

Press Release on the Human Rights Situation in Cameroon Following strike actions of Lawyers, Teachers and Civil Society

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) continues to follow closely the deteriorating human rights situation in Cameroon, State Party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter) caused by the ongoing protests in the English speaking North West and South West regions of the country.

The **Commission's Country Rapporteur for Cameroon and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa, Hon. Commissioner Reine Alapini-Gansou**, is deeply concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation in Cameroon, in particular: killings of civilians; the deployment of armed military personnel, special security forces (BIR) and war machines to these two regions; the disproportionate and deathly use of force and violence to dispel peaceful and unarmed Lawyers, Teachers, Students, civilians and protesters in Bamenda, Buea and Kumba; the raping of students in Buea; the arbitrary arrests, detention and merciless beatings orchestrated by the police, gendarmerie, military and the BIR following strikes and protests that have been going on since October 2016.

The Special Rapporteur has received information that the strikes and protests are allegedly provoked by what has been dubbed, "the Anglophone problem," due to discontented Anglophone Lawyers, Teachers and Civil Society in English speaking Cameroon legitimately and peacefully seeking a halt to: the gradual, but systematic destruction and obliteration of the Common Law Legal System and the Anglosaxon System of Education; the marginalisation and neglect by the administration of Cameroon of the two English speaking regions of Cameroon; and the return to Federal system of governance.

The Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned about the alleged deaths of more than nine (9) Cameroonians during the protests in Bamenda, Buea and Kumba, and the allegations that the Government is planning mass arrest, kidnappings and assassination of leaders of Lawyers' associations, Teachers' unions, Civil Society and human rights defenders as a means to thwart the Anglophone cause.

The Special Rapporteur condemns very strongly the alleged use of disproportionate force against civilians, the violent and deathly suppression of peaceful demonstrators and calls on the Government of the Republic of Cameroon to:

1. Investigate the alleged killings, rapes, inhumane treatment and human rights violations on peaceful protesters by the riot Police, elements of the gendarmerie, the military and the (BIR) in Bamenda, Buea and Kumba;
2. Immediately end the alleged violence against civilians and take necessary steps to ensure that the human rights of its citizens and all its inhabitants are respected;
3. Uphold the right to freedom of expression, assembly, the right to peaceful protest and ensure the security of its citizens, as provided by the African Charter;
4. Cease all arbitrary arrests and detention; and
5. Release all individuals unlawfully arrested during the protest.

The Special Rapporteur would like to remind the Cameroonian authorities of their obligations to guarantee fundamental rights, including the right to life, the right to freedom of assembly, association and expression as well as the right to self-determination as provided in **Articles 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 20** of the African Charter.

The Special Rapporteur also calls on the international Community to look into the matter and support the Government of Cameroon in the peaceful resolution of the "Anglophone problem"; by encouraging genuine and inclusive dialogue between the Government of Cameroon and the Cameroon Common Law Lawyers, Teachers, and Civil society in the Anglophone regions and other such bodies established to resolve the issue.

The Special Rapporteur will continue to monitor developments in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon and calls on the African Union to contribute towards the effective realization of human and peoples' rights in the country as a whole.

Done in Banjul-The Gambia, 13 December 2016

**Honourable Commissioner Reine Alapini-Gansou
Country Rapporteur for Cameroon and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in
Africa**