



**MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION**

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION 2019/2691 (EPR) ON CAMEROON

PRESS BRIEFING

**STATEMENT
OF**

**H.E. René Emmanuel SADI
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaoundé, April 22, 2019

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Cameroon has taken note of the European Parliament Resolution on Cameroon, adopted on April 18, 2019.

A Resolution, which, among other things, in substance:

- *literally depicts the socio-political situation in Cameroon, by ignoring all the appropriate measures taken so far by the State, to address the multiple security challenges faced by our country in recent years;*
- *discredits the presidential election organized in Cameroon on October 7, 2018;*
- *criticizes the relevant and essential provisions of our Constitution, the fundamental law which is an emanation of the only sovereign will of the Cameroonian people;*
- *criminalizes the National Defense and Security Forces, accusing them of human rights violations";*
- *affirms that tensions exist in Cameroon between French and English speakers, and that English-speaking regions are discriminated against;*
- *accuses the Cameroonian authorities, as a whole, of obstruction of public freedoms, notably:*
 - *For "restricting freedom of expression",*
 - *For "reacting disproportionately by organizing military trials against some members of the opposition";*

- *For suppressing demonstrations, and making excessive use of force."*
- *For disapproving the Cameroonian law on homosexuality.*

The Cameroonian Government is radically opposed to this European Parliament Resolution, and expresses its indignation at an act marked by bias, which is akin to a string of untruths, gratuitous affirmations, ungrounded recriminations, and injunctions accompanied by blackmail, directed against the Cameroonian authorities and our Defense and Security Forces.

The Cameroonian Government reaffirms that Cameroon is, and remains, a sovereign rule of law, and that it is its responsibility to lead the destiny of Cameroon, in the best interests of all Cameroonians, and in the respect of fundamental values of the Republic.

As a result, it is up to the Cameroonian people, and the people alone, responsible for providing itself with the institutions of its choice and the laws that govern the life of the nation, just as it is up to the people to choose the person to preside over the destiny of the Cameroonian nation.

In fact, President Paul BIYA was overwhelmingly elected as President by the Cameroonian people, with an unquestionable score of over 71%, and his re-election does not suffer any slightest dispute.

It is however specious and even inaccurate to hold that "there are tensions between French and English speakers, that English-speaking regions are discriminated against, or that there is an option, if not a deliberate policy aimed at devoting the primacy of the francophone component or a francophone cultural and legal order. It should be underscored that French and English are our two official languages of equal value.

In addition, French and English speakers go along very well throughout the national territory, and the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, is constantly working to consolidate unity and national integration, stigmatizing cultural isolationism, tribalism, ethnic discrimination or regionalist tendencies by ensuring that all the components of the Cameroonian nation participate at various levels in the management of public affairs.

Moreover, the corporatist concerns raised some time ago by some unionists in the national education sector and by a group of Lawyers from the North-West and South-West Regions have found appropriate answers.

Still within the framework of consolidating national unity and living together, the President of the Republic has set up forums and structures for inclusive participation in national life, at the forefront of which we have the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, which is now at work.

Other measures, not the least, were taken by the Head of State to create a climate of calm and appeasement, notably, the two orders to discontinue legal proceedings in favor of 55 and then 289 people prosecuted for highly punishable acts committed in the context of the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions.

In addition, the launch of the Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan, to the tune of 12 billion 716 million 500 CFA francs, aimed at restoring a living environment conducive to the well-being and development of

communities affected by the terrorist violence in the North West and South West Regions.

These are concrete initiatives that amply demonstrate the attention, solicitude and empathy that the Head of State and the Government bring to the populations of the two regions concerned.

At the political level, the process of decentralization enshrined in the Constitution, has known a certain acceleration, with the creation of a Ministry in charge of Decentralization and Local Development.

Moreover, the 2019 Finance Law gave substance to this dynamism, by allocating a budget of more than 45 billion CFA francs to this Ministry.

The Prime Minister, Head of Government, following in the footsteps of the legislator, signed on February 22, 2019, a decree raising the general allocation for decentralization to nearly 50 billion FCFA, which is thus five times higher than that of the previous year.

From this standpoint, the short-term prospects assigned to the decentralization process are in line, among other things, with a broadening of the field of competences

transferred to municipalities, the establishment of a local civil service and the introduction of new taxes for the benefit of municipalities, and above all, the drafting of a new financial regime to govern local and regional authorities.

In March 2019, the Parliament further refined the legal framework for the implementation of the decentralization process by amending the law on the electoral code in order to set the conditions for candidacy for the election of Regional Councilors on the one hand, and to determine the number, proportion by category and the allowance scheme provided to Regional Councilors, on the other hand.

Measures, among many others, that provide a response to the deep aspirations of our populations, particularly those of the North-West and South-West, to be fully involved, better than in the past, in the management of local affairs.

On a completely different tune, and still in the perspective of a return to normalcy, the Head of State has

set up a National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, for ex-Boko Haram fighters and armed gangs from the North-West and South-West.

Here again, we can see and appreciate the full extent of the commitment of the Head of State to restore peace in insecure regions, not only through the legitimate use of force, but through channels of dialogue, of awareness, by giving a chance to those of our misguided compatriots wishing to get back on the right track to contribute to nation building.

Moreover, the Government categorically refutes the accusations of abuses and other gross human rights violations against civilian targets, directed against the National Defence and Security Forces, in their struggle against the armed bands of secessionists in the North-West and South-west Regions. In the meantime, they are repeatedly reproached of, I quote, *"extrajudicial executions, excessive use of force, torture and burning of houses and other property belonging to the populations.* »

As already indicated in other circumstances, all these statements do not in any way correspond to the reality and truth of the facts on the ground.

Our republican forces, whose vocation is placed under the sign of honor and loyalty, cannot, at the same time, come to the rescue of the populations and be their executioners.

It is also curious that in the case of Cameroon, the use of tear gas and rubber bullets, which are non-lethal materials par excellence, in accordance with regulations, is considered as a disproportionate use of force.

Such qualification is however not observed in many other countries, including in Europe, when these countries are confronted with disruptions of public order.

That notwithstanding, if non-lethal weapons are not made to kill, they are intended to deter, which, of course, can sometimes cause inconvenience.

The Government, once again, uses this opportunity to strongly condemn these repeated attacks against

Cameroon, which reflect a real desire to weaken our institutions and undermine the morale of our Defence and Security Forces, in their missions to restoring order, preserving the territorial integrity and protecting the property and people living within our borders, when the situation in the North-West and South-West regions is gradually getting under control.

Moreover, it is the State's responsibility to guarantee public order within the Republic, to preserve territorial integrity and to ensure the protection of persons and property.

The State must take on this mission unfailingly and unabated, because it is a sovereign prerogative.

Contrary to widespread allegations, the Cameroonian Defence and Security Forces carry out their mission with a high sense of responsibility, professionalism, discernment, bravery and dedication.

In so doing, whether in relation to the crisis centres in the Far-North or on the eastern border, Cameroon has agreed to welcome hundreds of thousands of refugees from sister countries and to settle them on the national territory

for years, thus enabling them to escape the horrors of the violence imposed by various internal conflicts.

On the basis of such hospitality, generosity, and sacrifices, the Cameroonian Government would have expected to receive from the European Parliament, acknowledgement for its solidarity and support rather than recriminations.

The European Parliament also states in its Resolution that *"the Cameroonian authorities have repeatedly restricted freedom of expression, by blocking access to the Internet, harassing and imprisoning journalists, denying authorizations to independent media and intensifying political persecution against the independent media. »*

Actually, the reality is quite different.

With regard to the Internet, the Government notes that its popularization is one of Government's priorities.

As to the alleged harassment of journalists, the Government reaffirms its commitment to press freedom, which is an indisputable reality in Cameroon, where no journalist is prosecuted for reasons related to the exercise of his or her profession.

Responding to allegations that the Cameroonian authorities systematically oppose the freedom to demonstrate publicly, the Government wishes to make it clear that the regime of public demonstrations is set by law, and any person or group of persons wishing to hold a public demonstration must make a prior declaration to that effect. As in all countries, it may happen that, for reasons of threat to public order, a demonstration is not authorized.

In this case, the organizers of the said demonstration must refrain from going against the law.

These are also the requirements and constraints of the rule of law that we have been building and consolidating over the years.

The European Parliament is also accusing our country of gender-based violence and especially violence towards homosexuals.

The Government of Cameroon refutes these accusations and underscores that the said practices remain illegal in Cameroon and that in addition, such

behaviours are inconsistent with the traditions, values and beliefs of the Cameroonian people.

With regard to the last item concerning the necessary clarifications to the allegations relating to the detention of members and supporters of a political party, namely the CRM and its leader Maurice KAMTO, the Government recalls that it was on January 26, 2019, that these people, in small groups, took to the streets in the cities of Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam, Bafang, Bangangté and Dschang, to carry out marches there, in violation of the ban on public demonstrations which had nevertheless been formally notified to them by the competent administrative authorities.

At the same time, on that January 26, 2019, hordes of demonstrators claiming to belong to the CRM invaded and ransacked Cameroon's Embassies abroad, particularly in Paris and Berlin.

It is in this regard that 151 people were arrested in the hours and days following these events and taken to security units in Douala and then in Yaoundé.

These persons were taken into police custody, in accordance with the charges brought against them.

Brought before the Investigating Judge, the 151 persons arrested were charged with insurgency, hostility against the homeland, rebellion, degradation of public property, public demonstration, crowding and contempt of the President of the Republic. These acts are provided for and punished by the Cameroonian Penal Code.

Should I say it again, the charges on which Maurice KAMTO and his supporters were arrested and remanded in custody are therefore clear and in accordance with Cameroon's laws and regulations, as well as with the international conventions that our country has freely endorsed.

The arrest or detention of these common law litigants cannot therefore be described as arbitrary.

At the end of their indictment, 126 of the 151 people arrested were remanded in custody, and 25 others were released on bail to be prosecuted free.

Individuals who have not yet been identified and who have committed acts of burglary, destruction and ransacking of Embassies abroad are also prosecuted under X, that is to say, against unknown persons.

As you know, the persons indicted in Cameroon are prosecuted before the Yaoundé Military Tribunal.

In this regard, it should be recalled that the Military Tribunal is an integral part of the judicial setup of Cameroon.

The Military Tribunal in Cameroon is therefore not an exceptional court, but a court with special jurisdiction.

In other words, the relevant criterion for the jurisdiction of the Military Tribunal lies in the nature of the offence committed, and not only in the status of the person being prosecuted.

In this case, the legislation in force clearly states that the Military Tribunal has sole jurisdiction – I repeat, sole jurisdiction – to hear offences relating to State security, as is the case here, for certain offences for which the accused are prosecuted.

That said, it remains constant that the procedure applicable before the Military Tribunal is that of common law.

Similarly, the verdict of any of these courts may be challenged by appeal before competent civilian courts.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the foregoing, is the substance of the necessary clarifications in relation to the most recent European Parliament Resolution on Cameroon.

This is the reality that we would have liked to see presented to the distinguished Parliamentarians of the European Union, Parliamentarians from countries whose voices count, and whose voices are expected to defend fair and legitimate causes, and not illegitimate claims, distorted stakes, or even impostures raised for hidden purposes.

All in all, the Cameroonian Government considers that this Resolution is the product of an instrumentalization in which candour, ignorance, misinformation and bad faith are all reflected at the same time.

We deplore and even vehemently denounce this new, pernicious and infantilizing trend of some of our fellow citizens, including those who are aspiring to govern our country. This trend consists, on the one hand, in importing sermonizers or vigilantes, in defiance of our genuine sources of expertise, and on the other hand, in exporting internal Cameroonian problems through various channels, without the slightest consideration for Cameroon's image, its sovereignty and its dignity.

The Cameroonian Government is once again calling on them to be patriotic and have a sense of responsibility, for the matter at stake is the future of our country and our common interest.

In any case, the Cameroonian people can never be fooled, and stands ready to say no to subjugation.

Cameroon is a country open to friendship and international cooperation. As such, the Government highly appreciates the interest shown in Cameroon by its European partners, and in particular the European Parliament.

The Government would also like to thank the Honourable Dominique BILDE and Jean Luc SCHAFFHAUSER for their relevant comments in favour of Cameroon during the debates on the said Resolution, and to which the Cameroonian people has been very sensitive.

Although the Government of the Republic of Cameroon welcomes with due attention all constructive suggestions, wherever they may come from, it cannot accept injunctions against the backdrop of thinly veiled blackmail.

Cameroonian internal issues can and should be resolved in Cameroon, by Cameroonians themselves, and the leaders they have freely chosen.

Thank you for your attention.