



**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION
MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION**

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION
**FALSE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST DEFENCE AND
SECURITY FORCES**

MINCOM PRESS BRIEFING

STATEMENT

OF

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MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaounde, February 18, 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The National Defence and Security Forces have once again been subjected to second-guessing and false allegations in their struggle for a return to normalcy in the North-West and South-West Regions of our country.

Indeed, images of unbearable cruelty circulated on social media on Saturday, February 15, 2020, showing charred bodies, while indicating that this was only a reflection “of the massacre of the people, perpetrated the day before, in Ngarbuh village”, Ndu Subdivision, in the Donga-Mantung Division of the North West Region.

Without any prior investigation or any cross-checking of factual data, several political activists, die-hard detractors, presenting themselves as “human rights specialists”, “leaders or spokespersons of political parties”, immediately stormed national and international media to attribute responsibility for the consequences of this incident to the National Defence and Security Forces through untimely and ungrounded statements.

Moreover, the Minister Delegate at the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Defence, in a press release dated 17 February 2020,

formally denied these outrageous and misleading allegations and established the truth of the facts, as they emerge from a cross-check undertaken with promptness and diligence by the specialized services. The alleged killing of twenty-two villagers including fourteen children, by Cameroonian Defence and Security Forces in Ngarbuh is fake.

This issue is about human lives, the lives of our fellow countrymen who are, daily, under threat from lawless armed gangs, which our Defence Forces present in the North-West and South-West Regions have the essential mission to secure and protect.

The Government, through my voice, and following this denial, intends to clarify the situation as follows:

For several months now, the National Defence and Security Forces have succeeded in taking control of and securing the Ntumbaw road junction, the flow pathway for all the illicit traffic that floods the Bui Division in the North-West Region, particularly the subdivisional towns of Elak, Oku, Jakiri, Kumbo, Mbiame, Nkum and Nkor.

The armed gangs that were wreaking havoc in this area, sowing terror and despair among the

population, took refuge in a peripheral hamlet called Ngarbuh, to set up their rear base there and reorganize the racketeering of users, while perpetrating unspeakable abuses on the road leading to Ntumbaw.

Alerted by the population, the Defense and Security Forces then deployed to Ngarbuh, in a reconnaissance operation, on Saturday, February 15, 2020.

In the heat of the action, and not far from the landmark chosen by the secessionist rebels as a logistical base for the storage of illicit goods, arms and ammunition of various calibres, as well as adulterated contraband products, narcotics and amulets, elements of our Defence Forces were violently attacked by a group of heavily armed individuals.

The legal forces, consisting of six elite elements, responded vigorously and professionally, neutralizing seven assailants and routing other individuals from the armed secessionist group.

During the clashes that took place, a fire broke out in a fortified shelter that contained explosives and flammable materials stored by the armed rebels.

This led to blasts, followed by tongues of fire that eventually spread and reached nearby dwellings.

As indicated by the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence in his communiqué, the cross-checked balance sheet of this incident indicates five deaths, one woman and four children.

Deeply regretting this unfortunate incident, in a region where the Cameroonian army is working tirelessly and without sparing any effort, to bring peace and security,

I wish to convey to the people, and particularly to the families affected, the most heartfelt condolences of the PRESIDENT of the REPUBLIC, His Excellency Paul BIYA, and the comfort of the Government.

In any event, and on the Very High Directives of the PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, an investigation was immediately opened, with a view to further clarifying all aspects of this incident.

Beyond the ungrounded stigmatization and slander directed against our Defense and Security Forces, we should underscore and magnify the remarkable virtues that characterize our army, an elite army that is strong, credible, professional

and mature, and whose daily activity builds on the sacrosanct principles of respect for republican institutions and the defense of the Nation, with honour and loyalty.

We should indicate that in their legal and legitimate mission, and at the price of immeasurable sacrifices, our Defence and Security Forces are at work to annihilate the macabre dynamic established in the North-West and South-West regions by the secessionist armed bands, I mean terror, horror and abomination, in short. They do so with the restraint prescribed by the High Command, and in strict compliance with the fundamental principles of Humanitarian Law focused on the protection of vulnerable people (women, children, the elderly and the disabled).

It should equally be emphasized that in fulfilling their regalian mission, the Cameroonian Defence and Security Forces are called upon to pursue armed groups in their entrenchments, located both in the forests and sometimes in the homes of populations.

Moreover, it should be noted that in their criminal operations against the populations who don't support their cause, and against our Defence and Security Forces, armed gangs use cover-up techniques aimed at creating confusion among

these populations and the general public, by wearing military uniforms, so as to impersonate the Cameroonian Armies.

Yet, how can one believe for a moment that an army as disciplined and civic-minded as ours, can loot civilian properties and kill the people whose protection and security is their mission?

Under no circumstances have our Defence and Security Forces deliberately undertaken to perpetrate abuses of any kind against the civilian populations at the service of whom they are assigned.

The Government therefore strongly denies the fanciful and ungrounded accusations levelled by political activists, by sponsors of secessionist armed bands, by some Non-Governmental Organizations and some national and international media against our Defence and Security Forces.

In the same vein, it is surprising how gullible these various actors are, to the extent that they give credit to fanciful allegations from nondescript and unreliable sources and hastily consider them as established truths. This obviously is an indication of their bad faith and their gullible

minds, which are permanently working to manipulate the public opinion.

The Cameroon Gouvernement, strongly condemns these machinations aimed at damaging the image of Cameroon and systematically ruining the reputation of our institutions and our army, at the very moment when the 9 February 2020 twin legislative and municipal elections have just been successfully, transparently and fairly carried out throughout the national territory.

The Government therefore appeals to the responsibility and solidarity of all the friendly countries that continue to harbour all those who perpetrate such acts of violence and barbarism in the North-West and South-West Regions, and who keep spreading untruths about the real situation in these regions Regions, and throughout the national territory.

The Cameroonian Government specifically calls on the international community to be vigilant, with regard to the flow of fake news hurtfully disseminated on traditional mass media and online, in order to undermine Cameroon's image.

Finally, with regard to the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions, it should be emphasized that the situation is gradually improving, thanks to the quick implementation by the Head of State, of the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue, especially with the fast-tracking of the decentralization process and the granting of a special status to these two Regions.

In addition, faithful to his commitment to peace, the PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC once again urged his young compatriots in the North-West and South-West, who “have allowed themselves to be lured into armed gangs and who continue to maintain a climate of insecurity in these two regions [to] lay down their weapons, like many who have already done so and who are living peacefully in our communities.”

It goes without saying that the effective commitment and involvement of these repentant sons and daughters of the North-West and South-West are instrumental in the process to restore peace, security and social cohesion in the said regions and, consequently, on the national territory.

The efforts undertaken and the measures taken by the HEAD OF STATE were generally welcomed and praised by all our fellow citizens and partners of good will and good faith.

The signs are perceptible and the visible facts are instilling a little more optimism every day.

Therefore, the Government, through my voice, launches a vibrant appeal to all, so that everything possible may be done, not to stir up tensions as some do, but to unfailingly support every effort that can contribute to a return to peace, to normalcy, and the consolidation of living together in the North-West and South-West Regions.

Thank you for your kind attention.