

The Global Campaign for Peace & Justice in Cameroon
OPEN LETTER FROM 35 GROUPS

For Immediate Release, 27 October 2020
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A Plea for Action in Cameroon: #EndAnglophoneCrisis

(Canada, UK, Cameroon) On 24 October, at least seven schoolchildren were massacred in Kumba, a town in Cameroon's South-West Region. According to reputable reports, 12 more were gravely injured. Gunmen invaded Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy and shot the students in their classroom. One mother found her daughter on the floor, bleeding from the stomach, shouting, "Mum, please help me!"

The Cameroonian government, a signatory to the Safe Schools Declaration, has urged students and teachers in Cameroon's conflict regions to return to school this academic year while offering little protection for their safety. Some non-state armed separatist groups have continued to promote a 'school boycott,' threatening to commit violence against those who participate in school, which is allegedly the case in Kumba.

As the fourth year of the Anglophone conflict rages on, children have become targets and tools of war. Access to education has been weaponized.

The warring parties, notably the Cameroonian security forces and armed separatist groups, have previously burned schools and killed children. These are crimes against humanity. Moreover, the Kumba killings are actionable within the international definition of Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict.

Although international bodies and countries know what is happening in Cameroon, and express "deep concern," they need to take more concrete action. The 'Kumba Massacre' on United Nations Day 2020, along with the 'Ngarbuh Massacre' on Valentine's Day 2020, add to the long list of atrocities that includes beheadings, executions, torture, rapes, mutilations, and arbitrary arrests. What more does the United Nations need to consider the Responsibility to Protect doctrine (R2P) in Cameroon?

We vehemently condemn those who took lives yesterday. We offer condolences to the children's families, the town of Kumba, and all those who have suffered in the Anglophone Crisis.

We call on the warring parties to uphold international laws and provide a secure environment for education. We implore them to stop committing atrocities, and put them on notice that perpetrators, including those in the chain of command, will one day be held to account in court and that victims will have justice.

We assert that the root causes of the Anglophone Crisis are political, and the conflict requires a political, not military, solution.

We ask the Cameroonian government to declare a ceasefire and formally commit to finding a negotiated end to the conflict, at inclusive talks mediated by a third party.

We ask all non-state armed groups to commit to a ceasefire and participate in talks, and to permit the reopening of schools to afford children their fundamental right of education.

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We urge the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to obtain immediately from the warring parties, notably the Cameroonian government and separatist groups, signed or public declarations committing to a ceasefire and inclusive peace negotiations conducted by a credible third party.

We call on diplomats of goodwill and their countries to use all tools at their disposal, including public diplomacy and targeted smart sanctions, to encourage a ceasefire and peace talks, and to prioritize the lives of all children who are exposed to the same fate as those in Kumba. Please also contribute to cover basic living needs and psychological support for those impacted by this conflict.

Many civil society actors are encouraging Cameroon to choose the path of peace and justice in the interest of civilians. The Global Campaign for Peace & Justice in Cameroon salutes their tireless efforts, especially those presently in Cameroon. We jointly plead with all Cameroonians and friends of Cameroon to take action NOW for a ceasefire and peace negotiations to #EndAnglophoneCrisis.

The Global Campaign for Peace & Justice in Cameroon

Endorsed by:

ADISI-Cameroun

ANICHRA (African Network against Illiteracy, Conflicts and Human Rights Abuses)

ALL For Cameroon

Association pour l'enseignement coranique et la protection des enfants mouhadjirine (AECPEM)

Breaking Ground

The Cameroon Conflict Research Group, Faculty of Law, University of Oxford

Cameroon Human Rights Group UK (CHRG UK)

Cameroon Patriotic Diaspora (CPD)

Cameroon Women's Platform for National Dialogue

Cameroon Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education

Canadians for Peace in Cameroon

Center for Advocacy, Gender Equality and Action for Development (CAGEAD)

Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA)

Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations

Coalition for Genocide Response

Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO)

cont.

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security

Femmes pour la Promotion du Leadership Moral

HOVEA – Hope for the Vulnerable and Education for All

The Human Rights Defenders Network-Sierra Leone

The International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation – Cameroon, University of Toronto

International Children’s Awareness, Canada (ICA Canada)

Investors Against Genocide

JusticeForCameroon

Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (MIGS)

Network for Solidarity, Empowerment and Transformation for All

Refugee Free World

Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC)

South West North West Women Taskforce (SNWOT)

Voices of Community Women

Women International League for Peace and Freedom – Cameroon

Women’s Peace Initiatives

Youth for Peace

The Global Campaign for Peace & Justice in Cameroon is an informal group of academics, activists, journalists, lawyers, and other concerned citizens around the world who believe in the urgent need for a peaceful resolution of Cameroon’s Anglophone conflict. For further info: www.cameroonpeacejustice.ca

This release is also available in French.