

***The Champion* newspaper of Nigeria interview with Stephen Joseph, Moderator of the IG's Southern Cameroons Peoples Forum. The interview was published in February of 2005.**

**Question 1:**

**Who are the Southern Cameroons people? What do they stand for exactly, what do they want from the Cameroonian government?**

Stephen Joseph:

The people of Southern Cameroons are the people whom the British carved out of the lost German colonial possession of Kamerun in Central Africa after the First World War. They became incorporated into Nigeria as an expansion of that British colony from 1916 to 1919. In 1919 they were placed under the League of Nations Mandate System, after Woodrow Wilson President of the United States insisted that all ex-German territories be placed under a mandate system of the League of Nations. Britain returned the territory to the League of Nations but remained the Administering Authority and continued to administer the territory from Nigeria, as if it were a part of Nigeria. The continued administration of Southern Cameroons from Nigeria by the British was unfortunate because the territory and its people neither benefited from colonial investments as a British colony nor benefited as a League of Nations Mandate with rights.

At the formation of the United Nations Organization after the Second World War, the Southern Cameroons became a United Nations Trust Territory under United Kingdom Administration. In 1954 representatives of the people of the Southern Cameroons walked out of the Eastern Nigerian House of Assembly in Enugu to return home and establish the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. This act established a Southern Cameroons government in Buea, its capital.

In 1960, instead of giving independence to the people of the Southern Cameroons as international law provided for under article 76 (b) of the UN Charter, the British Secretary for Colonies, Ian McLeod described them as “expendable” and shortly thereafter, on October 1, 1961, the British handed the Southern Cameroons to the French. Charles de Gaulle later described the territory as “a small gift from the Queen of England” and had it annexed to the French colony of *La République du Cameroun*. Today, after decades of French colonization, the people of Southern Cameroons are referred to by officials of French Cameroun (*La République du Cameroun*) as Biafrans, Nigerians and “enemies in the house.”

Geographically, the people of the Southern Cameroons are the people native to the southern part of the former United Nations Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration. Known internationally and internally as The Southern Cameroons, this territory is bounded on the west and north by Nigeria along the boundary alignment described in the Anglo-German boundary treaty of 1913; and on the east by the French-speaking State of *La République du Cameroun* along the line defined by various boundary treaties between Britain and France, in particular the Anglo-French boundary treaty of 1931.

You ask what the people of Southern Cameroons stand for. The people of the Southern Cameroons stand for the restoration of their humanity that has been robbed by successive colonizers with the most brutal and senseless of them all being the French. When the Germans colonized the Southern Cameroons, they built roads, plantations, and fortresses. They laid the foundation for a modern economy in the Southern Cameroons and gave the people a sense of a nation-state. When the British took over from the Germans, they did very little to advance the economic progress the Germans had started but they did not destroy anything they found in the country. Instead they gave the people a progressive culture built on the rule of law, democracy and the respect for individual rights. They brought to the Southern Cameroons a world-class language that connected the people of the territory to a progressive Anglo-Saxon world that is largely responsible for the progress human life on earth has experienced.

Since taking over the territory in 1961 by the French, the people of Southern Cameroons have been forced to live under strict Napoleonic codes enforced by armed men (*gendarmes*) who give orders to them through interpreters. A combination of French experts and *gendarmes* from *La République du Cameroun* has destroyed the government of the Southern Cameroons, the economy and her way of life.

Today, the French have implemented a ruthless and relentless attack on the people of Southern Cameroons in an effort to become the last colonizer to have visit the territory. They do not want to see Southern Cameroons survive in any way, shape or form as a people, culture and country. To this end the destruction of the Southern Cameroons has included: power plants, agro-industrial businesses, roads, the legal system, the educational system and the language. They have relentlessly tried to make Frenchmen and women out of the English-speaking people of the Southern Cameroons. We have experienced a wanton display of unnecessarily violence, intolerance, irrational and pompous behavior that is inexplicable.

What do we want from the Camerounese government? The answer is simple: **our independence.**

The French are generally a nostalgic people who are inductive in their worldview. This explains why in Canada a remnant of a defeated French minority population enjoys more rights and freedoms than other Canadians, and more than even the French enjoy in France but they continue to traumatize Canada at every turn for reasons no one can put a finger on. Imagine what they would do if things were in reverse in Canada. In Southern Cameroons things are in reverse and they won't stop until we no longer exist as a people.

Ours is an unbearable situation. God created us, we have a right to be in the land he chooses to bring us into the world and we insist that we must have our freedom, our liberty and own our property. We want justice. We can only be assured of all these by our total and complete independence and sovereignty from any foreigners. The people of the Southern Cameroons want an over night evacuation by France, its African regiment and colonial administrators out of our country.

**Q2:**  
**What is the relationship of Southern Cameroonians with the Bakassi people of Nigeria? Are there any affinities?**

**SJ:**  
Various peoples live in the Bakassi Peninsula. Some are native to the peninsula while others of Nigerian origin began settling in the area in the 1960s. All these peoples now belong to the Peninsula, which is unquestionably a part of the territory of the Southern Cameroons. Bakassi was indeed one of the twenty-six Plebiscite Districts during the illegal UN sponsored Plebiscite of February 11, 1961 in the Southern Cameroons. The result of this plebiscite began the effective annexation of the Southern Cameroons by France.

The dispute which invited the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to Bakassi arises from the fact that our colonial administrators in the Southern Cameroons neglected the area and its people. The Nigerian government came to the rescue without notice by our colonizer and without care, because at the time it was just a matter of ignoring the natives and allowing nature to take its cause on them. In coming to their rescue, the Nigerian government saved the people of Bakassi from the brutal colonization the rest of the Southern Cameroons has suffered from the hands of the French.

The Nigerian element of the population of Bakassi is evidently therefore a part of an ethnic community that stands astride the Southern Cameroons/Nigerian border at that point. This is a phenomenon that repeats itself in respect to other ethnic communities all along the said common border. The affinity of the rest of Southern Cameroonians to the people of Bakassi comes from the closeness that has developed over the years among all the ethnic communities of the Bakassi

Peninsula. We thus consider the Bakassi people of Nigerian extraction as a part of the ethnic make up of the Southern Cameroons. Today, we all share a common nationality, the love of our freedom, our cultural heritage and our right to be independent from foreign control and exploitation.

**Q3:**

**There has been a lot of noise about an independent Southern Cameroons. How feasible is this given that you people enjoy a lot of benefits from the present Republic?**

SJ:

I cannot answer this question without correcting the inaccurate assumptions it projects. First, I hope that what you call “noise” is not coming from the people of the Southern Cameroons, for even though the complaints of six millions people may sound as noise to a distant listener, they are factual and genuine complains coming from a people who have been so violated that only those who came under the rule and occupation of Nazi Germany in the 1930s to 1945 can understand. The fact that the colonial French propaganda machine has been very effective in manufacturing lies to cover up its crimes against our humanity does not change the fact that they are in Southern Cameroons for the good of France and not that of the people of Southern Cameroons. The French are not known for their charitable giving and Southern Cameroonians, I can assure you, are not the lucky ones to “enjoy a lot of benefits” from them. Let me also add here that *La République du Cameroun* is not an independent republic any more than Ivory Coast is an independent republic as the Gbagbo government has revealed and your newspaper has done a great job reporting to the world.

The idea that the people of the Southern Cameroons enjoy any benefits at all from the Yaoundé colonial Government is preposterous. It is a veritable myth created and sustained by a country that has erected mendacity and fraud into techniques of government. Right from the onset of its armed colonial occupation of the Southern Cameroons as successor colonialist to the departing British, *République du Cameroun* contrived to cover up its criminality by peddling the fat lie that the Southern Cameroons is economically worthless and that assuming a colonial sovereignty over her was an act of philanthropy and a favor done to its people. The truth is that the Southern Cameroons is a real *eldorado* and the expansionist French *Cameroun* has long been living off its resources. The French President, François Mitterrand, in 1994 confessed that “France cannot abandon its African ambitions for France will no longer be the same in the world without Africa.”

We, on the other hand, cannot wait to be cured of the parasite that is anchored on our main artery and bleeding us to death. Only then can the people of the Southern Cameroons benefit from their enormous natural resources and the talents of its people who today must be ignored, murdered and sent into exile, for their resources to be exploited.

**Q4:**

**You said your people are opposed to the hand over of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroun. Why exactly are you opposed to it and would you encourage Nigeria to disobey the ICJ, which has given judgment in the matter? Don't you think doing so will earn Nigeria some negative consequences in the international community?**

SJ:

The reason for this opposition is simple; you do not invite your family members to come home when there is a hold-up situation going on at home, with heavily armed robbers who have demonstrated their willingness to kill. Unless those family members have the ability to overcome the robbers, it would be selfish, even murderous to ask them to come home and suffer a fate no human being should be subjected to. Since the people of Bakassi cannot overcome the French, they must stay away until it is safe to come back home. That is why we are asking the Nigerian government not to abandon them at this time to an arrogant colonizer.

To allow the French take over Bakassi at this time will have two serious consequences:

1) Put the people of Bakassi under the same bondage we are struggling to free ourselves from today.

2) The handover will result in substantial African resources falling into the hands of France to use in her continuous and relentless colonial exploitation of Africa and Africans.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that Nigeria should hold on to Bakassi as part of its territory. That would be violating international law and the ICJ ruling. What we are saying is that *La République du Cameroun* has no maritime boundary with Nigeria and so has no legal basis for claiming the Bakassi Peninsula as part of its territory.

The truth is that, fully aware of the economic significance of the Southern Cameroons territory of Bakassi, the predatory colonial state of *La République du Cameroun* is endeavoring to steal it via its colonization of the Southern Cameroons. Remove that colonization and the claim of *La République du Cameroun* to Bakassi becomes exposed for the fraudulent exercise it is.

Our opposition to the handover is grounded in international law that has outlawed colonialism and the acquisition of territory by illegal means. By holding on to Bakassi and eventually handing it over to an independent and sovereign Southern Cameroons, the rightful owner of the Peninsula, Nigeria would be acting consistently with international law and the demands of justice, and serving the interest of peace. The people of the Southern Cameroons are fighting for the decolonization of their homeland. They cannot accept the excision of part of their national territory and its handover to *La République du Cameroun* to continue there its colonial ravages.

We are not encouraging Nigeria to disobey the ICJ but it must not escape our attention that our continuous colonization by a European power, France, with veto power in the UN Security Council, while at the same time still maintaining colonies in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, should make any decision coming from the UN and any of its organs suspect and rejected if African interest is not fully served or protected. The acceptance by the international community of France's colonial status in Africa is evidence that the only hope for Africa lies with Africans and Nigeria holds a lot of the potential that can lead the way forward. I strongly believe that just as the West has ganged up, sharing technologies only among themselves and forming broad alliances to defend their interests around the world, Africans and especially sub-Saharan Africans have an urgent need to start thinking and acting for their national and regional interests even when it is against others interests.

You ask if I think doing this will earn Nigeria some negative consequences in the international community? All I can say about this is that the countries in Africa that have broken loose their chains of bondage did not do so in cooperation with Western Governments. The people of South Africa defeated apartheid against strong opposition from Western Governments. Rwanda had to battle French trained and armed militias to gain control of their country and destiny. Nigeria really has nothing to fear but fear itself in deciding to do the right thing for itself and for the region it lives in.

We must not forget that few in the world who set sails for Africa did so to benefit Africans, so there is not very much to lose for African countries that stand up for themselves. Mr. Tony Blair knows fully well what France is doing in Africa to prevent the development of the continent, but where the world came together to push the Nazis out of Europe, no European is ready to raise a finger to another European power doing the same thing in Africa. It is time we Africans recognize this and recognize our abilities to do for ourselves what we have paid a heavy price to have others destroy for us. This is the lesson India has learned and we in Africa stand to benefit from it.

#### **Q5:**

**Back in time, representatives of the Southern Cameroons walked out of the Eastern Nigerian House of Assembly, with the benefit of hindsight would you say they took an honorable decision and would you say that decision has helped your quest for**

## **self-determination?**

SJ:

That walk out was consistent with the status of the Southern Cameroons as a UN Trust Territory whose separateness, identity and distinctiveness, as well as its economic, social and political development to independence were not to be impaired by its administrative union with Nigeria. The walk out emphasized the legitimate aspiration of the people of the Southern Cameroons to sovereign statehood as stated in Article 76 (b) of the UN Charter. The walk out was therefore not only a very honorable decision, it was an act of nationalism and a politically correct imperative.

The joint administration of Southern Cameroons with Nigeria left us in limbo, existing neither as a colony, gaining from colonial developments nor as a different country, with its own administration and economic rights. The Southern Cameroons paid for this lack of definition with no developments in the territory. Children in the Southern Cameroons, for example, who wanted higher education above primary school, had to travel a long distance to Nigeria at a tremendous cost to their families. The walk out by Southern Cameroons representatives from Enugu in 1954 was in reaction to this neglect and in keeping with the Trusteeship Agreements which stated that UN Trust Territories were to be guided toward “independence or self government.”

There is no doubt that the walk out of Enugu after more than thirty-five years in union with Nigeria and the subsequent establishment of the government of the Southern Cameroons in Buea defined the national identity and aspirations of the people of the Southern Cameroons. This is at the heart of our struggle today; after more than 40 years under the most brutal and destructive occupation we have experienced in our history. I truly believe that it is the strength of the developments after the 1954 walk out of Enugu that has given us the ability to withstand the onslaught of French colonization and has continued to guide us to the independence and sovereignty that we are sure to accomplish soon. So without doubt, that decision has helped our quest for self-determination.

I'll like to add here that the walk out itself did not only show the determination of the people of Southern Cameroons to assert their national identity and self-determination but also demonstrated the liberal core that has made the Anglo-Saxon world the most progressive and admired throughout the world. Southern Cameroonians would not have been able to accomplish what was accomplished in the walk out from Enugu if Nigeria had been *La République du Cameroun* and Great Britain had been France. Because Nigeria was Nigeria and Great Britain was not France, a Southern Cameroons nation will soon be established and we are happy that it will be next to a Nigeria that will rise up to assume its place in our region and world.

**Q6:**

**What has the experience of your people been under the leadership of Paul Biya? Do you have fair representation in his government?**

SJ:

This is one of those questions that I need to establish certain facts which would help in the understanding of my answer and would make you see, I hope, why answering your question as asked would be misleading. I believe that one cannot effectively or fully understand world politics today, both national and international, without a proper understanding of the events and issues during and after the Second World War. I say this because your question assumes that Paul Biya is the effective leader of *La République du Cameroun* and that somehow there is a correlation between the number of representatives from the Southern Cameroons and what the people of Southern Cameroons get in return from the set up. This is a very “Anglo” way of thinking with assumptions that are embedded in principles of logic and fairness.

What we are dealing with in the Southern Cameroons is what is called *Françafrique*. *Françafrique* is not built based on logic or fairness; it is based on the interest of France. African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda did not get the same type of independence from Great Britain that *La République du Cameroun*, Ivory Coast and Gabon, for

example, got from France. A brief history of the type of “independence” France gave Africans will explain this.

I'll start from August of 1941 with article (3) of the “Atlantic Charter” which declared “the rights of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they lived.” President Roosevelt of the United States of America was the architect of this idea motivated by the desire to chart a different course for humanity after the devastations of the Second World War. Winston Churchill of Great Britain and Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French did not want this article to apply to Africans. They wanted it to apply only to European countries liberated from the Axis powers. President Roosevelt declared that the right of self-determination should apply to all peoples and that the U.S. would actively support it. Now, President Roosevelt and Churchill were great friends, Churchill and Charles de Gaulle were great friends, but Roosevelt and de Gaulle did not like each other and Charles de Gaulle feared them both because they were Anglo, undefeated in the war and did not treat him the way he liked to be treated. What has this got to do with Africa? France under Napoleon conquered continental Europe and France sat at Versailles in 1919 among the victorious powers of the First World War. She saw herself as one of the powers of the world. Suddenly in 1940 she found herself occupied by Nazi Germany by 1940 in the Second World War. Charles de Gaulle escaped and became a refugee in London. It was hard for him to take. He decided to join the Allies and assume leadership to restore the sovereignty of France. In this effort he tied his fate to that of France. This is where Africa comes in. Charles de Gaulle figured out that since France could not become a better military power and he did not see it becoming an economic power without its colonies, he decided that France must maintain its colonies as a means not only to help its economic growth but also a source of influence in an international system that was being built to function through consensus in the UN system.

How would France remain a colonial power in a world were the Atlantic Charter was circulating? The answer came in a conference held in Brazzaville, Congo in 1944. There French intentions were spelled out clearly, “*The goals of the task of civilization accomplished by the French in her colonies rule out any idea of autonomy, any possibility of evolution outside the French bloc of the empire; the eventual creation, even in the distant future, of ‘self-government’ for the colonies is to be set aside.*” This was obviously contrary to the direction the rest of the world was taking after a brutal Nazi war. Working against the trend of the time by choosing to maintain colonies could be tough for anyone but not for the people who invented the guillotine as a political tool. The way out of this problem was spelt out in these words: “*In greater colonial France there are neither peoples to enfranchise nor racial discrimination to abolish*” they declared in Brazzaville, “*there are populations which we intend to conduct, stage by stage, to a political personality, and for the more developed to political rights, but this will still mean that the only independence they will want will be the independence of France*”. So far so good, but they could not possibly be thinking of having white French men as presidents and governors running the place after everything? NO. The answer was provided without mincing words, “*Instead of allowing a mob of proletarians, more or less badly dressed, speaking more or less French, to grow up through contact with us, we would do better to create an elite, beginning with the chiefs and notables who, having been made by us personally responsible for power, will progress by their experience in dealing with the difficulties they encounter and, as they become attached to their work, will win their spurs on behalf of the country and within it. Is this not better than a crowd of soured individuals bringing in unsuitable slogans from who knows where?*” This is where Paul Biya and his predecessor, Ahmadu Ahidjo before him come in.

In 1960 the *Brazzaville Declarations* were put together and translated into “*Cooperation Agreements*” which French African colonies were forced to sign as a precondition for their “independence.” I have a feeling that you now get the picture. I think all Africans should understand this. Our people should understand that nothing is happening randomly in their lives. There is a master design and a master plan put in place that is being executed diligently and the actors are all scripted to act as called upon to maintain the independence of France. In *La République du Cameroun*, Paul Biya has been made, for over twenty years, personally responsible for power by France, and he has become attached to his work. This has earned him his spurs on behalf of *La République du Cameroun*. This is why you see him as the President of *La République*

*du Cameroun* but the only independence he wants is the independence of France. Any person from the Southern Cameroons who is co-opted to be a part of this scheme does not represent the people of Southern Cameroons. He is rewarded for going along with the scheme and it ends there. This is the scheme the people of Southern Cameroons are fighting and it has left them worst off than the people of *La République du Cameroun* because they get the brunt of the ravages of France and the ravages of the people of *La République du Cameroun* who are used as colonial administrators and soldiers in the Southern Cameroons. It is a hard concept for an Anglo oriented mind to grasp but I'm sure you do get it. It took us a long time to detangle the mesh; a lot of our people in the Southern Cameroons still don't get it.

You can now see why our experience under Paul Biya has seen an intensified colonial rule and repression that is second to none before it in the Southern Cameroons. It has worsened the material condition of our people. We live under wanton military and police brutality, gross human rights violations (arbitrary arrests and detentions, deprivation of property, torture, disappearances and extra-judicial killings by the forces and other agents of the Yaoundé colonial government), oppression, persecution and pauperization are the lived daily realities of the people of the Southern Cameroons in their own land. We are groaning under the double colonial yoke of France and *La République du Cameroun*, a form of colonialism far worse and far dehumanizing than anything experienced under either German or British colonial rule, as already explained. We have no say in the governance of our territory and no control over our wealth and natural resources. The administrators in the Southern Cameroons are colonial administrators from *La République du Cameroun* variously known as 'gouverneurs', 'prefets' and 'sous-prefets'. They function in French and are mandated to enforce the French system and to assimilate our population. They vigorously enforce a plethora of illiberal decrees depriving people of basic human rights, including a law that requires all persons to have on their persons at all times and to produce the same at any time, under pain of imprisonment, on request by the forces. That document is called 'carte d'identité'. It is used to harass the population, to impede the enjoyment of the right to freedom of movement and to deny a number of other basic human rights; to extort bribes from people at the numerous military and police road blocks erected throughout the territory, and to serve the same ends as the pass in apartheid South Africa. The Camerounese colonial administrators in the Southern Cameroons operate in cahoots with occupying colonial forces detached from the Camerounese 'sureté nationale', 'gendarmerie nationale', and 'forces armées nationales'.

Far from fair representation, our land has been Balkanized in order to further the colonizer's divide-and-rule policy. A handful of our people sit in the parliament of *La République du Cameroun*. That is in keeping with the French derived policy of allowing some people from the colonized territory to sit in the colonizer's parliament for mere decorative purposes. Likewise Southern Cameroons nationals are co-opted to serve in the government of *La République du Cameroun*, just as Senghor and Boigny served as ministers in France. The purpose of all this is to create the fiction that there is Southern Cameroons representation in *La République du Cameroun* and thus to promote the outlandish idea of colonization of the Southern Cameroons by consent of its people. The truth is that the people of the Southern Cameroons seek no representation in *La République du Cameroun*. They want to be free from *La République du Cameroun's* colonial serfdom.

**Q7:**

**You had voiced support of your people for the national dialogue being planed in Nigeria. What do your people stand to gain from the dialogue? Would it mean anything to your people?**

**SJ:**

The answer to this question is simple and obvious to us in the Southern Cameroons. A well managed Nigeria is good for the Southern Cameroons and all of Africa. The ravages we have suffered in our country and continue to suffer on a daily basis come as a result of a mismanaged colony that is programmed to be at odds with itself. The national dialogue Nigerians are going to be engaged in soon is similar to the national conference some citizens of the Southern Cameroons

had called for in the early 1990s to bring a rebirth of a country that was choking its own people to death. This was totally and completely rejected by President Biya for obvious reasons.

Nigeria is an independent country that is now showing signs of maturity and looking for ways to move to the next level. We truly welcome this dialogue because a well conceived and managed Nigeria would build a strong and independent economy, develop the Nigerian market and build a strong military with its own military industrial base that gives Nigeria the independence she needs to defend her interest without the fear of blackmail and sabotage from the outside. This can only be good for the Southern Cameroons and sub-Saharan Africa; for we are alone in the world, collectively enslaved for centuries, collectively colonized and collectively isolated, discriminated and exploited. Our only real hope therefore lies with us Africans, and Nigeria has a lot to contribute in moving all of us forward. The idea of a national dialogue is coming from Nigerian soul searching and I trust that the results will live up to the expectations for Nigeria and for the rest of us in the continent who share the fate of Nigeria as Africans. We strongly believe that just as the West has ganged up; sharing technologies only amongst themselves and building broad alliances to defend their interest around the world, Africans and especially sub-Saharan Africans have an urgent need to do the same for their national and regional interest, even when it is against others' interest.

**Q8:**

**Finally, would you say your people are prepared to fight for your emancipation from *La République du Cameroun* no matter what it takes?**

**SJ:**

The people of Southern Cameroons have always been ready to fight for their independence regardless of who the enemy at the time was. It took the Germans years of fighting local tribesmen of the Southern Cameroons to colonize the country. Since the 1960s, the failure to mount an armed struggle has been more the failure of leadership than anything else. This is an important distinction to make because leadership is the key to the accomplishment of any people.

In 1959 the people of the Southern Cameroons stood with John Ngu Foncha to oppose the British-led union with Nigeria, but the leadership did not take a more aggressive stand against British violation of the Trusteeship Agreements. In 1990 they lined up behind Mr. John Fru Ndi and the Social Democratic Front (SDF) to oppose the one-man dictatorship that was imposed by French colonial rule in the Southern Cameroons. Paul Biya's troops tried intimidation and murder to stop the people but failed. They would have gained their liberation then but the leaders of the SDF failed to take the next step. The people of Southern Cameroons were ready to go all the way with a war of liberation. The leadership of the SDF stopped short and gradually reconciled with the status quo. Today, those who were killed and those who lost their limbs have very little to show for their sacrifice.

All of these failures do not mean that the people of Southern Cameroons are incapable of developing strong, visionary and effective leadership. It simply means that no internal challenges to the colonial forces in Southern Cameroons have been successful. The reasons are simple; anyone who has studied Nazi operations and tactics in occupied Europe and has lived in *La République du Cameroun* would see clearly that French operations in Africa are carried out using Nazi tactics. For example the rule of fear is made to replace the rule of law. This is accomplished in several ways; collective punishment is routinely used to harass the population where every one in a neighborhood or town is arrested and herded into a stadium to sort out wanted individuals or stop suspect activity. This "*cale, cale*" is sometimes used just to intimidate the population and beat them into submission from committing "crimes" that could be committed under repressive circumstance. In all of this, only the law made by gun-carrying *gendarmes* is valid. They make the law, become judges and jailers in an instant, accuse you of the crime, torture you for it and then arrest you to continue the torturing in their jails. Depending on the accusation, they extort money from you and let you go and leak your wounds or sent to a kangaroo court and locked away as long as they like, especially if the charges are politically motivated. Many politically motivated arrested people in *La République du Cameroun* never go back home after the first encounter with

the *gendarmes*. Identified leaders who show signs of descent are paid to shut up, imprisoned, murdered, or forced into exile. There is no room, space or right for dissent.

It is in these circumstances that after decades of suffering the inability to organize any internal decolonization efforts, that the people of the Southern Cameroons met in September of 2003 outside of the territory and formed the Interim Government (IG) of the Southern Cameroons in exile to take on the liberation task from outside the belly of the beast.

The IG is today totally committed to the complete liberation of our land from France's colonial slavery masquerading as *La République du Cameroun*. We are determined to do so by all means recognized under international law. If it means resort to armed struggle is inevitable (as many other anti-colonial struggles in the past), we shall not shy away from that call of Destiny. Colonialism is aggression. The Paris/Yaoundé colonial Government can choose to continue with its coffin-like vision and its self-inflicted blindness, deafness and thick skin; it can continue to underestimate the profundity of our abhorrence of its colonial occupation of our homeland and treatment of our people as bondsmen, it can continue to underestimate the depth of our conviction and commitment to be free women and men, we say it does so ultimately at its own expense. We are determined to repel that aggression in legitimate self-defense of ourselves, our dignity and our self-worth. We have an intergenerational responsibility to do so. We are prepared to die. We shall not suffer our children to be slaves, the footstool of *République du Cameroun*. Never, the Lord has spoken on this!