

SUBJECT MATTER: SYSTEMATIC ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES, EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTIONS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN FRANCOPHONE REGIONS OF CAMEROON WITH IMPUNITY

WE WISH TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS FOLLOWS:

1. That according to reliable sources, some victims of human rights violations from the North West and South West regions who have sought refuge in predominantly Francophone parts of Cameroon continue to face very serious and increasingly precarious challenges at the hands of state authorities and segments of the host population. These violations include arbitrary arrest and detention without due process, enforced disappearances, incommunicado detention, torture, and, in some documented instances, extrajudicial executions.
2. That 16 cases were monitored and documented in our previous report in Bafoussam, Douala, Yaoundé and Ebolowa, of individuals who fled the Anglophone conflict zones after being accused often without evidence of collaboration with separatist groups and they have continued to be tracked, harassed, and re-arrested by security services. This pattern of persecution effectively extends the conflict beyond the North West and South West regions and undermines the safety of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). It also directly contradicts the official government narrative of "living together" consistently promoted by President Paul Biya as a pillar of national unity.
3. That we have again documented ten cases of enforced disappearances in Douala (Foglamench Aliyuh Nah, Minang Blasius Cho, Elizabeth Takang Yvette, Njongoho Hycenter) and Bafoussam(Tokoh George Nkongho, Finting Inusah Alious, Babolat Elijah, Fubkeh Kelson Bih, Nchangeh Sharon Mbih) all Anglophone IDPs and the whereabouts of 4 (Elizabeth Takang Yvette, Fubkeh Kelson Bih, Finting Inusah Alious and Foglamench Aliyuh Nah) remain unknown to date. Families have been denied information, and no judicial oversight has been provided. We also documented four additional cases of men who had been arrested in the North West region by defense and security forces, detained for months, and released without charge, only to be re-arrested after relocating to Francophone cities. Some remain in prolonged pre-trial detention in overcrowded facilities such as New Bell Prison in Douala and Kondengui Central Prison in Yaoundé, with no access to legal counsel or family visits. Others have been transferred to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) centers established in Bamenda and Buea in 2019 following the Major National Dialogue. Although these centers are officially reserved for former combatants who voluntarily disarm, credible testimonies indicate unarmed civilians are increasingly being sent there under duress on allegations of being separatists. In other disturbing cases, detainees have been taken to military barracks and coerced into acting as informants to identify alleged separatist hideouts, exposing them to severe reprisals from both state and non-state actors.
4. That beyond state led persecution, social stigmatization and xenophobia have intensified since the escalation of the armed conflict in 2017. We have recorded, monitored, and documented numerous incidents in which



Internally Displaced Persons residing in Francophone regions are subjected to hate speech, public humiliation, and physical assault. Derogatory slurs such as "Amba Boys," "Ambazonians," and "Anglofools" are routinely used in markets, schools, workplaces, and on public transport. These verbal attacks frequently escalate into violent confrontations with Francophone residents, particularly in high-tension areas of the Littoral and West regions. In Mounjo Division and parts of the South region, IDPs have had their homes burned, businesses looted, and property confiscated after being accused of "killing our brothers" in reference to soldiers deployed to the Anglophone regions. Victims are often told to "go back to your Villages" or "return to Ambazonia," reinforcing a dangerous narrative that frames Anglophone Cameroonians as foreigners in their own country.

5. That despite continuous denunciation of these practices by civil society organizations, repeated media advocacy campaigns, and our formal submissions to the National Commission on Human Rights and

Freedoms, meaningful change remains elusive. These abuses persist in violation of Article 1(2) of the Constitution of Cameroon, which guarantees every citizen the right to settle in any part of the national territory, as well as Articles 5 and 6 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The situation also stands in stark contrast to President H.E. Paul Biya's repeated calls for peaceful coexistence and national integration, emphasized in his annual end-of-year addresses. The gap between policy rhetoric and ground realities has eroded trust in state institutions and deterred many IDPs from seeking safety within Cameroon's borders.

6. That consequently, fear and insecurity are driving a growing number of Anglophone IDPs and victims of the crisis to seek asylum abroad. Neighboring Nigeria has received tens of thousands of Cameroonian refugees from the conflict Anglophone regions since 2017, while others pursue dangerous migration routes to Europe and North America. For many, leaving Cameroon is viewed as the only viable option to secure basic protection and to exercise fundamental rights without discrimination based on linguistic origin, perceived political affiliation, or displacement status. Until concrete measures are taken to end impunity, ensure accountability for violations, and guarantee equal protection under the law, the cycle of displacement and vulnerability will continue to deepen.

7. That the persistent attacks and violations of the rights of Internally Displaced Persons are unreasonable, illogical, and constitute a breach of their fundamental human rights and freedoms. These rights are enshrined in various international, regional, and national legal instruments, including:

a. International Instruments:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Article 3 – right to life, liberty and security of person; Article 5 – freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; Article 9 – freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention; Article 13 – freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966): Article 6 – right to life; Article 7 – prohibition of torture; Article 9 – liberty and security of person; Article 12 – freedom of movement and choice of residence.

- Convention Against Torture (1984): Article 2 – obligation to prevent acts of torture; Article 16 prevention of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

b. Regional Instruments:

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981): Article 4 – right to life and integrity of the person; Article 5 – prohibition of torture and cruel treatment; Article 6 – right to liberty and security; Article 12 – freedom of movement and residence.

- The African Union Convention (Kampala Convention 2009) for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, ratified by Cameroon in 2015, is the binding regional law on IDP protection.

1. Article 3(1)(a) – Obligation to Prevent Displacement

States Parties undertake to respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, so as to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to arbitrary displacement.

2. Article 9(1)(b) – Protection During Displacement

States Parties shall protect the rights of internally displaced persons, regardless of the cause of displacement, by refraining from and preventing arbitrary killing, summary execution, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

3. Article 9(2)(c) – Protection of Property

States Parties shall protect internally displaced persons against pillage, direct or indiscriminate attacks or other acts of violence, and against being used as human shields. Burning homes after forcing civilians out is both destruction of property and an act of violence against IDPs. The Convention explicitly prohibits such attacks.

4. Article 11(1) – Obligation to Investigate and Prosecute

States Parties shall ensure accountability for acts of arbitrary displacement and other violations of the rights of internally displaced persons, including through prosecution of perpetrators.

Cameroon has a legal duty to launch independent, effective investigations into alleged violations by its defense forces. A press release is not accountability. Failure to investigate violates Article 11.

c. National Law:

- 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, as amended: Preamble – affirmation of attachment to fundamental freedoms enshrined in the UDHR, ACHPR and all duly ratified international conventions; Article 5 – right to life and to physical and moral integrity; Article 7 – prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment; Article 9 – freedom of movement and residence.

THAT IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE, CONSCIENCE AFRICAINE CONDEMNS IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS THE SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, WHILE RECOMMENDING AS FOLLOWS:

1. To the Government of Cameroon:

Guarantee the protection, safety, and dignity of all Internally Displaced Persons throughout the national territory, without discrimination based on region of origin, language, or perceived political affiliation.

Specific Actions Required:

a. National Protection Directive

Issue a binding executive order to all governors, SDOs, DOs, defense and security forces, and local councils affirming that IDPs from the North West and South West regions are entitled to full protection, freedom of movement, and residence anywhere in Cameroon under Article 9 of the 1996 Constitution. Prohibit profiling, harassment, or arrest based solely on Anglophone origin.

b. Establish National IDP Protection Mechanism

Create an inter-ministerial taskforce under the Prime Minister's Office, with participation from MINAT, MINDEF, MINJUSTICE, NCHRF, and civil society, to:

- Monitor threats and attacks against IDPs in all 10 regions.
- Operate a 24/7 hotline for IDPs to report abuses, with rapid response units in Douala, Yaoundé, Bafoussam, and Ebolowa.
- Ensure safe housing, legal aid, and psychosocial support for IDPs at risk.

c. End Impunity for Violations

Investigate and prosecute state and non-state actors responsible for arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance, arson, and hate crimes against IDPs. Publicize convictions to deter further abuses. Suspend and sanction officials who order or condone illegal profiling of Anglophone IDPs.

d. Enforce Non-Discrimination in Public Services

Direct all public institutions, schools, hospitals, and law enforcement agencies to provide services to IDPs without discrimination. Prohibit denial of enrollment, healthcare, or documentation based on displacement status or region of origin. Sanction officials who use slurs like "Amba Boys" or "Anglofools."

e. Secure Property and Livelihoods

Instruct administrative authorities in high-risk areas like Moungo Division and the South region to prevent evictions, arson, and looting of IDP homes and businesses. Establish compensation mechanisms for victims and ensure IDPs can safely engage in economic activities.

f. Guarantee Access to Justice and Documentation

Provide IDPs with free legal aid to challenge unlawful detention and discrimination. Fast-track issuance of national ID cards and other civil documents lost during displacement, without requiring return to conflict zones.

g. Align with International Standards

Fully domesticate and implement the *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)*, ratified by Cameroon in 2015. Article 9 of the Convention obliges states to protect IDPs from discrimination, arbitrary displacement, and harm.

Core Principle: The right to live in safety anywhere in Cameroon is constitutional and non-negotiable. Protecting IDPs nationwide is not only a legal obligation under the UDHR, ICCPR, ACHPR, and the 1996 Constitution, but also a critical test of the government's commitment to "living together" and national unity. Without guaranteed protection, the cycle of fear, displacement, and secondary migration abroad will continue.

2. To Traditional Authorities, Religious Leaders, and Community Leaders

a. Promote Unity in Diversity

Use your moral authority to publicly reject hate speech, xenophobia, and stigmatization of Anglophone IDPs. Remind communities that Cameroon's strength lies in unity in diversity, and that all citizens have a constitutional right to live anywhere in the national territory under Article 1(2) of the 1996 Constitution.

b. Facilitate Integration and Social Cohesion

Organize community dialogues, cultural exchanges, and joint initiatives between host populations and IDPs. Support the enrollment of displaced children in local schools and encourage inter-community associations that foster mutual understanding.

c. Denounce and Prevent Mob Violence

Act swiftly to stop rumors, false accusations, and collective punishment targeting IDPs. Cooperate with administrative and security authorities to identify and report individuals inciting violence, arson, or looting of IDP property in markets, neighborhoods, and villages.

To the General Public in Francophone Regions



d. Reject Stereotypes and Derogatory Language

Refrain from using slurs such as "Amba Boys," "Ambazonians," or "Anglofools." Recognize that IDPs are victims of a conflict, not combatants, and that most fled violence to protect their families. Treat every Cameroonian with dignity and respect.

e. Report Abuses and Protect the Vulnerable

If you witness arbitrary arrests, harassment, or hate crimes against Anglophone IDPs, report them to the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, trusted civil society organizations, or religious institutions. Protecting the vulnerable is a civic duty.

f. Support Livelihoods and Peaceful Coexistence

Welcome IDPs into local markets, workplaces, and tenant arrangements. Economic integration reduces tension and disproves narratives that IDPs are a threat. Remember that many IDPs are skilled teachers, health workers, traders, and farmers who contribute to local development.

g. Challenge Misinformation

Verify information before sharing. Accusations that IDPs are "killing our brothers" fuel collective blame and violence. Distinguish between armed groups and unarmed civilians who fled the same violence you condemn.

3. To Media and Social Media Users in Francophone Regions**a. Practice Responsible Reporting**

Avoid sensational headlines that frame IDPs as security threats. Highlight stories of solidarity, integration, and shared humanity. Use your platforms to educate the public on the rights of IDPs under national and international law.

Done in Douala, this February 11, 2023

Signed




Amadu TARNTEH

Executive Secretary