

## CIVIC ACTION 237

### [CALL TO ACTION FOLLOWING THE POPE LEO XIV VISIT]

#### *The time for Genuine Dialogue has come!*

We, Cameroonian Civil Society organizations, acting within the framework of the **CIVIC ACTION 237** platform, have followed, with particular attention and sincere emotion, the historic visit of Pope Leo XIV to Cameroon from April 15 to 18, 2026. In Bamenda, before thousands of Cameroonian women and men bruised by years of violence and by the absurdity of limitless suffering, the Sovereign Pontiff released 7 doves of peace and forcefully called for a genuine dialogue to put an end to the crisis ravaging the North-West and South-West Regions. CIVIC ACTION 237 maintains that this message cannot go unanswered!

#### **I. A context that demands urgency**

A few days before this historic visit, some Cameroonian Civil Society organizations (Conscience Africaine, Mandela Center International and Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme) released the **2025 Report on the Human Rights situation in the North-West and South-West regions**. This report, based on a rigorous methodology consistent with international documentation standards, established **136 credible incidents of human rights violations and abuses** recorded during the year 2025 alone.

Its conclusions are unequivocal: **war is still a reality. Lethal violence has become commonplace**. In full view of everyone, a war economy structured around extortion has taken root in communities. Freedom of movement for the population is systematically impeded. Women and children (including infants) continue to pay the heaviest price in this conflict. Added to this is a genuine cult of impunity that has been established as a mode of governance and has ultimately trivialized blind violence.

The report confirms what Civil Society actors have been saying for years: **a purely security-based response cannot constitute a sustainable solution**. The deep roots of this crisis demand a courageous political response.

In the same vein, civil society organizations (including NDH-Cameroon, United Cameroon, Source de Vie, the Civil Society Platform for Democracy, REDHAC, and others) directly sent letters to draw the Sovereign Pontiff's attention to specific concerns. Among these concerns were the situation of political prisoners, truth and reconciliation, the NOSO crisis, and the overall human rights situation. A related declaration was made public for the attention of the national and international community.

#### **II. A call rooted in a long-standing effort**

Our commitment to dialogue is not new. As early as October 2017, civil society leaders alerted Prime Minister Joseph Dion NGUTE, in various ways, to the urgency of direct dialogue with the actors in the conflict. The **Major National Dialogue** of 2019 in Yaounde did not address the substance of the problem. It was organized without the participation of the most relevant actors, without the most representative separatist leaders, and without any credible follow-up mechanism. The crisis has since persisted and even worsened.

Initiatives for direct dialogue, facilitated successively by the Government of Canada and then by that of Switzerland, offered promising avenues. They were abruptly and unilaterally interrupted by the Cameroonian Government, without public justification. All these missed opportunities have prolonged the suffering of the population and led to serious infringements of human dignity.

The appointment of a Vice-President from the Anglophone regions in crisis, although some may consider it a symbolic gesture, cannot by itself contribute to de-escalation or to ending the fighting. It is no substitute for

the necessary political dialogue and may even be interpreted by some protagonists as a further provocation at a time when the urgent need for direct dialogue is imposing itself. This politicking approach cannot be regarded as a credible remedy for putting an end to the murderous madness in the Anglophone regions of the country.

### III. What we demand

Drawing on the message of peace delivered by Pope Leo XIV, we issue a solemn appeal to the Government of the Republic of Cameroon:

**The immediate and unconditional opening of a Direct, Inclusive, and Structured Dialogue on the Anglophone crisis.**

To succeed, this dialogue must meet the following conditions:

- **Genuine representativeness**: it must include the most consensual leaders of the Anglophone movement, in particular representatives of the diaspora, the local leaders who have effective control on the ground, as well as the leaders currently detained in Cameroonian prisons, whose prior or simultaneous release is a *sine qua non* condition for the credibility of the process.
- **Independent and legitimate facilitation**: we propose that **the Bishop of Bamenda, the President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, and the Apostolic Nuncio** take on a leading role in facilitating this dialogue. Their moral authority, their closeness to the communities, and their independence from the parties to the conflict make them the natural guarantors of a trustworthy process.
- **Involvement of Civil Society organizations**: NGOs that work effectively on the ground, that can demonstrate their achievements in the NW-SW, and that enjoy the trust of the various Anglophone components must be fully associated with this process;
- **A substantive agenda**: the dialogue must address the root causes of the crisis, without prior exclusion of any substantive issue, including the form of the State, and with genuine openness to the legitimate aspirations of the population, in particular taking into account the Report of the **National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM)**, commonly known as the “Musonge Commission”;
- **A Transitional Justice process**: any lasting peace agreement must be accompanied by mechanisms for truth, accountability, reparation for victims, and guarantees of non-recurrence.

### IV. On behalf of the victims

The reports of organizations, including the 2025 Conscience Africaine report currently available, are not merely compilations of figures. Behind every documented incident, there are devastated families, broken communities, children torn from their future. Infants have been incarcerated in prisons designed for adults. Breastfeeding mothers have been brought before military tribunals. Civilians have been executed. Valiant soldiers of the Republic have lost their lives. Entire populations live under the terror of “ghost towns.”

*To refuse the normalization of this violence is to refuse that the future be built on silence and oblivion.*

### V. A historic moment to seize

Cameroon now has a rare window of opportunity. The universal message of Pope Leo XIV, amplified by the global resonance of his visit, offers the Cameroonian Government a favorable context to take the initiative of a courageous political gesture.

The authorities have shown their organizational capacity by welcoming the Holy Father. Let them now demonstrate their political capacity by responding to his most powerful call: Peace through Dialogue.

***The CIVIC ACTION 237 Platform stands ready to contribute to this process and to accompany, in its role as an independent watchdog, any sincere effort in favor of a just, inclusive, and sustainable peace.***

***Done at Yaounde, on April 22, 2026***

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**For CIVIC ACTION 237**

**The Signatory Organizations**

#	Name of organization	Representative
1	Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Peace in the North-West and South-West and Conscience Africaine	Mr. Amadu TARNTEH
2	Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme	Mrs. Cyrille Rolande BECHON
3	The Civil Society Platform for Democracy	Dr Hilaire Kamga
4	Mandela Center International	Mr. Jean Claude FOGNO
5	Community Human Rights and Advocacy Center (CHRAC)	Fotoh Titus Abah
6	Volunteers for the Consolidation of National Unity (VOCONU)	Mr Nformir Williams Ngange
7	Human is Rights	Blaise Chamango
8	All Women Together	Mrs Weguem Ideline
9	Association des Amis du Droit	Dr Hugues Pojumes
10	Solutions Cameroun	Dr Yimga Andre Marie