



**STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PROTECTION AGAINST ATTACKS
ON EDUCATION**

9 September 2021

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter: "the Commission"),
established by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019,

Bearing in mind the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/275 of 28 May 2020 which proclaimed 9 September as the **International Day to Protect Education from Attack**;

Bearing in mind that the UN, through this Day sends a clear message *about the importance of preserving schools as a safe and secure place for students and their teachers and the need to keep education at the forefront of public policy*¹;

Remembering that the Preamble to the Constitution of 18 January 1996 provides that "the State shall guarantee the child's right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory. The organisation and control of education at all levels shall be the bounden duty of the State"²;

Considering that Cameroon has been a party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child since it entered into force on 29 November 1999, Articles 11 and 22 of which state respectively that "Every child has the right to education" and that "States Parties to this Charter shall undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts which affect the child"³;

Considering also that Cameroon ratified on 11 January 1993 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which in its Article 19 (1) requires States Parties to implement "[...] all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.";

Recalling the Oslo Declaration, resulting from the Oslo Safe Schools Conference held in May 2015, to *prevent attacks on education during armed conflict*, as well as the Guidelines for the Protection of Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;

¹ <https://www.un.org/fr/observances/protect-education-day> (accessed on 1 / 9 / 2021)

² Article 11 (1).

³ Article 22 (1)

Further recalling that the purpose of this Day is to underscore the plight of more than 75 million children and young people aged between 3 and 18 and living in 35 crisis-affected countries, and their urgent need for educational support⁴;

Noting that 2,739 schools have been closed for the 2019/2020 academic year (68 in the Far North and nearly 80% in the North West and South West) due to the security situation in these Regions;

Noting also that in 2019, more than 855,000 children were deprived of access to education in Cameroon⁵ and 19,503 teachers prevented from accessing schools due to the prevailing security situation in the North West and South West Regions;

Asserting that children require specific protection as a vulnerable group in society and that education is a *fundamental right that constitutes just, inclusive and peaceful societies*;

Aware of the new challenges faced by children and their families by reason of the outbreak of armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic and their attendant ills on living conditions;

Determined that *Child right to education* should be promoted, protected and guaranteed so as to enable them to develop harmoniously in society;

The Commission observes that armed gangs are still creating fear among communities in a scattered number of cases by committing disgraceful acts such as:

- the barbaric murder of seven school children at the Mother Francisca International Bilingual School in Kumba on 24 October 2020 in the South West Region⁶
- the kidnapping of six teachers in an assault against a Protestant school in Kumbo on 3 November 2020⁷
- the abduction by secessionists of seven students from the University of Bamenda in Bambili, Tubah Sub-division, on 27 June 2021, who were subsequently released two days later;
- the use of schools by secessionist terrorists as operating bases
- the recruitment of children into armed gangs by some entrepreneurs of violence.

The Commission condemns in the strongest terms such acts of blind violence so heavily present in the daily lives of children and reiterates its appeal to the authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of such atrocities are even more actively sought, arrested and brought to book.

The Commission reiterates its appeal to the pro-independence groups to lay down their arms and use peaceful means to make their voices heard.

The Commission is however concerned that:

- in Cameroon, 4,437 schools were closed in those regions in June 2019⁸
- at least 150,000 children have been displaced due to conflicts⁹,
- approximately a million Cameroonian children are in need of protection from the cruel violence of the terrorists in the Far North, North West and South West Regions¹⁰.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/fr/observances/protect-education-day> (accessed on 1/9 / 2021).

⁵ United Nations, Cameroon: More than 855,000 children out of school due to instability in Anglophone regions (UNICEF), <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2019/11/1055401> (accessed 1 / 9 / 2021)

⁶ Josiane KOUAGHEU, published on 4 November 2020 in Le Monde, newspaper, (accessed on 19 / 08 / 2021)

⁷ Le Monde newspaper, *Au Cameroun, au moins six enseignants enlevés dans l'attaque d'une école*, published on 4 November 2020, (accessed 19 / 08 / 2021).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Idem.

¹⁰ Idem.

The Commission commends Government efforts to ensure quality education for children, such as the following:

- the provision of soldier teachers in theatres of operation as a substitute for civilian teachers¹¹
- the use of new ICTs in education, including through time slots on national television to cover the educational programme in a difficult security situation
- the creation of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee (CNDDR), which aims at reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life, especially through organization, training, provision of tools or means of production and assistance in creating income-generating activities
- the five-billion humanitarian response plan granted by the President of the Republic, Head of State, for the construction of classrooms, toilets, tables and benches, and school supplies for the North and Far North Regions, which are facing the Boko Haram threat.

The Commission further encourages the multi-sector efforts of the Government, development partners and civil society organisations that are working tirelessly to promote and protect the *Right to Education for all children*.

The Commission recommends to Government that new measures be taken to protect schools and ensure *the right to education of children*.

The Commission also recommends that the Government takes exceptional measures to facilitate *access to education for displaced children* to other parts of the country as a result of persisting armed conflicts in their Region of origin.

The Commission solemnly reiterates its call on armed groups in conflict-affected regions to desist permanently from attacks on pupils and students, teachers, schools and other school staff, as well as from using them as hideouts, thus preventing their access for the education of children.

The Commission for its part will spare no effort to further promote and protect children's education against attacks, through awareness campaigns, advocacy, training workshops, fact-finding missions and handling of complaints.

Yaounde, ...8...SEPT...2021

Pour le Président
et par O. GALEGA GANA Raphaël



GALEGA GANA Raphaël
Ministre Plénipotentiaire

¹¹https://www.Cameroon-Tribune.cm/article.html/25732/fr.html/details_2 (Consulté le 2 / 9 / 2021 à 12h11).