



## MUSICAL ACTIVISM IN THE STRUGGLE TO END THE ANGLOPHONE SECESSIONIST CRISIS IN CAMEROON

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### **Abstract:**

In 2016, a crisis broke out in Cameroon provoked by secessionist agitations in the two Anglophone regions of the North West and South West. It has variedly been referred to as the Anglophone Crisis or the Ambazonian War. The crisis has affected and threatened the unity, territorial integrity, social cohesion and *le vivre ensemble* in Cameroon. It has shattered the economy, destroyed schools, villages, infrastructures and businesses leading to mass displacement of persons to the Francophone regions and neighbouring Nigeria. In fact, the crisis has inflicted huge anguish and damages on the masses and has left the populations in very precarious conditions and misery that demand humanitarian actions to their rescue. Appeals have been made from several stakeholders both nationally and internationally pressing on the government to seek and implement lasting solutions to the crisis. Some musicians and song composers through musical activism added their voices to the calls for peace by articulating and conveying the misfortunes, despair, miseries and sufferings of the poor masses, victims of the war. This was exhibited in the music titles, the lyrics or messages they passed across, their grieving faces in the video grams and their tones that were telling and compelling as they expressed their lamentations. The musicians via musical activism regretted the war, begged for peace, unity, cease-fire and veritable actions in seeking lasting solutions to the crisis. This article attempts an analysis of the content and messages of some of these musicians revealing the desperation and gravity of the crisis in Cameroon.

**Keywords:** activism, Anglophone problem, Ambazonia, music, peace, secession, unity

### **1. Introduction**

Music pervades the socio-cultural, economic and even political atmosphere of all African societies (Kah, 2016: 178). Sounds and music have always been an essential constituent in conflicts and protest/resistance (Dauhtry, 2015: 34, 165). A survey of the African colonial

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and post-colonial experiences portrays the use of music as a vehicle to manifest, articulate and communicate the people's hardships or cruel realities and to create awareness vis-a-vis the feelings or opinions of the society (Tala, 1987/1988: 102). Music was used to exert political pressure, propagate and capture the minds of leaders in order to shape public opinion (Finnegan, 1970: 275). Within the colonial spectrum for instance, political songs and musical collections were used to convey and manifest the objection to colonialism, chart the quest for independence and to consolidate nationhood especially after the Second World War (Ifionu, 1989: 168, Bekithemba, 2016: 10). In South Africa for example, the use of music as a fundamental tool for the liberation struggle against white domination and the anti-Apartheid crusade left much to be admired (Vershbow: 2010, Schumann: 2008, Makky: 2007). The set of maneuvers they engaged through music and songs to achieve their goal are evident to the matter of fact of the inherent ability of songs and music as a means of accomplishing liberation struggles or putting an end to civil wars, political tensions and crises (Jacob, 2019). It was also the case in the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe and during the liberation of Rwanda from the genocide regime. As observed and concluded by Abdullah Ibrahim, perhaps there is no revolution that has ever occurred without songs and music playing a pivotal role to coalesce its desires, bring together and beef up the morale or emotions of its supporters (Hirsch, 2002).

Politically, music serves as a means to establish community spirit, solidarity and unity especially as activist messages communicated through vocal mediums may have a higher impact and be more capable of reaching a wider population (Tala, 1987/1988: 102, Hess, 2019: 62). This explains why it is usually used to address current trends of instability, chaos and tensions as a means to mollify the state or society (Tanella, 2000: 176). Music has been used by some African songwriters and musicians in contemporary African states, to criticise and to address governance issues while some even adopted very radical stances. The Nigerian multi-instrumentalist, composer, Pan-Africanist and political activist Fela Anikulapá Kuti, stands tall as a musician who through his artistic prowess in compositions like *"Zombi"*, *"Upside Down"*, *"Beasts of No Nation"*, *"Authority Stealing"*, *"Colonial Mentality"*, exerted a heavy dose of political critique on the Nigerian state in advocating for social change and good governance (Uche: 2018). Others like Alpha Blondy, the Ivorian reggae superstar advocated peace and appealed for ceasefire of the civil wars that plagued Ivory Coast and the Africa continent at large through his songs. As quoted by Uche (2018:4), the artist revealed, *"I'm not a politician, but I do try to make them listen. I try to make them aware of the real human being values. I'm lucky that I can talk to the people. My way of fighting against war for peace is through music. I don't have the absolute truth, but I try to give hope in my songs."* The wind of change that blew over Cameroon like in most African countries in the 1990s in favour of democracy and political liberation, witnessed the emergence of musicians and songwriters who braved the socio-political milieu with songs that targeted and dealt with the mal governance of the Yaounde regime.

The decade of the 1990s in Cameroon ushered in a new dispensation in favour of multiparty politics, democracy with freedom of speech and press liberation that by

extension revolutionised the pop cultural entrepreneurial sector in musical and artistic performances. Musicians took advantage of law No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990 on freedoms and associations to make bold their role in shaping and imparting the socio-political life of the state through musical productions that generally addressed the concerns of the masses and slammed the state of poor governance in the country (Tangem, 2016: 161). This was the case of Awilo de Bamenda (Ndi Tansa) with his “*Country Don Spoil*” aired to the public in 2006, Lapiro de Mbanga<sup>ii</sup> who was awarded the Freemuse award as the best and most prolific human rights activist in 2009, thanks to his songs like “*Na Yu*”, “*Lefam So*” and “*Constitution Constipe*” which was later broadcasted in 2011. Lapiro stands out arguably as the most prominent Cameroonian revolutionary musical artists. Prince Mbaya’s “*Conférence Nationale*” issued in 2006, Saint Bruna with his “*Changement*” released in 2001 including other artists like Prince Yerima Afo Akom, Big Benji Mateke through musical activism, condemn the sufferings and vexations of the citizens caused by the regime (Ibid). In fact, discographies of the different artists were very meticulous in faulting the ruling elite and regime and exquisitely exhibited the abilities of music and folk artists as essential actors in the Cameroon socio-political scenario. In effect, artists used music to capture the attention of the public eye and mind and to bring to the limelight issues of the society. This is particularly true, as musicians and composers employed musical activism in the struggle to end the current Anglophone secessionist crisis.

## 2. Anglophone Secessionist Crisis

The Anglophone problem in Cameroon could be traced back to the colonial period. Cameroon annexed by Germany in July 1884 was partitioned in 1916 following the defeat of Germany by Anglo-French troops in World War One. British Cameroons and French Cameroons evolved as two distinct “colonies” and in 1961, British Southern Cameroons gained independence by joining French Cameroons following a UN organised plebiscite (Ebune, 1992: 102). Since the 1961 reunification, the Anglophones complained of marginalisation, assimilation, annexation and the exploitation of their territory by the

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<sup>ii</sup> Lambo Sandjo Pierre Roger aka Lapiro de Mbanga was born on April 7, 1957 in Mbanga in the Mungo Division of the Littoral Region. His father was from Bametcha in Bangoua Sub Division in the Nde Division of the West Region and had migrated and settled in Mbanga. His mother was a native of Douala/Aboh. He was one of Cameroons prominent advocates for social change and the respect of Human Rights. His musical career was marked by his aptness and conviction in fighting the state of poor governance in Cameroon characterised by corruption, embezzlement, tribalism, general social delinquency, poverty and unemployment, a boisterous ruling elite and ethnocentric marginalisation, the lack of constitutionalism of the constitution. Because of his critical nature in his musical pieces that generally faulted the regime, he was arrested in 2009 and jailed in the Douala prison for three years. He moved to the United States of America in September 2012 where he was granted political asylum. He died on March 12, 2014 from an illness. He is remembered as one of the most outstanding, prolific, eloquent and outspoken socio-political musical activist in Cameroon and his musical productions still leave their marks in Cameroons socio-political discourse. For details on Lapiro’s political activism in Cameroon see Peter W. V. (2014).

majority Francophones and Francophone dominated regimes of Yaounde.<sup>iii</sup> Their agitations and protests masterminded by pressure groups like the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) were less violent until 2016.

The secessionist crisis that began in 2016 in the two Anglophone regions of the North West and South West, was a direct consequence of the Anglophone Problem. It all started with teachers and lawyers strikes as these two groups called for the government to respect the Anglophone cultural identity. This had been relegated to the background by the appointment of French speaking magistrates to Anglophone courts and teachers of French background to schools of the Anglophone subsystem of education. Government failed to act and the striking teachers and lawyers added political and constitutional reforms to their list of grievances. Anglophone extremists or radicals complained that they had been marginalised for too long (Musah, 2021: 20). The teachers and lawyers trade unions fused to form the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) towards the end of 2016 and called for civil disobedience and a boycott of schools and courtrooms against the Frenchification of the Anglophone institutions. The government, at several instances, made efforts to resolve the corporate grievances that the consortium presented but was faced with the complexity and different aspirations of the varied camps within the consortium. Some wanted the corporate issues to be resolved; others demanded a return to a federation experimented in Cameroon between 1961 and 1972. Other extremists wanted outright secession. The government therefore did not adequately identify the gravity of the problems of the consortium (ibid). The consortium was accused of rebellion and terrorism and was banned in January 2017 and its leaders arrested and jailed in the Yaounde central prison. The crisis escalated into an armed conflict.

On October 1, 2017, Ayuk Tabe Julius claiming to be the leader of the Anglophones, declared the independence of the state of Ambazonia<sup>iv</sup> (Former Southern Cameroon). This met with stiff resistance from the regular military forces, as the government was out to protect the unity and territorial integrity of the state. The situation worsened in January 2018 when targeted attacks by the secessionists on military barracks and control posts were reported by the media (Fai, 2018: 5). With the complicity of the Anglophones in the diaspora, several secessionist armed groups were formed in the two Anglophone regions to fight for the “restoration” of the Southern Cameroons or Ambazonia. The secessionist military groups included; Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SOCADEF), the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCRM), Ambozonian Defense Force (ADF), Ambozonian Self-Defense Council (ASDC), Red Dragons among others. The activities of the secessionists or separatists and the war between them and the regular military forces put the social cohesion, cultural diversity

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<sup>iii</sup> For details of the Anglophone grievances in Cameroon, see Ayim, 2010, Nkwi: 2004, Konings & Nyamnjoh: 1997, Abwa: 2011, Elong, 2012, Awasum: 1998, Dickson: 2007, Ngoh: 1999, Tangie: 2013).

<sup>iv</sup> Ambazonia is derived from Amba Bay found along the South Western Coast of Cameroon. It was here that the London Baptist Missionary Society first settled and as a sign of homage to the then Queen of England they named it Victoria. In fact, it is the present day Limbe, a city in the Anglophone South West Region of Cameroon.

and *le vivre ensemble* in the two Anglophone regions at peril. The territorial integrity and unity of Cameroon threatened. Education drastically affected with schools boycotted, school infrastructures attacked and burnt, pupils, students and teachers attacked, harassed and killed. In addition, attacks and killing of civilians and the destruction of their properties led to gross human rights violations and atrocities. Businesses crumbled due to the insecurities and the ghost towns in the two regions over the years affected economic life negatively (Roxana, 2019). The killings, terror and violence, hardship, destruction of property, mass displacement of persons (most of whom to Francophone regions and to neighbouring Nigeria) prompted reactions from stakeholders both nationally and internationally appealing to the protagonists to dialogue and resolve the issues and called for peace and a return to normalcy. The struggle to end the secessionist crisis and a return for peace was also expressed vocally by a number of songwriters and music composers through musical activism. These musicians used music as a tool of protest and their activism added up to the numerous efforts that appealed for an end to the incessant killings. More often than not, the messages that these songs and music communicated during wars or crisis were not only tied to emotions and the ears, but also affected the minds and the body in whole (Budji, 2019:446). The different musicians dealt with themes that called for unity and the respect of the cultural diversity of Cameroon. Some asked for the eradication of tribalism and others composed prayers of despair calling for God's intervention. These songs were telling of the grief and anguish the populations of the two Anglophone regions had been subjected to by the crisis.

### 3. Music in the Anglophone Crisis

Like in many conflict situations, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon attracted the attention of musicians and songwriters. The Urban Artist Mr. Leo<sup>v</sup> in his song titled "*Pray*" released on 17 November 2017, proposed a prayer or religious meditation that called on God's intervention on the peoples of the two Anglophone regions. The song was released at the time when the hostilities in the two regions had become a cause for concern. Civil disobedience was at its apex with the regular army responding with disproportionate force. He used Pidgin English, a language adapted to the understanding of the masses, a tone that reflected lamentations regarding the killings. A music adapted to capture the minds of the audience and the population urging them to contemplate on the killings and atrocities. In his lyrics, he whipped and appealed to the Anglophones and the state as a whole reminding them that all Cameroonians make up one family and needed not to allow such calamities befall them. In fact, a song depth of plea, a message put in the softest way possible, a voice full of emotions for all sons and daughters of Cameroon to put voices and actions together and pray for their country in the hope for peace and unity.

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<sup>v</sup>Fonyuy Leonard Nsohburinka born on August 21, 1990 in Buea, South West Region is an urban music composer and singer known by the stage name Mr. Leo. He originates from Kumbo in the North West Region and has been one of the prominent Cameroonians artists in the recent years who have been gaining popularity in the sub region and at the continental level. He has worn several recognitions and awards.

Another urban artist by stage name Petit Bozard<sup>vi</sup>, in his music entitled “*Unite*” (Unity) elaborately dealt with the unity and indivisibility of Cameroon threatened by the crisis and pointed on the uniqueness of Cameroon as a bilingual and culturally diversified country. He explicitly communicated his message in a video gram that expressed the anguish of the populations. Released in December 2019 and counted almost a million views on YouTube, the music was an awakening call to the Cameroonian population about its unity and territorial integrity that was at peril as a result of the crisis. Presented in a grieving manner regarding the Anglophone Crisis, the artist used the Cameroon flag as a sign of unity, re-iterated the state and nationhood of Cameroonians as one family. He decried the civil war that the populations of the Anglophone regions had been plunged into and appealed that the misery and sufferings they claimed to be victims of, was felt by the entire country. He went further in his plea to invoke the ancestors of Cameroon to protect their land and peoples so that Cameroon will remain united as one country. In his video gram he aesthetically presented the unity and cultural diversity of Cameroon by appearing in different Cameroonian attires or cultural regalia and especially in the Grassfields (North West) traditional regalia though he hails from the Centre region. This was an earnest appeal that Cameroon is one and indivisible and should for no reason be separated.

Petit Bozard in his music openly made it clear that whether Muslim or Christian, Anglophone or Francophone, whether from the North, South, East or West they are all Cameroonians and that the nation demanded unity, national integration and social cohesion. In dealing with the rich cultural diversity of Cameroon, he did not hesitate to make allusion of this diversity by citing the cuisines from the different regions, ethnic groupings and villages of Cameroon. In his music, he begged that the future of Cameroon be protected and preserved and that the killings of the young sons and daughters of Cameroon be put to end. He pleaded with the protagonists to have pity on the children who on a daily basis witnessed their parents snatched away from them due to the killings and atrocities and who will have to grow with such traumas. He openly implored his brothers and sisters of the North West and South West regions to drop the guns and stop the fighting. Moustik Karismatik<sup>vii</sup> in a musical stage presentation in the Douala city hall at Akwa on May 20, 2019 at a gala night commemorating Cameroons National Day left the crowd woeful. In a compelling and symbolic manner and in a military uniform, waving the Cameroon flag handled the unity of Cameroon and regretted the non-respect of the bi-cultural nature of Cameroon and the negative effects which tribalism had

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<sup>vi</sup> Bimam Assimizelle Frank Taylor by stage name Petit Bozard is a Francophone young upcoming artist whose musical prowess have started gaining influence and popularity in the Cameroonian show biz universe. Based in Yaounde the capital city, he stands out conspicuously as one of most talented and eminent creators of a local musical rhythm called *Mbole* from the sub quarters (ghettos) of Mvog-Ada and Nkoldongo that is fast gaining grounds in the milieu of pop culture in Cameroon.

<sup>vii</sup> Hubert Martial Tagne Tagne is a Yaounde based comedian with stage name Moustik Karismatik. He has distinguished himself in the comic arena in Cameroon as one of the best contemporary comedians. He is a three-time winner of Best Cameroon comedian successively in 2014, 2015, 2016 by the Canal D’or Awards. With his skills and comic talent, he is able to analyse societal happenings and transcribe them with a tone of satire in the form of drama, stand up, TV shows.

brought on the statehood. The bi-cultural character of Cameroon whose advantages could be exploited to build a strong and united Cameroon. In his musical stage song titled “*La lettre d’un Soldat Inconnu*” (The Letter of an Unknown Soldier), which literarily depicted a Francophone soldier on duty in the Anglophone regions, he presented the atrocities and unbearable happenings in the two regions through a letter that this “Unknown soldier” addressed to the wife. According to this Unknown Soldier presented by Moustik in his stage song, the atrocities that unfolded in the Anglophone regions were comparable to Hollywood war and action movies.

One major theme that he treated was the multicultural nature of Cameroon insinuating that both the secessionist fighters and regular military forces killed, shared same names, ethnic languages and cultural values. Referring to the shared name appellations and language among the protagonists was testimony to the collective memory of the interface between Anglophones and Francophones. To Moustik, it was therefore paradoxical that the children of the same family (Cameroonians) were fighting each other and that the differences among them did not mean divergence. Moustik and his crew continued their plea for peace as they sang and cried out as understood in an extract of the song:

*« Mon ami je suis desolee eeehhh(x2)  
Comment le tribalisme a put nous separer eeehhh  
Notre bilinguisme a put nous eloigner eeehhh  
Pourtant pour le lutes d’independance pne etait toujours en semble  
Pourtant dans les moments de misere on etaist toujours en semble....*

*Apres le reunion a Foumban je ne repondais plus a tes appels mon ami...  
Je t’ai Presque oublie je reconnais  
Pardonne moi eeehhh mon ami eeehhh  
Je t’en supplie mon ami pardonne moi eeehhh  
Aiyoyooo j’ai oublie tout tes conseils  
Et je le regrette sincerement  
Ma vie aujourd’hui n’est plus pareille tout a change depuis ton absence  
Je croyais que mes seuls ami(e)s etait de ma famille...  
Pourtant tous les Camerounais forment une seule famille  
Ahhaaa quelle ignorance”*

(“My friend I am sorry  
How could tribalism separate us  
Our bilingualism instead kept us away  
Meanwhile we struggled together to gain independence  
Meanwhile we were always together in times of misery

After the meeting in Foumban, I no longer answered to your calls my friend  
I almost totally forgot about you

I recognize my fault  
 Forgive me my friend  
 I beg you my friend forgive me  
 I forgot all your advice and I sincerely regret it  
 My life today is not the same; everything has changed since your absence  
 I thought my only friends were my family  
 Yet all Cameroonians are one family  
 What an ignorance....”

Moustik in his reflections in the “Unknown Soldier” and in the song lamented that the cultural diversity and bilingual character of Cameroon ought not to have been a source of conflict provoked other artists to condemn the war.

It should be underscored that the founding fathers were very conscious of the cultural differences between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun. That is why John Ngu Foncha, (Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons) in his opening speech at the Fouban Constitutional Talks that cemented the reunification of the two Cameroons in 1961 insisted that, “...we [he and Ahidjo, President of French Cameroon] have kept in mind that ... we must not, however, forget the existence of the two cultures... the centre is, therefore, deliberately given only very limited subjects, while the states are left to continually largely as they are now...” (Ngoh, 2011: 53-54). It was the non-respect of the two respective cultures mentioned by Foncha above and inapplicability of bilingualism in the state machinery that was at the origins of the secessionist agitations (Musah: 2020). Moustik in the lenses of the “Unknown Soldier” recounted that there was unity, cordiality, and understanding amongst the founding fathers of Cameroon (Anglophones and Francophones) during the negotiations leading to independence and the birth of the reunified Federal Republic of Cameroon. This cordiality and understanding accounted for the 1961 plebiscites result in the British Southern Cameroons. Out of 332,665 votes, 233,571 Southern Cameroonians willingly voted in favour of reunification with French Cameroon. They considered French Cameroonians as “brothers” (Ebune, 1992: 102). In addition, on the billboard that had the official announcement of the intentions of the Fouban Conference, was the inscription, “how nice it is to meet our brothers” (Ndi, 2013: 150). Again, Foncha still manifested the brotherly regard for French Cameroon in his closing speech when he intimated that, “...I want to remark this-that the recommendations we made stem out of the brotherly feeling we have towards the Republic of Cameroun” (Ngoh, 2011: 54). This is evident of the brotherly affection that the Anglophones had towards the French Cameroonians. Moustik in his song further regretted the non-respect of the agreements (constitutional, legal, educational and linguistic) that were adopted at Fouban during the constitutional talks. It should be made clear that, it was the non-respect of these agreements that gave birth to the Anglophone Problem and eventually the secessionist agitations.

In the same vein, Tzy Panchak<sup>viii</sup> and Co released a song that was a cry of despair, calling for God’s intervention on the poor Anglophone populations. The song titled “Put

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<sup>viii</sup> Etah Tambe Nyenti born on 27 February 1986 is an Anglophone afro pop and urban music artist known by stage name Tzy Panchak. He hails from Manyu Division in the South West Region of Cameroon.



*your hands on we*", released on March 6, 2020, exposit the suffering, misery and chaos that the crisis or war had on the poor masses. He decried the collapsing education sector with close to 800,000 thousand school children out of schools<sup>ix</sup>. His musical piece denigrated the war and the fact that schools and education had been paralyzed with many schools burnt and destroyed, pupils, students and teachers harassed and sometimes killed. He craved for God's intercession and cried out "*Papa put your hands on we... before it gets too late*" making allusion to the harsh realities that the people had been subjected to. Richard Bona<sup>x</sup> in his song "*Ngarguh*" premiered on June 24, 2020, lamented the massacre of some 21 civilians (women and children) in the night of 13 February 2020 in Ngarbuh a village of Ndu Sub Division in the Donga Mantung Division of the North West Region by defence forces. In an extract of his lyric, he stated empathetically ...

*"An old Trunk lies under water  
He doesn't answer to anybody  
You have brought war and killed people  
How sad it is  
Nothing but misfortune and suffering  
Women and children are crying  
The old clan has killed enough  
How sad it is...  
The country is about to collapse because of the war...  
We are strong in act and not speeches."*

In the above music, Richard Bona, in line one to three, used a metaphor describing President Paul Biya of Cameroon in power since 1982 and 88 years old as the "*Old trunk*" that failed to take adequate and sustainable measures in resolving the Anglophone problem that resulted in war. In fact, Richard Bona blamed President Biya and his clannish regime by presenting them to "*the old clan has killed enough*" and have brought "*misfortune and suffering*" to the poor Anglophone masses. He went further and recalled that the crisis had to be resolved by "*strong acts*" and not by empty "*speeches.*" The same cry for help was expressed by a group of young singers, who call themselves Way in Record Crew. This was through a music titled, "*We Don Tire--- Wuna Helep We*" (We are tired... You should help us) put to the public on March 5, 2021. The song was literarily a cry for help by the poor masses tired of the appalling experiences and conditions that war brought to them. In the video gram, they displayed images of the populations killed (civilians as well as defence and security forces) which has been estimated at more than

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>x</sup> Richard Bona in a Cameroonian-born American musician, composer, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist. Born in Minta Cameroon on 28 October 1967, he evolves in the musical genres of Jazz fusion, world fusion, ethno jazz, funk, bass guitar. His album *Tiki* released in 2005 worn the best contemporary world music album at the 49<sup>th</sup> Grammy Awards in 2007. He held a professorship of jazz music at New York University. He has worn several awards and international recognitions of jazz music and cultural fusion in evolutionary world music. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Bona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Bona), <http://www.richard-bona.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Richard-Bona-Biography.pdf>).

4000. Arbitrary arrests, torture, detention of civilians, the forceful ejection and migration of the Anglophone masses out of their homes and villages and the raiding and razing of villages. It is estimated that some 765,000 were/are internally displaced by the war and close to 60,000 thousand Anglophone escaped to Nigeria as refugees.<sup>xi</sup> The music further displayed the harsh circumstances and precarious living conditions that the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were exposed to in their homes in the French speaking regions of Cameroon. Most, if not all, had been cut off from their sources of livelihood and happiness. In fact, close to 4 million Cameroonians have been affected in one way or another by the humanitarian crisis.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this paper, we have tried to demonstrate that music is a very important component in the socio-political life of any society. The new liberal dispensation and the liberation laws of the 1990 revolutionised the role of musicians and pop culture in Cameroon. Composers and vocal artists started using their musical skills in criticising and questioning the state of poor governance in Cameroon. In fact, some of them even became human rights musical activists. They were able to use their songs to articulate the sufferings, cruel realities and misfortunes of the poor masses of the society. Within the context of the Anglophone secessionist crisis, which has remained a threat to the unity, social cohesion and *le vivre ensemble*, appeals emerged from both national and international stakeholders requesting the peaceful resolution of the war and a return to peace. Musicians also used their musical prowess to add voices to the pleas for peace, there by demonstrating that they were also actors in the search for peace. They did this through musical activism expressed in the form of grieving songs that demonstrated and depicted the harsh effects of the war on the populations. Their pleas were embodied in the titles of the songs and felt in their tones, seen on their faces and understood in the lyrics that were compelling and telling as they all decried the misfortunes, begged for peace, unity and regretted the outbreak of the war at large. If adequate, veritable and sustainable measures are not implemented in resolving the crisis, then there is fear that Africa may experience a bloody civil war.

#### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

#### **About the Author**

Christian Pagbe Musah is an emerging Cameroonian Historian with a number of publications in international peer review journals. His research interest centers on issues of minorities, ethnicity, identity, development and governance.

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<sup>xi</sup> "Cameroon", International Crisis Group, accessed on 23 March 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>.

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