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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

#DEFYHATENOW

PRESS RELEASE

The Department of Sociology of the University of Yaoundé I, in partnership with the #defyhatenow Initiative implemented by Civic Watch and the Pan-African University, is organising a National Symposium from **10 to 12 May 2023** on the theme: "**Hate speech and violence in Cameroon: social genesis, emerging forms and possible responses**".

If violence is part of the very order of life in society, it must however remain in insignificant proportions. Otherwise, it becomes a harbinger of danger. Unless one is suicidal, it is the responsibility of all souls of good faith and of those who care about the future of mankind to react as quickly as possible to avert the threat. No concern on this subject is exaggerated. Violence exists or is preceded by discursive realities. In other words, wherever there is violence, the discourse is never far away. It is at the heart of it. Discourse begets violence. Of course, we are not talking about all forms of discourse. But we are referring to some of them, which are going to be addressed during this Symposium under the main heading: hate speech. While acts of violence are to some extent intermittent, irregular or simply fearful, hate speech tends to be persistent and even preponderant. This sad observation is moreover at the origin of law n°2019/020 of 24 December 2019 amending and supplementing certain provisions of law n°2016/007 of 12 July 2016 on the penal code. The amendment of the penal code is quite illustrative of the grip of the phenomenon of hate speech, as the law only regulates what exists. This recent amendment cannot be interpreted as a misunderstanding on the part of the authorities, but as a meteoric rise of a phenomenon that is taking the social body by surprise, infiltrating society in its slightest meanderings.

This symposium, which will be held from May 10 to 12, 2023 at the University of Yaoundé I, is the result of a partnership between the academic world and frontline stakeholders. This project, funded by the German Foreign Office via the Berlin-based non-profit r0g_agency for Open Culture & Critical Transformation; is an opportunity for the Department of Sociology, #defyhatenow Cameroon and the Pan-African University to contribute their share in addressing these phenomena which, despite sanctions, continue to have a disturbing impact. The reinforcement of penalisation seems to have no effect so far, making this intellectual initiative more than timely and relevant. For three days, academics and researchers; public authorities; diplomatic missions and chancelleries in Cameroon; communication and telecommunications companies/organisations; public and private media professionals; political, cultural and association leaders; civil society organisations and students are expected to attend.

In all, more than 500 people are expected at the Symposium ground each day, from the official opening and closing ceremonies, conferences and panels that will discuss and share perspectives based on the papers selected by the scientific committee.

President of Technical Organisation Committee

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