



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

**GOVERNMENT'S CLARIFICATION FOLLOWING
ALLEGATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS
GROUP ON THE CRISIS SITUATION IN THE NORTH-
WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS**

PRESS CONFERENCE

**PRESS STATEMENT OF
H.E. ISSA TCHIROMA BAKARY
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaoundé, 24 October 2017

**Distinguished Journalists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am highly delighted and honored to wish you a warm welcome to this meeting to which I have invited you for us to dwell on the latest report of the "International Crisis Group", on the crisis prevailing in the North-West and South-West Regions.

As you may have noticed, the International Crisis Group has, in the space of just two months, published two reports condemning the Cameroonian Government, on the situation I have just mentioned.

The most recent of these two reports, dated October 19, 2017, contains ungrounded allegations of such gravity that the Government could not remain speechless in the face of such vexing aggression.

The Government therefore strongly refutes all these allegations and totally rejects both the report of the International Crisis Group of 2nd August 2017 and that published on 19 October.

The position of the Government is dictated by the fact that each time, "International Crisis Group" has engaged itself in a real accusation, made up of baseless and ungrounded facts and accusations, without any relation to reality, in other words, pure gossip, instead of an objective report based on observation and a contradictory analysis of the situation.

In fact, the "International Crisis Group" has entirely constituted its accusations on the basis of fundamentally erroneous, deeply biased and voluntarily exaggerated information.

To achieve its objective, the "International Crisis Group", which has never paid the slightest visit to the scene of events, has preferred to claim ownership of other misleading and inadmissible allegations published by another less credible NGO, known in its French acronym as REDHAC, the Human Rights Network in Central Africa.

Moreover, "International Crisis Group" thought it necessary to draw its source from the fanciful information published in one or two newspapers published in France, whose reporters have not at any time stepped on the Cameroonian soil since the outbreak of the aforementioned events.

In a nutshell, instead of publishing a report worthy of the name, the "International Crisis Group" has rather served us with a prejudicial document drafted in defiance of all the applicable canons governing such procedure.

To demonstrate this, allow me to begin with the genesis which the authors of the October 19, 2017 report intend to attribute to this crisis situation.

In fact, according to the "International Crisis Group", the Cameroonian Government bears full responsibility for the escalation of the crisis, firstly, due to the supposedly inappropriate nature of the solutions given by the **Head of State**

to the concerns raised on that occasion, solutions which the report describes as "superficial measures"; secondly, owing to the repression described as murderous by the Security Forces, in the face of a declaration of independence, which they find just "symbolic" of a fictitious State and to peaceful protests perpetrated by secessionist militants.

However, as you are all aware, following the strike notice filed by certain teachers' trade unions under the Anglophone Education Subsystem and of some English-speaking lawyers in November 2016, the **President of the Republic** had immediately prescribed the Prime Minister, Head of Government, to open negotiations with the interlocutors who had raised such concerns.

All those claims that were found grounded and timely were favorably welcomed by the **Head of State**, who took all appropriate measures to this effect, despite higher bids maintained by many negotiators who were facing the Government.

Moreover, the activists concerned did not limit themselves to mere expression of corporatist claims. Some of them went further to launch and maintain strike slogans intended to paralyze economic and social activities, orchestrating acts of violence, intimidation and damage of public and private property, and even going as far as to defile symbols of the nation and armed attacks on public buildings.

It is against this backdrop that those who were caught red-handed in act of vandalism or sponsoring acts of public disorder were arrested.

In spite of this, and in order to appease and restore a climate of serenity conducive to dialogue, the **Head of State**, acting within the ambit of the powers conferred on him by the laws and regulations of the Land in this area, ordered the discontinuance of the proceedings against 55 of these individuals.

Contrary to what the "International Crisis Group" claims, not only did the escalation of violence not wait until October 1 to happen, but the initiative of this violence rightfully belongs to activists who have become real belligerents with terrorist insinuation.

Now with regards to the measures taken by the **President of the Republic** and which the report qualifies as "superficial", I would like to recall that the **Head of State** acted on the basis of the concerns clearly raised by English speaking teachers' trade unionists and lawyers, where the laws and the Constitution of the Republic gave him powers to do so.

That notwithstanding, with regard to the issue of secession, the International Crisis Group should indicate a single case in the world where the amputation of the territory of a country has been the subject of any transaction.

In choosing a position as radical as that of the constitution of an independent State within the territorial limits of Cameroon, the secessionists have put themselves to the wall and left no other choice to the Republic than to unreservedly refute their unfair plan and to defend the fundamental values of the nation which are Peace, National Unity and the Integrity of the Territory.

As far as the debate on federalism is concerned, this issue is obviously not a taboo in Cameroon, given that certain prominent political parties have included it in their programmes. These political parties present themselves regularly with their federalist programmes to the various electoral consultations with the results that we all know.

As an illustration, during the last presidential election, the **President of the Republic**, whose unitary State is included in his political philosophy, canvassed nearly 78% of the vote, whereas the first opposition party whose federalism constitutes the leitmotiv scored slightly over 10% of the votes.

That is to say that the Cameroonian people, holders of sovereignty, have from hence turned the page of federalism to open that of national integration.

Whatever the case, should there be any Cameroonian thinking that the federal state might be brought back, then he should merely canvass for votes in any election.

As for the assessment of the events of October 1, the "International Crisis Group" speaks of massacre perpetrated by the Defense and Security Forces, which according to this NGO fired live bullets on peaceful and defenseless protesters.

There again, it is just a gross attempt to misinform and create fear!

I would like to remind you once again about the circumstances in which a dozen people lost their lives during these events. This in itself is already very unfortunate, given that human lives were against all odds, sacrificed at the altar of the political madness of those, who, by anyway, have chosen to seize power through indirect and extra-democratic means.

As earlier stated on October 2nd, five people - inmates - died as a result of an attempt to escape from the Kumbo Prison.

Two of these persons suffered from a stampede while trying to escape and three others were neutralized by prison guards in accordance with the protocol of the regulations in force governing such situations.

Apart from the five persons who died during their attempted escape, the others were neutralized as a result of retaliation, while the Defense and Security Forces were the target of snipers who opened fire on them from the ambush, using weapons of all calibres.

As you are already aware, when a police officer, a gendarme or a soldier is faced with an armed attack, the retaliation is done on the grounds of legitimate self-defence.

During these clashes, a dozen members of the Defense and Security Forces were seriously wounded, with some of them who received real bullets.

This does not seem to mean any big deal to the authors of the International Crisis Group report. Just as the same NGO is not moved in the face of the bombing of September 22, 2017, the Molotov cocktail attack of a dormitory hosting more than hundred girls at the Bamenda Sacred Heart College, the attempt to burn down the SCDP fuel depot in Douala into ashes, which could have consumed half of Cameroon's economic capital, or the latest attack foiled thanks to the vigilance of our Defense and Security Forces in another school campus still in Bamenda.

If this is not terrorism, what then would it be? The question is addressed to the "International Crisis Group" and its political and media accomplices who prefer to endorse such crimes and blackmail a legitimate Government fulfilling its sovereign missions to protect persons and goods.

Meanwhile, the "International Crisis Group" prefers to remit secessionists of all responsibility for the violence sometimes caused by fires and bombings. These are, according to the

authors of the report, an unidentified splinter groups behind this violence, intended to later attribute the violence to the secessionist movement.

If this is not a collusion with a terrorist company, what then would that be? This too is another question addressed to the "International Crisis Group" and its political and media accomplices.

This is therefore the whole and simple truth.

To say anything else on this issue can only be a matter of lying, misinformation, intoxication and malicious propaganda in favor of an illegitimate and criminal cause.

In this approach bordering blindness and hysteria, the "International Crisis Group" goes as far as to accuse the international community and partners of Cameroon of complacency, indifferent and even accomplices of the Government of Cameroon.

Still according to the "International Crisis Group", all the bilateral and multilateral partners of Cameroon are and shall so remain, as long as they refuse to accompany the action of the secessionists through military sanctions and economic embargo on Cameroon.

In any case, and for failing to succumb to the injunctions expressed by the International Crisis Group, Cameroon would

experience hell fueled by an armed insurrection that would make Cameroon totally unmanageable.

Distinguished Journalists

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is evidently clear as you can all bear witness, in the light of a few selected elements of this accusations, that instead of a human rights NGO, we are dealing here with a veritable destabilization organization defending the interests of the secessionist movements veiled with unconfessed interests whose sole dream is to install chaos in our country.

We are dealing here with a coalition of enemies teamed up against our country in which the Anglophone problem, just like that of Boko Haram, is only a suitable pretext to destroy our national edifice and set up favorable conditions for the attainment of their interests.

However, this coalition, including the network of allegedly charitable NGOs - be it Amnesty International, the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, REDHAC, the Human Rights Network in Central Africa, or even Reporters Without Borders, just to name a few - is only a window dressing. This coalition, I must assert, should know that the Cameroonian people are not duped by their collusion and their destabilization aims.

Our people (of which the Defense and Security Forces are an important component), be it from the North and South, East or West, Muslims and Christians, Anglophones and Francophones, are all united, standing up with a burst of duty and national pride, and mobilized behind the elected of the Nation, **H.E Excellency Paul BIYA** to frustrate this conspiracy made by predators whose only dream is to take control of our natural wealth for the interest of these NGOs and a few accomplices to destabilize and impose chaos in our dear and beautiful fatherland.

Allow me to buttress it again, Cameroonians are not duped. Their resolve to defend the territorial integrity of our Nation, our societal model, our willingness to live together, in a solid solidarity, is measured by the sacrifices concerted by the founding fathers of our Nation, of which we should remain exemplary heirs.

Distinguished Journalists,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The war in the 21st century is more of communication than military. It is for this reason that I therefore urge you press men and women, communicators of all media landscape, to be custodians, jealous of what we are, that is to say, a great and very beautiful nation, united behind its leader, resolutely

determined for the press to become a bulwark against aggression and a vector for the development of our Nation.

I thank you for your kind attention