

## Theme: Minority Youth - Towards Diverse and Inclusive Societies

### The Case of the Southern Cameroonian Youth: **Public Life, Peace and Stability**

Southern Cameroonian Youths have been the most powerful agent of change in Cameroon for the past twenty-seven (27) years, despite being a minority group. Beginning from their successful, but subsequently sabotaged, peaceful campaigns for multi-party democracy in the early 1990s, to the current peaceful revolution for self-determination that has taken over the entire Southern Cameroon, these Youths have repeatedly and consistently demonstrated great awareness of their basic human rights, the readiness to fight for them when violated, and a significant degree of respect of the rights and freedoms of others; even those of their oppressors. This progressive approach of the Southern Cameroonian Youths to political and social activism finds eloquent expression in their history and culture.

Perhaps this is the main reason why the government of the Republic of Cameroun has always pursued a policy of marginalisation of Southern Cameroonian Youths in rare and sporadic recruitment drives for the public service sector. For a government that sees an active and politically conscious youth as a threat rather than an asset, the path to political involvement of the Ambazonian Youth in the governance of their own country is fraught with almost unsurmountable barriers. Consequently, the Southern Cameroonian Youths are grossly under-represented at all levels of government in the Republic of Cameroun. They are effectively left out of the public affairs of a state that lays claim to their homeland. This same government has a history of vetoing the creation of manufacturing facilities or any form of entrepreneurial venture that has the potential of economically empowering these Youths. Even the companies that existed when Southern Cameroons was still an independent state have all been liquidated through the actions of the government of the Republic of Cameroun.

Over the years, Southern Cameroonian Youths have founded hundreds of NGOs advocating the respect of basic human rights and freedoms, good governance and democracy. These youths have been the greatest champions for democracy under an oppressive political system that sees them only as inconvenient aliens. Sadly, the youth-led political revolution currently going on in the Southern Cameroons has been very violent, with the violence being perpetrated by the government of Cameroun against Southern Cameroonians. As we speak, any kind of public utterances in Southern Cameroon that seeks to promote democracy and the rights of the Southern Cameroonian youths is considered subversive. Democracy and rights activists are tagged terrorists and treated as such.

Since October 2016, government-sponsored violence has directly resulted in the death of hundreds of Southern Cameroonian youths. Thousands more have been raped, grievously injured, illegally detained and tortured. The carnage is still going on as we speak, and the entire nation has become extremely unsafe for Southern Cameroonians, especially those who dare to seek to promote the rights and freedoms of the people of the Southern Cameroons, which is a pre-requisite for peace and stability. Consequently, millions of these youths have fled the country and now live in self-imposed exile.

We recommend that the UN urgently initiates a comprehensive, practical and meaningful process to make the Southern Cameroons homeland free and safe for its youths. We also urge the UN to fully engage these outcast Youths both at home and abroad, in this process. This is the only way to guarantee that effective solutions are implemented so these youths can return to applying their talents and energy to the peaceful transformation of their Nation.