

HIGH COMMISSION FOR THE
REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace - Work - Fatherland



HAUT COMMISSARIAT POUR LA
REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix - Travail - Patrie

COMMUNIQUE

The High Commission for the Republic of Cameroon has the honour to publish herewith in extenso, a statement of the Minister of Communication pertaining to the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr Eric OHENA LEMBEMBE.

London, 10 September 2013

RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix – Travail- Patrie

MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

**CAMEROON'S GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO THE DEATH OF MR.
ERIC HUBERT LEMBEMBE OHENA,
JOURNALIST AND DEFENDER OF
HOMOXESUAL RIGHTS**

PRESS BRIEFING

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT
OF H.E. ISSA TCHIROMA BAKARY
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaoundé 19th July, 2013

**The Secretary General of the Ministry of
Communication,
The Inspector General,
Distinguished Technical Advisers N°1 and
N°2,
Distinguished Inspectors,
Distinguished Directors and Heads of
Divisions,
Distinguished collaborators,
Distinguished Journalists,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to first of all welcome you in this conference hall of my ministry, following the invitation I addressed to you within a short notice.

Let me also thank you for your prompt response, which once again, is a translation of your constant interest to inform the public and the working relationship you have with government authorities.

Distinguished journalists,

I have invited you here today to talk on an issue which already seems to be making big headlines.

This has to do with the death of Mr. LEMBEMBE OHENA ERIC HUBERT, presented as a journalist and designer, as well as an activist of homosexual rights in Cameroon. According to related information, the body of Mr. LEMBEMBE was discovered on Monday July 15, 2013, at his home, in the Tongolo neighborhood.

Being informed by the entourage of the deceased, the Yaoundé 6th District Public Security Police Station alerted the watch office of the Centre Regional Division of the Judicial Police. After forwarding a report to the State Prosecutor, a team of investigators of the Division immediately went to the field, accompanied by the Fire Fighting Brigade officers and elements of the 6th District Public

Security Police Station. The death of the concerned was confirmed and the body taken to the Yaoundé General Hospital Mortuary.

Within the framework of the investigation open to this effect, an autopsy has already been ordered and requisitions addressed to mobile telephony operators in relation to the calls of the deceased.

As you are certainly aware, many foreign media organs have taken ownership of this information, probably with the intention to carry out a well organized media campaign.

From the different facts made public in foreign media, it appears that a constant reference is made to the lawful and judicial practice of homosexuality in Cameroon.

The same sources mention the repeating acts of assaults and violence of all kinds against homosexuals in Cameroon without any investigation being carried out by

Cameroonian authorities and particularly police and judicial services to establish responsibilities for such acts and arrest the authors and sentence them in conformity with the law.

It is therefore, not less, not more that an attempt to render the Government accountable for such acts by alleging that the Government does not give any consideration to crimes committed against homosexuals, whereas the practice of homosexuality is systematically and without any concession followed before courts.

Such a view does not match to the reality.

First, in Cameroon, there is neither state nor social conspiracy against homosexuals. For different reasons to be denounced and followed before competent courts, acts of assaults, violence and even murders are

committed against persons or properties in all human societies.

These acts can be committed against heterosexuals or homosexuals. In this sense, we are dealing with an issue of security of persons falling within the competency of the responsibility of the State.

In this particular case, namely, the alleged murder of MR LEMBEMBE, it is about the killing of a human being which seems to have occurred in yet not clarified circumstances. The mere fact that this compatriot passed away in both deplorable and regrettable circumstances is in itself dramatic and does not please anybody.

Meanwhile, going further and alleging any political or social responsibility as some rapidly did and are still doing, is speculating where there is no need to.

Many famous homosexuals peacefully live and move themselves in Cameroon without being subject to any acts of assault or violence.

A crime is said to have been committed against a citizen alleged to be a homosexual and even more an activist of the rights of homosexuals, whereas this citizen had the right to live as any other human being.

The way with which the Cameroonian penal and judicial code deal with the practice of homosexuality does not provide that citizens guilty of practicing this offense be sentenced to a death penalty.

As soon as a crime is committed, investigations are conducted to find out who are the authors and sue them before competent courts.

Moreover, we can observe that many activists, who openly deal with the issue of homosexuality in a positive perspective, are

never followed neither by security forces, nor by the justice, despite the fact that promoting an activity prohibited by the law constitutes, *ab initio*, an unlawful act calling for repressive actions against such acts.

In this vein, one could really be surprised by the excitement observed among certain foreign organizations powerfully broadcast by multinational communication organs.

To this effect, there is no doubt that such a serious issue we have just detailed does not concern the Government. The Government will therefore take its responsibility where necessary to clarify this case within the strict limits of the respect of the independence of justice, which, as I previously stated, has already taken over the case.

But this justice needs serenity in order to efficiently work. Therefore, there is need for a maximum caution and responsibility from all

actors be it civil society organizations or media in order to let the work of justice be done without any pressure and external influence.

In this vein, I would like to recall that this case, pending now before competent courts, any infringement in term of information rendered public and broadcast by media could fall within the violation of the secret of proceedings or considered as partial comments, which are, as we all know, contrary to the law.

We should therefore trust our justice for the unveiling of the truth in this matter.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.