



DECLARATION DES ORGANISATIONS DE LA SOCIÉTÉ CIVILE SUR LES LIBERTÉS PUBLIQUES AU CAMEROUN



Douala on January 6, 2022

Gathered in Douala, more than 200 civil society organizations through the leaders of their associations and networks, observe.

Let the State of Cameroon affirm a particular attachment to public freedoms. This is materialized and verified in the preamble of Law 96/06 of 18 January 1996 revising the Constitution of 2 June 1972 amended and supplemented by Law No. 2008/001 of 14 April 2008 which states: ***"The Cameroonian people... Affirms its commitment to the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and all international conventions relating thereto and duly ratified"***.

I) CAMEROON'S COMMITMENTS

The State of Cameroon has adopted national laws and ratified several regional and international instruments that prescribe to States Parties the promotion and protection of civil and political rights in general and public freedoms in particular.

a) At the national level

Beyond the constitution of Cameroon mentioned above, we note among others;

- Loi n°90-53 of 19 December 1990 on freedom of association
- Law No. 90/055 of 19 December 1990 establishing the regime of public meetings and meetings in Cameroon.

"Public meetings, whatever their purpose, are free. Article. 3.- (1) »

b) At the regional level

- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.
- Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa
- Guidelines and principles on the right to a fair trial and assistance
- Legal in Africa;
- The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa

"Meeting means a voluntary gathering, in private or in public, for expressive purposes and for an extended period of time. The right of assembly can be exercised in a variety of ways, including through demonstrations, meetings, processions, rallies, sit-ins and funerals, through the use of online platforms or in any other way that people choose. » point 3 Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Réunion in Africa

c) At the international level

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

"2. No restriction or derogation from the fundamental human rights recognized or in force in any State Party to the present Covenant under any law, convention, regulation or custom may be permitted, on the pretext that the present Covenant does not recognize them or recognizes them to a lesser degree. » Art.5.2 ICESCR

II) THE REGULATION OF PUBLIC FREEDOMS.

Civil society organizations have been concerned about the extent of violations of civil liberties in Cameroon for some time. In the period of November and December 2021 alone, flagrant cases of violations were documented, in connection with the freedoms of assembly and demonstration.

✓ Ban on the press conference of the platform of political parties for the reform of the electoral code.

After ten months of work carried out in a constructive and transparent approach, the leaders of seven opposition political parties including 4 deputies to the National Assembly, engaged in the framework of a platform for the participatory and consensual reform of the electoral code, saw their conference presenting the final document be banned by the Sub-Prefect of Yaoundé 3rd. The conference that was to be held in a hotel in the square in Yaoundé, on November 24, 2021 was interrupted by the police following a prohibition order of the administrative authority served the same day, on the following grounds:

- Interference with legislative powers
- Held during the parliamentary session

✓ Sequestration and deportation from the city of the president of the MRC

Sequestration of Pr Maurice KAMTO, president of the Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon (MRC) for 2 days, on⁰¹ and 02 December 2021 in a hotel in Douala by the police and gendarmerie where it was forbidden to go out, nor to visit. He was then expelled from the city of Douala manu militari without official reason. At the same time, the press conference of Pr Maurice KAMTO for the dedication of his literary works projected at the restaurant La Chaumière in Douala at the same time, was banned by the Sub-Prefect of Douala^{1st}.

✓ Ban on the meeting of the Network of Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa

The high-level sub-regional consultation for advocacy for peace and national reconciliation in Cameroon scheduled for December 16, 2021 has been banned by the sub-prefect of Yaoundé^{2nd} with the following reasons:

- *Attempts to disturb public order and tranquility*
- *Threat of the new COVID 19 variant called OMICRON.*

✓ Condemnation of MRC activists

Forty-seven (47) members of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) were sentenced on December 29, 2021 to sentences of up to 7 years in prison, including for *rebellion and attempted insurrection*. The spokesperson, the national women's president and the treasurer of the MRC are among the convicts. They were arrested even though they had not taken part in the peaceful demonstrations organised by their political party on 22 September 2020.

✓ Condemnation of the young people of Stand Up.

On Friday, December 31, 2021, the Douala Military Court ruled on the case of the five members of Stand Up For Cameroon arrested on September 18, 2020 and detained since September 22, 2020 in New Bell Central Prison.

Etienne Ntsama, Moussa Bello, Mira Angoung and Tehle Membou were prosecuted for *conspiracy of revolution and insurrection*.

At the end of the hearing of December 31, 2021 at the military court and after 15 months already spent in prison, they were found **guilty of insurrection** and sentenced to 6 months in prison.

- ✓ Judicial harassment of community leaders and human rights defenders in particular. The recent cases being those of Jean-Marc BIKOKO, President of the Centrale Syndicale of the Public sector; Maximilienne NGO MBE, Executive Director of REDHAC and its members;

At a time when Cameroon is preparing to welcome Africa and the World, as part of the African Cup of Nations, Cameroon's civil society organizations gathered in Douala and who want this football event to be an opportunity for national reconciliation:

- ❖ **Express** their deep concern about the heavy sentences handed down against persons who have not committed any crime, if so that some wanted to enjoy their right to freedom of expression and regrets that these court decisions taken in military courts violate regional and international human rights treaties in particular.
- ❖ **Draw** the attention of the President of the Republic, national and international opinion, to the risks of social unrest that can result from the multiplication of violations of public freedoms.
- ❖ **Call** on Cameroonian citizens to become collectively aware of the urgency of ensuring respect for public freedoms as provided for in Cameroon's constitution.
- ❖ **Invite** the President of the Republic to decree a general amnesty for all citizens detained in Cameroon's prisons for expressing their opinions
- ❖ **Call** on the President of the Republic and parliamentarians on the urgency of reviewing article 2 of the law on terrorism, which exposes the perpetrators of peaceful demonstrations to life imprisonment.
- ❖ **Draw** the attention of the President of the Republic of Cameroon to his responsibility to protect the physical and moral integrity of all Cameroonian citizens.
- ❖ **Invite** the Government of Cameroon to respect the Treaties, Conventions and other international instruments relating to civil liberties, in the light of the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Réunion in Africa

Done at Douala, 06 January 2022
