

ANSWERS TO YOUR CLAIMS

- 1- The National Communication Council is not using threats towards journalists. The statistics speak for themselves. In Cameroon there are about 600 newspapers, 30 radio stations, 20 TV stations, 1000 cable distributors, 15 online newspapers whose tone borders on licentiousness. It should be noted that we use more of pedagogic approach towards them. We discuss with them through seminars that we organize every year in the ten regions of Cameroon. When a complaint is addressed to us, we take time to investigate. We hear both parts to understand the matter. We discuss with the accused journalist or publisher and sometimes they are even the ones to apologize. We try as much as possible to protect the journalists. Even when several complaints concern the same media organ, we still try as much as possible to dialogue with the media professionals. But when the media organ continues to publish lies and insults, does not want to change and cannot even prove what it published, we have to act. Even in the actions, we take them gradually. We have the warning, the 1 to 3 months ban, the 3 to 6 months ban and the definitive ban. That is to say that, when we take the ultimate sanction (definitive ban), it means that, the incriminated media organ has gone far in the violation of ethics and deontology.
- 2- From what I have just said, you can realize that the National Communication Council is objective when it takes its decisions. We work according to the complaint procedure, which is accessible to all. We also distribute it to journalists during our seminars. We are an autonomous and independent regulation organ. Several times, we have treated complaints of high officials of this country, realized that their complaints were not valid and rejected them.

- 3- The Members of the National Communication Council are appointed by presidential decree according to the decree of the 23rd of January 2012 that reorganizes the institution (which was created by the Law of the 19th December 1990). The members of this Council are personalities renowned for their integrity, moral rectitude and expertise in the domain of social communication. Having said that, you can agree with me that with all these qualities, it will be absurd for them to interfere with editorial independence of media organs and sanction abusively media houses and/or journalists. Moreover, on the field, press freedom is effective considering the number of press organs.

- 4- Concerning this allegation, I can assure you that it is a free statement. I have never phoned Ms. Martha Mouaha. I did not threaten to ban the program entitled “Talking Point”, though the said program was virulent. Anything that could have justified a call to order from us. I issued a press release at that time asking media professionals to avoid any debate that have to do with secession or federalism. This was not intended to suppress their freedom of speech. The country was going through a very sensitive moment and we, as the regulator of media in Cameroon, had to ensure that media debates at that time could not generate hatred or violence in the country. The decree that reorganizes the National Communication Council states that we are guarantors of peace, unity and national integration in the media.

- 5- Once again, permit me to reiterate that the National Communication Council does not interfere in the editorial independence of the private media in Cameroon. The press freedom is enshrined in the Cameroon’s Constitution. Concerning the Ahmed Abba’s case, this journalist was not arrested because he was really exercising his profession; instead, he was caught up for other reasons related to the State’s security, which is not relevant to the National Communication Council. We only deal with cases that have to do with ethics and deontology in the field of social communication.

- 6- The anti-terrorism Law has not been issued for journalists, but for all the persons who will intend to create disorder in the country. The State is sovereign and has to take any action in order to preserve peace and unity. The National Communication Council has never allowed the government to abuse the legislation towards journalists; instead we are always looking for ways to protect them in the exercise of their profession, when they are in the right path. For comparative purposes, anti-terrorism provisions are more severe in States such the United States of America and France. We agree with this rigor due to the security context prevailing in these countries. In this vein, Cameroon also has the right to enact laws to preserve security.
- 7- According to the presidential decree of the 23rd January 2012, that reorganizes the National Communication Council, we are both a regulatory and consultative organ. We this in mind, the National Communication is not acting beyond its powers and has the right to take punitive actions towards media organizations.

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