



COMMISSION NATIONALE DES DROITS
DE L'HOMME ET DES LIBERTÉS

Secrétariat Permanent

Cellule de la Communication

B.P. /P.O. Box 20317, Yaoundé
Tel.: (237) 222 233 370 / 222 226 117

NATIONAL COMMISSION
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Permanant Secrétariat

Communication Unit

Fax: (237) 222 226 082/ e-mail: cndhl@cndhl.cm
Web site: www.cndhl.cm

**PRESS RELEASE ON THE TERRORIST ATTACKS IN MBENGWI, MATAZEM
AND MOZOGO ON 6, 8 AND 9 JANUARY 2021 AND ON THE EVENTS IN MAUTU
ON 10 JANUARY 2021**

The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (hereinafter: "The Commission") learned, with dismay and amazement, about the series of attacks against:

- **Mr FOU DA ETABA Benoit Nicaise, the SDO of the Momo Division, in his procession, 15 kilometres from Mbengwi town, the administrative headquarters of Momo Division, in the North-West Region at about 1 a.m., on 6 January 2021.**
- **the joint checkpoint of the Gendarmerie and the Police of Matazem** not far from Babadjou, a place located between the Northwest and the West Regions, attacked by secessionist armed groups at about 6 a.m. on 8 January 2021, and
- the inhabitants of **Mozogo village** in the Far North, on 8 January 2021, by Boko Haram terrorists, towards midnight.

Concerning the attack in Mbengwi, the report to date indicates that five persons were killed, including four members of the Defence and Security Forces and a civilian, LIWUSI Rebecca JEME, the Divisional Delegate of Communication for Momo, and many others were injured as well as material damage. The dead bodies were transported to the Bamenda Regional Hospital mortuary and the injured were admitted to intensive care at the Mbengwi District Hospital.

Concerning the attack in Matazem, five persons were killed, including four gendarmes, a police officer and many wounded who were taken to the District Hospital of Mbouda.

The report on the terrorist attack in Mozogo states that 13 persons were killed on the spot and two injured persons were taken to Koza Adventist Hospital.

Similarly, several murders committed in line with the modus operandi of the armed separatists were reported in the North-West and South-West Regions between 1 and 9 January 2021. For example, in Ndop in Ngoketunjia Division in the North-West, a civilian was killed. In Ndian in the South-West, a manager of the PAMOL Estate was killed. His dismembered body parts were found on 9 January 2021 by the roadside. In the same Region, on the same day, Mr Felix Tambe Ashu, Principal of the Government Technical College (GTC) of Tinto in Manyu Division, was murdered inside the college premises, causing panic among the teaching staff and students present.

In another school in Manyu, Mr Ayuk Martin Egbe, Principal of Government High School Ossing, was killed at the entrance to his home.

The Commission Regional Branch of the North-West, South-West, West and Far North carried out preliminary investigations into those attacks, as required by the provisions of Law No. 2004/016 of 22 July 2004 to set up the Commission, indicating that the attack in Mbengwi was caused by improvised explosive devices, including large, high-powered gas bombs. In Matazem and in Mozogo, the secessionist terrorists fired a Kamikaze operated explosive devices on the defence and security forces.

These attacks by **secessionist terrorists** and **Boko Haram** targeting the administrative authorities, the defence and security forces and the civilian population constitute serious violations of human rights, especially the right to life, the right to physical and moral integrity, the right to security, the right to property and the right to education, rights recognised and guaranteed by the Constitution as well as by regional and international human rights instruments.

Recalling the terms of the Press Releases of 24 June 2020, 18 and 26 August 2020 and 28 October 2020 concerning similar attacks conducted by the aforementioned secessionist terrorists in the North West, South West and West Regions and by Boko Haram in the Far North Region,

Considering UN Security Council resolution 1566 of 8 October 2004 which **"...condemns in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism ... irrespective of their motivation, whenever and by whomsoever committed..."** and in view of the heavy toll of these despicable and barbaric attacks,

- **the Commission** condemns in the strongest terms these atrocities, which under no circumstances can be justified.
- **the Commission expresses** deep condolences to the families of the unfortunate victims who have died, to the Ministry of Communication and the Defence and Security Forces.
- **the Commission wishes** a speedy and full recovery to all the wounded, currently being attended to by the Government.
- **the Commission** is appalled by the relentlessness of the secessionists and Boko Haram in increasing criminal acts in the North-West, South-West, West and Far North Regions in the aftermath of the election of regional councillors on 6 December 2020, which is a further proof of the government's determination to provide concrete responses to the legitimate concerns of both sides.
- **the Commission** deplores the recurrent distrust of independence fighters towards State institutions, despite the long series of relevant answers the Government has given to the legitimate demands of the people of the North-West and South-West Regions, including measures to restore peace and rebuild these two Regions.
- **the Commission** considers that these terrorists are violating the Preamble of the Constitution of 18 January 1996, which states that **"Every person has a right to life, to physical and moral integrity"**, Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which stipulates that **"Human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person"** and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states, in its Article 6(1), that **"Every human being has the inherent right to life [...] and shall be protected by law"**.
- **the Commission** strongly urges the authorities to proceed with the investigations opened following **these attacks**, so that the suspects can be arrested and brought before the competent courts, as required by law.

- **the Commission indicates that these new atrocities, together with all the barbaric crimes previously committed between 2016 and 2020, could constitute crimes against humanity.**
- **the Commission** reiterates its appeal to the armed gangs operating in these Regions to put an immediate halt to the suffering that they are inflicting on the people they claim to defend and to the trauma caused to children, most of whom are school children.
- **the Commission once again calls on them** to give up their independence project, which is nothing more than an illusion, lay down their arms and grasp the outstretched hand of Government by joining the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Centres, so that peace can finally return to the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions.

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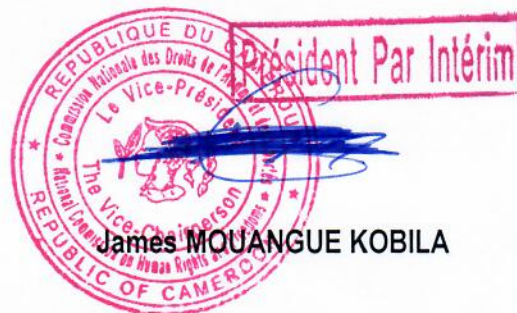
Concerning the developments in **Mautu**, in Muyuka Sub-Division, Fako Division, South-West Region, on 10 January 2021, according to some sources, a military operation conducted by the 21st Motorised Infantry Battalion against armed separatists allegedly resulted in civilian casualties under circumstances which are not known to the general public.

Given that these allegations include civilians among the victims, the Commission calls on the Minister of Defence to open a thorough investigation to determine the circumstances in which civilian casualties were registered during this military operation and to communicate the results to the Commission.

The Commission urges all parties to comply fully with the prescription of the President of the Republic, Head of the Armed Forces who, addressed the Defence and Security Forces during the graduation of the 37th batch of the Yaounde Combined Services Military Academy (EMIA) on 24 January 2020, in the following terms: "*in carrying out your missions, you must respect human rights*"; an instruction reiterated in his message to the Nation on 31 December 2020.

Lastly, **the Commission** is still encouraging the people, especially those in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions, to cooperate fully with the Defence and Security Forces in preserving territorial integrity, safeguarding goods and persons, and upholding the institutions of the State.

14 JAN 2021



James MOUANGUE KOBILA