

## **Statement of Matt Meyer, Secretary-General, International Peace Research Association**

There is no longer any controversy: leading British historical and legal agencies and none other than French President Emmanuel Macron have equally asserted:

Colonialism was and is a Crime Against Humanity.

**As such, United Nations protocols empower all peoples and parties to act, with the “responsibility to prevent genocide” and the “responsibility to protect.”**

It is not so useful, in the case of the Cameroons or Ambazonia, to spend time debating who is most at fault. Is it the government in Yaounde, or the man—Paul Biya—who has been president since I was nineteen, the longest-ruling leader in the world? Is it the original French colonialists, who along with their British counterparts set up this competitive, divided-we-fall scramble way back when? Is it the UN, in failing to oversee the promises made decades ago? Perhaps it is the children of Ambazonia, who—frustrated at increasing police and military violence, and little to show for decades of completely nonviolent and unarmed actions against their colonial predicament—pick up some stones to defend themselves over the past year? There is enough guilt to go around, and we say again: it is not so useful to spend time debating who is most at fault.

The UN-mandated responsibility to protect and the responsibility to prevent genocide, especially in cases of contemporary, ongoing colonialism, is a responsibility of all of us. It is certainly the responsibility of UN member-states, with an emphasis on those who currently make up the Human Rights Council which soon meets in Geneva. But it is also the responsibility of NGOs, organizations like IPRA with consultative status with ECOSOC, and yes—the responsibility of the media as well—to remember that even conflicts which appear small in places which are not easily found on a map require our urgent attention and solidarity. We need only reflect upon the upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwandan genocide and the ongoing tensions in the Great Lakes region to be clear about that.

I represent a UNESCO-affiliated organization of scholars, academics, researchers, and students from roughly one hundred countries in every region of the world. We of all people know that the information is neither inaccessible nor in doubt. Despite sometimes misleading reports from even the most reputable and well-known agencies in the human rights field, it is not too difficult to ascertain who is most at risk and who is mostly armed in the north-western corner between Cameroon and Nigeria. Despite recent news that the U.S. will suspend security assistance to Cameroon because of its poor human rights record, we must not be over-joyed or lulled into a sense of false accomplishment. Our colleague Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International’s deputy director here in the USA, noted that “Cameroonian security forces have indiscriminately killed, arrested, and tortured people, firing on crowds, displacing thousands of civilians, and destroying entire villages with impunity.” Until all that has come to a complete end, Calls like this one to the UN HRC which we sign onto today, are vital in both accumulating incontrovertible information to share with the world forum and in stemming the tide of violence, at least in the short term.

In the long run, we repeat:

**Colonialism was, and in Ambazonia today COLONIALISM STILL IS, a Crime Against Humanity.**

**Until colonialism is ended, our work will not be complete.**

*Professor Matt Meyer, Secretary-General of the International Peace Research Association, also serves as War Resisters’ International Africa Support Network Coordinator, International Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Financial Advisory Committee Chair, and Senior Research Scholar of the UMass/Amherst Resistance Studies Initiative*