



PRESS RELEASE ON THE UPSURGE OF INFRINGEMENTS ON THE DIGNITY OF PERSONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) (hereinafter referred to as: "the Commission") is dismayed to learn of the videos circulating on social media for the past few weeks in which people are shown naked without their consent and/or molested. These videos include:

- the video of a young woman taken hostage and tied up by an individual wearing a balaclava, obviously under the influence of psychotropic substances, who, after having molested and stripped her naked with a knife, uttered death threats at her. The said video has been circulating on social media since mid-June 2021
- the video of a young girl recorded having sex in a journalist's office, which was widely circulated on social media as of 16 June 2021
- the video of a young woman stripped naked, molested and verbally abused by a group of individuals accusing her of the theft of a mobile phone and hair extensions. These happenings, widely disseminated on social media in early July 2021, allegedly occurred in a shop in Nkomkana quarters in Yaoundé
- the video showing a group of naked young women and men being molested by Law Enforcement officers in a house in the Bonamoussadi neighbourhood in Douala, which has been widely circulated on social media as of 6 July 2021
- several videos showing students involved in sex parties and recording "sextapes", especially in the cities of Yaoundé, Kribi, Douala, etc.

Recalling the Preamble to the Constitution of 18 January 1996, which states in its 12th indent that "every person has a right [...] to physical and moral integrity and to humane treatment in all circumstances. Under no circumstances shall any person be subjected [...] to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment",

Considering Article 17 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 16 December 1966, ratified by Cameroon on 27 June 1984, which provides that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation",

Recalling Article 7 (1) (b) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted in June 1981 by the Organisation of African Unity, ratified by Cameroon on 20 June 1989, which states that "Every individual shall have [...] the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty by a competent court or tribunal" and Article 31(d) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted by the African Union on 16 September 1992, ratified by Cameroon on 5 September 1997, which commits children to preserve and strengthen African cultural values [...] and to contribute to the moral well-being of society",

Reaffirming the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 68/167 of 18 December 2013 and 69/166 of 18 December 2014 on the right to privacy in the digital age, which call on all States to respect and protect the right to privacy, especially with regard to the digital media,

Recalling furthermore the provisions of Section 74 paragraph 1 of the Law of 21 December 2010 on cybersecurity and cybercrime, which punish "with imprisonment for from 01 (one) to 02 (two) years and a fine of from 1,000,000 (one million) to 5,000,000 (five million) CFA francs",

The Commission strongly condemns the recording and dissemination of indecent, shocking or violent images and videos on social media and other digital platforms, which seriously infringe on human dignity, the right to privacy, the right to physical and moral integrity, the right to an image, the presumption of innocence, public decency and morality.

The Commission is deeply concerned by the recurrence of such irresponsible behaviour and attitudes on the part of certain private individuals and public agents of dubious morality or in search of notoriety.

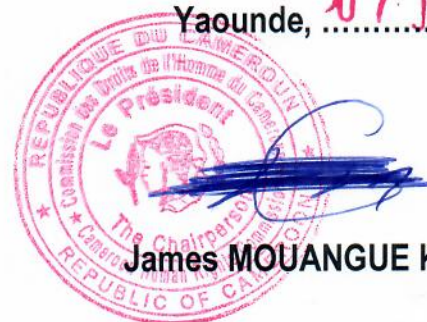
The Commission welcomes the prompt reaction of the competent services of the Ministry of Defence which opened an investigation following the publication of the video involving officers of the National Gendarmerie, according to information obtained from Captain Cyrille Serge ATONFACK NGUEMO, the Head of the Communication Division of the said Ministry.

The Commission encourages all competent authorities to investigate or pursue investigations, as the case may be, so that responsibilities are established, suspects brought before the competent courts and sanctions taken in accordance with the legal provisions in force.

The Commission calls on parents, as those having the "primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child" pursuant to the provisions of Article 20 paragraph 1 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to be more rigorous and vigilant in supervising their children, by instilling in them values likely to enable them to contribute effectively to the moral well-being of the entire society.

The Commission calls on people to make responsible use of new information and communication technologies, including refraining from producing, disseminating or relaying images, texts, videos and other content likely to infringe on human dignity, privacy, physical and moral integrity, public morality and decency.

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