

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item: Item 3, General Debate

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Speaker: Felix Agbor Nkongho

Mr. President;

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada draws the Council's attention to the use of arbitrary detention by numerous States to suppress rights exercised by peaceful advocates. Examples include arbitrary detention of lawyers and defenders in China,¹ Saudi Arabia,² Turkey,³ and Cameroon.

In Cameroon, counter-terrorism measures and military courts are used to arbitrarily detain persons peacefully advocating for rights of Anglophone minorities. Unlawful practices include incommunicado detention without access to lawyers, and reports of torture.⁴

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recently determined that the detention of journalist Mancho Bibixy Tse is arbitrary. We join the Working Group's call for his immediate release, reparations, and an independent investigation into the circumstances of his detention.⁵ Mr. Bibixy has reportedly been tortured.⁶

Other concerns include the lengthy detention of lawyer, Michelle Ndoki, followed by her recent court conviction in absentia and a six-month prison sentence. Michelle Ndoki is also facing an upcoming Military Court trial. The Military court recently sentenced separatist leader Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe, Lawyers Eyambe Elias and Shufai Blaise and seven others to life imprisonment.

We call on the Council to urge Cameroon to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release all lawyers and advocates for Anglophone minority rights; and
2. Cooperate with all recommendations of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ China: Open Letter on the Rule of Law in China, Joint letter of 16 NGOs, available at: https://www.lrwc.org/ws/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/20190907_joint-statement_HRC42_final_withlogos.pdf.

² Statement Under Agenda Item 2:interactive Dialogue With The High Commissioner40th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, delivered By H.E. Harald Aspelund (Iceland), 07 March 2019, available at: <https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-for-Foreign-Affairs/Myndir/Joint%20Statement%20on%20Saudi%20Arabia%20-%207%20March%202019.pdf>.

³ LRWC, Turkey: Continued Violation of Non-Derogable Rights After Lifting of State of Emergency | Joint Written Statement to the 39th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, available at: <https://www.lrwc.org/turkey-continued-violation-of-non-derogable-rights-after-lifting-of-state-of-emergency-joint-written-statement-to-the-39th-session-of-the-un-human-rights-council/>

⁴ Yonah Diamond, David Grossman, Pearl Eliadis and Antoine Beauchemin, *Cameroon's Unfolding Catastrophe: Evidence of Human Rights Violations and Crimes Against Humanity in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon*, Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, 3 June 2019, pp. 48- 49, <https://www.raoulwallenbergcentre.org/2019/6/4release-of-landmark-report-on-unfolding-catastrophe-in-cameroon>; LRWC, Human Rights catastrophe in Cameroon, Written statement, A/HRC/42/NGO/1, 21 August 2019, <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/HRC/42/NGO/1&Lang=E>.

⁵ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinion No. 46/2019 (Cameroun), adopted 15 August, 2019.

⁶ “Cameroon ‘Tortured Mancho Bibixy’ – Ambazonia Detainees not Dead”; Journal du Cameroun, July 29, 2019, available at: <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-tortured-mancho-bibixy-ambazonia-detainees-not-dead/>.