

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

NOPE (NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EMPLOYEES), TOURNONS LA PAGE (LET'S TURN THE PAGE), ROLBG & NATIONAL PLATFORM OF CIVIL SOCIETY

On the sidelines of TOURNONS LA PAGE (LET'S TURN THE PAGE), ROLBG and the NATIONAL PLATFORM OF CIVIL SOCIETY (NPSC) in Port-Gentil as part of an awareness-raising campaign organized by the local pro-democracy associations, the three National Civil Society from Libreville, spoke at the headquarters of the National Organization of Petroleum Employees (NOPE) with the executive board of the union, leader in the oil sector and Gabonese related activities.

The aim of this meeting was to support NOPE in the current conflict with the so-called oil companies supported by the Public Authorities.

In the course of the interview, NOPE, LET'S TURN THE PAGE, ROLBG and the NATIONAL PLATFORM OF CIVIL SOCIETY made the following observations and proposals:

A- Observations:

- Inability of the Government to achieve genuine social dialogue favourable to the interests of workers by promoting fair, productive and harmonious industrial relations;
- Collusion between certain magistrates and certain unscrupulous companies headmen with the effect of permanent denial of rights, characteristic of opaque judicial decisions against NOPE, in every strike situation;
- Obvious breach of trade union freedoms constitutionally enshrined in the Gabonese Republic and recognized by international legal standards, in particular the various international conventions of the ILO.
- Unreasonable assault of the Maurel Prom Company workers in the ONAL site by police officers and gendarmes, instrumentalized by the General manager of the company and, behaving in the face of the world as militiamen;
- Replacement by Maurel & Prom Company General Management of the workers on strike by staffs from external companies, with risk of massive loss of jobs;
- Environmental pollution at the Maurel & Prom ONAL site due to the replacement of striking workers by external staff;
- Violations of the rights of Gabonese workers by the French oil companies whose actions are tinged with neo-colonialist reflexes;
- The deliberate and flagrant violations of human dignity: workers are thus exploited by their employers, who reduce them to slavery in modern times (Modern Alienation);
- Political trials and lawsuits against the NOPE, organized maliciously by a justice losing its orientation and by a class of men in the shadow, within the Executive Power, resolved at all costs to silence any denunciation in the sector for the sole benefit of their selfish interests.

B- Proposals:

- Establishment of an immediate partnership with NOPE for effective actions against the illegal behaviour of oil multinationals;
- Implementation of an international media campaign targeting non-ethical companies operating in Gabon;
- Development of awareness campaigns through the media (round tables on television, passages in international channels, publications in the written press, mobilization of social networks against any action by multinationals infringing human rights, laws and regulations Of the work in Gabon;
- Partnerships and membership in international pressure groups and initiatives related to extractive industries;
- Joint commitment to denounce corruption and opacity in the oil sector;
- Legal proceedings abroad against companies that violate human rights like Maurel and Prom, whose French General Director, *Christophe BLANC*, shows cynical, slavery and even racist behaviour towards Gabonese workers;

Consequently, the three organizations of the National Civil Society call on ONEP to remain credible and independent of any influence to defend the rights and interests of its members, which are legitimate expectations of Gabonese workers in the petroleum sector and related activities;

Finally, they call on the public authorities to:

- Stop stigmatization and all ongoing harassment toward trade union leaders;
- Remove the army and Security Forces from the Maurel & Prom oil sites;
- To initiate an independent investigation into the police violence observed on the workers of the ONAL site on Thursday, February 23rd, 2017, as well as on the pollution recorded at the site;
- To expel from Gabon *Mr. Christophe BLANC*, Managing Director at Maurel & Prom, supposedly responsible for the safety, health and lives of workers he assigns on oil sites, for his direct responsibility on the attacks against the striking workers on site, since he was the one who ordered and misled the Defence and the Security Forces to intervene.

Libreville declaration, the 10th of March 2017.

<u>FOR NOPE,</u>	<u>LET'S TURN THE PAGE,</u>	<u>FOR ROLBG</u>	<u>Pour la NPCS,</u>
The General Secretary	The National Coordinator	National Executive President	The President
Sylvain MAYABI BINET	Marc ONA ESSANGUI,	Georges MPAGA,	Révérant Georges Bruno NGOUSSI