

The Attack at Kondengui: Response and Demands of the Ambazonian People to the International Community

On 22 July 2019, the Ambazonian Prisoners of Conscience illegally held at the Kondengui Maximum Security Prison by the Cameroon regime were premeditatedly and viciously attacked by Cameroon forces following the initiation of a coordinated protest to highlight the actions needed to be taken to make sure Ambazonia children get a chance to return to school at the start of the school year in September. We are deeply sorry to report that in the attack, the Cameroon forces killed four prisoners, injured several others, and left even more struggling with the effects unknown chemical agents deployed in tear gas canisters.

22 July 2019 will be a date that our people will always remember with contempt! It is particularly heinous that this attack on these imprisoned leaders — who were taking it upon themselves from behind bars to respond to concerns widely shared by the international community that children are being positioned as the innocent victims in this conflict — took place while Cameroon has supposedly been in the process of pursuing peace. This surface-level orientation has been widely publicized by the so-called “peace-seeking mission” that the Prime Minister of Cameroon took throughout the Ambazonia territory, and by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet’s report on “Cameroon’s willingness to cooperate to tackle human rights crises.” Just last week the Cameroon Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development was on another supposed conflict -mitigation trip to Ambazonia. But their bluff has now been called. This latest action not only constitutes a flagrant violation of Cameroon’s own law, and multiple provisions of international human rights laws, but contradicts the multiple of assurances of good faith that Cameroon officials and their masters in Paris have given to international personalities who take seriously the goal of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Indeed, their choice to deploy not the regular police, but the military and the Groupement Polyvalent D’intervention De La Gendarmerie Nationale (GPIGN) — a special anti-terrorist unit which is notorious for its lack of restraint and has been accused of numerous crimes in Ambazonia — reveals the regime’s true posture vis-a-vis resolving this conflict. This act makes entirely clear that the Cameroon regime has deliberately sought to deceive the international community by false statements and expressions of hope for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. World leaders must respond by immediately ceasing to tolerate deliberate deceptions of this kind, and must renew their commitment to stop the persistent and wholesale violations of fundamental human rights that our people have been subjected to for 58 years, especially the escalation of the past 3 years. We no longer live in a world where such horrendous crimes should be allowed to be swept under the carpet.

In the hours following the attack, some of the remaining Ambazonia political prisoners were removed from their cells and taken to the base of the presidential Guard affiliated Gendarme Special Intervention Unit Groupement Spécial d’Opération (GSO) and State Defense Secretariat (Secrétariat d’Etat à la défense, SED), which Human Rights Watch described in a May 6, 2019, report as a major site for torture, incommunicado detention, and enforced disappearances.

And on the morning of 23 July, the following prisoners accused on the Cameroon government media as the ringleader of the protest have been taken to an unknown destination by the Cameroon forces:

- Mancho Bibixy, journalist

- Conrad Tsi, journalist
- Ngalim Felix, teacher and teachers union organizer
- Penn Terence Khan, Vice Principal and teachers union organizer

The facts of these past two days confirms what was already the opinion of an overwhelming majority of Ambazonians when it comes to Cameroon's disregard for the lives of our people, and thus the implications to the life and safety of our people everywhere in the world. In that sense what yesterday communicated to us is Cameroon's unwavering commitment to violence as the sole medium of resolving this conflict.

For years we watched in shock as the Cameroon regime in a determined effort to subjugate us shredded every bit of political, economic, and even social infrastructure and capital that our people managed to acquire from the abominable years of official colonization. The sustained nature of this assaults makes clear how deeply rooted it is in the DNA of the French neocolonial regime next door. Rwanda, Congo Brazzaville, and event Ivory Coast should teach us a clear lesson: French neocolonial regimes in Africa will go to every length to acquire and maintain its dominion and have been successful in co-opting respected organizations, institutions, nations and individuals to play along in the past.

Ambazonians are opposed to war. We chose the universal symbol of peace, the dove with the olive branch, for our national flag. We tried everything in 55 years to avoid an armed conflict with this Cameroon regime. But the memory of the experience of effective democracy in 1954, with the transfer of power from one elected prime minister (albeit with limited authority) to another, is still strong within Ambazonian society. Therefore, nothing short of total independence from the French neocolonial regime in Cameroon is acceptable to us. Our motive is not about dominating or conquering some other people. We only want our own self-determination. And we will not be moved or distracted from our commitment to our total independence by lobbyist–engineered spectacles and feigned outrage by fair-weather friends.

No matter how long it may take us to end the occupation, the Ambazonian people in their boundless determination to end the horrors of the past 58 years, will persevere — and, God willing, will prevail.

Acting therefore to free our people from subjugation, domination, and exploitation, and in accordance with the International law of self-determination as restated in the 2010 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the unilateral declaration of Independence of Kosovo and similar cases referenced,

We the undersigned in consultation with our communities do declare and demand as follows:

First: To stand with Mancho Bibixy, Conrad Tsi, Ngalim Felix, Penn Terence Khan and any other Ambazonian prisoners taken to an unknown destination in relation to the protest of 22nd and 23rd July 2019 from Yaounde or the solidarity protest in Buea Central Prison; we call for a total lockdown of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia in a “Ghost Town” general strike to be held on Monday, 29 July 2019, and Tuesday 30 July 2019, with possibility of extension if our prisoners are not returned and in sound health. The purpose of this Ghost Town is to refuse the regime the ability to continue with “business as usual,” which is responsible for the brutalization of our brothers and sisters in its captivity. Exceptions should of course be made for ambulances and others in need of medical attention. This lockdown may be extended if the location and well-being of the missing prisoners is not clarified in a timely manner.

Second: As a necessary measure in anticipation of possible escalation by the Cameroon regime we have deposited a unilateral declaration undertaking to apply the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I to the conflict between us and the Cameroon regime. We call for a state of maximum alert as to the likelihood that the regime will make efforts to blame their crimes on our innocent people and use this as an opportunity to smear the image of our movement. As we've seen in the past and as reported by opposition politician Fru Ndi and others, they sent their soldiers to circulate in our cities pretending to be bike riders breaking ghost towns, they tried to blame their soldiers' murder of a 4-month old sleeping baby Martha on our movement. We will be vigilant in researching and rebutting such efforts in the days ahead, and we call on all concerned observers, academics, commentators and allies across the globe to join us in applying the strictest standard of review possible to any and all assertions made by the Cameroon regime.

Third: We call on the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution mandating a UN Fact-Finding Mission to investigate the alleged abuses during the Ambazonia–Cameroon Conflict, and we further call on all members of the international community — especially political figures, human rights and peace organizations, and faith leaders — to unite behind this demand. The Cameroon regime cannot be trusted to investigate itself, and PR-driven “tours” negotiated amicably with those orchestrating this brutality are not a substitute for international tools of accountability. A UN-mandated Fact Finding Mission has the authority to challenge the culture of impunity that the Cameroon regime currently operates within, and such accountability is a prerequisite for achieving a just peace. Moreover, we believe that a UN-mandated Fact-Finding Mission will have the immediate effect of quelling violence, saving lives, and halting the destruction of our peoples' lives and livelihood. We make this call aware that in December 2018 Ms. Reena Ghelani, Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), alerted the Security Council that this conflict was one of the fastest growing displacement crises in Africa; that OCHA's March 2019 report puts the number of people affected by this conflict at 4 million; and that reports from the May 2019 Arria-Formula Meeting of the UN Security Council confirm the urgency of the situation.

Fourth: To those parties in the United States, Switzerland, Canada, and Germany who have publicly offered their services to help bring an end to the conflict by pursuing peace negotiations, we express our sincere gratitude, and we reiterate that we are ready and open to engage in honest peaceful negotiation with Cameroon facilitated by independent impartial non-participant third parties — which most definitely excludes France and the other neocolonial French regimes that are using the French neocolonial currency formerly known as the Colonies Françaises d'Afrique (CFA) Franc. Hence while we recognise the UN Charter's provision for regional security arrangements, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) — whose members all use CFA Franc — cannot be considered independent or impartial and thus cannot play any role in mediating this particular conflict involving one of their most significant ally and member. We entreat all parties sincerely interested in playing a role in resolving this conflict to address themselves to Sisiku AyukTabe and his Senior aides being held at the Kondengui High Security prisoners by the Cameroon government. Mr. AyukTabe and his aides are the leaders of our negotiation team.

Fifth: We call on French President Emmanuel Macron to stop this painful war of extermination being waged against our people by the French neocolonial regime in Cameroon, with potential to seriously destabilize the entire central African subregion. We call upon him to take concrete steps to end

Francafrique, which as he has stated has harm the vitality of French society and which is responsible for 9 of the 10 current wars in Africa, and to join the efforts to create a new future for former French-controlled territories in Africa that is devoid of the shame, material and human cost of this particularly harmful form of neocolonialism.

Sixth and finally: To the captive people of Cameroon, we have no desire to fight you, that is why our forefathers provided your independence movement refuge and our forebears voted in the plebiscite to join you in 1961 as equal partners in a two state federation to build a new subregion for our progeny. We wish to address you as fellow Africans, whom we know were the first to be mass slaughtered by the French neocolonial regime when your people launched the first independence armed struggle in a French-controlled territory in Africa. And we have watched with deep sorrow how Paris orchestrated a genocide to destroy your aspiration for independence and turned your country to a French outpost for natural resources to fund the obscene lifestyles of corrupt politics and their cooperate cronies in the French metropole. We understand that those that rule you are puppets of the corrupt international conspiracy of Francafrique and that your lives and land are being used as pawns by these cabal. We have no doubt that you also want the freedoms that we seek — freedom from French-domination and exploitation; freedom to choose your own leaders; freedom of thought, expression, association, and control your economy and destiny. This might very well be that opportune moment for you to fight for that future of freedom. For those of you who acknowledge our right to total independence and are ready to join the battle against this French neocolonial regime in Cameroon, we extend a hand of friendship and solidarity. Please join with us to support the above demands.

Fellow Ambazonians, this is a treacherous and difficult journey we have embarked on. No one can say with 100% certainty what the outcome will be. We have seen hundreds of our villages burnt to the ground, thousands of our men women and children shot dead for no other reason that belonging to our community, livelihoods destroyed from the burning of the bikes of biker taxi riders to the destruction of corn farms in Bali. From the shooting dead of a 4-month-old to the burning alive of elderly grandparents, and everyone in between, our innocents have suffered. No one can say for sure how much more suffering we will be subjected to by this regime — how many more months of hardship, how many more people will be killed. We must continue forward and keep our eyes on the prize. The greatest danger of all is for us to give up at this point. The price of freedom is always high but we must remember that we tried peace at the expense of freedom and got 55 years of bone-chilling terror instead of real peace. We most definitely shall not accept a return to the status quo, nor accept anything less than total independence. This time, we want real freedom and real peace.

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