



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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January 17, 2019

His Excellency Samuel Kleda, Archbishop of Douala
President of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon
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Your Excellency:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, I write to express our solidarity with the people and the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC), as the country continues to struggle with the current crisis in the two Anglophone Provinces. As you pointed out in your statement of May 2018, it is tragic that since 2016 the Northwest and Southwest regions have been living under difficult conditions, marked by inhuman, blind and monstrous violence and the radicalization of the population.

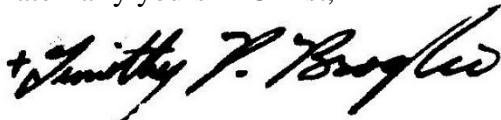
In that same statement you point out that the Bishops of Cameroon believe that there is urgent need for mediation as a way of resolving the crisis. I believe that you are correct. Dialogue between people of good will on both sides of the conflict is the only way to transform what is now a violent armed conflict into a peaceful solution that is acceptable to all parties. This can only happen through an open, inclusive and free exchange of competing political ideas that with enough political will and compromise could result in a sustainable peace. Knowledgeable and respected mediators can be helpful in creating a safe space for negotiators to meet, build understanding and envision new solutions that defuse the grievances and define a new social contract that rebuilds the social relationships between Anglophones and Francophones.

But first, all armed groups must commit to stop the fighting and allow daily life to return to normal. This would also allow tensions to decrease and negotiations to begin. Already the suffering has been enormous with between 450-500 civilians killed including Catholic priests, 185 security forces and hundreds of armed separatists have been killed. Up to 437,000 people are estimated to have been displaced with approximately 20% seeking safety outside of the Anglophone provinces. Many have fled their homes to safer areas, or to the bush while another 30,000 have crossed into Nigeria. I agree with you that if this crisis continues it could lead to what you called, “an unnecessary and baseless civil war”.

As you continue to develop ways to stop the violence and build peace, I invite you to let us know how we might support your efforts. I and the staff of our Committee on International Justice and Peace often work with our State Department and the United States Agency for International Development to find ways to support Church and civil society efforts in Africa to bring peace to difficult conflict situations. We are open to your ideas and guidance on how we can be supportive.

In closing, in this new year 2019, rest assured of my prayers and solidarity in this difficult time. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you to help the Church bring peace back to Cameroon.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy P. Broglio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace