



Statement on the Escalating Crisis in Campo: Standing in Solidarity with the Iyassa, Bagyeli, Mvae and Mabi Communities

January 23, 2025

We as environmental and communities' defenders, express our unwavering solidarity with the communities of Campo, particularly the indigenous Bagyeli people, in their ongoing fight for justice, rights, and dignity. On January 16, 2025, the communities of Campo once again gathered to peacefully protest against the continued violation of their rights by agro-industrial and forestry companies, namely CAMVERT, BOISCAM, and SOFONI. This protest was met with heavy-handed military repression ordered by local authorities, resulting in the arrest and detention of numerous community members.

The events of January 16 are a blunt reminder of the systemic injustices these communities face, compounded by state-backed corporate impunity. We strongly condemn this assault on human rights, the militarization of protests, and the silencing of community voices seeking justice.

Background

Since 2019, the people of Campo have endured relentless exploitation and dispossession. The CAMVERT concession, backed by the declassification of 39,923 hectares of forest, has not only decimated biodiversity but exacerbated human-wildlife conflicts. Forestry companies such as BOISCAM and SOFONI have similarly engaged in unchecked exploitation, including logging outside their designated zones, failing to pay land royalties, and disregarding legally mandated social obligations.

In November 2024, the people of Campo organized their first large-scale protest to demand justice and accountability. This was preceded by a petition submitted on November 20, 2024, to the Sub-Prefect of Campo, detailing grievances including:

- Violation of community rights by CAMVERT, BOISCAM, and SOFONI.
- Non-compliance with contractual obligations outlined in the "Cahier des Charges."
- Environmental degradation, including deforestation and destruction of village farmlands by elephants displaced due to agro-industrial and logging activities.
- Exploitation of local labor and failure to fulfill promised social projects, including schools, health centers, and clean water facilities.

Despite the clarity and urgency of these demands, the response from both the companies and government authorities has been marked by evasion, broken promises, and repression.

The Protest and Government Repression

The January 16, 2025 protest was a peaceful effort by the people of Campo to call attention to these unaddressed issues and to demand:

1. Concrete commitments from CAMVERT, BOISCAM, and SOFONI to fulfill their obligations.
2. Respect for their rights as guaranteed under national and international law.

Instead of engaging with these legitimate concerns, local authorities deployed military forces to suppress the protest, resulting in the arrest and detention of dozens of community members. Eyewitnesses report the use of excessive force, intimidation, and the targeting of community leaders. This escalation reflects a broader trend of criminalizing dissent and prioritizing corporate interests over the rights of indigenous and local communities.

We Demand

We demand the following immediate actions:

1. **Arrested and Detained Protesters**

Stop the use of state security forces to suppress peaceful protests is a violation of fundamental human rights.

2. **Accountability for Repression**

An independent investigation must be launched into the events of January 16, 2025 including the role of government officials, elites and military personnel in repressing the protest.

3. **Respect for Community Rights**

The grievances outlined in the November 2024 petition must be addressed, including:

- Transparent renegotiation of the “Cahier des Charges” with active community participation.
- Immediate cessation of logging activities outside designated zones.
- Payment of all outstanding land royalties and other financial obligations.
- Implementation of promised social projects, including schools, health centers, and water facilities.
- Stop any further expansion of the CAMVERT’s activities in the Campo.

4. **Environmental and Land Protections**

Immediate steps must be taken to halt deforestation, restore damaged ecosystems, and create wildlife corridors to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.

5. **Support for Indigenous Leadership**

Strengthen and protect the leadership of Campo’s traditional chiefs and community representatives, ensuring they are not subjected to intimidation or co-opted by corporate interests.

Call to Action

We call on national and international stakeholders to stand with the people of Campo in their struggle for justice. Specifically:

- **The Cameroonian Government:** Fulfill your constitutional duty to protect the rights and welfare of all citizens, including indigenous and local communities.
 - **Civil Society Organizations:** Amplify the voices of Campo's communities and provide legal, technical, and moral support.
 - **International Bodies:** Investigate and sanction human rights abuses associated with corporate activities in Campo. Demand compliance with international conventions on indigenous rights, land governance, and environmental protection.
 - **Media:** Bring global attention to the plight of Campo's communities and the broader implications of this struggle for environmental justice.
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Conclusion

The struggle of the Campo communities is not an isolated one. It is a microcosm of the global fight against corporate greed, environmental degradation, and the erosion of human rights. As one community leader poignantly stated, *“Our forests are our lifeline. Our land is our history. We will not stand by as it is stolen from us.”*

The time for action is now. We stand united with the people of Campo in their fight for justice, dignity, and a sustainable future.