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## PRESS RELEASE

On 1 September 2020, the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) was dismayed to learn of the images posted on social and related media of the killing of a National Police officer in the North-West Region. Still, on 1 September 2020, the Commission was equally stunned to learn of the BOKO HARAM suicide bombing in a camp for internally displaced persons in Kouyapé, Kolofata Sub-division, Far North Region, with eight civilians killed and 14 others wounded.

The Commission extends deep sympathy and sincere condolences to the family members of the victims of such barbarism by the secessionists and terrorists of Boko Haram, also to the National Police Force.

Concerning the killing of the police officer on duty, the Commission's preliminary investigations into this yet another barbaric act of the secessionists, in which gross violations of human rights were committed, including violations of the right to life, the right to security, and the right to property, it appears that the Police patrol team in the 2nd District of Bamenda, who were only performing their duty to protect goods and persons under the rule of law, were the target of a treacherous attack by armed separatists aboard motorcycles in Small Mankon, not far from the City Chemist Round-about. During that attack, **First Grade Police Inspector Joseph BIKOI NLEND NDADJI, 30 years of age, on duty at the Central Command of the Mobile Intervention Group in Yaounde, and dispatched in reinforcement to the North-West Region, specifically to the Central Police Station in Bamenda, was coldly gunned down.** This brave policeman was taken to the emergency ward at Bamenda Regional Hospital, where he died. The ensuing exchange of gunfire between the forces of law and order and the secessionist armed groups provoked a lot of material damage, which is currently being evaluated.

Concerning the Boko Haram attack in Kouyapé village, **the terrorists detonated explosive devices worn by two young girls who had infiltrated a group of people seeking refuge in a field around midnight, seeking safety during the attack on their village by members of BOKO HARAM.** The Commission wishes to remind that repetitive use of children as a weapon of war by the BOKO HARAM is prohibited by Article 4, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Optional Protocol to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and constitutes an international crime, as stated in Article 77, paragraph 2 of the Additional Protocol No. 1 to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

On 2 August 2020, still in Mayo-Tsanaga, the Illuminated Boko Haram members attacked another IDP camp near Nguetchewe village, killing 18 civilians and living 15 others

wounded. In both terrorist attacks, Boko Haram used improvised explosive devices operated by young children.

Recalling the wording of the press releases of 14 and 26 August 2020, ***the Commission strongly condemns the attacks against the defence and security forces as well as the atrocities committed by armed secessionists in the North-West and South-West Regions. The Commission once more condemns the indiscriminate and other abject Boko Haram attacks in the Far North Region. The Commission reiterates that these attacks are grave violations of human rights***, especially the violation of the right to life of innocent civilians and of the young police officer who was performing the lofty duty of preserving the safety of his fellow citizens and their property. These attacks are equally factors of economic and social regression, in a difficult context of declining commodity prices and the ravages of COVID-19. As such, they also constitute grave violations of economic, social and cultural rights protected by regional and international instruments.

The NCHRF, therefore, recalls that it remains constant that, **the United Nations (UN) Security Council**, in its resolution 1566 (2004) of 8 October 2004 “...condemns in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism ... irrespective of their motivation, whenever and by whomsoever committed...”.

The Commission urges terrorist groups and all other non-State actors to respect the essentially civilian and humanitarian character of the IDP camps.

The Commission reiterates **the call on the secessionist armed groups to lay down their arms and accept the extended hand of the Government to integrate the Centres for Demobilization, Disarmament and Social Reinsertion so that peace may finally be restored in the North-West and South-West Regions.**

The Commission calls on the authorities concerned to go on with investigations so that those suspected of such abominable acts can be arrested and brought to book.

To the people, the Commission reiterates its call for full and frank collaboration with the Defense and Security Forces for the preservation of territorial integrity, safeguarding of goods and persons, and respect for the institutions of the State, without which no development is possible.

Yaoundé, 4 September 2020

(é) James MOUANGUE KOBILA