

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix – Travail – Patrie

**COMMISSION DES DROITS
DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN**

**SOUS-COMMISSION CHARGÉE
DE LA PROMOTION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME**

Secrétariat Permanent

Division de la Protection et de la
Promotion des Droits de l'Homme

B.P./P.O. Box 20317, Yaoundé
Fax : (237) 222-22-60-82

Numéro Vert : 1523



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

**CAMEROON HUMAN
RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**SUB-COMMISSION IN CHARGE
OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION**

Permanent Secretariat

Human Rights Protection
and Promotion Division

Tel.: (237) 222-22-61-17 / 691 12 86 70
e-mail: chrc.cdhc2019@yahoo.com
Web: www.cdhc.cm

Toll-Free Number: 1523

**STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION
IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

27 JANUARY 2023

Theme: *Home and Belonging*

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

Bearing in mind Resolution No. A/RES/60/7 of 1 November 2005 of the UN General Assembly, whereby the General Assembly decided to proclaim 27 January each year as the **International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust¹**, to commemorate the liberation by the Red Army on 27 January 1945 in Auschwitz-Birkenau in Germany of the largest Nazi concentration and extermination camp of the Jews,

Recalling that, according to this Resolution, "the Holocaust, involving the annihilation of one-third of the Jewish people and countless members of other minorities, will forever serve as a reminder to all peoples of the dangers of hatred, intolerance, racism and prejudice",

Considering that, in the Cameroon context, the word "racism" used in this resolution should be replaced by "tribalism",

¹ The term Holocaust, which is more commonly used in Anglo-Saxon countries to refer to genocide, means "sacrifice by fire" in Greek, <https://www.memorialdelashoaah.org/archives-et-documentation/quest-ce-que-la-shoah.html>, accessed on 17 January 2023.

Further recalling that, through the same Resolution, the UN General Assembly calls upon States and Civil Society actors *"to mobilize to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and raise awareness of its realities, to help prevent future acts of genocide"*,

Recalling the Holocaust, also referred to as *"the Shoah"*², is the term generally used when referring to the genocide of approximately six million European Jews during the Second World War,

Considering that the 2023 theme of the Day *Home and Belonging*³ aims to highlight the multidimensional needs of victims of crimes, atrocities and the dangers of Holocaust negation, rhetoric proclaiming a race or ethnic group superior to others, calls for genocide, hate speech, distortion of history, manifestations of intolerance and prejudice,

Stressing that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which also honours the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, *"reaffirms its unwavering commitment to combating anti-Semitism, racism and other forms of intolerance that can lead to group-specific violence"*, including tribalism, and recommends that States should more effectively combat the dissemination or proliferation of hate speech through the prevention of warning signals and the protection of victims⁴,

Noting that UNESCO's notion of "preventing manifestations of hate speech" is an appeal to States to share collective responsibility for effectively combating the spread or proliferation of such speech⁵, by:

- promoting education and research through, inter alia: raising awareness of the warning signs, responsible civic engagement that support peace and solidarity, studying historical episodes of violence targeting groups of people, illustrating the dangers of all forms of discrimination and dehumanisation, raising awareness of the dangers of intolerance, racial and religious hatred and ignorance of genocides and encouraging young people to engage with stereotypes, clichés and violence, and providing guidance and tools to support the revision of textbooks and curricula, develop and revise policies, promote appropriate and relevant pedagogies,
- promoting the documentation and maintenance of historical sites to support the preservation and dissemination of exceptionally valuable archives relevant to genocide through its Memory of the World Register or World Documentary Heritage, which should be fully preserved and protected for all and should be permanently

² The Shoah means "disaster" in Hebrew, *Ibid*.

³ <https://www.ungeneva.org/fr/events/2023/01/holocaust-remembrance-day-27-january>, accessed on 18 January 2023.

⁴ <https://www.unesco.org/fr/days/holocaust-remembrance>, accessed on 18 January 2023.

⁵ <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/holocaust-genocide/need-know>, accessed on 18 January 2023.

accessible to all without hindrance, particularly in areas affected by conflict or natural disasters,

Further noting that the notion of protecting the victims of hate speech indicated by UNESCO is an appeal to States to engage in the handling of residual trauma by taking measures that enable not only the punishment of the perpetrators of such acts and any offenders but also redress for the victims,

Considering the Preamble of the Constitution of 18 January 1996, which stipulates that "*no person shall be harassed on grounds of his origin, religious, philosophical or political opinions or beliefs, subject to respect for public policy*",

Considering that Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, ratified by Cameroon on 22 October 1986, prohibits all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, property, birth or any other status,

Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which proclaims in Article 2 (1) that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, religion or any other status,

Recalling that Article 18, shared by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Cameroon on 27 January 1984, states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,

Considering Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that "*Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law*" given that, in the Cameroonian context, the term "*racial hatred*" used in this Pact should be replaced by the word "*ethnic hatred*",

Recalling that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted on 21 December 1965 and ratified by Cameroon on 24 June 1971, condemns racial discrimination and calls upon States Parties to undertake to prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of this nature in territories under their jurisdiction,

The Commission reiterates its concerns raised in the Statement to mark the 2022 International Day to deplore the fact that these acts, of undeniable horror, are serious violations of human rights, because they have generated adverse repercussions in the world, especially through the proliferation of hate speeches, the spread of anti-Semitism, racial and tribal discrimination, etc., creating or exacerbating divisions;

The Commission reiterates the regrettable fact that, at the national level, some Cameroonians undermine Republican Institutions and symbols, especially through attacks and various forms of violence against the National Defence and Security Forces and other agents or representatives of the State, and against civilians, with special emphasis on women and children, particularly in the North-West and South-West Regions, where secessionist terrorism is rampant;

The Commission deplores the lack of interest in developing and preserving historical sites and promoting the use of existing ones in Cameroon;

The Commission strongly condemns all forms of ethnic, religious and political intolerance, attacks on minority communities, especially during inter-communal conflicts in certain Regions, and also the dissemination of ethnic supremacist messages in the media or during public or private meetings and events, disinformation, incitement to hatred on social media, and the resurgence of violence in the home and society at large;

The Commission reaffirms its commitment to upholding human rights and combating tribalism as well as the theory of the superiority of an ethnic group or race and hate speech, which are at the root of genocide and killing.

The Commission commends Government measures to maintain peace and stability in the insecure Regions, such as:

- the creation of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) by Decree No. 2018/719 of 30 November 2018, whose actions so far have yielded positive results as evidenced in updated statistics as at 15 January 2023 which show a total of 3,231 ex-combatants integrated in the three DDR Centres in Buea (340), Bamenda (322) and Mora (2,569), including 1,191 men, 785 women and 1,255 children who are being trained for their social reintegration
- the organisation of a working session on 29 April 2022 on the eradication of violence, the fight against drug addiction and drug use in schools involving the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, the Ministry of Secondary Education, the Ministry of Basic Education, the General Delegation for National Security, UNICEF, UNESCO and many other organisations and associations working for the rights of children⁶

⁶ <https://camerpressagency.com/cameroun-stop-a-la-violence-dans-les-ecoles-et-perspectives/>, accessed on 6/9/2022.

- the organisation, on 16 May 2022, of the traditional "*Carrefour du vivre ensemble camerounais harmonieux*" by the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education on the theme *My contribution to a better harmonious living together in Cameroon*, to promote social cohesion, peace and tolerance
- the special peacekeeping operations undertaken by the defence and security forces in some areas where terrorists are still active
- the many press briefings by members of the Government to condemn the many acts of violence perpetrated by citizens and to make them aware of the criminal penalties incurred by those who commit such acts
- the organisation of an international conference on violence in schools by the Ministry of Secondary Education in collaboration with the UN system in Cameroon, from 20 to 21 December 2022 at the Yaoundé Hilton Hotel.

The Commission recommends that all political actors, administrative authorities, the media people, the educational community, leaders of religious congregations, Civil Society Organisations, parents and artists should practice zero tolerance against tribalism, including its ultimate form of ethnic supremacism based, like the Holocaust, on the theory of the superiority of an ethnic group;

The Commission recommends that public and private actors in charge of primary, secondary and higher education should support the revision of appropriate and relevant textbooks and didactics, to improve the appropriation of the precepts of civic education and citizenship;

The Commission recommends that public institutions responsible for culture should restore the dignity of emblematic victims of violence that have marked the history of Cameroon through the organisation of memorial ceremonies, the development of tourist sites and the popularisation of existing sites;

The Commission encourages education in schools, communities and through the media, on the importance of life and respect for human dignity and the need for collective responsibility and individual accountability of any perpetrator of hate speech, intolerance and violence against a religious, linguistic or ethnic group;

The Commission encourages international cooperation to strengthen the effectiveness of preventing genocide, discrimination or any form of dehumanisation, and to promote a culture of peace;

The Commission recommends that Civil Society actors should be more active in organising activities aimed at perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust and raising

awareness of its realities, to help prevent the recurrence of acts of distortion of history, manifestations of intolerance and targeted violence against one group;

The Commission urges victims of violence to report the perpetrators, to ensure that they are brought to book and deter those who might be tempted to commit such acts;


The Commission reaffirms that it will spare no effort to further promote and protect peace and human dignity through training workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, prison visits, fact-finding missions, and handling complaints and self-initiated investigations;

The Commission once more appeals to all victims and witnesses of human rights violations in general, and especially discrimination, ethnic supremacism, tribalism, hate speech and violence or the threat of violence, to contact the Commission also through its **toll-free number 1523**.

Pour le Président
et par Ordre

Yaoundé,

26 JAN 2023


Dr. Galega Gana Raphaël
Ministre Plénipotentiaire Hors Echelle