

## **SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE DOCUMENTATION MISSION ON THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE SOUTHWESTERN REGION OF CAMEROON.**

From 12 to 14 February 2017, a delegation of ADISI-Cameroon, headed by its Executive Secretary, visited South-West Cameroon with the aim of documenting the social and political situation in this part of the country since November 2016.

During this field trip, the delegation met with five types of key actors: the highest authorities (administrative, political and traditional), civil society actors, journalists, ordinary citizens and bearers of various causes of the current crisis. The mission focused on the collection of data and information related to acts of violation of citizens' rights to information in times of crisis, the position of local authorities and respect for the fundamental rights of citizens in times of trouble Public order and the breakdown of social equilibrium. It was also a question of observing the impact of the management of this crisis by the local and central authorities on the experience of the citizen in his living space.

The mission at first stayed in Limbe. Several hot spots including crossroads, bars and recreation areas were visited both day and night. The delegation also observed human movements and exchanged directly with citizens.

### **Findings**

Life seems to follow its normal course in Limbe. The staff of the hotels visited stated that they had not lost clients. Semme Beach, the most popular beach of the resort, sees its flow of local and foreign visitors unchanged both weekdays and weekends. The city remains calm and hospitable. Citizens interviewed said they received no threat.

## **THE BUEA CASE EPICENTRE OF THE VOLTAGES IN WHICH MAGNITUDE IS TO CRAIN**

If the delegation of ADISI-Cameroon can congratulate the authorities for the warm welcome, it is clear that there is a tension in the interactions between administrators and administrators at the local level.

The second and final stop of the delegation was in the town of Buéa, a hotbed of tension because of its status as the capital of the South-West region and the center of local government. The majority of the citizens interviewed wished to speak on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals because of the situation. The specter of fear hovers over the city and the authorities also suffer from it: they take no initiative, every order comes from Yaounde, the capital of the country. Citizens fear the authorities at all times. The governor of the region now perceived as a "colon", to use the expression of citizens. The regional secretary of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms for the South-West has received threats, an event after which he remains inaccessible: "I cannot speak because I was told that if i speak, we will also arrest me, "he told us in a very brief audience in his office.

Social cohesion is eroding, terror takes precedence over the tranquility of the inhabitants and authority is now perceived as the executioner of the populations. Meanwhile, the crisis pitted three types of endogenous actors: the bearers of the idea of federalism widely shared by ordinary citizens; the pro-secessionists maintained by the diaspora of this region, and those who advocate the status quo, including the civil servants, middle class and bourgeois of this

region. Just as the crisis between the two English-speaking regions is a matter of leadership, communities are struggling to control the situation in the region.

In view of the above, ADISI-Cameroon notes:

### **Socially and politically**

- The breakdown of social equilibrium caused by the loss of trust between administrators and the local and central authorities;-
- The radicalization of populations following arbitrary arrests. Depending on the media available to the delegation, the grudge is expressed in certain anonymous letters addressed to parents, teachers and school officials, business owners ...
- Arbitrary arrests without respect of the procedures in this matter, yet no note declared a state of exception in the region. The representatives of the central and local administration are perceived by the citizens as executioners;
- The appearance of armed bands and the skyrocketing of banditry according to indicators to which the delegation has had access. The delegation also had access to reports of bandits who operate late at night, stripping as many ordinary inhabitants as families and / or company agents. Molotov cocktails and rudimentary manufacturing explosives were also presented to the delegation;
- The radicalization of nearly 200 young people according to figures collected in the field and coming from the hubs that make up Mountain silicone; Dozens of abandoned start-ups no longer function because of the Internet cut. These young people, who are companions of idleness, are now devoting their days to political debates and positions are hardening;
- Some authorities take advantage of the situation to settle their accounts with citizens and make search-and-resist arrests for old disputes and grudges arising from land disputes in what is here called "Fako Land";
- Families without news of members arrested and brought to unknown destinations, such as those of people arrested at full cult in Molyko on Sunday 12 February 2017, or those of those many arrested nightly in the districts of the city of Buea or While others were reading leaflets thrown on the public road by unknown persons;

### **On issues of access to information, freedom of expression and the press**

ADISI-Cameroon noted:

The absence of a mechanism and a strategy for informing citizens about the crisis situation. The latter is therefore interpreted differently;

The multiplication of the outputs of the Minister of Communication and the elites envenom the situation and unfortunately do not allow the quietude to settle;

The manipulation of information by the central government based in Yaounde also aggravates the situation

The authority of the authorities directed to the local press: on the pretext of reframing the media, the authorities circulated a note to which the delegation could not have access because it met with a categorical refusal of the authorities. Questioned on the question, the latter rejected the thesis of censorship or control of the media and speak of an internal note which was nevertheless the subject of a restricted publicity;

Prohibition of political debates in the media until further notice;

The prohibition of certain journalists from accessing certain official ceremonies organized by the services of the governor of the region and the municipality of Buéa;

Some journalists fearing for their lives have deserted their homes to live elsewhere while others have hidden in other parts of the country;

Two journalists and a third unidentified person were arrested on 9 February 2017 in Buea. According to the authorities, they were arrested in possession of leaflets called "anti-11 February 2017" and fireworks of unauthorized capacity. But in the local press, the thesis of the settlement of accounts is brought before the tumultuous relations which one of them maintained with the local authorities;

Internet disruption which prevents citizens from having access to information and thus restricts their fields of expression in violation of Cameroon's commitments;

### **A civil society absent**

ADISI-Cameroon also noted:

A divided civil society on the crisis;

A civil society absent from the crisis;

A civil society refusing to take initiatives for fear of reprisals;

A civil society, some members of which say they are threatened.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the authorities:**

Respect for the right of citizens arrested for a fair trial;

Compliance with the Code of Criminal Procedure in a situation not declared exceptional by the authorities;

Respect for the presumption of innocence;

Respect for the principle of sacred places of worship according to canon law;

The end of the spread of terror among the populations;

Respect for the missions of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (CNDLH);

The setting up of a strategy and a means of informing the population about the situation;

Opening up spaces for public debate for citizens' debates;

Respect for the freedom of tone of the local press;

The abolition of orientation meetings and instructions with the media on the eve of major events;

The unconditional and immediate reestablishment of the internet connection, because any finding made, this cut is aimed more at concealing the violations exerted on the citizens than at increasing security and seriously damaging the economy;

The return to the dialogue table and the structuring of the latter;

The acceleration of the decentralization process begun 21 years ago;

Sanctions against members of the forces of the order and authorities guilty of abuse

of authority.

### **To the media:**

To denounce any act of intimidation with the bodies responsible for examining these types of recriminations;

To remain professional by observing the rules of ethics and ethics;

To put forward, the social responsibility of the journalist;

**Civil society:**

A group synergy to ensure together moral, psychological and legal accompaniment of the families tried and the victims;

To pronounce without complacency on the situation;

To associate in order to confront the State of Cameroon about violations of international law by cutting the Internet. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, David Kaye, also issued a statement on 10 February 2017, in which he recalled that an "Internet break of this magnitude violates international law - not only does it Public debate, but also deprives Cameroonians of access to essential services and basic resources ". The Special Rapporteur reminds the Cameroonian authorities that this is a "clear violation of freedom of expression;

Establish a watchdog to authenticate and document citizen violations such as arrests etc;

Calls on other civil society actors in the country to assist those in crisis areas.

**For the Delegation**

**Paul-Joel KAMTCHANG**

**Executive Secretary**

**About ADISI-Cameroon**

*The Association for Integrated Development and Interactive Solidarity (ADISI-Cameroon), is an association of Cameroonian law. It is a non-profit organization with a social character and whose activities are becoming more professional over the years. Its core business being information and governance, its strategic axes are: access to information, open data, freedom of press and expression.*

*Our targets are made up of three main groups: journalists and the National Press; The custodians of the authority of the State and the public administration, the citizen and his mode of access to citizen information.*

*Its head office is in Douala the economic capital of Cameroon, at the place Rond-Point Hall of the Akwa festivals in the 1st arrondissement.*