were forwarded to the Minister of State, Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals, who solemnly handed them over to the Chairman of the Bar Association.

Meanwhile, at the University of Buea, the penalties for the late payment of tuitions fees were lifted and some diligent measures have been taken to ensure the payment of the academic gratifications for excellence.

With respect to security, administrative officers and law-enforcement officers handled the demonstrations in Bamenda and Buea with restraint and professionalism, in strict compliance with the international laws and commitments of Cameroon in matters of Human rights. Nevertheless, investigations are underway and in the event of proven misconduct, the Government will take some disciplinary and corrective measures as appropriate.

In a nutshell, Cameroon reiterates that in any Rule of Law, it is the primary responsibility of Public Authorities to ensure the respect of order and security. The exercise by citizens of their rights, such as the right to go on strike, is done in compliance with the provisions laid down by the law. At this level, the action of law-enforcement officers should not be considered on same footing as persons who willfully infringe the law and go around assaulting citizens, looting private and public properties.

The Government is, in this vein underscoring that the law-enforcement officers were on many occasions assaulted. The culprits of such acts are exposed to legal proceedings before the courts and would be punished appropriately.

With regard to the balance sheet of the recent social unrest in Bamenda, the Government of Cameroon regrets the toll of some twenty injured and one death, a security guard who was killed by vandals using a locally-made rifle, amid the prevailing security context. This murder is similar to the one perpetrated a few weeks ago against a gendarme in Bangolan with a locally-made rifle. The Cameroonian Government strongly condemns such heinous actions, which will not remain unpunished.

We note that forces of law and order are being unjustly accused of committing atrocities, whereas assaults against the said forces including the killing of one gendarme is simply going unreported.

In another realm, the allegations relating to ten-year prison sentence inflicted to some young people for having exchanged text messages about Boko Haram are ungrounded. As a matter of fact, the public examination of this matter, in keeping with the law on the suppression of terrorism, had led to the release of two of the three accused. The last one who was sentenced to eleven-month imprisonment on February 22, 2016 for spreading false news, has since then been released.

The Government of Cameroon therefore reaffirms its profound attachment to the exercise in all serenity, of civil liberties.

With regard to the concern relating to the arrest of militants of a political party mentioned in the press release of the Department of State, it should be strongly underscored that in every country, the organization of public meetings is governed by legal provisions that must be complied with by

each and every one. No one can circumvent the requirement to conform strictly to the applicable legal and regulatory provisions, using the argument of having a special status, whichever it may be.

It remains however that those militants were all released after being identified.

The Government of Cameroon avails itself to draw the attention of everyone on the serious consequences of a willful malicious use of social media.

It condemns in the strongest terms, the dissemination of false information as well as the manipulation of minds and methods of intimidation through social media and recalls that those found guilty of such acts shall be appropriately punished in accordance with the regulations in force.

In all, the Government of Cameroon reiterates its constitutional and unwavering commitment to ensure its sovereign duty to maintain public order.

It should be underscored however, that no attempt to disrupt our hard-won national unity and cohesion and our territorial integrity, shall be tolerated.

The government of Cameroon, in keeping with its openness to dialogue, reiterates its unweaving commitment to strengthening collaboration with friendly countries for the promotion of Human rights through instructive channels, in the respect of the sovereignty and independence of each party.

In this regard, it commends the sound functioning of consultation frameworks put in place as part of the Structured Political Framework with the European Union or even the platform for exchange on such issues created between the Ministry of External Relations and the Embassy of the United States of America in Yaoundé.

The Government once again calls for tolerance, temperance, the sense of citizen responsibility and dialogue, which are shared values that have contributed to shape the peculiar identity of the Cameroonian Nation.

In season and out of season, the **President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA**, has always made consultation and dialogue a political creed in the mission that has been bestowed on him, in all sovereignty, at the helm of the State.

Our Nation is a land of diversity and plurality. These attributes are the very source of its strength and wealth, because what brings us together is greater than anything that could at any given time put us asunder.

We should be able to reap all the fruits of this wonderful natural asset passed down from one generation to another from ages to ages.

It is by so doing that Cameroon will continue to move towards its grandeur and the attainment of its emergence.

Allow me to avail myself, on behalf of the Government, to reiterate this call for unity, which is more than ever necessary, at a time when our brave Indomitable Lionesses are on the verge of conquering the trophy of the 10th edition of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations hosted for the first time by Cameroon, in order to give them our full support that will lead them to final victory.

Thank you for your kind attention.