



JUST ATONEMENT INC.

justice
hope peace unity equal opportunity
golden age
progress sustainability democracy freedom
human rights harmony civilization

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Just Atonement Inc. is a legal 501(c)(3) non-profit that trains new human rights defenders to address threats to human rights, a livable planet, and the international rule of law.

JAI was founded in the United States of America in 2017.

JAI was founded to address the challenges arising from the intersection of climate change, global peace, and threats to the rule of law and the habitability of the planet. These threats are civilizational in scope and potentially existential to the human race.

JAI submits this written submission with respect to the Universal Periodic Review of Cameroon.

I. Summary of Conclusions

1. Climate change is already affecting Cameroon in a variety of ways, and it must adapt in order to avoid worse effects. Cameroon is vulnerable to increasing sea-level rise (SLR), desertification, and an increase in the frequency and intensification of extreme weather events.

2. We commend Cameroon for investing in climate-adaptive measures. Cameroon's reforestation projects and investment in climate-resilient agriculture are great steps toward protecting its population from the worsening effects of climate change.

3. Cameroon should work to enhance the integrity of its democracy, with a focus on the implementation of its constitution, anti-corruption measures, and preventing suppression of political opposition.

4. Cameroon should take action to protect the rights of marginalized populations, such as indigenous peoples, women and the LGBTQ+ community.



II. Climate Change

Impacts of Climate Change

5. **Cameroon already faces several kinds of extreme weather phenomena, including high winds, temperatures, and rainfall.** ¹ Water-related disasters, such as drought and flooding, pose serious threats to population health and the economy, and climate change will only continue to exacerbate the intensity and frequency of these adverse weather phenomena.²

6. **Coastal areas are, in general, particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change,** and Cameroon's coastal areas are no exception. SLR threatens to displace hundreds of thousands of residents of coastal communities and destroy tens of thousands of homes.³ Inundation, soil erosion, and saltwater intrusion resulting from SLR may seriously damage coastal agriculture industry.⁴ Loss of territory from SLR could have impacts to the self-determination of Cameroon and could lead to climate displacement and migration.

7. **The Northern Sahelian regions' agricultural prospects are threatened by climate change.** High temperatures and drought worsen crop-killing bush fires, further exacerbated by traditional slash-and-burn farming practices.⁵ The North is vulnerable to decreasing rainfall and increasing desertification, further threatening agriculture and the already scarce water supply.⁶

8. **Climate change poses serious threats to Cameroon's food security.** Along with generally greater fluctuation in weather condition, research shows large areas experiencing decreasing rainfall and crop production,⁷ leading to malnutrition⁸ as well as deleterious economic effects.⁹ Possible increases in temperature and precipitation without adaptation could lead to a nearly 50% loss in Cameroon's agricultural output value, with drastic economic and food security ramifications.¹⁰ 57% of children between 6 and 59 months and 39% of teenage to middle aged women already suffer from iron deficiency.¹¹ Threats to food security implicate the right to food, the right to life, and the right to health.

9. **Climate change is exacerbating the violent conflict, migration crisis, and water shortage in Cameroon's far northern region.** Increasing temperatures and fluctuating weather patterns are hastening the shrinking of Lake Chad, a vital resource for millions in the region. Consequent losses in fishing, farming, livestock and drinking water supply have, in turn, caused mass migration and conflicts between farmers and herders, different communities, and different ethnic groups.¹² The loss of critical resources from climate change impacts the right to self-determination and the means of subsistence, and could threaten Cameroon's ability to develop.

Contributions to Climate Change

10. **Cameroon's carbon emissions are minimal.** It should be noted, however, that the gas shortage has led to an increase in wood-burning, contributing to climate change directly through



wood-burning's high carbon emissions and indirectly by exacerbating the deforestation of the Congo Basin.¹³ We commend Cameroon for committing to a 35% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, despite its own emissions contributing to less than .1% of total carbon emissions.

III. Human Rights Concerns

11. **Violence against women.** Despite legal efforts to discourage female genital mutilation/cutting (FGC), the practice continues with relative frequency.¹⁴ FGC has various health ramifications for women, both short and long term,¹⁵ and thus poses serious threats to the right to health and the right to life of affected women in Cameroon.

12. **Women's land ownership.** Women, especially indigenous women¹⁶, suffer from a lack of access to land ownership¹⁷ despite making up over 75% of agricultural workers.¹⁸ Despite gender-neutral laws aiming to ensure equal rights of ownership, the majority of land in Cameroon is considered national land under communal use,¹⁹ and ownership is therefore dictated by customary law.²⁰ For example, despite laws protecting women's inheritance rights after divorce, customary law often pushes women to sacrifice their share of inherited property.²¹ A lack of land ownership has material implications - wealth, status, political and socioeconomic power – as well as symbolic implications that spring from a history of religious connection to land,²² which impacts the dignity and equality of women in Cameroon, and could constitute serious forms of discrimination.

13. **Cameroon's LGBTQ+ community does not enjoy equal rights to its heterosexual and cisgender community.** Homosexuality remains a crime in Cameroon, and employees of HIV-related organizations have been arrested, beaten, and forced to comply with anal exams.²³ This action not only violates the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights guarantee of non-discrimination and equal protection before the law but also discourages treatment and awareness of HIV, endangering the general population.²⁴ Cameroon has one of the highest rates of enforcement of laws against LGBTQ+ community members.²⁵

14. **Violence surrounding the so-called Anglophone Crisis.** The Anglophone region's separatist movement has led to a bloody conflict costing at least 6,000 lives.²⁶ Investigations are open into government soldiers killing and assaulting civilians as well as burning civilian property,²⁷ and separatist fighters are killing, torturing, assaulting and kidnapping civilians. Government forces were involved in the massacre of 21 civilians in Ngarbuh, among them 13 children and a pregnant woman.²⁸ Cameroon has restricted humanitarian aid to the area on grounds that the aid organizations were too close to the Anglophile separatists.²⁹ Furthermore, over 700,000 children have been denied the right to education due to related school closures or boycotts.³⁰

15. **Human rights violations against returned asylum seekers.** Human Rights Watch reported 14 cases of physical abuse or assault—13 of which were by Cameroonian



authorities—three cases of rape, one case of forced labor, and several cases of torture, none of which have yet received remedies.³¹

IV. Democracy and Freedom

16. Cameroon is lacking implementation in many of the articles contained in its 1972 Constitution.³² For example, although the constitution institutes a policy of bilingualism that mandates equal treatment of English and French across Cameroon, current tensions illustrate the failure to provide equal political power to Cameroon's English-speaking population.³³ Furthermore, the president, with the aid of a cooperative parliament, has been able to amend the constitution to allow for his continued candidacy for forty years.

17. Cameroon's ruling party may be responsible for unfair suppression of political opposition. Over 100 opposition party members have been arrested for protesting, several of whom have since died from cholera caused by unhygienic prison conditions.³⁴ Suppression of political opposition delegitimizes the ruling government and damages the integrity of the democratic process. We express concern about the internal self-determination of the Cameroonian people as well as possible infringements on rights guaranteed under the ICCPR related to a free and fair political process.

18. Cameroon suffers from high rates of corruption in various branches of the public administration, including the judiciary, the police, and tax and land administration.³⁵ The anti-corruption measures are almost all perceived to be ineffective, especially since the executive often has strong control over the checks against corruption.³⁶ Corruption is one of the greatest obstacles to economic development and results in the deterioration of public infrastructure on which the health and wellbeing of the population depends.³⁷

V. Recognition and Recommendations

19. We commend Cameroon for investing in its small-scale farmers, proactively fighting food insecurity, and promoting climate-resilient farming solutions through the Commodity Value Chain Development Support Project. We especially commend the high participation of women in this project as progress towards economic gender equality.³⁸ We recommend further investment in small-scale farmer, exploring alternative solutions like rethinking land tenure arrangements with a focus on empowering the largely women agricultural workforce.³⁹ We also recommend economic diversification to mitigate risks posed against Cameroon's agricultural industry.

20. We commend Cameroon for integrating climate change and environmental concerns into its goal to become an emerging economy by 2035.⁴⁰ Only by confronting the many climatic changes already underway will Cameroon be able to protect the health of both its people and its economy.



21. **We commend Cameroon for investment in urban reforestation in mitigating future flooding, drought, rising temperatures and water shortages.**⁴¹ We recommend continuing to invest in adaptive measures that will build resilience against continued climate change.

22. **We recommend that Cameroon take steps to ensure that marginalized communities, including women and LGBTQ+ individuals, enjoy equal rights.** We urge Cameroon to decriminalize homosexuality and to outlaw forced anal exams.

23. **We commend Cameroon for helping to bring transparency and accountability into possible human rights violations by government forces.**⁴² We encourage Cameroon to take preventative measures to ensure that violence against civilians at the hand of the government does not happen again.

24. **We recommend that Cameroon invest in early warning for extreme weather events that may become more frequent and/or intense due to climate change.** Meteorological services and communication infrastructure will help prepare citizens for disastrous events and mitigate possible damage.⁴³

25. **We encourage Cameroon to take steps to improve the integrity of its democracy.** Such steps could include ensuring the implementation of all of Cameroon's constitutional articles, more explicit protection of political opposition, and greater independence in anti-corruption agencies.

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Endnotes

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