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**THE DISPROPORTIONATE USE OF FORCE BY A POLICE OFFICER LEADS TO
THE KILLING OF A 7-YEAR-OLD GIRL**

Bamenda –Cameroon: 13 November 2021

The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) strongly condemns the disproportionate use of force by a police officer that led to the killing of a 7-year-old girl on her way back from school.

On 12 November 2021, police officers manning a checkpoint at New Road Junction, situated in the Nkwen area of Bamenda town in the North-West Region of Cameroon, allegedly chased after a vehicle when it refused to comply with a routine check. During this incident, a police officer opened fire, missing the target and instead hitting a child returning from school. The child died instantly. The 7-year-old pupil, identified as Tataw Brandy, was returning from school at around 12:30 pm, when the stray bullet, reportedly fired by Police Constable Fagha Alain, arbitrarily took her life away from her.

The incident brought an uproar and commotion in Bamenda as the population marched in protest with the remains of the child to the Governor's office, demanding justice for the victim and an end to police brutality in the city of Bamenda.

Reacting to the unfortunate incident, the Governor of the North-West Region, Adolphe Lele L'Afrique, reassured the population that the author of the gun has been remanded in custody and that an autopsy to confirm the death of the child from the police officer's gun would be conducted. In addition to the Governor's response, the Delegate General for National Security, Martin Mbarga Nguelle, reiterated that the officer who committed the unfortunate act has been placed in custody, following the investigation that was immediately launched by the Regional Division of the Judicial Police for the North-West Region.

While the investigation was still ongoing, the protest began to escalate, with protesters burning vehicles and tyres at other ends of the city. The military, in trying to disperse the population, opened fire with live bullets, killing at least one protester and several more were injured.

The law prohibits the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials

CHRDA strongly condemns the disproportionate use of firearms by law enforcement officials, which led to the killing of an innocent schoolchild, as well as shooting to disperse protesters with live bullets leading to more deaths. Article 3 of the 1979 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials has set in place three general principles governing the use of force, which are necessity, proportionality, and precaution.¹ The same article provides that every effort should be made to exclude the use of firearms, especially against children. This provision is further expanded by the Cameroonian law, Law No 90-54 of 19 December 1990 relating to the maintenance of law and order which prohibits the disproportionate use of force in Section 3, Paragraphs 1 and 2. This implies that violations of the rule are an offence under the legislation of Cameroon.

Thus, responding to a driver's refusal to comply with a routine control with the use of live bullets, leading to the death of a child, and opening fire at protesters with unnecessary use of force, are violations of human rights and inflame an already tense situation which could put more lives at risk.

Violence intensification in the Anglophone Crisis

It is worthy of note that this incident happening in Bamenda comes barely two days after a bomb exploded in Amphitheatre 600 of the University of Buea in the South-West Region, allegedly dropped by separatist fighters, which left over a dozen students injured.² Prior to the bomb attack at the University, a Gendarme officer on 14 October 2021 in the city of Buea opened fire at a vehicle carrying school children and killed a five-year-old pupil.³ The domain of education has been at the center of the conflict from

¹ See, e.g., Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, A/HRC/26/36, 1 April 2014, §§59–73.

² <https://www.chrda.org/cameroon-the-indiscriminate-and-disproportionate-use-of-improvise-explosive-devices-at-the-university-of-buea-is-unacceptable/>

³ <https://www.chrda.org/cameroon-the-disproportionate-use-of-force-leads-to-the-killing-of-a-five-years-old-girl/>

the origins of the crisis to date, and children's right to education, right to life, and right to a safe environment have been violated tremendously.

After the unfortunate incident in Bamenda yesterday, a faction of the separatist movement (the Interim Government of Ambazonia) announced a ban on all schools and educational institutions in the Anglophone regions via their communications secretary, Chris Anu. The announcement also promised violence against teachers, students, and school proprietors who violate this order. Furthermore, in response to the incident in Bamenda separatist fighters ambushed and killed at least five (05) police officers and three (03) gendarme officers in Santa on the outskirts of Bamenda at about 7:30 am today, 13 November 2021. Such attacks only lead to the intensification of violence in the Anglophone Crisis.

CHRDA calls on the Cameroonian government to:

- Thoroughly, impartially, and effectively investigate the use of acts of violence and unnecessary and disproportionate force that led to the death of the 7-year-old child as well as peaceful protesters.
- Constantly sensitize and train the defence and security forces to refrain from the unlawful use of force during the routine road operations.
- Take all necessary measures to put an end to the Anglophone Crisis by a truthful and inclusive dialogue.
- Provide reparation, rehabilitation and guarantees to the families of the victims.

The Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) is an independent, non-governmental, apolitical and non-profit making organization created in 2005, dedicated to the protection and advancement of human rights and the promotion of democracy as a political culture in Africa. The CHRDA is based in Buea in the South-West Region of Cameroon.

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