



**ACTION CIVIQUE ET PROTECTION LEGALE DES DEFENSEURS
DES DROITS HUMAINS EN AFRIQUE CENTRALE
(ACDHAAC)**

**LE PROTOCOLE DE MAPUTO DE L'UNION AFRICAINE, LA
RESOLUTION 1325 DES NATIONS UNIES
&
LA PROTECTION DES FEMMES DEFENSEURES DES DRIOTS
HUMAINS EN AFRIQUE CENTRALE**



*Rapport sur les Violences, les Violations et les Représailles
subies par les Femmes Défenseures des Droits Humains
au Cameroun et au TCHAD*



Ce qui nous unit est plus fort que ce qui nous divise

Décembre 2023

**The Maputo Protocol of the African Union,
United Nations Resolution 1325**

&

Protection of Women Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa

*Report on Violence, Violations and Reprisals suffered by Women Human
Rights Defenders in Cameroon and Chad*

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACDHAAC: Civic action and legal protection of HRD in Central Africa

ACHPR: African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

CEMAC: Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa

FSPT: Chad Federation of Public Sector Trade Unions

HRD: Human Rights Defenders

UNDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

WHRDs: Women Human Rights Defenders

DVHR: Defenders of Vulnerable Human Rights

FSPT: Chad Federation of Public Sector Trade Unions

HOFA: Hope of Africa

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

MRC: Cameroon Renaissance Movement

WHO: World Health Organization

PAF: Air and Border Police

PFU: Unity Platform

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

REDHAC: Human Rights Defenders Network in Central Africa

AU: African Union

UST: Union of Trade Unions of Chad

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

DEDICATION

REDHAC dedicates this report to all Women Human Rights Defenders victim of violence and reprisals, particularly those who work in rural areas.

PREFACE



Bar. KAMADJI DEMBA Karyom,

Clerk and sociologist, activist of the Union of Trade Unions of Chad (UST) and the Federation of Public Sector Unions of Chad (FSPT), member of the Tournons La Page-Tchad campaign

It is with great interest and immeasurable satisfaction that I read this REDHAC report on the violence, violations and reprisals committed against Women Human Rights Defenders in Cameroon and Chad in 2023.

REDHAC, I must say with regard to one of its missions, namely the protection of Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa, continues to undertake activities in all areas of Human Rights. This report is undoubtedly part of this logic.

No one doubts that Central Africa today presents itself as the breeding ground for crises and multifaceted conflicts, undermining social peace and the security of goods and people.

Cameroon and Chad, which are united by geography, history and culture, unfortunately share some similarities in terms of security challenges, consequently leading to massive violations of human rights.

In such an environment, it is obvious that the promoters and protectors of human rights who are Women Human Rights Defenders are victims of violence and violations of their rights by both state and non-state agents.

After careful reading, I realized that this report had several legal instruments as working tools, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Also, I can safely attest to what this report highlights, in addition to the difficulties faced by Women Human Rights Defenders, there is the risks and dangers to which they are exposed on a daily basis. This is therefore a boon for the authorities of Cameroon and Chad to take adequate measures for the protection of Women Human Rights Defenders.

While saluting this masterpiece of REDHAC, we must recognize that this report sufficiently demonstrates that the Women Human Rights Defenders of Cameroon and Chad remain determined to work for the restoration of a more just society.

Courage to all Women Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa; particularly those of Cameroon and Chad.

INTRODUCTION



I- GENERAL CONTEXT

The Defense of Human Rights has become a very high-risk activity in most countries around the world. Indeed, Human Rights Defenders are exposed to several forms of violence and reprisal violations which can lead to their death. This situation has always concerned and continues to concern both international and regional Human Rights institutions. This is why these institutions are constantly considering the relevant mechanisms to put in place to strengthen the protection of Human Rights Defenders. In Central Africa, the promotion and defense of Human Rights have become increasingly a risk, especially with the appearance of new challenges such as: artificial intelligence, digital rights and digitalization. In the security context; socio-political crises, armed conflicts and military coups (the case of Gabon August 30, 2023)¹.

¹ REDHAC and its Gabon country coalition through Declaration No. 0015/30/08/2023 condemned the seizure of power by a group of Gabonese army officers.

In the 21st century, Human Rights Defenders victims of multifaceted violence, violations of their rights and reprisals are increasingly women and girls as well as sexual minorities and all other people working on gender-related issues. The latter are exposed to major risks. They are part of what is commonly called Defenders of Vulnerable Human Rights (DVHR).

However, United Nations Declaration No. 53/144 of 1998 on : *“the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms”*² and its mechanism of Special Rapporteur for Women Human Rights Defenders (Ms. Mary Lawlor); the Kigali Declaration of 2003 and the Grand Baie Declaration of 1999 of the African Union and its mechanism of Special Rapporteur for the situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa, Focal Point on Reprisals (Pr. Rémy NGOY LUMBU) which recognize these people, individually or collectively, the right to the promotion and defense of the rights of all without discrimination. Unfortunately, it is with regret that we note and deplore the insufficiency of the political will of states to ensure legal protection for Defenders. Although REDHAC welcomes the promulgation of the law on “protection and responsibility of the Human Rights Defender in the Democratic Republic of Congo by the Head of State his HE Félix Tchisekedi³. What about Women Human Rights Defenders?

² <https://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article1630>

³ <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2021/11/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women>

II- SPECIAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) contribute to the promotion and the protection of human rights at the local, national, regional and international level, in particular by collecting and disseminating related information; by denouncing human rights violations committed by state and non-state actors.

The WHRDs are actors of peace, they are active in states prey to armed conflicts, in stable countries, in countries suffering from a democratic deficit, as well as in so-called democratic ones. This dynamism exposes them more and more to numerous risks in the exercise of their work. We can cite, among other things, sexist and sexual violence, gender-based violence and attacks on the reputation, including of those close to them.

Aware of these growing vulnerabilities, regional and international Human Rights institutions have taken measures by adopting resolutions to strengthen the protection of women's rights in general and the rights of women defenders in particular. We can cite the most relevant: United Nations Resolution 1325 of October 31, 2000⁴ and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the rights of women called the Maputo Protocol⁵ which were added on the existing legal arsenal for the protection of Women Defenders. Despite all this arsenal, the WHRDs continue to suffer violence and violations because they only carry out their work of promotion and defense of human rights, prevention, conflict resolution and peace very often by state actors with complete impunity.

This violence, violations of rights and reprisals of which they are victims result in stalking, threats and intimidation, including against their close relatives and offspring, defamation campaigns orchestrated by the media, bans on leaving the country or to return there, harassment in the workplace, attempted arrests, arbitrary arrests and detentions, acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment which may lead to physical death, blocking of bank accounts, well-orchestrated burglaries of offices and homes, etc. However, the impunity from which certain perpetrators of these violations and reprisals very often benefit remains very worrying and worrying.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/fr/chronicle/article/les-conflits-armes-et-le-femmes-la-resolution-1325-du-conseil-de-securite-dix-ans-dexistence>

⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65556/63007/F2037633474/ORG-65556.pdf>

III- JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVE

In a 2014 report on the situation of WHRDs in Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) documented for the first time the multiple violations to which these women are victims. This report recommends, among other things, the popularization of the said report by civil society and the preparation of programs to implement the resulting recommendations.

During the 77th session of the African Commission on Human Rights held in Arusha, Tanzania from October 20th to November 9th 2023, it was recommended to reappoint the study group on the situation of WHRDs in Africa in order to pool efforts to create an effective network of Women Human Rights Defenders. We welcome the holding of the Convention of African Women Defenders which was held in South Africa from 29th to 30th November 2023 and which aimed to reflect on our lived realities and develop sustainable strategies for the futur. We also note with satisfaction the ratification of the AU Maputo Protocol, United Nations Resolution 1325, by the governments of 8 Central African countries covered by REDHAC, although implementation remains a real challenge⁴.

It is in this spirit that REDHAC, in its mission to promote and protect Human Rights Defenders, has, on the one hand, developed the training manuals on physical protection, the online and offline data security of HRDs and trained more than 5,000 Human Rights Defenders; on the other hand, developed specific protection manuals for girls and women defenders by training more than 2,500 from 2010 to 2023. REDHAC has also set up a mechanism to protect women and men defenders in particular. Every 3 years, REDHAC awards an honorary distinction to women defenders who have fought to promote and defend women's rights and human rights in difficult contexts while taking risks. The REDHAC also conducted campaigns for the legal protection of HRDs in general and more specifically,

⁶ <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2021/11/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women>

⁴ <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2021/11/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women>

Women Defenders by documenting in a global framework, cases of human rights violations and the reprisals they suffer.

This report on WHRDs in Chad and Cameroon is part of a series of activities of the ACDHAAC project: “*Civic Action and Legal Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa*”. It documents the types of violations and reprisals against the WHRD, highlights the emblematic figures of the WHRD who took the risks and suffered various threats and reprisals during this year 2023 in Cameroon and Chad, Finally the report addresses the relevant recommendations to the States of Cameroon and Chad, the African Union and the United Nations, National Human Rights Institutions and Women Human Rights Defenders. It is prefaced by Me KAMADJI DEMBA Karyom, Clerk and sociologist, activist of the Union of Trade Unions of Chad (UST) and the Federation of Public Sector Unions (FSPT), of Chad; and postfaced by Me Alice NKOM, Lawyer at the Bar of Cameroon, expert of the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent for its constant advice, REDHAC Co-PCA.

IV- METHODOLOGY

The report on the situation of WHRDs in Cameroon and Chad was produced using a participatory approach involving all stakeholders. The methodology used was structured around three phases: preparation, data collection and analysis, and report writing.

Preparatory phase;

- Hold 02 briefing and framing meetings
- Identification of target groups to be interviewed (sampling)
- Development of data collection tools

i- Data collection and analysis;

This section covers the data collection tool, the parties involved in data collection, the difficulties encountered and data analysis.

ii- Data collection tool;

Two (02) questionnaires/guides for individual and direct interviews were drawn up and used to collect data. These data collection tools, one for beneficiaries and the other for other

stakeholders, were drawn up in French, the common language of the two countries under review. The questionnaires/interview guides were first tested with a group of young REDHAC trainees to ensure that their terms would be understood and that the questions would be interpreted in the same way by all respondents.

iii- Parties involved in data collection

Data collection was carried out by a multidisciplinary team of around twenty experts, including ten (10) from the Republic of Chad and ten (10) from the Republic of Cameroon.

To collect data in the field, the group of people who conducted the study relied on:

- REDHAC focal points in both countries;
- Some members of associations and NGOs affiliated to REDHAC;

Period and place of operation;

Data collection for the report on the situation of the WHRDs in Cameroon and Chad focused respectively on the cities of Ndjaména and Moundou in Chad and the North-West and South-West regions in Cameroon.

The data was collected, analyzed and the study report written between February and November 2023.

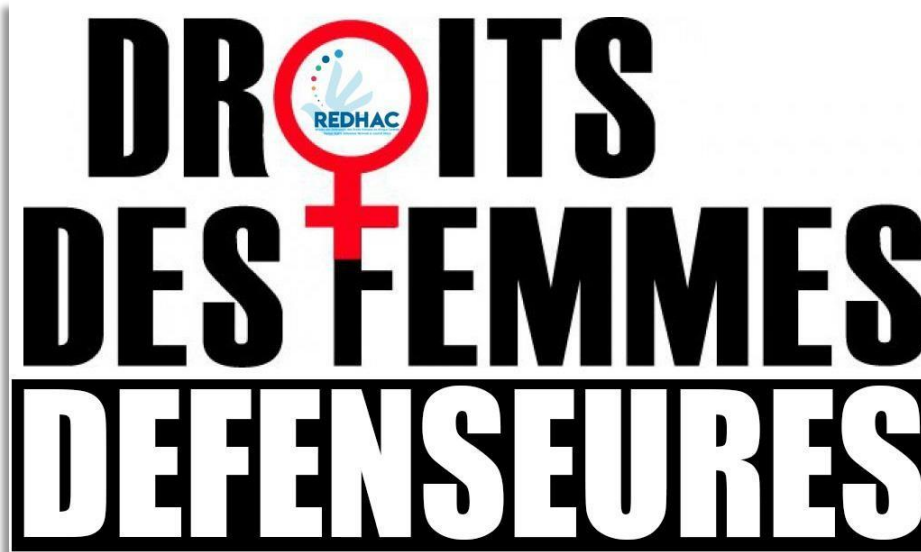
Data analysis

The data was analyzed on a qualitative basis for both groups of stakeholders (beneficiaries and others), given that it was not possible to reach a very large number of people given the diversity of the stakeholders targeted, that is, ten stakeholders per country under review.

The questionnaire

- Types of violations and challenges faced by the WHRDs in Cameroon and Chad;
- The normative framework, political, socio-cultural and religious practices and behaviors in Chad and Cameroon;
- Implementation of the country's recommendations on the situation of WHRDs.

SECTION I : DEFINITION OF TERMS



A- WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

- **The former Special Rapporteur on HRDs in Africa, Reine Alapini Ngansou Esq, current judge at the ICC (International Criminal Court) defined WHRDs as “all women engaged, individually or in association with others, in the promotion and protection of human rights and all those who work for women's rights and rights related to gender and sexuality, regardless of their sexual orientation.”**

All these women who fight in different areas such as: gender equality, the rights of indigenous persons, land and environmental rights, socio-economic rights in rural areas, the rights of migrants and refugees), the right decent housing, the right to justice without discrimination, the right to free abortion and the right to dispose of one's body, digital rights, the right of disabled people, prevention, conflict resolution, peace and human security are the Women Human Rights Defenders. We find them among: journalists who bring issues of public interest to light, union leaders who demand respect for labor rights, non-violent democracy activists, parliamentarians who debate public issues, judges who provide justice to the weak, the ~~Security and Defense forces~~ who protect the population, the teachers and academics who teach and conduct research in the field of human rights, the leaders of community associations in

rural areas, associations non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations and social movements that work for transformative change, executives within intergovernmental organizations who collaborate with governments to ensure compliance with state obligations vis-à-vis human rights institutions, humanitarian workers, Development actors who ensure access to essential services for populations, women who fight for the rights of sexual minorities, human rights lawyers who represent victims in court. The list is not exhaustive. It is this diversity which has led public opinion to classify Women Human Rights Defenders into three categories, namely: Women activists for Democracy and non-violence, Women journalists and Women Defenders of sexual minorities.

B- HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

According to the United Nations, "human rights violations" cover transgressions by States of the rights guaranteed by national, regional and international humanitarian law and acts and omissions directly attributable to the State involving a failure to implement legal obligations derived from human rights standards. Violations occur when a law, policy or practice deliberately contravenes, or willfully ignores, obligations incumbent upon the State, or when the State fails to meet a required standard of conduct or required result. Additional violations occur when a state derogates from or removes existing human rights protections

C- REPRISALS

According to United Nations sources, reprisals mean any directly or indirectly harmful action having a negative impact on the employment or working conditions of a person, when this action has been recommended, taken or threatened to be taken with the aim to punish, intimidate or harm a person who has participated in a protected activity

SESSION II: TYPOLOGY OF VIOLENCE, HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND REPRISALS AGAINST WHRDs



As set out in the ACHPR Report, WHRDs face:

- ✓ Specific violence, including sexual violence, such as rape and threats of rape;
- ✓ Intimidation and discrimination;
- ✓ Damage to their “good repute” or reputation;
- ✓ Humiliation, stigmatization, isolation;
- ✓ Legal, physical and psychological harassment,
- ✓ Violations of their privacy, including their relatives;
- ✓ Death threats;

It should also be noted that WHRDs also face various rights violations because of the sensitivity of the subjects on which they work.

In Cameroon as in Chad and Central Africa, we observe that:

- a) threats and reprisals against the WHRD result in surveillance, including against members of their families, smear campaigns orchestrated by the media, bans on leaving or returning to the country, harassment in the workplace, and even murders and assassinations. Very often, the premises of civil society organizations (CSOs) are targeted by attacks, during

which sensitive files are stolen and computer equipment destroyed, thus depriving the WHRD of their work equipment.

- b) the recurring impunity from which certain perpetrators of violations often benefit accentuates the risks and vulnerabilities of WHRDs
- c) the challenges linked to access to justice, especially in the two countries where the judiciary does not always benefit from the independence necessary to sanction the perpetrators of violations, contributes to increasing the vulnerabilities of WHRDs. Generally, no follow-up is given to the rare complaints filed with the police and before the courts.;
- d) WHRD have limited access to justice given the lack of financial means because legal costs are often high, causing endless trials to be abandoned, which exposes them to judicial harassment.
- e) the legal and political environment determines the agenda for the implementation of international, regional and national obligations in human rights and related disciplines is at the discretion of the State. He lends himself to this according to his priorities and his means.
- f) the difficulty of accessing funding, particularly for WHRDs who work on the rights of rural communities on issues of civil and political rights in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), encounter difficulties in accessing funding due to the formalities that are difficult to complete and the complicated financing process which very often requires adequate expertise on the one hand and the actions of the administrative authorities. In addition, the fight against terrorism, the war in Ukraine and today in the Middle East (Israel-Hamas) have led to a scarcity of resources. This state of affairs leads to a reduction in funding for actions in favor of the realization of human rights in general and those of women in particular.

In a study carried out by a subsidiary body of the development assistance committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)⁷, it was found that in

⁷ The OECD is an intergovernmental organization whose objective is to promote policies for sustainable expansion of the economy and employment with a view to assessing the progression of living standards and the liberalization of trade.

2014, only 0.5% (192 million USD) of aid dedicated to gender equality was paid to women's rights organizations in the North and South, compared to 1.2% in 2011. 92% of funds intended for gender equality policy were directed towards international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or towards NGOs from the donor country, compared to only 8% to NGOs in developing countries⁸. This situation impacts not only the ability of WHRDs to do their work of promoting human rights but also their own protection.

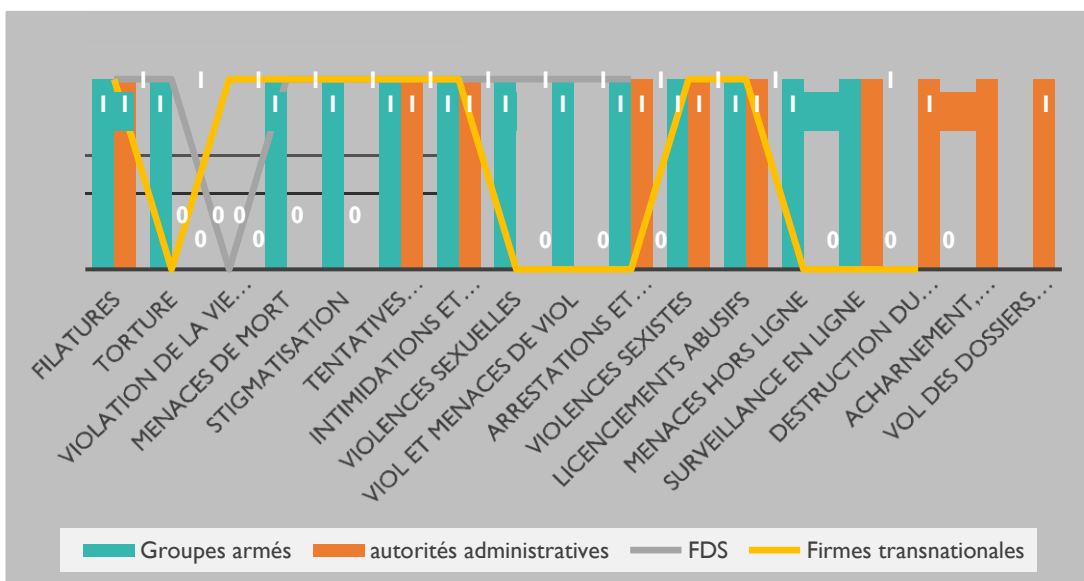
- g) WHRDs encounter difficulties in setting up an effective network. This weakness has a negative impact on the solidarity strategies that the WHRD could put in place to pool their efforts and share good practices. Even if this can be partly justified by language barriers and the weakness of digital communication in different countries, we must also point out the lack of significant funding and the restriction of civic space.
- h) The community's refusal to recognize the status and work of HRDs to women while constantly trying to marginalize their contribution can be verified by the fact that WHRDs work on socially, politically and economically sensitive subjects. They thus address, in a non-exhaustive manner, the rights of women, inequalities against them, polygamy, hereditary rights, female genital mutilation, the sexuality of young women and their right to sexual education, including orientation. gender, gender identity and gender expression, legal age of marriage, and equitable sharing of resources and wealth, particularly from extractive industries.

The table below more easily summarizes the types of violations and Reprisals suffered by WHRDs in Cameroon and Chad - documented during data collection.

TYOLOGY OF WHRD VIOLATIONS	REPRISALS	PERPETRATORS
Spinning	Difficulties in accessing financing	Some Administrative authorities And government
Torture	Difficulties in accessing justice	Armed groups state and non-state/judicial authorities
Violation of the private life	Attack on honor and reputation	State and non-state actors

⁸ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders: Situation of human rights defenders, p.7, January 2019.

Death threats	Isolation	Administrative authorities/ Armed Groups/penitentiaries Authorities
Stigma	Office fire	State And non-state armed Groups / Some administrative authorities
Arrest Attempts	Kidnapping of loved ones	State And non-state armed Groups / Some administrative authorities
Bullying And discrimination	Closure of accounts	Some administrative authorities
Sexual violence	Account blocks	State And non-state armed Groups
Rape and threats of rape	Internet outage	State And non-state armed Groups / Gouvernement
Arrests And arbitrary detentions	Psychological Harassment	Elements of the Strengths of Defense and Security (police, gendarmerie etc.)
Gender-based violence	Denigration Campaigns	State and non-state actors
Unfair dismissals	Online threats	Cybercriminals/ some hierarchical superiors
Offline threats	Office and homes burglaries	
Online monitoring	Forced disappearances Media lynchings	



SESSION IV: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ILLUSTRATIVE CASES OF WHRDS VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND REPRISALS



A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Women Human Rights Defenders act individually or collectively on the basis of regional and international human rights instruments and commitments freely signed and ratified by States as well as on national laws on the promotion and protection of human rights and other relevant jurisprudence.

In other words, the legitimacy of the work of the WHRD is based on several resolutions of the African and UN human rights system, namely:

1- For the African system

Resolution ACHPR/Res.409 LXII 2018 on the need to adopt legal measures for the protection of Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa; Resolution 67/144 on Intensifying Action to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women; Resolution TRES/005/4/2015 on Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa,

2- The international framework

- Resolution No 68/181 of 18 December 2013 promoting the Declaration on the Right

and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect

Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: protection of women human rights defenders/defenders of women's rights;

- Resolution 67/144 on stepping up action to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

3- The national framework

For Chad: The revised constitution of 04 May 2018.

For Cameroon: The revised constitution of 18 January 1996.

Despite this relevant legal framework in these two countries through these fundamental laws, we observe that there are laws that hinder the protection of WHRDs in the exercise of their daily work.

Anti-terrorism laws

With the increase in terrorist acts in the sub-region, the Chadian⁹ and Cameroonian¹⁰ governments adopted anti-terrorist laws, which are repressive, thus restricting fundamental freedoms and which have become a real danger for the WHRD. The terrorist threat can thus be used to hinder the work of the WHRD. The risks of amalgamation are real in this context.

In addition, the development of surveillance techniques through digitalization, digital rights and artificial intelligence have accentuated online surveillance practices. These practices lead WHRDs who defend Human Rights to self-censor when carrying out their work in the field for fear of reprisals.

¹¹ <http://www.mjustice.gov.cm/index.php/fr/textes-lois/lois/382-loi-n-2014-28-du-23-decembre-2014-portant-repression-des-actes-de-terrorisme>

¹² <https://www.droit-afrique.com/uploads/Tchad-Loi-2020-03-repression-actes-terrorisme.pdf>

Added to this are the threats of legal proceedings which result from such practices and which divert the energy and resources of the WHRD, because they are absorbed by the legal proceedings to which they are subject.

As an example, we can cite

a) anti-terrorism laws:

Law No. 2014-28 of December 23, 2014 relating to the suppression of acts of terrorism in Cameroon;¹¹

- Law No. 003/PR/2020 of May 20, 2020 on the Suppression of Acts of Terrorism in the Republic of Chad ¹²

b) laws relating to cybercrime and cyber security

- Law No. 2010/01 of December 21, 2010 relating to cyber security and cybercrime in Cameroon;

- Ordinance No. 008/PCMT/2022 of August 31, 2022 on cyber security in the Republic of Chad ¹³

- Law No. 009/PR/2015 on Cyber Security and the Fight Against Cybercrime in Chad¹²

¹³ <https://tchadinfos.com/le-phenomene-de-cybercriminalite-force-le-tchad-a-revoir-son-arsenal-juridique/>

¹⁴ <https://www.scribd.com/presentation/497874751/EXPOSE-droit-Loi-009-PR-2015>

The table below easily illustrates the emblematic cases on violence, human rights violations and reprisals suffered by the WHRDs.

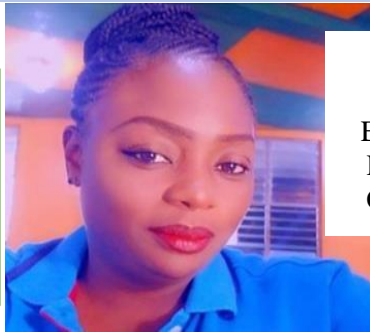
Illustrative cases in Cameroon	Illustrative cases in Chad
<p>In January 2023, Sally Georgette, Executive Director of the Community of Development Action of Cameroon, was threatened with death by unidentified people for claiming protection of women defenders in the North-West and South West regions in crisis.</p>	<p>In 2023, Kamadji Demba Karyom, clerk, sociologist and activist of the Union of Trade Unions of Chad (UST) and the Federation of Public Sector Unions of Chad (FSPT), member of the Tournons La Page-Chad campaign, was beaten up by men in uniform at a demonstration. She has, at the same occasion, received threats and intimidation of certain members of the government to have protested against abusive salary cuts, liberticidal laws on freedom union and austerity measures unilaterally by the Chadian government.</p>
<p>In January 2023, Caryn Dasah, Executive Director of Hope Advocates Africa and elected coordinator of the Cameroon Women’s Peace Movement (CAWOPEM), was attacked by armed men followed by an attempted abduction, forcing her to take refuge in a secret location.</p>	<p>In April 2023, Nodjikoua Dionrang Epiphane; President of the Chadian Women’s Rights League was threatened by unidentified men for her fight for respect for women’s rights.</p>
<p>In January 2023, Serah Derval Lifanda, Executive Director of Hope of Africa (HOFA) in Cameroon was threatened by armed men who were described as traitors for denouncing human rights violations.</p>	
<p>On 19 May 2023 (National Unity Day), women, mostly human rights defenders,</p>	

and women traders, were abducted by armed men in «Big Babanki», a locality in the department of Mezam (Northwest region), for demonstrating, through a peaceful march, to denounce the taxes imposed by the separatists on the inhabitants of their locality.

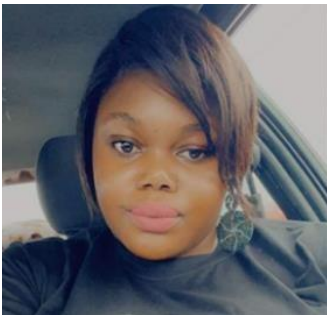
**SOME ILLUSTRATIVE PHOTOS OF WOMEN DEFENDERS
OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMEROON**



Sally Georgette,
Executive Director
Community of
Development Action
of Cameroon
(CDAC)



**Serah Derval
Lifanda**
Executive Director
Hope of Africa of
Cameroon (HAC)



Caryn Dasah
Executive Director
Hope Advocates Africa,
Coordinatrice du
Mouvement des femmes
camerounaises pour la
paix (CAWOPEM)



**SOME ILLUSTRATIVE PHOTOS OF WOMEN DEFENDERS
OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHAD**



KAMADJI DEMBA KARYOM
Activist of the Union of Trade
Unions of Chad (UST), Member of
TLP



DADJI RAHAMATA AHMAT
Collective of Associations and Youth
Movements of Chad (CAMJT)



NODJIKOUA DIONRANG Epiphane
President of the Chadian League for
Women's Rights (LTDDF)

SECTION V: MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTION OF WHRDS



Resolution 68/181(2014) encouraged States to publicly recognize the important and legitimate role of Women Human Rights Defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and development as an essential component in ensuring their protection, including public condemnation of violence and discrimination against Women Human Rights Defenders¹³.

The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders regrets that there are no specific mechanisms in place to protect WHRDs and those working on human rights and gender issues in many countries, including Cameroon and Chad. In countries where such mechanisms exist, they are often hampered by a lack of gender sensitivity, the absence or insufficiency of the

¹³ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/181 (2014), para. 7.
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/SexualHealth/INFO_WHRD_FR_WEB.pdf

political will of governments in the implementation of regional and international human rights instruments and Defenders.

The Special Rapporteur is deeply convinced that *“Women Human Rights Defenders need specific, enhanced protection, targeted and deliberate efforts to make the environment in which they operate a safer, more conducive and favorable environment for respect for human rights.”*

I- NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR PROTECTING WHRDS

Although the question was asked, none of the Women Defenders in Chad reported on mechanisms put in place at the national level to ensure the protection of WHRDs. Despite the existence of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) which do not have a broad mandate including the lack of financial and technical means and legal regulations and laws which repress sexual violence and gender based violence, the high rate of rapes observed in countries remains an indicator of poor performance, despite the efforts made by governments to fight for gender equality and the protection of WHRDs.

While these States have the responsibility to protect Human Rights Defenders and Women Defenders, there is no legal framework that ensures legal protection of WHRDs in Cameroon and Chad.

As a result, Women Human Rights Defenders, activists working on women’s rights and gender issues on democracy, peace, are not sufficiently taken into account in the design and implementation of measures to combat violations of the rights of WHRDs.

II - REGIONAL MECHANISMS

On a national level:

- ✓ The State through the voice of the Head of State: (promulgation of the law protecting defenders and establishment of mechanisms for the recognition of their legal status: e.g.: protection card, service passport with the mention "Defender of human rights");
- ✓ Ministry of Justice or Ministry of Human Rights (advocacy at the level of national authorities for the protection of WHRDs and the recognition of their legal status through the establishment of specific mechanisms (immunity, etc.)
- ✓ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (advocacy at international level for recognition of legal status)
- ✓ National Human Rights Institutions)
- ✓ Parliament (adoption of a law on “Protection of human rights defenders and other specific laws granting them status, immunity, etc.)”

At the regional level:

- ❖ The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), through its mechanism, Special Rapporteur on the situation of Defenders in Africa, Focal Point on Reprisals,
- ❖ Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights,
- ❖ Defender Protection Networks in Africa
 - REDHAC in Central Africa,
 - ROADDH in West Africa,
 - East & Horn Africa Defenders in Horn and East Africa
 - AfricanDefenders

At an international level

- ◆ The United Nations through the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Defenders
- ◆ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and demonstrations
- ◆ The Universal Periodic Review
- ◆ The United Nations General Assembly (Office of the Secretary General)
- ◆ United Nations Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa
- ◆ International Organizations which have the mandate
 - FrontLine Defenders,
 - International Protection,
 - Amnesty International,
- ◆ Protect defenders-EU
- ◆ Civil Right Defender
 - OMCT, Observatory, FIDH
- ◆ Civicus,
- ◆ Freedom House etc.

SECTION VI : RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of our report and taking into account the serious challenges faced by Women Human Rights Defenders in Cameroon and Chad and which clearly emerge in this report, the Human Rights Defenders Network in Central Africa (REDHAC) recommends the following:

1- To the States of Cameroon and Chad

- 1) to ensure the legal protection of defenders by adopting and promulgating the law on “*Protection of Human Rights Defenders*” so that Human Rights Defenders without discrimination, in particular Women Defenders, are able to carry out their work without fear of retaliation or intimidation, both online and offline, and ensure their safety, that of their loved ones and their well-being. For Cameroon, a proposal has been submitted to the Senate office since November 17, 2021;
- 2) adopt the law relating to the decriminalization of press offenses in order to guarantee the protection of journalists;
- 3) open civic space by making the “*declaration regime*” of public meetings and demonstrations a rule, and the “*authorization regime*” an exception;
- 4) ensure that WHRDs, journalists, etc. have open access to free and independent information, guarantee the right to freedom of opinion, association and expression

2- To the AU and the UN

Encourage States to:

- 1) Systematically investigate threats, attacks, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial and/or extrajudicial executions, alleged reprisals from all state and non-state actors, against WHRDs, convict the perpetrators and provide them with material and psychological reparations;

- 2) end the use of the military court against civilians and rewrite the Laws suppressing acts of terrorism

3- To national human rights institutions

- 1) Ensure that the status of Women Defenders is a reality through advocacy with governments for their specific legal protection;
- 2) Ensure that associations led by Women Defenders securely receive adequate funding for their work in the field;
- 3) To play a key role in monitoring and demanding accountability from all those who abuse and/or violate human rights, to further strengthen the protection of WHRDs ;

4- To the WHRDs

- 1) Pool efforts for the creation in the Central Africa sub-region of a network of Women Human Rights Defenders;
- 2) Appropriate national, regional and international human rights instruments and the protection of defenders in order to address present and future risks, threats and vulnerabilities;
- 3) Implement solidarity campaigns between WHRDs;
- 4) Create formal and/or informal spaces for inclusive dialogue with state and non-state actors.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this report, we can conclude that Women Human Rights Defenders strive as best they can to ensure that all Africans and peoples throughout the world enjoy all their human rights. To this end, they are the guardians of the promotion, protection and enhancement of human rights. This fight must encourage all actors in the Central African sub-region to work in synergy of action and tirelessly in order to create the necessary conditions for the promotion and protection of all human rights.

In this regard, the States parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), including Cameroon and Chad, remain the primary holders of the obligations of respect and implementation of said rights. To this end, the international community, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, National Human Rights Institutions, Human Rights Defenders and civil society as a whole must contribute to the protection and promotion of the rights of Women Human Rights Defenders.

All this can only be achieved if there are effective mechanisms to combat **IMPUNITY**.

POSTFACE



Me Alice NKOM
Lawyer at the Cameroon Bar
Co-PCA of REDHAC

The consolidation of the rule of law requires the recognition and protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens of any state that aims to be legalist. It is an obligation for every State to implement mechanisms to protect its citizens. To ensure that this is effective, human rights defense organizations have been formed. Some have networked in order to pool their efforts and actions, which sufficiently demonstrates the importance of their work in denouncing violence and violations of all kinds committed by both armed gangs and state agents.

However, the exercise of the mission of Women Human Rights Defenders is strongly hampered by the social, political and economic environment marked by instability and precariousness. This instability and this precariousness are unfortunately not the work of a single State. They are observed throughout the Central African sub-region where there are restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Far from being motivated by an unhealthy need to criticize governments, this report, which deals with the violations of Women Human Rights Defenders in Cameroon and Chad, was designed to raise awareness and bring about positive change among those in power and the populations themselves.

The legal and conventional provisions in force in Cameroon and Chad, as in all other Central African states, establish the countries' attachment to the principles and values

enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These are sometimes repeated in full in national and regional human rights protection texts.

Despite the good initiatives undertaken to combat the violations faced by women human rights defenders, their situation still remains precarious in Central Africa and particularly in Cameroon and Chad. They continue to be victims of numerous discriminations, inequalities, abuses and social and political aggression.

This sad reality promotes a reproduction of facts, outdated and obsolete rules which have led to the adoption of specific legal instruments for the promotion and protection of Women's Rights at the international and regional levels. This is why this report highlights the work of Women Human Rights Defenders and their leading role in protecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Cameroon and Chad.

It highlights the human rights violations of which they are victims. It also recommends that States parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights be visionaries, and finally directly raises the issue of gender and work.

The Human Rights Defenders Network in Central Africa (REDHAC), as, admittedly, tiny in the institutional ordering of the sub-region in Central Africa, would however like, thanks to its actions, reports and other publications as is the case with this report, to make its modest contribution to the building of a more just world; a world in which the fundamental freedoms of citizens are respected and protected, a world in which human rights are no longer sought after, but acquired simply by belonging to the human community, a world where, finally, the characteristics of Human Rights such as universality, indivisibility, inalienability, equality and interdependence are no longer mere concepts, but a whole art of living and a reality shared by all.

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This report was written by the Protection Department of REDHAC (Ebelle Grace, and Yebga Jean Claude under the direction of Me Batoum Jean Victoire, Legal Expert with the collaboration of the Staff, under the supervision of Executive Director Maximilienne Ngo MBE.

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