

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON

Office of the MODERATOR



P.O. Box 19
BUEA
South West Region,
Republic of Cameroon.
Tel. +237 23332 24 87
Fax +237 23332 27 54
e-mail: moderator_office@pconline.uk

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HIGHLIGHTS OF HAPPENINGS IN BAMENDA OF LATE

Preamble

Anglophone Cameroon known variously by as Southern Cameroon, West Cameroon, British Cameroon and now known as the North West and South West Regions of the Republic of Cameroon, though called by Amba fighters and supporters as Ambazonia, has been in a crisis that exploded in 2016 and turned into a war by the government of the Republic of Cameroon by end of November 2017. Things have been degenerating with more than 3,000 people killed and over 300 villages burnt down. Each day that passes takes the crisis to new levels. Kidnappings and demands for ransoms by armed men is the order of the day within Anglophone Cameroon. The situation in Bamenda which is the capital city of the North West Region has been very dicey for about a week today. More and more people become jittery over the situation in this town as the days pass by.

Immediate Cause of the Situation

It was reported that some armed men attacked and killed about two Policemen at one of the most popular and populated roundabouts (City Chemist) in Bamenda on Monday 7th September 2020. The next day both the military and the police force descended on the city, shooting indiscriminately at buildings, into the air and at people. This sent everyone into fright and panic as people ran into every direction for their dear lives.

The military that were about a thousand in number started breaking into shops looting and carting some valuables away and destroying some business articles along the Commercial Avenue and other streets in the quarters. They were also breaking into shops and houses around town and removing people and molesting them. Besides the videos in our possession, we got these two live testimonies from these persons:

The first person is a young lady who owns a dress shop at the Bamenda Food market. She narrates her experience that more than twenty persons ran and took refuge in her shop. She reported that the military came in their numbers in their jeeps and armoured car shooting into the air and at buildings. After a while they started breaking into shops and removing people and forcing them to lie down and roll themselves in mud. They came to her shop and broke the door and removed everyone outside and forced them to lie in the mud. They were all searched and after that asked to raise their hands and go home. They collected some valuables and money from some people that they found money on them. She explained that the shooting was so

deafening that she could die of it. Last Saturday I spoke with her and she told me that they have been indoors since Tuesday 6th September with no liberty to go for drinking water and food. She only collects and drinks water from the rain and her food is getting exhausted. She also explained that the military came to her quarter, broke into houses and took away boys and men unknown destinations.

The second testimony is that of a Contractor with the office of his company at Commercial Avenue, Bamenda. He explained that the windows of his office and other building were shattered by the bullets of the military. Dressed in suit, he came out and met the military who asked him and others they had gathered to raise up their hands and walk home. He said after about 200meters was a group of military. He recounted that the military shattered the windscreens of many vehicles at the Commercial Avenue and destroyed many cars.

House to House Searches

The military have since then been moving from one quarter to another raiding and searching houses and extorting money from people. Any electrical appliance and other valuables without receipts are either taken away or the owners pay from 2,000frs to 20,000frs to keep them.

Early Sunday morning, as reported to me by a phone call this Monday afternoon, the military raided the Ntumazah quarter in Bamenda, searching from one house to another and shooting. They shot at the door of a house and the bullet shattered through the parlour into the kitchen. They raped a nursing mother and this was reported to Doctors Without Borders who drove to the victim's house and took her to the hospital for medical attention. A young lady was beaten and she collapsed and was then taken away. They arrested a young man just because after searching their house and finding nothing, they asked for money which the young man did not give them, when the young man stepped outside he was arrested and taken to their "concentration" camp. This is so because they are just too many people in such camps and the living conditions by the captives are deplorable.

People Killed and Molested

The exact number of people killed has not yet been established, but a good number of people have been killed and others taken to unknown destinations. Last Thursday the military Army General in charge of the operation "Bamenda Clean" announced that they had captured and killed one Amba fighter known as "General Mad Dog" purported to have killed the police officer on Tuesday. On that same Thursday a commuter vehicle entering Bamenda from the Bamenda-Mamfe axis of the road was shot and all three persons on board killed. There is a viral graphic video on social media showing how some eleven hefty young men were arrested by some armed men in Bamenda three days ago and forced at gun point to crawl through some stagnant and very dirty water. They are said to be members of a vigilante group in one quarter in Bamenda that is supposedly aiding the military by identifying armed men for arrest and shooting.

Intermittent shooting from different parts of the town is a common happening. Vehicles and motorbikes are not allowed to circulate, either by the military or armed men. The population is really hemmed in and are suffering the brunt of this senseless and irresponsible armed conflict that keeps degenerating by the day. We are told that this will go on for three weeks or even a month.

Starvation and Health Crisis

With the sudden lockdown of the town by military with orders from the administration for one week running, there is food shortage in homes as supplies cannot enter the town, provision stores cannot open and people's stock of food and basic necessities at home are getting exhausted with no way to replenish them.

Those with health challenges cannot go out for medical attention as the military do not want to see anybody outside. Anyone who goes out risks being arrested, molested or taken to unknown destinations, either by the military or armed men. Some people are dying for no access to medical care as a result of this siege.

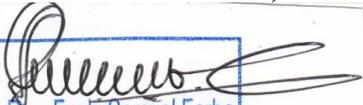
Government's Position

The Cameroon government has termed this act as operation, "Clean Bamenda." They have passed orders banning the circulation of motorbikes considered to be frequently used by the fighters to attack the military. According to a news media known as Cameroon News Agency (CNA), this military siege can rightly be described as "Operation Dry Bamenda Pockets" considering the way money and property are being extorted from the helpless population by the military.

Where will help come from for the People?

The hands and eyes of the helpless people keep gazing into some void or the sky for help which seems not coming. But those who believe in the Lord have not yet lost hope as they keep looking to the mountain of the Lord with hope that help will come from the Lord who is their Creator and Protector and who will not allow a single hair fall off their head. The South West Region is experiencing their own molestation in different ways. The human atrocities are just so inhuman and unbearable! Millions of people have been ruined as several communities have been extinct. Someone said that, "This is no longer a war intended to solve a problem, but a war meant to punish and destroy a people and their way of life." Can humanity do something to help these suffering people? Do human beings still have any conscience and human feelings left to consider human life as sacred? Can this carnage be stopped?

Yours for the Sake of the Faith,



Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel Forba
MODERATOR