



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

SECURITY SITUATION AND CRIMINAL ACTIONS OF THE BOKO HARAM TERRORIST ORGANIZATION IN THE FAR-NORTH REGION

**GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE ACCUSATIONS LED BY
SOME HUMAN RIGHTS NGOs AGAINST THE CAMEROONIAN
DEFENCE AND SECURITY FORCES INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT
AGAINST BOKO HARAM**

PRESS CONFERENCE

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY
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Dear Journalists,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish you a warm welcome and thank you for responding to my invitation to exchange on an issue relating to the security situation in the Far North Region of our country.

As a matter of fact, on Wednesday, January 13, 2016, at around 5:40 a.m., the Boko Haram terrorist group led an attack within the premises of a mosque in Kouyapé, a town near Kolofata Sub-division in Mayo-Sava Division.

During this attack, a yet unidentified young man, posing as a faithful Muslim, got into the mosque and triggered the explosive device tied on him, leaving 13 dead, including himself, and one severely injured. A few hours before, on the night of January 12 to 13, elements of Cameroonian Defence Forces had succeeded to push-back an armed attack of Boko Haram in the same area, killing two of the insurgents.

To summarize, since the beginning of 2016, official statistics report 15 terrorist attacks led by Boko Haram against Cameroonian interests and populations in the country, among which two suicide attacks with 10 people killed, 11 injured, 9 persons abducted and 6 cases of burning of homes and compounds.

It should therefore be noted as follows:

- On January 2, 2016, at around 9 a.m., a young girl blew herself up near the Kolofata municipal stadium in the Mayo-Sava Division. Only the suicide bomber died in the explosion, after receiving an arrow in her back from a local vigilante committee member.
- On the night of January 2 to 3 at 10:50 p.m., some terrorists of the Boko Haram criminal group besieged the locality of Mozogo

in Mayo-Moskota Subdivision, Mayo-Tsanaga Division, killing two villagers and wounding a third villager while looting shops and houses and stealing livestock and properties.

- On that same night, Boko Haram attacked the border town of Kerawa in the Mayo-Sava, stealing food and material goods from the villagers.
- On January 4, 2016 in the afternoon, some Boko Haram insurgents broke into the village of Talakachi in the Mayo-Tsanaga, armed with assault rifles and terrorizing the populations with gunfire in the air to once again steal and carrying away material property.
- On the night of January 4 to 5, 2016 at 10 p.m., the same insurgents attacked the village of Olamsao in Makary Subdivision leaving one Cameroonian dead, one injured, and 61 hurts burnt.
- On that same night, a similar attack was attempted against the village of Ouro-Mari in the same Subdivision. This attack was foiled thanks to the immediate response of the elements of the Rapid Intervention Battalion at Fotokol.
- Still on that same night at around 10:20 p.m., the locality of Mozogo was again besieged by the same criminals, leaving one Cameroonian dead and one injured.
- Again on that same night of January 4 to 5, 2016, the locality of Kerawa was subject to intense looting, with stealing of cattle and food.
- On January 6, 2016, the village of Ashigashia in the Mayo-Tsanaga suffered yet another attack of the Boko Haram terrorist group, which resulted in the abduction of two Cameroonian villagers.

- On January 7, 2016, at around 12:30, Boko Haram led yet another attack on the locality of Ashigashia, killing one villager, carrying away 45 bicycles, 30 carriers and 150 small ruminants, before abducting six other villagers and forcing them to herd the stolen cattle to Nigeria.
- On January 8, 2016, at 5:45 a.m., a young boy broke into a mosque in the locality of Ganse in Kolofata Subdivision, where he triggered his explosive device. Fortunately, only the bomber died in this case, but seven Cameroonian faithfuls who were praying were injured.
- On that same morning, the village of Fima in the Logone-and-Chari suffered an attack of Boko Haram, which resulted in the theft of 125 cattle.
- On the night of January 8 to 9, 2016, the Boko Haram terrorists attacked the village of Goura in Fotokol Subdivision, killed one villager and wounded another, and set fire on numerous homes.
- On January 9, 2016, other criminal incursions occurred in the town of Ashigashia, leaving behind several cases of looting and destruction of houses.
- On January 10, 2016, at around 4:30 p.m., the chief of the Fima village was murdered with two of his elders. Again, several compounds were looted and burned.
- On the night of January 11 to 12, 2016, reacting to an attack by Boko Haram, the members of the Fotokol vigilante committee were able to neutralize the Nigerian born Boko Haram leader called DJOGANA ALADJI ALI Boukar, near the locality of Fima. The individual was then handed to elements of the Rapid Intervention Battalion.

All these attacks occurred over a period of just two weeks.

From 2013 to 2015, the estimate of acts of abduction of persons, including children, organized by Boko Haram on our territory reports of 02 abductions in 2013, 11 abductions in 2014 and 05 in 2015, amounting to 18 abductions over this period.

In 2014, 1 160 cattle were stolen from our people by the Boko Haram criminal and barbaric horde.

In 2015, according to an estimate by Boko Haram itself, the number of cattle stolen on the Cameroonian territory was around 4200, excluding small ruminants.

In 2014, 37 Boko Haram attacks were perpetrated against the units of Cameroonian Defence Forces and 23 in 2015.

Also in 2015, 21 attacks were perpetrated against the vigilante committees.

In the same year, 28 suicide attacks were recorded, and as I was saying earlier, since the beginning of 2016, 5 attacks of the same type have already been perpetrated by this terrorist organization.

As for the civilian population, they were victims of 66 attacks and diverse abuses from Boko Haram in 2014, 116 in 2015 and, just on the first two weeks of 2016, 5 attacks and other abuses.

Since 2013, 315 incursions, 12 landmine accidents and 32 suicide bombings were perpetrated in the Far-North region of Cameroon by the Boko Haram terrorist group.

In all, 1098 Cameroonian civilians and 67 soldiers and 03 police officers have to date, lost their lives as a result of the criminal actions led against our country by the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

Dear Journalists,

I have just given you the summary of the macabre statistics of the barbarous attack being suffered since 2013 by Cameroon from the Boko Haram gang.

Faced with such harassment both ungrounded and unjustified, our Defence and Security Forces have always retaliated, leading the enemy to incur serious setbacks that have considerably weakened the group and reduced it to mere acts of cowardice, especially suicide bombings which have become its *modus operandi*. This gives me another occasion to laud the courage, determination and efficacy of our Defence and Security Forces, supported in their efforts by the bravery of the vigilante committees that have been lending a helping hand to administrative authorities in searching out and tracking down those notorious criminals wherever they may hide on the national territory.

It should be mentioned that it was thanks to these shared efforts that Cameroon, fighting alone at the war front for over eight months before being joined by other neighbouring countries, has been able to safeguard its territorial integrity faced with the assailants. And the International Community got it right when, as a response to the call by the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya**, in early 2015, it joined our country with multifarious support in the fight for a permanent eradication of the terrorist danger embodied in the actions of the Boko Haram criminal group.

How then can we understand that some actors of the national and international civil society chose this point in time to attempt to falsely name and shame our country, especially our Defence and Security Forces, by accusing them of all sorts of abuses and

violations of human rights in tracking down and responding to the assault from the Boko Haram enemy?

As a matter of fact, some major NGOs involved in the defence of human rights seem to have chosen to attack Cameroon by means of grossly ungrounded accusations on act they consider as serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, allegedly committed by Cameroonian military and police, in fighting Boko Haram.

Our Defence and Security Forces have as such been recurrently accused of committing, on enemies, and sometimes on civilian populations, crimes under international humanitarian law and other human rights violations, in as much as such allegations stigmatize them on the motive that they are used to carrying out mass arrests, unlawful killings, excessive use of force, enforced disappearances, tortures and deaths of inmates or suspected Boko Haram members.

Making themselves counsels for righteousness, these activists of human rights and international humanitarian law spoke out against the conditions in which Boko Haram prisoners are kept in our penitentiaries, and the slowness of judgement procedures involving the Boko Harams before Cameroonian jurisdictions.

The Government cannot stay quiet faced with such harassment which, I must stress, is ungrounded, so much as the allegations are serious and constitute a gross indecency.

While the Government of Cameroon strongly refutes such accusations, I would like to remind their authors some words of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul Biya, in his speech during the Extraordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of

State and Government of the Council for Peace and Security of Central Africa – COPAX – which held on February 16, 2015 here in Yaounde, and I quote him: **“The reality is simple. On one side, there are our forces, defenders of a modern and tolerant society which guarantees the exercise of human rights, including that of religion, as well as representative democracy. On the other side, namely Boko Haram and similar movements, there are partisans of an obscurantist and tyrannical society which has no consideration for human dignity,”** end of quote.

Therefore, we should well recall to our despisers, human rights advocates, that their determination to defend human rights should not lead them to confuse between the assailant and the attacked, because in this specific case, it is the Boko Haram criminals, and the victim, the Cameroonian people that is leading a fight for the preservation of its territorial integration and the safeguarding of peace on its national territory.

This said, it should be clear that it is not because we are facing such barbarous criminals that we will be turning ourselves into barbarians.

I would therefore like to tell our despisers in relation with the issue of respect of human rights by our Defence and Security Forces, that the obligation to respect human rights, be it in time of peace or in time of war, is part and parcel of the training of our Defence and Security Forces; and that each time they have been to the field operations, they have always made good use of the lessons learnt during their training.

The professionalism, efficacy, competence and moral uprightness of Cameroonian Defence and Security Forces are a reference among the community of nations, if we go by the satisfaction regularly

expressed by leading international organizations such as the United Nations and the African Union, just to name a few, and which has earned them to participate in several peacekeeping operations with remarkable success.

It has been the case with the MINUSCA in the Central African Republic and the observers currently involved in other countries such as Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Sudan.

Putting it as such, because it is a tangible reality, is not an attempt to insinuate that no cases of burrs or behaviours deviating from norms were recorded among our military and police. However, when such burrs or other failures of the same nature have been recorded, legal means exist, to either inflicting disciplinary sanctions on the authors, or bring them before competent court to hold them liable to their acts pursuant to the law in force.

The same sources of misinformation report massive expulsions led by Cameroonian authorities against Nigerian refugees who fled the fighting zones and the violence caused by Boko Haram on the Nigerian territory.

There again, the Government of the Republic of Cameroon strongly denies such allegations, because they are at odds with reality. In fact, Nigerian nationals we are referring here have always been welcomed on our territory.

Gradually, as these areas are being stabilized in Nigerian territory, these refugees are then returned to their country, and this, with their consent.

The Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA, has given firm

instructions and provided appropriate logistical support for the home return of these people to take place under optimum conditions of safety and dignity.

There are therefore no extortion, no brutality, no inhuman treatment committed on these people who are all happy to return to their land of belonging in Nigeria.

On quite a different level, it should be specified that the influx of these refugees in certain sites in Cameroon is higher than the available reception capacity.

For example, the Minawao refugee Camp in the Far North, designed to accommodate 18,000 refugees maximum, is today hosting over 52,000 refugees.

Dear Journalists,

As we can see together, against the glaring untruths expressed by such NGOs and sometimes relayed by some international media especially, the recurrence and persistence of their distribution within public opinion, the seriousness of the accusations against our institutions and particularly our Defence and Security Forces, at a time when they are giving the knockout blow to the enemy represented by the Boko Haram terrorist group, are likely to leave us perplexed.

And the question we can ask is what the real motive behind such obstinacy? In other words, what is the hidden agenda behind such maneuvers, in as much as it is so obvious that such allegations are not only both gross and ungrounded, but also opportunistic because

occurring at a time when our country is faced with a unprecedented security crisis in its existence.

Therefore, we seize this opportunity to more than ever call on the vigilance of all Cameroonians, and invite them to remain mobilized and fully committed behind the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya, Commander-in-Chief of the Army**, in the struggle he is leading on behalf of the entire nation against the forces of evil represented by the terrorists of the Boko Haram criminal horde.

This is essentially a matter of remaining united and barring the way to such maneuvers aiming to weaken our national cohesion, and these multifaceted attempts to destabilize Cameroon which, more than ever, must remain a haven of peace, a sanctuary of unity and a potential of prosperity and aspiration to emergence that many countries envy worldwide.

Thank you for your kind attention.