



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT ON THE EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE CITY OF BAMENDA ON DECEMBER 08, 2016

PRESS CONFERENCE

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF
H.E.M. ISSA TCHIROMA BAKARY
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaoundé, 10 December 2016

Distinguished Journalists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to this exchange, to which I have invited you, so that we can discuss on a major issue in the life of our nation.

Distinguished Journalists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this point in time when the entire world is marveled and in total admiration on Cameroon for peace, unity and concord which characterizes our people and prevails in our country, resulting from the plebiscite accorded to the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA;**

At this point in time when the international community recognizes the seriousness and professionalism, bravery, sense of honor and duty of our Defense and Security Forces currently deployed in the Far North Region to fight and finally exterminate members of the Boko Haram obscurantist group, to also restore calm and serenity among our populations living in these affected areas, and to defend and preserve the integrity of our national territory;

At this point in time when over 1 500 civilians and soldiers are said to have been slaughtered, beheaded and mutilated since the launch of the attack against this criminal gang;

At this point in time While our people in the areas affected by this merciless war are utterly deprived of everything in terms of the most basic necessities to which they are entitled to as full citizens of our country, deprived of dividends to which they are entitled to and derived from a particularly flourishing economy and tourism, but which in recent years have been slowing down, not to talk of being entirely non-existent;

Whereas our country, in spite of the difficult times which it is passing through, fortunately with dignity and courage, has just administered to the wide world proof of its capacity to squarely address the organizational and infrastructural challenges, as was the case with the recent 2016 WOMEN AFCON recently organized by Cameroon with a professional touch.

The cities of Bamenda and Buea, are for the past weeks the theater of grievances and tensions, are beyond all expectations and to the general amazement, portraying sad images of our dear and beautiful fatherland.

Those who are by so doing trying to impose their option for violence and non-respect for the law, would like to pass through the idea that certain of our compatriots are being frustrated, marginalized, and ostracized for the political and cultural heritage of Cameroon.

Driven by an overbid of demagoguery and populism, these supporters of disorder and intolerance, are today taking the issue too far, to the extent of questioning the fundamental achievements of our Republic, such as peace, national unity and our willingness to live together, at all cost and worthwhile.

The upholders of these theories and the perpetrators of such acts including their sponsors are totally out of step with the founding principle of our Republic, which is our national unity, demand nothing less than a return to federalism, which would in all indications be the anti-chamber of the secession which they are calling with their entire wish.

I would like on behalf of the Government, to recall here that the **President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces**, is the guarantor of the Constitution- the Basic Law of our country- and all the other inherent laws.

In the conduct of the affairs of the Nation which the people of Cameroon have in a sovereign manner entrusted unto his hands, **the President of the Republic** has made of dialogue and tolerance his creed and leitmotiv.

Moreover, the President of the Republic is acknowledged by all as the architect of an inclusive and open-minded policy, which is a veritable brand that has always characterized our people and our nation.

The **Head of State** has never, and can never, remain dormant, or even indifferent to any claim expressed by his fellow compatriots, in as much as such claims derive their legitimacy or are grounded in the laws and values of the Republic.

It is therefore quite natural that, in response to the legitimate and well-founded demands made first by lawyers practicing in the English-speaking regions of our country and then by teachers' trade unions in these same regions, the Government, on Special Instructions of the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA**, has opened a dialogue with the representatives of these different professional bodies, a dialogue that proved fruitful with regard to the set of

important structural and financial measures urgently taken at the end of consultations with the various actors

Meanwhile, it is inconceivable, not to say unthinkable, to believe for a moment that because of a political and cultural heritage which has certainly shaped our societal model, because of this cultural heritage of which we are all proud of, **the President of the Republic** can exonerates himself from his sovereign mission entrusted to him by the people, that of protecting persons and goods on the national territory, ensure public order and guarantee fundamental freedoms of citizens as enshrined in the Constitution and laws of the Republic.

We therefore have the right to ask ourselves the question of what could really be the root causes of this more or less insurgency which the city of Bamenda witnessed on last December 08, 2016.

Meanwhile, before addressing that question, it would be appropriate to substantiate here on what really took place on that day in the Nord-West Regional Chief town.

Whereas on December 08, 2016, CPDM militants were preparing to attend a meeting organized by the Mezam 1 CPDM section and presided over by the Secretary General

of the said party, in the presence of the **Prime Minister, Head of Government**, the Bamenda ceremonial ground, precisely at the Commercial avenue, was stormed by a group of protesters armed with projectiles, catapults and Molotov cocktails.

This meeting fell within the framework of a concerted approach undertaken by officials of this party to invite each and everyone for appeasement and to bring back calm in the cities of Bamenda and Buea.

This meeting is similar to the one which took place last December 06, 2016 in Buea and which went on hitch free.

Everything was in place for the harmonious conduct of the public meeting in Bamenda, duly authorized by the competent authorities, when some highly motivated individuals, and acting by groups, visibly prepared and perfectly organized, started to carry out acts of protesterism and urban guerilla to clearly obstruct the holding of this public meeting.

In their destructive madness, these protesters, who had become real insurgents, began to erect barricades on roads in order to hinder traffic, burn many vehicles, burn tires on the roads, siege and then burning public buildings, including

schools and hospitals, taking hostage students, patients and medical personnel as, and assaulting natural persons.

The human balance sheet is as follows: two people dead, under circumstances which are yet to be clarified, four gendarmes and four police officers, a young woman also wounded and partially burned, a senior member of the CPDM party also sustained a head injury.

With regard to the material balance sheet, 9 vehicles were destroyed, including that of the Commander of the Gendarmerie Legion, the Commander of the Second Motorized Rapid Infantry Battalion (BRIM), that of the Bamenda 3 Divisional Officer, la Camerounaise des Eaux, Campost, Special Rapid Intervention Units of the Police (ESIR), the National Gendarmerie, as well as two private vehicles.

Several businesses and other urban stands, two public buildings: the Third District Police Station and several pavilions of the Bamenda Regional Hospital were also burned.

In addition, the protesters hoisted the flag of the Southern Cameroon National Council at some crossroads and public buildings.

Faced with this situation, the forces of order were deployed on the field to ensure security in the city and its surroundings, leading to the arrest of 58 people, 34 of whom are kept in custody by the National Gendarmerie, and 24 detained by the police.

In order to avoid a confrontation between the militants of the CPDM and the protesters, the political rally that was initially scheduled to take place the Commercial Avenue finally took place in a hotel in Bamenda.

On the spot, in order to sustainably restore order, emergency measures have been taken by administrative authorities in order to arrest the breakers, identify and search out their sponsors and accomplices.

It should be noted that in the management of this situation, the Security Forces were effectively deployed with a constant aim of restoring peace and order in the city of Bamenda and its surroundings by preserving human lives - including those of troublemakers - and by ensuring the safety and tranquility of populations.

To these Forces of law and order who showcase courage, self-denial, patriotism and the sense of sacrifice, the **Head**

of State extends his encouragements for their action in order to restore public order and security.

The violent demonstrations in Bamenda took place on December 8, when the Government, on the Highest Instructions of the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA**, is pursuing his efforts to find adequate solutions to the problems raised by teachers and lawyers, provided that these have been deemed legitimate and compatible with the laws of the Republic.

The persistence of these acts of violence has become incomprehensible and hide the maneuvers of some people who are fun of shady dealings, refractory to dialogue and consultation, and who cheerfully manipulate the populations and especially the youths, in support of a hidden agenda.

Cameroon being a rule of law, the perpetrators of such destruction of public and private property as well as their accomplices, must be aware that while remaining open to dialogue and consultation, the Government of the Republic intends to fully fulfill its mission of protecting the populations and their property, guaranteeing freedom of movement, and protecting our children's right to education.

Therefore, the perpetrators of the acts of protesterism on December 8 in Bamenda must know that they will have to face the rigors of the law and will receive, if need be, the rightly deserved punishment for the abuses for which their guilt will have been established.

On behalf of the Government, I am calling on our young compatriots, prey to the illusions sold to them by the sponsors of this violence, to be more vigilant and lucid enough in order to avoid being drawn into these paths which are pathways to perdition and self destruction.

The Government strongly warns those who undertake to use the communication advantages of social media to misinform public opinion, misrepresent facts and incite hatred, disorder and violence, that the State will do everything in its power and with the support of friendly countries, to track them, search them out, arrest them and take them to court.

Following the call by the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA**, I invite our young compatriots to cultivate, just like our national women's football squad, Africa Vice-champion, values of hard work, solidarity and patriotism, which are the only guarantee of positive results and

solutions to the problems they face and which are at the core of Government's concerns.

The Government will continue to leave no stone unturned, in keeping with the laws of the Republic, to ensure public order and guarantee all citizens the protection they are rightfully entitled to, and which should enable them carry out their daily activities in all freedom.

To the families of our compatriots whose lives were claimed during these sad events, the **President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA**, hereby addresses his most heartfelt condolences and wishes the wounded quick recovery.

Thank you for your kind attention.