

# *The Ecumenical Forum on the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon*

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## **A Passionate Call**

H.E. Paul Biya  
President of the Republic of Cameroon  
Unity Palace  
Yaoundé  
Cameroon

Geneva, 30 October 2020

Your Excellency President Biya,

You have declared Saturday, 31 October 2020, as a day of national mourning in memory of the victims of the attack on the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy on 24 October 2020, in Kumba.

The members of the Ecumenical Forum wish to use this occasion to express our condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims of the attack, to the teachers, students and staff of the Mother Francisca Academy, to all teachers and students throughout the Anglophone regions who go to school in fear of becoming victims of another attack, to the traumatized residents of Kumba Town whose lives were shattered by the attack committed in broad daylight in the middle of their community, and to all people in Cameroon who are concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Anglophone provinces and who are praying and working for peace, justice and reconciliation in the whole country.

This day of mourning is an opportunity to give expression to the shock, grief and trauma, to comfort people in fear, to encourage those whose belief in peace and justice has been shaken by the violence in the Anglophone provinces, and to assure the nation that there is hope that the conflict can be resolved and people will once again be able to live in security and without fear.

We hope and pray that on this day of mourning, all Cameroon will recommit to the values and goals of the *Grand National Dialogue* of 2019. We see the dialogue and the steps for the implementation of its resolutions as a significant first step to address the root causes of the conflict and to create an environment of trust that will allow the warring parties to commit themselves to a process leading to peace and the reconstruction of the areas affected.

We join Mr. António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, and the many religious and political leaders who in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic called for an *immediate global ceasefire*. In his communique on the Kumba attack, the Right Reverend Fonki Samuel Forba, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon said: “All life is sacred and God-given; consequently, it must be preserved by all. The spilling of human blood is a curse on the earth. The right to education is universal and fundamental to human development – it must not be obstructed. War and violence are false securities, in the long term, they cause more problems than they intended to solve. This war must stop.”

The killing of the school children in Kumba should be a compelling wake-up call. A further spiraling of violence must be prevented by all means. The Government of the Republic of Cameroon has a huge responsibility to create the environment which will allow peace to be restored. Trust and confidence have been shattered by the Kumba attack and must be rebuilt.

An independent investigation into what happened at the Mother Francisca Academy will be an essential step to ensure that those responsible will face justice, to serve as a deterrent to others, and to rebuild confidence in the rule of law in Cameroon. We call upon the Government of Cameroon and the armed secessionist fighters to protect the schools and to end atrocities against innocent children.

The Cameroonian Army should return to their barracks as soon as possible to allow for a credible and trusted programme of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration to take effect, which the secessionist fighters should embrace with delay. The army and the police should embrace a culture of civility while carrying out their mandates with full respect for the dignity and rights of every person in Cameroon. The brutality we have witnessed in recent times must be resolutely rejected.

On this day of mourning, the Ecumenical Forum appeals for renewed efforts for a comprehensive and more inclusive dialogue to address the current security, humanitarian, and human rights challenges in the affected regions.

We call upon the religious leaders of Cameroon to remain committed in their active engagements for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Anglophone Cameroon and for the wellbeing of the country. The Ecumenical Forum stands in solidarity with and offers its support and accompaniment to the churches and all stakeholders in Cameroon as they seek to fulfil their essential ministry for justice, peace and human dignity and rights.

Respectfully submitted by:

**World Council of Churches**, Mr Peter Prove, Director, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

**World Communion of Reformed Churches**, Rev. Dr Hanns Lessing

**Lambeth Palace**, Bishop Precious Omuku - Special Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury on Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa

**All African Conference of Churches**, Rev. Dr Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel

**The Methodist Church Great Britain**, Dr Olubunmi Olayisade

**Presbyterian Church (USA) – Presbyterian Mission**, Mr Jeff Boyd