



I am

Introducing PEACE

A youth advocacy initiative for the promotion of peace in Cameroon

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Produced by the Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency (MDDT) Cameroon. in collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), U.S.A.





**Barrister Clifford Niba
AKONTEH**
MDDT Executive Director

INTRODUCING “I AM PEACE”

Distinguished Readers,

It is time for every generation, civil society, inter-governmental organization, local and international organization, diplomatic missions, government and most importantly civilians, to intensify efforts towards consolidating peace in the Republic of Cameroon. The path to nation-building and sustainable peace is multifaceted and the Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency (MDDT) Cameroon, in collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), in an effort to contribute to the peace process, has developed a newsletter to serve as a mechanism to amplify youth

voices on reducing youth radicalization, youth violence and a ceasefire in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, amidst the ongoing Anglophone Crisis. Youths have been both the visible perpetrators and victims of the Crisis, be they civilians or members of the military. As a commitment to our mission, we seek to mentor youths out of the extreme position of utilizing violence as the sole mechanism for a resolution of the crisis.

MDDT Cameroon is a not-for-profit and apolitical organization, duly registered in conformity with the 1990 Law on Freedom of Association in Cameroon, with focus on human rights, democracy and Peace. Over the last three (03) years, the organization has focused on promoting youth advocacy and reducing youth radicalization in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon within the context of the ongoing Anglophone Crisis. MDDT is fostering this initiative in collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an independent, non-profit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions and reducing violent extremism around the world.

This newsletter is a component of the MDDT-NED Partnership and it has been branded, **“I AM PEACE”**, with the aim of communicating youth initiatives on possible solutions to the Anglophone Crisis, sharing best practices and promoting youth endeavors that can be amplified by stakeholders to enable the North West and South West Regions, as well as the entire nation of Cameroon revert to a genuine state of peace.

Embedded in this edition, are articles and commentaries from young leaders on the ills of the ongoing Anglophone Crisis and related infringements on the rule of law, human rights and civilian protection. Opined in this edition, is an assessment of existing measures to quell down the crisis since 2016 and possible innovative strategies going forward. The MDDT Cameroon team identified Young Cameroonian Youth Leaders working in the domain of peace who have shared their perspectives on the way forward for the Anglophone Crisis.

In conclusion, on behalf of MDDT Cameroon and its honorable partner NED, we call on you to extrapolate efforts towards not only seeking but driving solutions for a peaceful resolution of the Anglophone Crisis.



WHY THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS?

A Historical Overview

The origin of the current Anglophone Crisis can be traced to its colonial and post-colonial history. Otherwise referred to as the **“Anglophone problem”**, the current crisis can be described as a resurgence of a poorly managed decolonization process in the unfinished project of nation-building. After more than about 40 years under British trusteeship, the British Southern Cameroons - present day North West and South West Regions - was bequeathed an Anglo-Saxon heritage reflected by a distinct linguistic, educational, legal, administrative and political value system. From 1st October 1960 to 30th September 1961, it was a full self-governing territory fully responsible for its internal affairs except for defence and foreign affairs over which the British continued to exercise temporal jurisdiction.

Following a United Nations supervised plebiscite, Southern Cameroons (otherwise referred to today as “Ambazonia” by those advocating for a return to the status at independence) joined La République du Cameroun (Otherwise known as “The Republic of Cameroon” or French Cameroon). The Southern Cameroons, therefore, achieved independence on 1st October 1961 by joining with the Republic of Cameroon rather than with Nigeria to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The objective of such a union was to form a federation of two equal states. However, this political arrangement which barely surpassed a decade, seemingly became the foundation of the Anglophone problem and the root cause of today’s Anglophone Crisis.

After the unification of Southern Cameroon and French Cameroon in October 1961, the then



*Former Southern British
Cameroons; also former
West Cameroon and
the territory referred to
today as “Ambazonia”*

President of French Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo organized a referendum which dismantled the 1961 federation and instituted a unitary state in 1972 referred to as the United Republic of Cameroon. This was also accompanied by a change in the governance structure. It is this political move, which according to today’s Ambazonians, that kick-started the progressive domination and erosion of the culture and identity of Southern Cameroonians. In fact, they maintain that this move laid down the structural foundations of institutionalized marginalization, oppression and suppression of Anglophones. This political change has equally been described by pundits as a constitutional coup which undermined the basis of peaceful coexistence of two nations with distinct identities.

Again, in 1984, the current President of Cameroon, H.E Paul Biya, changed the name of this union from the “United Republic of Cameroon” to “The Republic of Cameroon”, which was previously the exclusive appellation of East or French Cameroon upon attaining independence from France in 1960. This move evidently signaled the unilateral undoing of Southern or West Cameroon as a state of equal status with the Republic of Cameroon. According to some political analysts, going back to use this

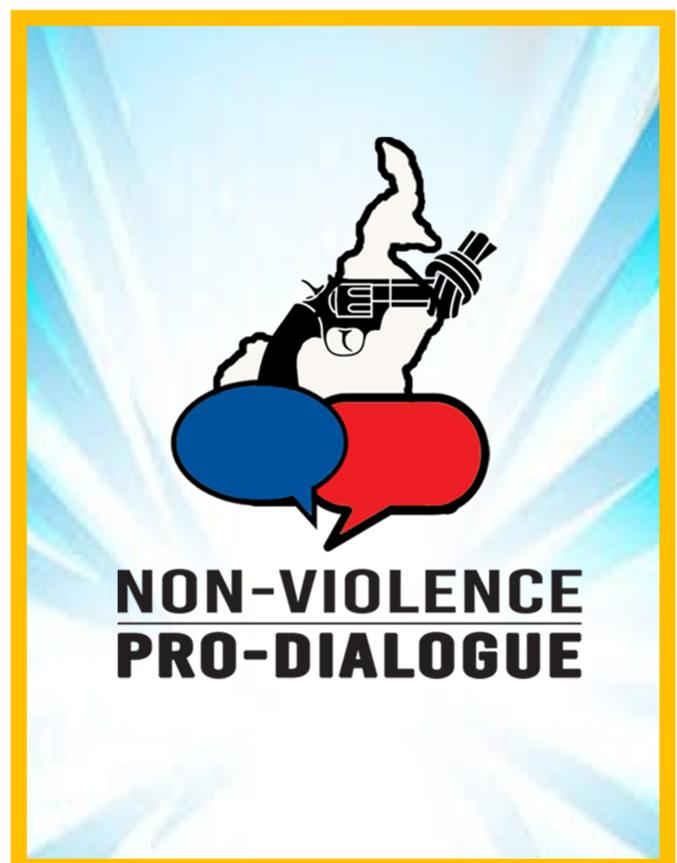
appellation to refer to two distinct political entities, signified a disregard for the socio-political and cultural heritage of former Southern Cameroons and implied its assimilation into and under the former French Cameroon.

Since then, Anglophones have launched significant attempts through peaceful means to reassert their identity within the union. The Southern Cameroonian struggle was officially born as a result of this decision when a sitting magistrate called Gorji Dinka took the State of Cameroon to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and later created the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC). In 1993 and 1994, the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) was held in Buea and Bamenda respectively, wherein Anglophones boldly expressed their frustration and disgust over what many considered then and still do so today, to be the second-class citizenship status to which the Francophone majority has reduced them; thus underscoring the need for a return to a federal system of government as one of its proposals. This appeal was diluted by the French-dominated government which called for a Tri-partite conference wherein all proposals made by Anglophones were ignored in favour of a decentralized unitary state. Twenty-two years after the 1996 constitution which articulated the agenda of decentralization, nothing has been implemented in concrete terms. As a result, Anglophones have continued to feel marginalized and disenfranchised, particularly as the most basic tenets of constitutional provisions on a bi-jural, bi-cultural and bilingual state have been progressively obliterated.

The tensions boiled back to the surface when in October 2016, lawyers of Anglo-Saxon Common Law extraction, organized a peaceful protest, following a memorandum which they submitted to the government in May 2015 asking in part, for a review of Southern Cameroon's identity in the union. This memo was a direct consequence of the systematic and continuous dilution of Common Law practice through the deployment of civil law trained magistrates who could not speak or understand the English language, thus undermining the delivery of justice for Southern Cameroonians. The call for nonviolent protests was met with brutal repression by the state of Cameroon. Lawyers were tear-gassed, brutalized and their regalia seized. Anglophone teachers lat-

er joined in the strike and the government's harsh and repressive response triggered a general outrage by Anglophones which subsequently translated into calls for a return to a two-state federation. The collective interests of Anglophones were represented by the leaders of the protests who created a consortium. The leaders (Barrister Felix Agbor Balla, Dr. Neba Fontem and others) were arrested shortly after the consortium was banned in 2017.

Following the arrests of the Consortium leaders and the banning of the consortium, the state of Cameroon responded with further arbitrary measures including internet shutdowns, massive arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and other gross human rights violations meted on Anglophones in the North West and South West regions. What started as peaceful protests for the reinstatement of constitutional safeguards transformed into radical calls for total independence. This desire was symbolically expressed by the declaration of independence by Anglophones on the 1st of October 2017. This day was characterized by a bloody response from government forces who opened fire on harmless civilians marching with peace plants. Today, this crisis has blown out into a full-blown armed conflict between the state of Cameroon and Separatists fighting for independence.



WHAT MDDT CAMEROON IS DOING TO SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS



Over the last Six (06) Years, the Republic of Cameroon has witnessed a dreaded crisis, popularly known as the Anglophone Crisis, deeply expatiated in the early articles of this newsletter. In the last six (6) years, the North West and South West Regions (Anglophone Regions) of Cameroon have recorded untold human right violations, killings, burnings of properties, kidnappings and malicious activities in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. From 2016 till date, the government has failed to find a solution to the ongoing crisis. Young people have been the perpetrators and the victims, caught up in absurd ghost towns, school lockdown and burning, increasing violence and radicalization. The ongoing Anglophone Crisis is puncturing the inalienable right to security, shelter, health, life, political opinion, freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial just to list a few. Youths are resolving to rebellion as the only credible measure to seek a change in the form of the state.

Nevertheless, MDDT Cameroon seized the opportunity to address the unbearable human rights violations and the swift radicalization of young people into rebellious groups. In the past years, MDDT has carried out online campaigns like the **“LETDIALOGUELEAD”** campaign which reached out to more than 2 million civilians at home and abroad, diluting the agenda of armed groups and separatists to radicalize young Cameroonians.

The MDDT project team has created peace civic clubs in over 80 schools in the North West and South West Regions and Youth Civic hubs in over 50 hotspot communities. It has created safe youth advocacy spaces such as cultural, sporting, and musical events bringing together at least 500 youths in each local community to sensitize them on non-violence and a ceasefire.

MDDT Cameroon has created safe spaces through which youth can safely advocate for peace, ceasefire and a peaceful resolution of the crisis through cultural activities, choral and artistic performances. The organization has hosted cultural events at 8 chiefdoms generating greater youth participation. These events have also served as a space for youths to meet with the influential traditional leaders to discuss ways to reduce youth radicalization and advocate for a dialogue to bring about peace in the region.





In the North West region, MDDT has identified four hostile Bali Community, the Bafut Community, the Mendankwe Community and the Ndop Community, which are known to be “red zones” as far the Anglophone Crisis is concerned. Characterized by killings, kidnappings, constant raids and acts of arson and the people living in a permanent state of insecurity, MDDT has ventured to work with these communities. MDDT identified focal points in these local communities who would work closely with them thereby easing communication, field preparations and execution of the project

In the South West Region, MDDT selected four communities for the implementation of its projects namely: the Bafia Community, the Mamfe Community, Muea Community and the Muyuka Community. All these communities have experienced and continue to experience massive forms of human rights violations. Inhabitants of these localities have suffered rampant kidnappings, burning of houses, schools and hospitals and these acts of destructions have left the people in complete state of vulnerability and they continue to live in tragic insecurity and fear.

It has further organized 3 roundtables in Yaounde, Douala and Buea with government agencies on best practices, modern strategies and their role in diluting youth radicalization in their towns.

MDDT has equally provided legal assistance to vulnerable arbitrarily arrested persons and human rights activists within the likes of journalists, lawyers, Artists and Human Rights Civil Society Actors. With its team, MDDT has successfully intervened in about 300 cases in two years which lead to the release of over 300 detainees from the Buea, Bamenda, Kribi and Edea prisons. As well,



MDDT has trained a team of 10 lawyers for trial observation and partnered with five law firms for effective intervention in identified human rights cases, observed 9 human rights cases, 4 human

rights defenders inclusive and organized a legal outreach to 4 communities (Nkwen, Mile 8, Bonduma and Sokolo) educating communities.

MDDT's communication's unit has produced the Advocacy Newsletter "I AM PEACE". The newsletter serves as strong communication and advocacy tool, carrying the voices of youth and peace activists. The newsletter embodies topics around the root causes of the crisis, the atrocities and

dreadful effects of the crisis. The newsletter also reveals the role of various stakeholders in finding possible solutions to the crisis as well as the possible solutions and a way forward.

The struggle has not ended. MDDT continues to advocate for peace through its projects. Its team is fully dedicated to finding possible solutions to the crisis and reducing youth radicalization while defending human rights.



THE WAY FORWARD

Who Can Be the Solution?

We live in a world where violence, radicalization and wars are slowly and gradually becoming the agendas and norms of society where little or nothing is done to address the root causes of these chaotic events. Our leaders have often considered silence to mean peace, parading the impression that things are fine and under control whereas the reality is usually a near absolute contradiction, eating into the lives of many civilians who struggle for safety and survival.

striking our subconscious every night and every day.

As regards the Anglophone Crisis, early warning signals had been visible for over ten years but were treated with unwarranted disregard or the occasional disproportionate display of power. Looking forward, one must acknowledge that the Anglophone problem for as it has existed, was ceaselessly rebutted, undermining the political and institutional foundations upon which it is grounded. While time and the escalation of the crisis has forced the official admission of its existence and the need for redress, the lack of commitment to a transparent and genuinely inclusive approach has and continues to hamper its judicious resolution towards the return of peace and normalcy in the two affected Anglophone regions. Persistent violations of human rights and recurrence of crimes against humanity have continued to serve as unfortunate obstacles to the peace process.

In the never-ending search for a long-lasting and peaceful end to the crisis, every stakeholder has a role to play. From the government to the international community and from civil society actors to the citizens, everyone must play his part in the drive for possible solutions to the crisis.

Firstly, being a principal actor, the government has a major role to play by ensuring the existence

of a most convenient setting and atmosphere for any solution-driven activities. She must for example, ensure absolute implementation of all necessary policies towards an enabling environment for pre-talks and subsequent deliberations. She must demonstrate an unbiased respect for all Conventions to which is affiliated as well as Human rights and other necessary laws to ensure the security of its citizens. When the forces of law for example, continue to showcase themselves as perpetrators of human rights violations instead of assisting the state to bring other perpetrators to book in accordance with the law, then the government's effort to regain the trust of the citizens and assure them of their protection is diminished.

Secondly, the government must consider and integrate civil society as an essential part in the (proper functioning of the) state administrative mechanism under the prevailing circumstances. Generally, civil society organizations can safely have access to parties on the ground that governments cannot reach. This is undoubtedly necessary in the initiation, promotion and strengthening of a mutually comprehensive dialogue between the government, the people and other actors as well as in the promotion of human rights and a better democratization process. Through an all-inclusive advocacy for example, civil society actors can reach out to all parties neutrally for a ceasefire.

More so, civil society organizations and actors can prove to be an invaluable resource if they are able to harness their strengths, collaborate with each other and synergize. This is possible under a well-crafted policy-driven and neutrally-backed scheme. They must also ensure absolute inclusion of youths in their advocacy programs to help reduce youth radicalization and violence for example, and to ensure a wider and more-

effective outreach. Civil society equally has the ability to identify and monitor warning signals, be it in the form of threats or issues of concerns, which is integral to successful post-conflict political and reconciliation processes. Therefore, in the quest for a ceasefire and return of peace, the government must commit itself to creating an enabling environment that not only allows civil society organizations to operate smoothly but also reinforces their capacities.



Ines Tchakounte

The international community on its part, has a vital role to play with focus on mediation and peacebuilding. There is the grave need for concerned and committed international organizations to invest in improving communication between opposing forces, facilitating humanitarian cooperation, building civilian-military dialogue and providing essential services to civilian populations. Diplomatic institutions as well, can fund youth-led projects that are aimed at deradicalization and countering extremism while equally encouraging all actors to uphold and implement human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law. With their regional or global perspectives, international organizations can serve as conflict resolution services by assisting in the identification and analyses of issues and threats that may signal escalating tensions or conflict before the outbreak or recurrence of hostilities.

It is worth noting that roles of all stakeholders are interlinked and as such, there is the necessity for collaboration in order to ensure that a ceasefire is attainable and an effective peacebuilding process is possible with the Anglophone crisis. Also worth noting is the fact that every peacebuilding project must consider the needs of all including minority groups and the vulnerable as well as the socio-cultural dynamics within the conflict areas.

Conclusively, if all stakeholders can recognize and work towards attaining a common goal, then we can hope to see them commit their work to for peace in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

DERADICALIZATION **JUDICIAL ADHERENCE**
HUMAN RIGHTS
FAIR TRIAL **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**
DIALOGUE **INCLUSIVITY**
CIVILIAN PROTECTION **TRUTH & RECONCILIATION**
JUSTICE **PEACEBUILDING**

Youth Leaders Proffer Solutions to the Anglophone Crisis



“Dialogue, we know, is the solution to the Anglophone crises but there needs to be a serious change of mindset in case we hope to see the crisis de-escalated and ultimately come to an end. We cannot engage in dialogue with the same mindset we had more than 3 years ago; that will only lead to the same results. We must adopt an open, accommodating, positive and progressive mindset towards dialogue if we expect to achieve mutually beneficial results; this entails the willingness to make sacrifices and compromises where need be, and only if indeed we seek to satisfy the greater good of all Cameroonians.”

Tenkeu Marie-Sabine

Talk Show Host/Migration Specialist



Marie-Sabine TENKEU is a Talk Show host and Community activist with over 5 years' experience on the field. She holds a BSc in Gender, Migration and Refugee Studies from the Pan-African Institute for Development, West Africa. She fervently believes that for Africa to be great, youths need to change their mindset and understand that it starts with them.



Bochum Samuel Bache

Executive Director of Youth Advocates for Peace and Community Empowerment Cameroon (YAPCEC), Director of PEACE ACADEMY and the CEO of GSOLUT CONSULTING.

He is a dynamic, prolific and a multiple award-winning Cameroonian peace, governance and development expert.

“Inclusive consultation & participation at all levels in the address of the crisis or facets thereof, remains a cornerstone to its eventual redress. The involvement of different stakeholders from youths, women, religious and traditional leaders as well civil society actors and government authorities in organized forums characterized by free expression or open dialogue over diverse grievances, challenges, needs and opportunities is indispensable if long-lasting solutions are to be achieved. Such forum serve as a necessary pathway to identify priority areas, reinforce the capacities of all stakeholders, encourage proposals for improvement through policy development and implementation, and create an enabling environment for trust, collaboration and security. This sets the pace for peace, necessary not just for resolving the crisis but to foster good governance and hence, guarantee sustainable development with youths especially at the center, serving as the driving force behind the social-economic and infrastructural progress of the country from their various communities and regions.”

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

“ Because unity does not mean uniformity, we must consciously seek the creation of an enabling environment that honestly recognizes, accepts, respects, complements and celebrates each other’s uniqueness with equity and equality — without inferiority or superiority complex.

The foundation of peace is social justice. Thus, to achieve sustainable peace, we must consciously construct a conducive environment with time, by laying down a solid system and setting of social justice that hinges on the respect of human rights and freedoms. Paying lip service to social justice will only exacerbate feelings of anguish.

“Looking at the manifestation of the crisis and the hostilities characterizing it, there is the need to review any pre-conditions and provisional release of all or key socio-political activists currently locked up in prison and possible halt of all legal proceedings against activists; the need to embrace all relevant conflict resolution mechanisms, encourage transparency and establish an atmosphere of mutual trust with the assistance of neutral and mutually accepted third parties.”



George NEBA

Personal Brand Strategist and founder of brandwayacademy.com. He helps socially conscious game-changers, entrepreneurs and corporate professionals to identify, define and align to their true brand potentials and to leverage personal branding to position themselves as thought leaders in their industry, thus increasing their visibility, influence, impact and income.



BESONG CHRISTELLE



Young Regina Afanwi

“While an ALL-INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE remains the best route for a sustainable redress of the crisis, there is need for a lot of education, sensitization and awareness-raising on the importance of not spreading hate speeches, of dissipating socio-cultural and ethnic divides. This requires conscious effort, planning and implementation that cuts through from the basic family level to the community level. Social media tools and platforms should be optimally exploited more especially as they constitute greater access mechanisms to and for youths. Peace clubs should also be created in schools and communities where youths can be empowered to be peace ambassadors especially to their peers as a means of reducing radicalization.”

“All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”- Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Article 27 mandates the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minority to enjoy their own culture, to profess their own religion, and to use their own language. Cameroon is a signatory to this treaty and so my first proposed solution to the crisis will be to call on the state to respect the terms of the treaty they signed.

Secondly the government can hold broad-based constitutional talks that will focus on the form of state or further discussions on special status. In order to have these legitimate talks, it is will be prudent to release the leaders in custody and grant amnesty especially to those in the diaspora.



NGWANE JOCELYN



Whilst DIALOGUE is inevitable towards a lasting peaceful resolution of the crisis, to ensure that it is a best attained would require as to the relevant prerequisites, ; (1) Assessing the root cause which is now well known and acknowledged globally, (2) Ascertaining mutually acceptable arbiter(s) who must be neutral and must ensure transparency at all times, (3) Identifying major stakeholders, external security partners at regional and international levels.

NANGE MARIE CECIL

PURPOSE-DRIVEN APPROACH

activities in pics con't



