



ASDPN MEMBERS ASSAULTED BY AMBAZONIAN DEFENSE FORCES WHILST CAMPAINING FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

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As the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon continues to escalate, the local population in the two English speaking regions who make up a fifth of the country's twenty four million population, and the francophone government of President Biya continue to suffer the very devastating consequences of an unnecessary and avoidable war. Kids especially those of school going age have been particularly most affected by the war more than any other group. The heavy crackdown has driven many

Anglophone boys and girls who should be in classrooms to rather support secession from Cameroon. Today they have picked up arms to defend a self declared nation they call Ambazonia. These young extremists called Amba Boys who 4 years ago were students sitting in classrooms, now stand in total opposition to Education in the Anglophone regions. They have demanded school closures and continue to intimidate civilians including their former teachers who resist the strikes. Hospitals, schools and businesses have been burned down not only by the Ambazonian fighters but also by Cameroons elite military called the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR). As a result hundreds of thousands of children have been unable to attend school for years now. An unacceptable fate in this day and age when every child must have access to education. A universally acceptable right which must never be infringed upon by any government or grouping.



Mindful of our strong commitment towards advancing the universal goals for sustainable development instituted by the United Nations ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all, the ASDPN Cameroon team engaged in a door to door campaign in the restive North West and South West Regions of Cameroon where this particular right and development goal have come under sustained assault from separatist rebel groups belonging to the Ambazonian Defense Forces operating in the two regions. We have since been talking to parents, children, teachers and proprietors of private schools encouraging them to send their children to school and for proprietors to defy fear and intimidation like we have done and open up the doors of their schools to children of school going age. ASDPN Cameroon has been distributing pens and exercise books to facilitate this process. Putting happiness on the faces of children, who had no hope of seeing the four walls of a classroom, is what every child deserves and must get no matter the price.

Our members thus literally put their life on the line when we embarked on this program which was widely supported by some Christian movements in the country. In the course of our campaign we came under heavy attack from armed separatist fighters belonging to the Ambazonian Defense Forces who are bent on making sure school doors remain closed. Some of our members were abducted and brutally tortured. Even our Country Coordinator was among the victims of this heinous act. We continue to demand the immediate release of all our members who are still in the keeping of the Ambazonian Defense forces. We remain committed in our quest to make sure schools resume in the restive regions no matter the circumstances we may be confronted by.

We continue to condemn the Cameroon government for using brute force against the civilian population. It is first and foremost the actions of the government which has created a climate of insecurity which made it hard for school going children to feel safe going to school and staying in school by stationing heavily armed military men, war trucks and armored vehicles on the streets and around school premises. This act is provocative to the Ambazonian Defense Forces is responsible for pushing them to attack schools. Schools therefore became a war zone. The actions of the Cameroon military equally made students frightened. There is no way a student can ever excel under such difficult conditions. We can also confirm that government troops are also responsible for burning many schools especially in the rural areas by simply assuming they were being used as a base by the Ambazonian Defense Forces. The Rapid Intervention Battalion in Cameroon has been responsible for also shooting live bullets on students then producing fake reports and pictures to claim they were separatist Ambazonian fighters by planting guns on the dead bodies. The Cameroon government must therefore also be held to account for these gross human rights crimes.



We continue to denounce every action or course that must be achieved by keeping children out of classrooms and denying them their most basic rights or by indiscriminately targeting the civilian population. The ASDPN continues to appeal to members of the international community to take practical steps towards addressing this problem which risks producing an illiterate generation. Education remains the foundation of any nation and therefore no nation will ever stand without an educated population.