



Dr. Tebo: Mr. Tamba, thank you for taking you time to honor this invitation and it is a pleasure speaking to Freedom Magazine. If I may ask, who is Tamba?

Achu Tamba: Just an ordinary boy.

Dr. Tebo: You just told me that you are a freelance reporter and you were covering a story that has just resurfaced about the regime of Cameroon failing to meet up with her international obligations vis a vis refugees from some west and central African regions who are currently seeking protection. What really are these persons and in a nutshell, who are refugees and displaced persons?

Achu Tamba: They are men, women and children fleeing war, persecution and political upheaval from neighboring Tchad, some from central African republic and others as far as cote d ivoire.. They are uprooted with little warning, enduring great hardship during their flight. They become refugees when they cross borders and seek safety in Cameroon. As such, warrants protection in line with the Geneva Convention.

Dr. Tebo: The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by its 1967 protocol defines a refugee as a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..." Do you mean that all these persons you are talking of fall under this category? If yes, why should the Cameroon government treat them as 'petit bandits' and if no, why do you feel they need protection? Just because they are out of their borders and it happens that their country situation is shaky? Don't you feel that they may even pose a big threat to Cameroon given that the presidential elections are months away?

Achu Tamba: The Cameroon government is claiming just that, that they will not recognize persons who have participated in war crimes and violations of humanitarian and human rights law, including the crime of terrorism, as refugees. They say these persons claiming to be refugees are specifically excluded from the protection accorded to refugees given that they aught to be turned in for justice to proof their innocence.

Dr. Tebo: How many refugees are there, and who makes up the majority of the refugee population?

Achu Tamba: we are talking here of about 2000 persons of diverse backgrounds and countries.80 percent of these refugees are women and children who are more vulnerable to their unstable conditions.

Dr. Tebo: Are there any plans options for resettlement?

Achu Tamba: No, Very few refugees are ever even considered for resettlement. There are three internationally accepted durable solutions for refugees:

Dr. Tebo: What happens to these refugees then, this is because, international law warrants some three understandable solutions:

1. Voluntary repatriation. Refugees return to their former country of nationality when conditions prevail that allow return in safety and dignity; Local integration.
2. Local settlement and integration of refugees in their country of first asylum upon receiving agreement from the host country; Resettlement. Most frequently used for refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or human rights are at risk in the country where they have sought refuge.
3. Resettlement to a third country becomes the primary objective or priority when there is no other way to guarantee the legal or physical security of the refugee. Any hope Cameroon or any other country will be pressured to consider any of the three options?

Achu Tamba: The problem is that, with elections at the corner, Biya is playing the game of the wise one in which most of the cards are under the table instead of a plain field open to genuine competition.

Dr. Tebo: This is almost the third time you are raising the issue of elections in Cameroon at the corner. Is this a priority for Cameroon for now given that there is no credible election commission and neither Biya nor Fru Ndi is willing to usher in new faces? Also the southern Cameroons youth league has vowed to engage Yaoundé in any open confrontation after October 1, 2011. What really is happening?

Achu Tamba: Cameroon is even a bad case compared to Yemen, Ivory Coast and Lybia. The geopolitics of this central African country is a time bomb yet unnoticed by the international community. Firstly, Cameroon is Babylon in Africa with about 274 ethnic groups, by-cultural differences and linguistic marginalization. The Southern Cameroons are bent on saying goodbye to an unholy marriage which they say Biya severed in 1985 after he killed the spirit of the fake 1972 referendum. Hundreds of Biya's enemies languishing in jail accused of corruption, the memories of Ahidjo still fresh in the minds of the Hausas and vibrant diaspora population who have been engulfed by the social media and the events in North Africa and the Middle East. In a nutshell, let us just wait and see how the country will look like after November.

Dr. Tebo: If I may ask, is Biya contesting and who are the other candidates:

Achu Tamba: Definitely, King Biya will be a sure candidate and winner.

Dr. Tebo: Why

Achu Tamba: he is a contestant and arbitrator at the same time. He control ELECAM, MINAT and the Supreme court in the absence of a constitutional court

which he has deliberately refused to established. After 28 long years and almost half a century starting as director of civil cabinet, then prime minister, president and now emperor, Biya is well too good for any true opposition or threat.

Dr. Tebo: going back to the refugee problem, can the IRC intervene? Or better still can the IRC help them get refugee status in Cameroon or elsewhere?

Achu Tamba: The International Rescue Committee does not conduct direct refugee resettlement. You must approach the nearest office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for assistance. The UNHCR will determine if your case qualifies for resettlement to any of the international resettlement countries.

Dr. Tebo: We are running out of schedule, and I wish to thank you for your time and dedication in the work of true journalism and human rights

Achu Tamba: It's my pleasure.