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H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat
Chairperson
African Union Commission
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Lomé, le 15 février 2017

Dear Mr. President

An urgent appeal to the African Union for the protection of civil liberties in “English-speaking” Cameroon territory and the need to encourage and support the Government of Cameroon to commit to peaceful and genuine dialogue

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) representing over 16 million workers in 51 out of the 54 African countries conveys to you her warm sentiments on your recent election to the high Office of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Congratulations Mr. Chairperson.

We wish to refer to the subject matter, please.

We have noted with concern the deteriorating human rights situation of the people and residents of Southern Cameroon for a while now. A number of persons described and declared as “enemies of the Republic” have been arrested and detained without trial. Many more who have felt threatened because their opinions and actions have been considered politically unacceptable have been forced to flee into exile. Reports also indicate that basic social rights like access to information and telecommunication services have been deliberately withdrawn from the people and their communities.

These developments affirm indeed that there is a political issue needing sensitive and pragmatic resolution as it concerns the people of Southern Cameroon, especially the “English-speaking” people. Part of the problem, we learn, is apparently linked to perceived historical marginalization and deprivation that have fed demands to secede by the aggrieved people.

On the other hand, there is information that security agents of the State have used and continue to use disproportionate force to quell and silence the perceived voices of dissents and the so-called “enemies of the Republic”. In the process, dozens have been arrested, some killed and many put in detention without trial. They live in fear and their communities appear to be under real and frightening siege.

We note with a sense of hope that the principle of the African Union to move away from an organisation that is non-interfering (in perceived sovereignty of her members states) to one that cannot be indifferent to civil liberties infractions, can, when steadfastly applied, help to secure rights and well-being for Africans. This is more so as the African Union continues to evolve with a view to positioning itself as an AU of citizens and not one of Heads of States. We are of the strong opinion that this principle should be applied in the case of the plight of the people of Southern Cameroon, especially the “English-speaking” ones.

ITUC-Africa urgently appeals to you, Mr. Chairperson, to rally the Commission to secure the protection of the rights of the people who are being victimised. Importantly, we ask that the African Union prevails upon the government of Cameroon to commit to a genuine and inclusive dialogue process aimed at resolving this crisis.

As we count on the favourable response of Mr. President, please accept the assurances of our highest esteem.

Yours sincerely,



Kwasi Adu-Amankwah

General Secretary ITUC-Africa