

COMMISSION DES DROITS  
DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN

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CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

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**STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
TO MARK THE WORLD REFUGEE DAY IN CAMEROON**

**"THE RIGHT TO SEEK ASYLUM"**

**20 June 2022**

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission ( hereinafter : "the Commission"), created by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019, and established on 29 April 2021 following the swearing in of its members before the Supreme Court sitting in Assembled Chambers,

*Bearing in mind* the United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. A/RES/55/76 establishing 20 June as World Refugee Day,

*Considering* that this day was established as a tribute to refugees throughout the world, to celebrate the strength of persons who have been forced to flee their countries of origin to escape conflict or persecution,

*Bearing in mind* that Article 1 (2) of the 1951 Convention of 28 July 1951 on the status of refugees which entered into force on 22 April 1954 and was ratified by Cameroon on 1961 defines a refugee as a person who, "[...] owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it [...]",

*Considering* this year's theme which is "*the right to seek asylum*"<sup>1</sup> which means that every person on our planet has the right to seek safety - whoever they are, wherever they come from and whenever they have been forced to flee,

*Observing* that the search for safety means that:

- all persons forced to flee persecution, conflict or human rights violations have the right to seek protection in another country
- borders must remain open to all persons forced to flee

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/fr/journee-mondiale-du-refugie.html>, consulted on 15/5/2022.



- nobody should be forced to return to a country where their life or freedom is threatened
- no one should be discriminated against at the borders
- persons forced to flee must be treated with respect and dignity<sup>2</sup>,

**Bearing in mind** that according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 82.4 million people were uprooted worldwide at the end of 2020, due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order, amongst these were about 24.6 million refugees of whom half were less than 18 years<sup>3</sup> and 4.1 million were asylum seekers<sup>4</sup>,

**Noting** that 5,693 people from Cameroon fled their countries in 2020 and applied for asylum in other countries. In total, 63 per cent of asylum applications were rejected, for various reasons such as economic difficulties, false denunciations or serious reasons for the commission of a crime against peace, a war crime or a common law crime<sup>5</sup>,

**Noting also** that due to the conflict orchestrated by Boko Haram or inter-ethnic clashes in the Far North Region, the Cameroonian refugee population was about 50,000 in Chad in February 2022<sup>6</sup> and the population in Nigeria was about 60,000 in 2020 due to the conflict in the North West and South West Regions caused by terrorist secessionist fighters<sup>7</sup>,

**Bearing in mind** that as at 31 May 2022, there were 1,943,733 persons of concern to the United High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) in Cameroon and that of these, 479,644 were refugees, 8,469 asylum seekers and 579,136 internally displaced persons<sup>8</sup>,

**Considering** that there is a clear link between the refugee problem and human rights in that the violation of minority rights and ethnic conflicts are among the main causes of mass exodus and internal displacement<sup>9</sup>,

**Bearing in mind** the Preamble of the Cameroon Constitution of 18 January 1996 which states that "*every person shall have the right to settle in any place and to move about freely, subject to the statutory provisions concerning public law and order, security and tranquillity*",

**Recalling** the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted on 27 June 1981 in Kenya, which came into force on 21 October 1986 and was ratified by Cameroon on 20 June 1989, which proclaims in Article 12 that "*every person has the right, in case*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/fr/global-issues/refugees>, consulted on 17/5/2022.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/fr/aperçu-statistique.htm>, consulted on 14/5/2022.

<sup>5</sup> Reasons provided in article 1 (f) of the Convention of 28 July 1951 on the status of refugees.

<sup>6</sup> Chad - Refugees from Cameroon: Inter-Agency Operational Update # 1 (06 February 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/chad-refugees-cameroon-inter-agency-operational-update-1-06-february-2022>, consulted on 17/6/2022.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/2/5e452d2b4/cameroonian-refugees-flee-nigeria-bringing-total-arrivals-close-60000-mark.html>, consulted on 17/6/2022.

<sup>8</sup> Refugee situations, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>, consulted on 14/6/2022.

<sup>9</sup> Fact Sheet No.20, Human Rights and Refugees, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet20en.pdf>, consulted on 17/5/2022.



*of persecution, to seek and to receive asylum in a foreign country, in accordance with the law of each country and with international conventions",*

**Bearing in mind** the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states in Article 14 that *"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution",*

**Considering** Article 32 of the above-mentioned 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which states that *"the contracting States shall not expel a refugee lawfully in their territory save on grounds of national security or public order",*

**Considering** the principle of non-refoulement set out in Article 33 (1) of the aforementioned Convention which states that *"[n]o contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion",*

**Referring** to article 3(1) of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2612 (XXII) on the Declaration on Territorial Asylum adopted on 18 November 1977, which states that *"[t]he situation of persons referred to in article 1, paragraph 1 [persons entitled to invoke article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights], is without prejudice to the sovereignty of States and the purposes and principles of the United Nations, of concern to the international community",*

**Considering** the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa which was adopted on 10 September 1969, entered into force on 20 June 1974, and ratified by Cameroon on 7 September 1985 whose Article 1(6) and Article 2(2) provide respectively that *"under the terms of this Convention, it is for the Contracting State of asylum to determine the refugee status of the applicant" and that "the granting of asylum to refugees is a peaceful and humanitarian act and may not be considered by any State as an unfriendly act",*

**Bearing in mind** the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa (Kampala Convention) adopted on 23 October 2009, entered into force on 6 December 2012 and to which Cameroon acceded on 24 May 2017; a key regional legal instrument aimed at protecting, assisting and resolving the plight of displaced persons,

**Bearing in mind** Law No. 2005 / 006 of 27 July 2005 on the status of refugees in Cameroon and Implementing Order No. 2011 / 389 of 28 November 2011 on the organisation and functioning of the organs for the management of the status of refugees in Cameroon, and the appointment in August 2012 of the members of the two organs provided for by this law, namely the Commission for Eligibility for Refugee Status and the Appeals Commission,

**The Commission notes** that in 2021, Cameroon had 936,767 internally displaced persons, 357,631 of whom were displaced by Boko Haram abuses in the Far North Region,



226,708 and 120,834 by insecurity in the North West and South West<sup>10</sup> Regions respectively;

*The Commission also notes* that persons from Cameroon who have fled their country have requested asylum in other countries, in particular France (965), Cyprus (628), Germany (477), Morocco (453), Greece (395), United States (350), Belgium (272), Italy (202), Ghana (96), Niger (76) and South Africa (28)<sup>11</sup>;

*The Commission acknowledges* that there is a new challenge posed by internally displaced persons desiring the protection and assistance they desperately need, including:

- those who are often forced to remain inside combat zones
- those who have moved to safer areas within their countries
- those who are struggling to satisfy the right to an adequate standard of living for the health and well-being of both themselves and their families;

*The Commission commends* the hospitality of all countries that have hosted Cameroonian refugees and offered them protection and basic necessities;

*The Commission commends* the hospitality and generosity of the Cameroonian people towards refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons since 2013, and their integration into communities of host populations;

*The Commission appreciates* the constant support of United Nations agencies, especially the UNHCR, other international organisations and national actors, given to refugees such as school supplies or kits, medical assistance, including cases of Covid-19 infection, construction of shelters, water points; multi-faceted assistance to internally displaced persons and host communities, as well as psychosocial support<sup>12</sup>;

*The Commission lauds* Government's measures to promote and protect the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, including:

- the signing of a Convention between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Ministry of Public Health for the medical care of refugees in public health structures on 10 August 2016
- instructions issued to the Heads of secondary schools by the Minister of Secondary Education on 16 September 2019 to welcome and unconditionally enrol IDPs from regions which are insecure
- the distribution of school materials, such as school uniforms, desks and sportswear to refugee children and those of host communities;
- the effort to restore relative peace in certain communities in the Far North Region, which led to the return of 123,489 IDPs by December 2020
- the organisation of the peaceful and voluntary repatriation of 425 Nigerians in February 2021 and 369 others in March 2021

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<sup>10</sup> *La situation des Droits de l'homme au Cameroun en 10 points*, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Fiche d'information du HCR de février 2021. Cameroun MCO, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>, consulted on 30 avril 2021.



- the organisation of the return to Mamfe of 300 persons displaced by the security situation in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, where they received gifts from the Government of the Republic in January 2021<sup>13</sup> ;
- the progressive and complete inclusion of refugees in the national health system with the construction of health centres accessible to all, without discrimination
- the provision of sanitary materials and the constant education of refugees on preventive measures against Covid-19.

**The Commission notes** that 386,000 children, including refugees, IDPs and children from host communities, require education services<sup>14</sup>;

**The Commission notes** that the State needs more assistance in managing refugees and IDPs,

**The Commission recalls** that during its visit to the Ardjanire IDP camp of Bogo in the Far North Region on 10 March 2022, inhabited by Choa Arabs who fled interethnic conflicts in the Logone and Chari Division, she noted the inadequacy in health facilities, the destruction of their water point, insufficient food, lack of household items for women, etc.;

**The Commission urges** the Ministry of External Relations to make the Eligibility and Appeals Commissions operational so that refugees can enjoy a recognised status and the privileges that go with it, especially in the areas of education, health and sports;

**The Commission recommends** that the institutions responsible for defence and security should take special measures aimed at providing protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons during their movements to safer areas within the country, as well as to facilitate their identification by establishing identity documents for them;

**The Commission recommends** that the Ministries in charge of education in Cameroon should permanently facilitate access to the various schools, by simplifying procedures for admitting refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers;

**The Commission recommends** that the Ministry of Public Health should take measures to ensure that refugees and internally displaced persons receive sufficient assistance in accessing health services for their well-being and that of their families;

**The Commission recommends** that the socio-professional integration of refugees and IDPs be pursued to enable them to exercise their profession and use their talents and skills to contribute to the country's economy;

**The Commission equally recommends** that the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development and the General Delegation for National Security further facilitate the

<sup>13</sup> Mamfe: Returning IDPs, refugees receive President Paul Biya's gift, <https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html>, consulted on 10/5/2022.

<sup>14</sup> Country programme UNICEF Cameroun 2018-2020: Strategy note, basic education programme 2018-2020, [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) consulted on 20 May 2022.

procedure for obtaining identity documents for displaced persons, so that they can easily access public services such as health and education;

*The Commission*, for its part, *will spare no effort* to further promote and protect human rights including the rights of refugees through training workshops, awareness campaigns, advocacy, prison visits and investigations as well as within the framework of complaint management, self-initiated investigations and the prevention of torture.

Yaounde, ..... 1 8 JUIN 2022

Pour le Président  
et par Ordre



*Dr. Galega Gana Raphaël*  
Ministre Plénipotentiaire Hors Echelle