

Appendix IX, Letter from the “Leadership of Ambazonia in Prison”

November 29, 2021

Dear Ms. Mausi Segun,

I have received Human Rights Watch (HRW)’s request for my comments regarding the attacks on children and teachers in Ambazonia. Before I address your questions, I would like to state clearly that I find your research as summarized to be extremely biased to the degree that it is difficult to characterize it as anything other than as deliberate misinformation. Given this, it is difficult to reply in good faith. This letter is an attempt to do so nonetheless. In order to do so, it is necessary for me to address the extreme and manipulative bias first.

The elements of your bias can be summarized as follows:

- A. **You choose to start your timeline for the current campaign of the Cameroon military against Ambazonian communities in 2017 instead of 2016.** Fall 2017 is when the first Ambazonian self-defense groups emerged. Starting your timeline in 2017 allows you to avoid talking about the well-documented unprovoked wholesale attacks on the as-of-then completely unarmed and nonviolent Ambazonian communities that were executed by the forces of the Cameroon regime, starting in fall 2016. It was this extended onslaught that eventually forced some in the community to form self-defense groups to try to protect their communities from violent assaults by Cameroon forces, the largest military in the Central African subregion. We do not believe that you do not know this history. We believe you are intentionally omitting it because your primary goal is to assemble data on alleged violations by armed resistance, which emerged in 2017; you are notably uninterested in assembling data on violations by the Cameroon military. This bias in your focus allows you to see the year-long military campaign prior to the emergence of the armed resistance as not even worthy of mention. If you believe you are not intentionally omitting this information, then we challenge you to revise your presentation of the conflict to include this context in your forthcoming report.
- B. **You repeatedly and consistently utilize biased or outright incorrect characterizations of the research you are citing.** It seems you do not think anyone will follow your citations and check your sources. We have been doing so consistently, and based on this we assert you are intentionally trying to mislead your readers. For example, in the abstract you sent us, you write that “at least 70 schools have been attacked in the Anglophone region since 2017.” You place this information under the subtitle “Attacks on Schools by Armed Separatist Fighters.” Yet neither the reports you cite, nor your topic sentence itself attributes *all* these attacks to those you call “armed separatists.” The UN, for example, is disciplined and evenhanded in representing that

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they do not know for certain who the perpetrators are.¹ The way you use your subhead pushes your readers to conclude that all 70 attacks were by Ambazonians, when the data you cite does not demonstrate or even imply this. This is just one example of this behavior, which is a constant in your reporting style. Why do you do this? You owe the public an explanation of whose interests this practice is in service of. Are you being paid off to implement this bias? If you believe you are not being paid off to implement this bias, then we challenge you to produce your forthcoming report to include: (1) exact quotations, (2) full citations including page numbers, and (3) active web links to the report in question, for *every source to which you refer*.

C. You use language that systematically undermines the credibility of the resistance while inflating the credibility of Cameroon's regime perspective. You call Cameroon military and paramilitary formations "security forces" which is a propagandized term that is designed to legitimize their actions. Why do you not call them "death squads," as Ambazonians who are feeling the brunt of their force do? Or at least call them what they are: military and paramilitary units? By contrast, you call Ambazonians "separatist fighters" — which is a derogatory term aimed at delegitimizing them. Why not refer to them as "Ambazonian self-defense groups," since this is how they are referred to on the ground and by many others? "Separatist" is not a term that is used by the self-defense groups or by Ambazonians striving for a political solution to the conflict. Across the board, Ambazonians call ourselves "Restorationists." This is based on the assertion that in 1961 Ambazonia had nearly all aspects of self-governance intact prior to entering into the federation with Cameroon: a constitution, a parliament, an elected prime minister, a legal system, local police forces, a public works department, and multiple other functional civil institutions, all of which were dismantled unilaterally by French Cameroon government in violation of the federation agreement. Our intention is to "restore" this independence. Why would you not call us as we call ourselves? We see your reports on the Rohingya: the Burmese government's ban on the word Rohingya has not stopped HRW from using this term. Are we to conclude that when it comes to African people whose struggles are less known, HRW does not see it necessary to extend such courtesy? If you do not believe you are using these terms to intentionally manipulate readers, then we challenge you to, in your forthcoming report, systematically and consistently use the terms "restorationist forces" and "military forces," *and* include a glossary in which the justification for why you use each term is laid out in exact detail.

¹ "Cameroon: Joint Statement of UNICEF and UNESCO on Abduction of Education Personnel and Attacks Against Schools in the South-West Region of Cameroon, June 1, 2018. <https://www.africa-newsroom.com/press/cameroon-joint-statement-of-the-united-nations-childrens-fund-unicef-and-the-united-nations-education-scientific-and-cultural-organization-unesco-on-abduction-of-education-personnel-and-attacks-against-schools-in-the-southwest-region-of-cameroon?lang=en>

D. **You focus your reporting disproportionately on alleged crimes by Ambazonian self-defense groups while all-but ignoring multiple mass-level crimes that are impacting many more Ambazonians.** In specific, HRW underreports or gloss over village burnings, torture, and mass imprisonment of grassroots leaders by Cameroon. If HRW is sincerely interested in reporting on crimes against children and educational professionals, they would have published a thoroughly researched documentation of the more than 1000 students, most of them minor and workers in the academia, who are currently being detained in prisons and detention centers across the territory controlled by the Cameroon regime. No commonly accepted human rights principles on the treatment of minors are being applied by the Cameroon government in their detention. There are a comparable number of teachers and educational administrators, of which I myself am one, being detained in similar conditions. We are being held in degrading conditions; tortured and denied medical treatment; forced to fundraise to pay for food, health care and legal representation; and denied access to civilian trials. Similarly, if HRW was sincerely interested in tallying the number of schools that have been destroyed through this conflict, they would be including in their numbers the schools that were burned when the whole village they were in were burned down by the Cameroon government. Other human rights organizations have reported various numbers, including 500, 206, 150 and 90 villages burnt in this way.² HRW's reporting omits this big picture view and only when the situation makes ignoring a burning impossible does it grudgingly mention that "property" has been destroyed. Well, amongst the so-called "property" that has been destroyed in these assaults are hundreds of schools, built by Ambazonian community initiative over generations. Children and elderly have been killed in these onslaughts on numerous occasions. Where is the "documented in detail" report by HRW on these matters? It seems as though HRW's concern for Ambazonian and Cameroonian students begins and ends at the frontiers of what can be spun for the benefit of the regime. HRW cites Cameroon's signing on to the GCPEA Safe Schools Declaration — run by the online front group Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) — as evidence of "steps taken by the government of Cameroon to curtail [school] attacks."³ Your whitewashing services are surely very appreciated by Cameroon. If you do not believe that this is your intention, then we challenge you to include in your forthcoming report a **setting in context** of the alleged school attacks by presenting a detailed overview of the numbers of Ambazonians and Cameroonians impacted by the conflict: How many have been killed? How many have been internally displaced or made refugees? How

² See for example: *Cameroon: The Anglophone Crisis: 206 Villages burnt in the North West and South West Regions*, April 2019, <https://www.chrda.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/206-Villages-burnt-.pdf> and "End the bloodshed in Cameroon," October 3, 2019,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/10/03/end-bloodshed-cameroon/> and *Cameroon's Unfolding Catastrophe: Evidence of Human Rights Violations and Crimes Against Humanity*, June 2019,

<https://www.raoulwallenbergcentre.org/images/reports/cameroons-unfolding-catastrophe-june-2019-report.pdf>
³ see: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/12/targeted-going-school-cameroon>

many villages have been destroyed and what were their populations? How many minors, teachers and other adults have been imprisoned? How many schools have been destroyed including through village burnings by the Cameroon military and paramilitary forces?

This is just a summary of the egregious bias that we see emanating from HRW's reporting. We could go into detail on a dozen specific examples — and it would be helpful if you had a mechanism by which to receive such feedback! From where I sit inside Cameroon's Maximum Security Prison in Kondengui, alongside many others invisibilized by your reporting practices, there is little that HRW can do to gain trust — short of a public apology acknowledging and expressing consternation at the above practices followed by a full scale shift. Watching these shenanigans unfold in the past five years has given us a new level of cynicism as to the racist paternalism woven into the so-called international community. If these practices are not the result of deliberate, politically agendized manipulation, and rather the result of some combination of ignorance, wanton use of privilege, and inertia, then we challenge you to address the above concerns publicly as part of your next report, and to create and advertise a mechanism for community feedback by which such concerns can be reported to you and receive a public response.

Now, though we doubt your integrity and we suspect you to be engaged in an intentional effort to distract the public from the war of extermination that our people are currently being subjected to, we will nonetheless attempt to answer the questions you have laid out.

1. What is our position with regards to classes in the Anglophone regions?

Ambazonians are deeply aware of the value of education. In fact, education has been a nexus of the power struggle between Ambazonian civil society and the Cameroon regime for decades: constant defunding and threats to disband educational infrastructure is one of the main ways that the Cameroon regime has acted in disregard of the terms of the 1961 plebiscite to marginalize and oppress the Ambazonia population. For decades we have responded by consistently and vigorously fighting within the civil sphere to defend and build up our educational institutions. It is because of this history that the 2016 general strike and school boycott civil action was called by a coalition of civil society organizations including the Teachers Unions & the Federation of Parent Teachers Union (CAPTAC) which have been in the forefront for decades of the fight for resources and empowerment for Ambazonian schools.⁴

⁴ To learn more, consult Joseph Takougang and Julius A. Amin, eds. *Post-Colonial Cameroon: Politics, Economy, and Society*. Lexington Books, 2018. Pages 115, 408, & 409 and "CORRECTION NEEDED: Children Killed at Kumba are being made into Pawns by the French Neocolonial Regime in Cameroon — Fact Finding Mission Needed Now!!!!" October 25, 2020, subsection: "Why are children being targeted?" <https://ambazoniapocs.net/node/39>

Given this, what could possibly be our position with regards to classes in Ambazonia? *Our position is for an end to the military attacks on our population and the immediate resumption of classes.* Schools are not somehow separate from the rest of society.

2. How do you respond to allegations that armed separatists fighters, including those belonging to the armed groups affiliated to your organizations, have attacked schools, teachers , and students since 2017?

I share your horror at the brutal attacks on minors, schools and educational professionals. These attacks are inconsistent with the principled political campaign for rights and self-determination of Ambazonians of which I am a part. One of the reasons we must work vigilantly to end this war by addressing the root causes is because of how war distorts the human spirit and draws out horrific behavior. History has shown that this takes place on both sides of enemy lines.

In a handful of cases that we know of where there have been threats and attacks against those violating the general strike & school boycott, it is our understanding that those actions have been summarily condemned by the Teachers Union and other leaders of the civil society coalition.⁵ This condemnation accords with the slogan of the decades-old teacher-led Ambazonian movement, "The Force of Argument, not the Argument of Force."⁶

By contrast, it is common knowledge that attacks by Cameroon military forces on minors, schools and educational professionals — as well as other defenseless civilians — are frequent and brutal. It is also our belief that in many cases, paramilitary groups controlled by Cameroon are responsible for horrific activities which they are intentionally making look as though they are self-defense groups. I wish I and my colleagues had the time and resources that HRW has to document all of these incidents.

And when uncontroversial information emerged of Cameroon troops burning schools. HRW has on some occasions decided to justify without evidence that the regime is burning school because supposedly the schools were occupied by "separatists. An idea that is ridiculous on its face by any measure seeing the wholesale war of extermination being waged against Ambazonian communities by the Cameroon regime, that someone would set themselves up to be killed.

⁵ June 9, 2017. "Anglophone Leaders Condemn Gruesome Attack On Students In Bamenda," <http://www.cameroonpostline.com/anglophone-leaders-condemn-gruesome-attack-on-students-in-bamenda/>

⁶ Edward Halle, "'The Force of Argument' and the Fight for an Anglophone Identity in Cameroon," November 28, 2014, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2529021

I am an educator, and many of my fellow prisoners are students, teachers and administrators. Many of us have been subject to torture and degrading conditions during our imprisonment, and there is no question that we were targeted by the regime in large part because of our leadership as educators. We are unequivocally and vigorously against all actions that harm students and educational professionals, and we stand firm in asserting that the primary perpetrator of such harm is the Cameroon military and paramilitary forces, and that they must be called to account for this. It is in this regard that we have been calling for the deployment of an international independent fact-finding mission to the ground, to investigate and apportion responsibility.

3. Could you please provide us with more information regarding how many armed groups have pledged allegiance and /or are fighting on behalf of your political organization? Could you tell us whether they are operating in both Anglophone regions, or just in one of the two?

I share your desire for specific information on numbers and names of armed groups in Ambazonia. I am particularly interested in seeing documentation of specific Cameroon military and paramilitary units and leaders who are responsible for mass atrocities and systematic human rights abuses. From where I sit, behind bars in Kondegui, it is difficult to amass this information.

I do note that this is not the first time I have laid eyes on this same question from HRW, even as you claim in your September 22, 2021, correspondence to have in your possession written documents from Ambazonian leaders detailing such things. So by your “documented in detail” count, how many groups are there, and where do they operate?

I’m afraid our organization will not be able to help bolster your “documented in detail” reporting. While we understand and deeply empathize with the motive for self-defense that is rising within our communities, our efforts are focused on locating a nonviolent, political solution to this crisis.

4. How many, if any, children have been recruited and used by armed groups affiliated with your political organization? Where, When, and why?

We do not know of any efforts to “recruit” minors. As far as we are aware, the self-defense groups are not being formed through any centralized recruitment effort, but rather through volunteers assembling in decentralized formations. If there are explicit policies within these formations regarding the participation of minors, we are not aware of them nor are we being consulted about them.

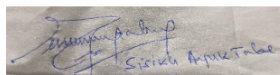
5. Have you taken any steps to instruct fighters within the armed groups affiliated with your political organization with any code of conduct to guide their operations in the Anglophone regions, including to avoid harming civilians? If so, could you share a copy?

We do have a charter that defines our ethics. It is called the "Freedom Protocol" and I am attaching it here. While it does not address children specifically, it does address the more general theme of marginalization and vulnerability which children as well as others outside of the formal power structure experience on a day-to-day basis.

We also have repeatedly and emphatically called on the UN to mandate an Independent International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-finding Mission to investigate reports of massive human rights violations going on in Ambazonia. In our view, this sort of impartial investigation into all parties is absolutely necessary to begin the process of restoring trust. The excessive and wanton violation of human rights has wrought untold trauma on the Ambazonian people. You write as though you believe that the main perpetrators of these violations are resistance self-defense groups; we believe that the main perpetrators of these violations are found within the largest French neocolonial army in Central Africa, the Cameroon military, and its paramilitary affiliates. Whose impression is correct? The only way to determine this is through a rigorous and publicly accountable fact-finding process. Every question that is asked of Ambazonian organizations must also be asked of the Cameroon military and government agencies and units, and all answers must be made public. Toward that end, we would like to have this response published. If you share our desire for such a publicly accountable process to unearth facts about human rights violations, then we challenge you to join our call for a UN-mandated Independent International Humanitarian and Human Rights Fact-finding Mission to Ambazonia / English-speaking Cameroon, and to make this call public in your forthcoming report.

Regards,

SIGNED

A small rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored background. The signature appears to be 'Sisiku Julius AyukTabe'.

Sisiku Julius AyukTabe

3. We apologize to women for the shameful way humankind has treated them for most of human history, and we commit to total respect of women without qualification

Handwritten signature
Suzanne Spivack

4. We apologize for the marginalization and mistreatment of minority communities in most societies throughout human history, and we commit to total equality and respect without qualification to all differently abled and every other minority of individuals or groups.

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Elyse G.B.

Handwritten signature
Dr. Frederic Ndele-Cha

5. We apologize to those who have been mistreated and hurt physically, mentally and emotionally by tribalism and we commit to total equality and respect without qualification for all tribes and cultures.

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Dyfanth Jones on Amman 15

Handwritten signature
Dr. Catherine M. 15.10.2019

6. We are aware of the richness and advancement in the quality of life of a society when the labour of all individuals is valued fairly and encouraged along with wisdom from the cultural contribution of communities and tribes.

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E. and B. 2019

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SHARAH

SHARAH BENCE S. BERINTUY

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H. S. Kimung

Handwritten signature
NFOR, N. NFOR

*Joseph F. ...
... ..*

7. We commit to build a Society that cultivates peace and harmony through respect for human rights and equitable sharing of the rich resources of our land. We shall work continuously to create avenues for prosperity and the wellbeing of all.

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... ..*

8. We commit to engage the Pan-African struggle with full resolve and to stand in solidarity with all peoples around the world fighting for their dignity against neocolonialism.

*... ..
... ..*

9. We are done being balanced from one colonial chess-board to another and assert unequivocally that going forward, for Ambazonia, it shall be Total Independence or Resistance forever.

Signed, Leadership of Ambazonia in Prison.

[Signature]

[Signature]
H. I. Kimeas

[Signature]
NFOR, N. NFOR

... ..

THE AMBAZONIAN FREEDOM PROTOCOL 28/02/2019

PREAMBLE:

ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THE FORMER BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROONS (AMBAZONIA),

EVERYONE WHOM BY THE ACCIDENT OF HISTORY HAVE ANCESTRAL ROOTS IN THE TERRITORY FROM THE SHORES OF AMBAS BAY ON THE ATLANTIC COAST OF BIMBIA IN THE SOUTH, TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER AKON IN THE NORTH, OR WHOM WITHOUT CRIMINAL INTENT OR PREJUCIDE AGAINST THE COMMUNITIES IN THIS AREA CHOOSE TO BECOME PART OF THE COMMUNITIES IN THIS TERRITORY

TO OUR GENERATION AND THE REST OF HUMANKIND, WE MAKE THIS SOLEMN COMMITMENT TODAY:

1- WE SHALL PICK-UP AND BIND TOGETHER THE PIECES OF OUR COMMUNITIES MUTILATED BY SLAVE TRADE, DEFACED BY COLONIALISM, AND BATTERED BY NEOCOLONIALISM.

2- WE SHALL, AS ALL OTHER PEOPLES FOR WHOM THE ACCIDENT OF HISTORY CREATED THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO EXIST AS INDEPENDENT PEOPLES, EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO INDEPENDENCE TO ITS FULLEST EXTENT — AWARE OF OUR PAST EXPERIENCE WITHOUT PREJUDICE.

3- WE APOLOGIZE TO WOMEN FOR THE SHAMEFUL WAY HUMANKIND HAS TREATED THEM FOR MOST OF HUMAN HISTORY, AND WE COMMIT TO TOTAL RESPECT OF WOMEN WITHOUT QUALIFICATION.

4- WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE MARGINALIZATION AND MISTREATMENT OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN MOST SOCIETIES THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, AND WE COMMIT TO TOTAL EQUALITY AND RESPECT WITHOUT QUALIFICATION TO ALL DIFFERENTLY ABLED AND EVERY OTHER MINORITY OF INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS.

5- WE APOLOGIZE TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN MISTREATED AND HURT PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY BY TRIBALISM, AND WE COMMIT TO TOTAL EQUALITY AND RESPECT WITHOUT QUALIFICATION FOR ALL TRIBES AND CULTURES.

6- WE ARE AWARE OF THE RICHNESS AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF A SOCIETY WHEN THE LABOR OF ALL INDIVIDUALS IS VALUED FAIRLY AND ENCOURAGED ALONG WITH WISDOM FROM THE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITIES AND TRIBES.

7- WE COMMIT TO BUILD A SOCIETY THAT CULTIVATES PEACE AND HARMONY THROUGH RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF THE RICH RESOURCES OF OUR LAND. WE WILL WORK CONTINUOUSLY TO CREATE AVENUES FOR PROSPERITY AND FOR THE WELL BEING OF ALL.

8- WE COMMIT TO ENGAGE THE PAN AFRICAN STRUGGLE WITH FULL RESOLVE AND TO STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH ALL PEOPLES AROUND THE WORLD FIGHTING FOR THEIR DIGNITY AGAINST NEOCOLONIALISM.

9-WE ARE DONE BEING BALANCED FROM ONE COLONIAL CHESS-BOARD TO ANOTHER, AND ASSERT UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT GOING FORWARD, FOR AMBAZONIA, IT SHALL BE TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OR RESISTANCE FOREVER.

SIGNED, LEADERSHIP OF AMBAZONIA IN PRISON.

SISIKU AYUKTABE
BARRISTER EYAMBE ELIAS
PROFESSOR AUGUSTINE AWASUM
DR. EGBE OGORK
BARRISTER SHUFAI BLAISE S. BERINYUY
DR. H. T. KIMENG
DR. NFOR N. NFOR
DR. CORNELIUS N. KWANGA
DR. FIDELIS NDEH-CHE