



#DEFYHATENOW

**THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDÉ I
WITH THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF THE CAMEROON LABORATORY FOR
RESEARCH ON CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES (CERESC)**

In collaboration with

**Civic Watch, Country Implementation partner of #defyhatenow initiative
in Cameroon**

Organising a

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Theme:

**Hate speech and violence in Cameroon:
*Social origins, emerging forms and possible
responses***

From 10-12 May 2023, The University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon



Background

In Cameroon, hate speech and violence are increasing in intensity and take many forms. The most visible are materialised by socio-political crises including the war against the nebulous Boko Haram which is experiencing a relative lull in the northern region of the country; the crisis which is currently rocking the two Anglophone North-West and South-West Regions; the exacerbation of hate speech on digital social networks, ethno-community divisions and clashes in urban areas, gender-based violence and cases observed in schools and homes, etc. The murder of Cameroonian journalist Martinez ZOGO in February 2023, particularly under horrifying condition, as well as the stages leading to the discovery of his mutilated body, has dramatically re-launched the debate on the extreme forms of violence that the Cameroonian social corps has been experiencing for over a decade.

These overt and over-mediatised aspects of the phenomenon, combined with many latent threats that indicate a level social fragility, points to the fact that violence in Cameroon has an enduring nature. These salient facts, which are visible across the country, reveal that anomie has become an obsessive form of Cameroonian 'normality'. Based on what is observed daily, violence is gradually becoming a major component of the identity of Cameroonian society.

In the same perspective, themes relating to violence occupy a prominent place in the media, but with a more emotional, univocal and consequently, a more subjective than reflexive and analytical approach. These different elements put together, imply that Cameroonians devote a significant part of their time to producing violence. Rigorous analyses have been made by some authors, while distancing themselves from these secular writings, in order to understand the phenomenon of violence in Africa, which even if it can be understood as 'endemic', is inseparable from the archaeology of its emergence within Cameroonian society (Abéga, 2003).

Reflections on hate speech and violence as a social phenomenon and its implications demonstrate that it is being addressed by different categories of institutional and



non-institutional actors, including: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders supporting development in Cameroon. With regards to this, several studies have been conducted aiming at linking violence to political, economic, social and ecological factors; aimed at finding long-lasting preventive solutions. In this context, this social phenomenon has been analysed from the point of view of a pathology that requires rapid treatment. Several researchers, distancing themselves from militant and partisan analyses, have taken an interest in this topic through different approaches.

The works of Abéga (2003; 2007), Janin and Marie (2003), Janin (2004), though not limited to these, can be highlighted in Anthropology. In history, the works of Mbembe (1996), Kipré (2003) and Thierno Bah (2005) stand out as the most quoted. Similarly, reflections in political science such as those of Onuoha (2011), Debos (2013) and Bayart (2018) elaborate on the development of this phenomenon. In sociology, the works of Ela (1999), Abe (2003) and Mengue (1998) stand out as references. In the field of geography, Calas (2011), Agheyisi (2017), Oteng-Ababio, Owusu, Wrigley-Asante (2016) or Chauvin and Magrin (2020) also address this phenomenon. In his account of the emergence of violence, De Montclos (2004) emphasises that it is class inequalities and the persistence of specific structures of domination that define the course of situations of tension and, most importantly, of violence in cities. According to other authors, especially culturalists, this social phenomenon is inherent to the different cultures of African peoples. This is the case of theoreticians such as Martinelli and Bouju (2012), Mayneri (2013) point to witchcraft as the origin of violence. For Diamond (1987), Amselle and M'bokolo (1999) and Mouiche (2000), violence has an ethnic origin. As concerns Collective Imagination, Mbembe (1996, 2010, 2013) and Tonda (2015, 2021) believe that this social phenomenon stems from social imaginaries. Similarly, Bayart (2018) analyses the topic through the prism of religious perspective; meanwhile authors like Ela (1999), Mengue (2007), Chouala (2008), Leye, Sougou, Faye et al., (2019) consider that violence has its origins within the family unit. Despite all these contributions, there is an upsurge in acts of violence and the leading corollaries in Cameroon, thus the necessity of questioning this phenomenon afresh.

The objective of the Symposium is to discuss, afresh, hatespeech and violence in the contemporary Cameroonian society. The session is built on the basis that contemporary social dynamics witnessed by the country the past few years, which main matrices are the diversely appreciated political modernity, the continuous neo-liberalisation of the societal sphere, the growing digitisation and digitalisation of social life, changes at the social and family levels, the weakening of social bonds, the exacerbation of ethno-community tensions, etc., it is necessary to review hate speech and violence and to identify the structuring factors while analysing its multiple facets.. - What are the issues at stake revealed during debates on hate speech and violence? What are the issues at stake in the diversity of forms of violence that can be identified on the continent today? What tools and perspectives should be applied to clarify or at least account for them? What are the possibilities to consider? The expected proposals will be structured around these three questions, which will guide our discussion during the three days of reflection.

The Symposium is planned and organised by the Department of Sociology of the University of Yaoundé I with the support of the Cameroonian Laboratory of Studies and Research on Contemporary Societies (CERESC) in partnership with Civic Watch which is a community-based organisation whose objective is community mobilisation to effectively address online and offline hate speech. As the country implementation partner of the #defyhatenow initiative¹, the Association works on the permanent search for solutions to issues of incitement to violence, conflict, tolerance and peacebuilding and social cohesion in connection with the use of social networks.

Objectives of the Symposium

The organisation of this three-day Symposium aims to:

Main objective : To create an enabling environment to enlighten public authorities, academics and civil society actors on the issues of perpetuation of violence and hate speech in Cameroon with the aim of improving public policies addressing these phenomena.

Secondary objectives:



- To set the agenda of public discourse by raising awareness on the issues of violence and hate speech as an obstacle to social cohesion and peace in Cameroon;
- Re-assess the impact of the main matrices of contemporary social dynamics in order to propose solutions to mitigating them;
- To Mobilise academics, politicians, professionals and civil society towards a synergy of actions to reduce the prominence of online and offline violence and hate speech.

Targets:

The target audience for the organisation of this Symposium is as follows

- Academics and researchers;
- Public authorities;
- Diplomatic representations and chancelleries in Cameroon;
- Communications and telecommunications companies/organisations;
- Public and private media professionals;
- Political, cultural and association leaders;
- Civil society organisations;
- Students.

Expected results

These are the results of the activities expected within the framework of the Symposium in order to achieve set objectives. For a better understanding of the perspectives of deployment to achieve the objectives according to our target, these results are expressed in a quantitative way. Thus, at the end of the Symposium, the expected results are as follows:



- The mobilisation of about thirty academics and researchers;
- The production and publication of a scientific report of the conference which will also serve as a working report to be proposed to the public authorities;
- The participation of 300 to 500 participants during the three-day Symposium;
- The conception of an advocacy file on countering violence and hate speech in Cameroon;
- The creation of a multidisciplinary platform for exchange and research on countering violence and hate speech online and offline.

Organisation of the Symposium

The Symposium is open to French and English speaking academics and researchers who can develop scientific works on the main theme, but also to national and international decision makers and actors with experience in the field of violence and hate speech. Although the spirit of the conference is scientific, it aims to promote exchanges and reflections between different actors on their work and field experiences. In light of the above, the work will take place in the form of conferences and round tables in plenary sessions and parallel thematic workshops.

Procedure and deadlines for the submission of abstracts

Abstracts should not exceed one page (Font New Times Roman, size 12, single spaced). They must clearly indicate the title of the proposal, the communication axis, statement of the problem, the methodology that will be applied and the main outline articulations of the article. Abstracts must be sent in French or in English, accompanied by a maximum of five key words and bibliographical references as well as a summary presentation of the author in 10 lines (institution of attachment, position, email address, telephone number). Abstracts are expected no later than **March 20, 2023** before midnight at the following addresses: depart.socio20@gmail.com copying armandleka@yahoo.fr



Proposed abstracts could focus on, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Violence: institutional and political figures;
- Verbal violence and social stigmatisation;
- Violence, hate speech and social cohesion;
- Violence, hate speech and social networks;
- Domestic violence and school violence;
- Mainstream media and violence;
- Combating violence and hate speech;
- Etc...

Eligibility

Draft articles/contributions may be submitted by academics, young researchers, advanced doctoral students, trainers, political and administrative leaders, trade unions, associations, organisations and professionals in so far as the subject under consideration concerns a theme that requires the contribution of academics and practitioners.

Proposals may be individual or collective, in which case they are submitted by a single researcher, who takes responsibility for the research team.

Timeline :

- **February 20, 2023:** publication of the call for papers
- **March 20, 2023:** deadline for submitting of abstracts
- **March 25, 2023:** Notification to authors of the acceptance or rejection of their proposals
- **April 25, 2023:** Submission of the full text of the communication by the authors
- **From May 10-11-12, 2023:** National Symposium at the University of Yaounde I



Scientific Committee :

Pr. Christopher NSOH (Universite of Yaounde II); **Pr. Joseph-Marie ZAMBO BELINGA** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Jean Emmanuel PONDI** (ICT University); **Pr. Jean NZHIE ENGONO** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Laurent Charles BOYOMO ASSALA** (University of Yaounde II); **Pr. Honoré MIMCHE** (CERESC/University of Yaounde II-IFORD); **Pr. Emmanuel YENSHU WUBO** (University of Buea); **Pr. Jean NJOYA** (University of Yaounde II); **Pr. Paul ABOUNA** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Godwin MOYE** (University of Bamenda); **Pr. Romain Charles MBELE** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. NTUDA EBODE** (CREPS-University of Yaounde II); **Pr. Ibrahim MOUICHE** (University of Yaounde II); **Pr. Armand LEKA ESSOMBA** (CERESC/University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Yves Bertrand DJOUDA FEUDJIO** (Universite of Yaounde I); **Pr. Christian BIOS** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Paschal KUM AWA** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Vivien MELI MELI** (University of Dschang); **Pr. Antoine SOCPA** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. Edmond MBALLA ELANGA** (University of Douala); **Pr. Pascal MBAHA** (University of Douala); **Pr. Ibrahim Bienvenu MOULIOM MOUNGBAKOU** (University of Maroua); **Pr. Mathias-Éric OWONA NGUINI** (University of Yaounde II); **Pr. Willybroad DZE-NGWA** (University of Yaounde I); **Pr. PANGOP Alain Cyr** (University of Dschang); **Pr. ATANGCHO NJI** (University of Buea).

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