

Cameroonian and African Civil Society

Declaration of the Cameroonian Civil Society of January 21, 2025.

After the attack on Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme

" No to the restriction of our fundamental freedoms: No persecution and no threats "

The Republic of Cameroon is currently experiencing a period of significant change, with the upcoming presidential election being viewed by many analysts and observers as presenting certain challenges. In the lead-up to this election, in November 2024, Cameroon participated in a review by the United Nations Committee Against Torture. In 2025, Cameroon is expected to appear once more before the United Nations Human Rights Committee to address any concerns regarding its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which it acceded on 27 June 1984.

The experts on these two UN committees have been provided with alternative reports on the situation in Cameroon, including those submitted by dynamic Cameroonian human rights organizations such as Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme. These experts have expressed their **deep concern** at the deterioration of human rights.

was against this backdrop that, on **January 20, 2025**, we learned with shock and dismay of the attack on the Yaoundé offices of **Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme-Cameroun** in the form of a "disguised burglary". This is undoubtedly a purely criminal act of commission.

It is a matter of concern that this situation has arisen just a few months after the Minister of Territorial Administration (MINAT) decided to suspend civil society organizations that focus on promoting and protecting human rights, defending human rights defenders, fostering social cohesion, promoting peace and facilitating national reconciliation. This decision, which was made through a series of orders dated 6 December 2024, has had an impact on organizations such as REDHAC and REACH OUT.

It is with great regret that we must inform you of an incident that occurred during the night of Saturday, January 18 to Sunday, January 19, 2025. It appears that individuals, whose identities remain unknown at this time, gained unauthorized access to the NDH-Cameroun offices at Rue policlinique, Bastos-Yaoundé, and took away all essential working equipment. These included computer equipment and

the majority of data storage devices, such as laptops, CPUs, hard drives, USB sticks, and projection and recording equipment for conferences and meetings.

The flag, proudly displayed in front of the offices as a symbol of our country's national unity, was also carefully removed. For us, this is a message of declaration of war.

- **Considering** that human rights, including the right to freedom of association, like all fundamental freedoms, are guaranteed by the Constitution of Cameroon and legal provisions in force;

- **Considering** that these rights are also guaranteed by international texts duly ratified by Cameroon, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);

- **Noting that** NDH-Cameroon is one of the best-known human rights organizations in Cameroon, and has worked tirelessly to promote and defend human rights since 1996;

- **Pointing out that** the credibility of NDH-Cameroon's work has enabled it to work in concert with the Cameroonian authorities on several projects and programs impacting on human rights;

- **Noting** that, for several months now, the Executive Director of NDH-Cameroun has been subjected to threats of intimidation from unknown persons, because of her fight for the right to freedom of association and assembly guaranteed by the Constitution (fundamental law), the African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the effective rule of law in Cameroon; Noting that, for several months now, the Executive Director of NDH-Cameroun has been subjected to threats of intimidation from unknown persons, because of her fight for the right to freedom of association and assembly guaranteed by the Constitution (fundamental law), the African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the effective rule of law in Cameroon;

- **Noting that** this attack, disguised as a "burglary", aims to prevent NDH from continuing its work and to silence its Executive Director. This attack is clearly in line with the acts of intimidation, threats and further harassment faced by Human

Rights Defenders in general and Women Human Rights Defenders in particular in Cameroon;

- **Recalling** that some Cameroonian authorities have made public statements expressing their opposition to NDH for its actions to protect human rights in Cameroon;

- **Recalling** that since **1948**, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has placed human rights at the forefront of international law, and that the UN actively protects human rights through legal instruments and field work;

- **Recalling** that in a Press Release **N°AG/SHC/381 of November 3, 1998**, in concluding the debate on the methodical implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), the United Nations Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Commission (Third Committee) had already indicated that THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS REQUIRES DIALOGUE-BASED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND THE CREATION OF A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT;

- **Recalling** that General Assembly Resolution **53/144** on the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, commonly known as "THE DECLARATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDANTS", emphasized that "*members of the international community must fulfill, jointly and severally, their solemn obligation to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, and reaffirming the particular importance of international cooperation in fulfilling this obligation in accordance with the Charter, and of protecting all those who work for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms*";

- **Recalling** the African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which states that States Parties have a duty to guarantee the independence of the Courts and to enable the establishment and development of appropriate national institutions responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the present Charter;

- **Recalling** the Grand Bay (Mauritius) Declaration and Plan of Action on Human Rights of the African Union of April 16, 1999, which considers that the promotion and protection of human rights is a priority for Africa and constitutes a unique

opportunity for global analysis and reflection on mechanisms for the protection and guarantee of human rights for the accelerated development of the continent;

- **Recalling** the African Union's Kigali Declaration of May 08, 2003, recognizing the important role played by civil society organizations and human rights defenders in particular in the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa;

- **Recalling** the study on the situation of Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa and their relevant recommendations by the African Union's AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS of 2014;

- **Recognizing** that individuals, groups and associations have the right and responsibility to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to publicize them at national and international levels, and must be protected by United Nations member states and signatory states of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

- **Recalling** that, as a State party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the one hand, and a signatory to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance on the other, Cameroon has a duty to comply with its international obligations, Cameroon must comply with the "*Guidelines, on freedom of association and assembly of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted at its 60th Ordinary Session held in Niamey, Niger from May 8 to 22, 2017*";

- **Recalling the Bamako Declaration** of November 03, 2000, in which the States of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) undertake to recognize the place and facilitate the involvement of Civil Society, to enable them to play their role as actors in a balanced political life in the collective interest;

- **Noting** that MINAT's latest actions against well-known civil society organizations, and the attack on the NDH offices disguised as a "burglary", as well as acts of intimidation, complete a long list of attacks on fundamental freedoms and human rights;

- **Considering** that these threats, intimidation and other attacks against civil society actors plunge Cameroon into a dynamic of human rights violations, flagrant and grotesque restriction of civic space and installation of dictatorial methods that truly tarnish Cameroon's image internationally;

- **Recalling** that the actions of certain Cameroonian authorities, including the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) and remote-controlled individuals lurking in the shadows, constitute genuine threats to social cohesion, peace and stability in Cameroon;

- **Noting** that these attacks, intimidations, threats, including the recurrent instrumentalization of justice, which occur a few months before a presidential election eagerly awaited by Cameroonian citizens, seem to indicate a desire to neutralize Civil Society committed to human rights, peace and fundamental freedoms before these crucial deadlines;

Cameroonian and African Civil Society (organizations and personalities),

- **Recalls** that these recurrent threats, attacks, intimidations, legal and judicial harassment against civil society organizations are a flagrant and assumed violation of human rights in general and in particular of the right to freedom of association in Cameroon;

- **Reminds** the Cameroonian authorities that it is their obligation to protect human rights, human rights defenders and the right to fundamental freedoms, and not to limit our hard-won constitutional freedoms, let alone create actions contrary to the laws of the Republic;

Cameroonian and African Civil Society (Organizations and Personalities),

- **Denounces** this nth attack, of rare gravity, on civil society organizations in Cameroon;

- **Condemns** with the utmost energy these recurrent attempts to violate human rights, to restrict civic space, and to threaten, intimidate and legally and judicially harass civil society actors and organizations;

- Urgently **requests** the Prime Minister, Head of Government of Cameroon, to take special measures to protect civic space, and the physical and psychological security of Defenders, especially Women Defenders and their families, in accordance with the commitments relating to the promotion and protection of Human Rights made by the State of Cameroon before the United Nations and the African Union;

- **Urges** the Government of Cameroon to adopt the law on the protection of human rights defenders, which has been before the Senate for several years;

- **Urges** the United Nations, the African Union and Cameroon's friendly countries **to** call on the Cameroonian authorities to cease all intimidation, threats, attacks

and legal and judicial harassment against civil society organizations and human rights defenders, and to ensure that civic space is opened up to guarantee democracy and the rule of law in this pre-electoral period;

- **Recalls** its commitment to the respect of human rights and therefore reassures its determination to fight for the promotion and protection of rights, a civic space for all, social cohesion and peace;

- **Reiterates** its determination to combat all acts tolerated by the public authorities that violate human rights and fundamental freedoms;

- **Calls** on all human rights organizations not to give in to acts of intimidation from any quarter;

- **Calls on Cameroonians to make no concessions on their constitutionally guaranteed and internationally recognized rights;**

- **Reassures** public opinion and the international community of its determination to make use of the provisions of our penal code to resist attempts by any authority to deprive citizens of their rights;

- **Calls** on the international community to pay particular attention to the human rights situation in Cameroon, and to exert greater pressure to ensure that Cameroon honors the commitments it has made through the ratification of regional and international human rights instruments ;

- Announces the creation on **January 21, 2025** of a ***strategic monitoring unit for Cameroonian civil society organizations and their leaders;***

- Finally, Cameroonian and African Civil Society condemns with the utmost energy this intimidating and restrictive approach to human rights and civic space, at a time when Cameroon is about to embark on a new high-risk electoral cycle in 2025, which requires a more visible climate of appeasement.

- **Reaffirms** its solidarity and support for Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme Cameroun and its volunteers.

Done in Yaoundé on January 21, 2025

Signed :

1. Dr Hilaire Kamga, Plate-Forme de la société civile pour la Démocratie
2. Mme Maximilienne Ngo Mbe, Directrice Exécutive REDHAC
3. Me Alice NKOM, Avocat
4. Mme Cyrille Rolande BECHON, Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme
5. M. Jean Claude FOGNO, Mandela Center International
6. M. Philippe NANGA, Un Monde Avenir
7. M. Amadu Tarnteh, Coalition pour les droits de l'homme et la paix dans le NOSO et les régions affectées
8. Me Nkongho Felix AGBOR-BALLA, CHRDA
9. M. Paul Joel KAMTCHANG , ADISI -Cameroun
10. M. Flaubert DJATENG, Coordonnateur de Zenü Network
11. M. Jean Marc BIKOKO, CSP et Tournons La Page
12. Me Calvin JOB , Avocat
13. Me Felenon MAHOP SEN, Avocat
14. Me Gladys MBUYA, Avocat
15. Me Dorcas Nkongme , Avocat
16. Me Sadrack WOAPPI , Avocat
17. Dr. Richard Makon , Universitaire
18. M. Jean TAKOUGANG , Enseignant /Syndicaliste
19. M. Fogué FOGUITO , Positive GENERATION
20. M. Joseph POUAGAM , Goodwill Cameroun
21. M. Charlie TCHIKANDA , Ligue des droits et Libertés
22. M. Felix Marcel OBAM , Dynamique Citoyenne
23. M. Alex Gustave AZEBAZE , Journaliste
24. Dr. Samuel Mathieu TANG , Juriste
25. Dr André Marie YIMGA , Enseignant
26. Me Tamfu Richard, Avocat
27. M abrice LENA, Activiste
28. Mme Augusta EPANYA, Féministe
29. Me Charlotte Tchakounté, Avocat
30. Mbengan Nkai Njee, Journaliste
31. Me Assirou, Avocat
32. Roger Kaffo Fokou, Ecrivain
33. Jean Genestar Priso, Cameroon patriotic Diaspora
34. Dr Hugues POJUME, Association des Amis du Droit (ADD)
35. Mme TZEGOUO Marie Alvisse ; Association Femmes Revivres
36. M. BOUENZE MENGANG Stéphane, Association pour l'Epanouissement des Jeunes Femmes
37. M Clovis KOAGNE , FIDEPE
38. M DZUALO AZEMGUE Sipa, SAC
39. Me Njifen Thierry, Avocat
40. M Mamadou Boba Dodo, Cameroun O'bosso
41. Mme Bergeline DOMOU, Activiste
42. Franck ESSI, Stant Up for Cameroun
43. Remi TASSING, Activiste,
44. Dr. Rose Ndengue

45. Dr Kuate Edi Donal, Universitaire
46. CHANGAM BERNARD ROMÉO, Journaliste
47. Dr Simo Engelbert . Enseignant
48. Mme Larissa KOJOUE, Universitaire
49. Me Crepin Ndjodo, Avocat
50. Me NGASSA TCHATAT Pelerine Flaure, Avocate
51. Me ASSIENE ABOYOYO Paul, Avocate
52. Me Justin Robert NANA LEUNKWA, Avocat
53. Me Meboug Laurie, Avocat
54. Me Nkemaïgni Mélanie, Avocate
55. Me NGUEZONG Nadège, Avocate
56. Me CHENDJOU Serge Emmanuel, Avocat
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66. Mme Pauline MATCHIM, Association Femmes et enfants
67. M Daniel MOUNDZEGO, Association Réfugiés Sans Frontières
68. M Marius KAPTOUOM, OnEstEnsemble
69. M Anyssé KENFACK NGNINTEDEM, RACCC et ACDESPE
70. Mme Viviane NGUIMEYA, Peace Bus Association
71. Ateki Seta Caxton, NewSETA
72. Mme WEGUEM Ideline, All Women Together
73. M. TAGNE Jean De Dieu , Offre Orange
74. M MAGOUA Samuel, Solutions Cameroun
75. Mme Valentine NGOUTCHE NKONLAK, Women Advocacy and Communication Network
76. Mme Elisabeth MEKOUYOU OBAMA, Association pour la Solidarité et le Développement Durable