



Declaration of the “Multi-stakeholder coalition for the fight against misinformation and hate speech during elections in Cameroon,” June 2025

We, members of the Multi-stakeholder Coalition for the fight against misinformation and hate speech during elections in Cameroon, media players, civil society and socio-political actors, lawyers, academics,

Acknowledging that Cameroon is a State Party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,

Acknowledging that Cameroon by its Constitution in Articles 2 & 3, enshrines national sovereignty as belonging to the people and stipulating that political parties and organizations must respect the principles of democracy, sovereignty and national unity,

Affirming that the upcoming elections are a decisive rendez-vous between the Cameroonian people and its history;

Affirming that the dialectic of ideas and the respectful confrontation of political ideologies must be part of the political game and the edification of public opinion for the promotion of democracy,

Recognizing that peace and social cohesion are essential to the sustainable development of the country, requiring the active commitment of all sectors of society,

Reaffirming that the plurality of the media and the democratization of the use of social networks encourage the promotion of the freedom to express one's opinions and convictions, and consequently open up opportunities for public debate to be enriched by the points of view of a larger majority.

We observe that since the beginning of the year, there is a sharp rise in hate speech and tribalism, sometimes inciting violence, and an increase in the spread of false information.

We observe that media professionals, sacrificing the principles and ethics demanded by the conduct of their profession, participate fully and fearlessly in strategies of mass manipulation and incitement to hate and inter-community violence

We sound the alarm about the threats to peace and social cohesion posed by the rise of hate speech and the proliferation of false information through media and social media in the run-up to elections. These threats are helping to create a pervasive climate of hostility in public debate, negatively shaping public opinion on socio-political issues and the democratic future of our country, Cameroon.

We recall that fostering rejection of others and mistrust toward those who are different endangers national peace. Past experiences, both in Cameroon and other countries, have shown that disinformation and the spread of hate speech undermine trust among citizens and create a risk of verbal and even physical violence, particularly in the context of elections.

We call on the national and international community to urgently address the dangerous rise of hate speech and false information, which threaten the foundations of our democratic institutions and the unity of the state.

Indeed, for several months now, we have been observing the spread of hate speech and disinformation taking on several faces and dimensions:

- The fabrication or manipulation of correspondence/communiqués, messages, images/videos, shared massively in the form of viral rumors on media and social media.
- The use of intentionally misleading headlines and content; the dissemination of falsified polls to influence opinion; and impersonation via fake online accounts.
- Intentional manipulation and cunning distortion in the interpretation of facts and laws.
- The popularization of loan words and names aimed at stigmatizing communities and individuals based on their ethnic/community affiliation and ideological choices.
- Verbal confrontations between partisans of different political affiliations turn into insults, slander, vilification, and threats that do not epistemically shape public opinion.
- The propagation of hate speech and false information as part of mass manipulation strategies, skilfully orchestrated by agents in the shadows for unavowed motives.

These misleading contents, which often circulate without prior verification by public figures and web influencers, stir up fears, anxiety, and dangerous rivalries. The unchecked spread of hate speech and ethnic clichés circulating in parallel contribute to setting one group against another. Where dialogue and tolerance should prevail, we are now witnessing the polarization of tensions.

In light of this alarming situation, and to avoid further deepening the social divide, we solemnly call for the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to do the following:

- Authorities must reinforce and apply strictly, equitably, and without discrimination the sanctions prescribed by legislation against anyone responsible for hate speech, incitement to violence, and the dissemination of false information and online content. This must be done while also guaranteeing transparency, promoting public freedoms, and ensuring respect for human rights.

The government is therefore urged to find ways of fostering peace and inclusive dialogue during the elections without resorting to restrictive measures such as internet blackouts, arbitrary arrests, and human rights violations, which have a negative impact on freedom of expression and access to information.

- Media and journalists must prohibit the dissemination of sensational or unsubstantiated content and intensify the rigor of information control. Maintain a commitment to ethical standards that forbid the dissemination of false information, stereotypes, and prejudice and refrain from divisive debates that could exacerbate community and socio-political tensions. Promote peace journalism, which educates and informs without stirring up conflict.

- Political parties and their representatives must refrain from fuelling divisions. Make it your duty to convey soothing messages and to work towards transparency, rather than aggravating the debate. Do not yield to the traps of manipulative campaigns and infiltration strategies.

- Public prosecutors and magistrates: Guarantee exemplary, responsive, and balanced justice by mobilizing all available legal levers in strict compliance with the rule of law. Initiate criminal proceedings when an offense is detected, in order to represent the public interest
- Influencers and public figures on social media are urged to refrain from misinformation and disinformation, promoting tolerance in elections.
- Civil society organizations should adopt a more inclusive and educational stance more than ever before, promoting dialogue between communities and stepping up awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives for peace and harmonious coexistence.
- Digital platforms monitoring the situation in Cameroon should actively improve content moderation. They should develop partnerships with local organizations to help limit the spread of fake news and raise awareness about the issues surrounding misinformation and hate speech.
- Cameroonian citizens and the diaspora should take individual responsibility by refraining from sharing dubious information or hate messages. Instead, share inclusive messages that promote peaceful dialogue, tolerance, and acceptance of others, regardless of political or ideological differences. It is essential to enhance your vigilance and cultivate a critical mindset by verifying the authenticity of any messages before sharing them.
- It is important for the international community and friends of Cameroon to urgently support and strengthen collaboration in developing local initiatives that promote social cohesion while combating hate speech and disinformation.

At this critical moment, the Multi-Stakeholder Coalition for the Fight Against Disinformation and Hate Speech is urging everyone to actively prioritize the general interest and national solidarity over any political or partisan interests. By remaining vigilant, demanding the truth, and engaging in peaceful dialogue leading up to the upcoming elections, we can work together to build a better Cameroon.

Signed by :

1. Association Civic Watch (Civic Watch)
2. Cameroon Bar Association
3. Paradigm Initiative
4. Network for Solidarity, Empowerment and Transformation for All (NEWseta)
5. KTDral Consulting
6. Eduk Media
7. Sisterspeak237
8. Junior Chamber International (JCI)
9. Cameroon National Youth Council (CNYC)
10. Action pour le Respect des Droits de l' Homme et la Dignité Humaine (ARDHU)
11. Big Steps Outreach Network (BONET)-Cameroon
12. StopIntox
13. Association des Blogueurs du Cameroun (ABC)
14. Global Initiative For Digital Inclusion and Communication (GIDICOM)
15. United Youth Organisation (UYO)
16. Local Youth Corner (LOYOC)

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