MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

MUTINIES AT THE KONDENGUI CENTRAL PRISON
AND THE BUEA MAIN PRISON

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

BY

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Yaoundé, August 02, 2019
Distinguished Journalists;

Thank you for once again responding promptly to my invitation for this press briefing on the mutinies that rocked the Kondengui Central Prison in Yaoundé and the Buea Main Prison in the South-West Region on July 22 and 23, 2019, respectively.

It is therefore a pleasure to wish you a warm welcome in this auditorium of the Ministry of Communication.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Government of the Republic, having informed the public, in due course, as soon as these events occurred, wishes today to assure the national and international community of the return to normalcy within the prisons of Kondengui and Buea. The Government also wishes to make a general appraisal of the situation in these prisons in the aftermath of the revolts they have just gone through.

First, with regard to the Kondengui Central Prison, it should be recalled at the outset that on July 22, 2019, a group of persons held in remand following the security unrest in the North-West and South-West Regions, after having declared itself to be the bearer of complaints to be submitted to high
State authorities, turned into a radical and violent insurgency.

Turning down the calls for calm and completely resistant to the dialogue initiated by the officials of the prison administration and the competent administrative authorities, these insurgents were joined by other detainees, all of them vehemently demanding their release, and then undertook to spread panic within the prison with the aim of provoking a massive escape of the detainees.

As you know, the Forces of Law and Order, called upon to contribute, succeeded in limiting the extent of the damage caused by this mutiny by exclusively using modern deterrence tools, with composure, tact and professionalism.

The Government once again deplores the extent of the material damage estimated at tens of millions of CFA francs, and reaffirms that, apart from the two detainees raped in their prison quarters by the insurgents, no loss of human life has been recorded, and no one was injured among the security forces and protesting detainees at the Kondengui Central Prison.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that the various legal proceedings initiated against the leaders of this insurgency
were conducted in strict compliance with the laws and regulations of the Republic.

The inmates identified as being the leaders of this insurgency, 177 people on the day of the events, and 67 thereafter, for a total of 244 insurgents, have been handed over to the police and gendarmerie services for questioning. They have all been heard now, and the various investigations almost completed. As it is, the final procedural checks are being completed.

It should be noted that at the end of the various routine searches carried out by the competent authorities within the Kondengui Central Prison, several inmates were found in possession of items including:

- huge sums of money;
- many communication devices, including mobile phones, chips, chargers and phone batteries, USB keys, internet keys, memory cards;
- electronic devices including computers, laptops, tablets;
- edged weapons including daggers, knives, hacksaws, screwdrivers, punches, razors, spikes;
- a significant amount of Indian hemp and cigarettes;
- tear gas.
With regard to the incidents that took place on July 23, 2019 at the Buea Main Prison, during which insurgent prisoners used the same procedure, by stubbornly refusing any dialogue with the administrative and penitentiary authorities, and opting to ransack and burn down the various facilities of the prison, the Forces of Law and Order who were deployed to restore calm, order and discipline, were able to limit the extent of the damage.

The mutiny orchestrated in this penitentiary establishment, as you know, did not in its part record any loss in human life. Meanwhile, two elements of the security forces were injured, and 43 inmates among the insurgents were wounded, of which, twenty were immediately taken care of at the prison infirmary, and another inmate rushed to a nearby hospital in the city of Buea for medical attention.

As we speak, the health condition of all the injured has greatly improved, while the usual procedures initiated against the 20 insurgents identified as the leaders have also been closed.

➢ Ladies and Gentlemen;

In the face of these serious incidents perpetrated in an obviously sensitive prison environment, and with regard to
the recurring problem of prison overcrowding in Cameroon, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, has ordered the Government to take all appropriate measures:

- to speed-up ongoing judicial proceedings;
- to rigorously monitor the strengthening of disciplinary measures in all penitentiary institutions in the country;
- to strengthen and modernize the means of controlling and monitoring the prisoners;
- to decongest the various prisons with proven overcrowding;
- to strongly ban the entry and use of all tools and ingredients prohibited in prisons by the regulations in force.

Moreover, special instructions have been given to relevant sector-based administrations in order to extend the premises of certain prisons that have exceeded their capacity.

The foregoing is, Ladies and Gentlemen, the truth of the situation in the aftermath of the serious incidents that occurred on July 22 and 23 in the Kondengui and Buea prisons.

With the calm that has now returned and the related measures taken at all levels, the Government urges all
citizens to abide by the laws and regulations of the Republic, and is especially calling on inmates to comply with applicable disciplinary measures. The matter at stake is their individual and collective interest as well as the authority of the powers that be, which is and remains the guarantee of the solidity and stability of our institutions.

In accordance with the Special Directives of the Head of State, and with regard to its share of responsibility in speeding-up the ongoing judicial proceedings, the Government hereby reaffirms its resolve to effectively work to ensure with due diligence, the conduct of necessary procedures, in strict compliance with the established legal order.

Thank you for your kind attention.