

Script “Let’s talk human rights”
FNF Human Rights Podcast episode Cameroon

Host: Nangamso Kwinana

Guest: Dr Michaela Lissowsky and Human Rights Defenders Nora and Elvis

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[00:00:00] **news clip:** [00:00:00] All right, moving up the continent. Now I said, we're going to be looking at Cameroon. That has been a country of conflict for years. Tentative, ceasefire talks were announced last year between the Cameroonian government and suspicion as fighters, demanding independence, the countries to Anglophone phone regions, but reports of abuse continue into 2021 to swap to reporters.

[00:00:24] And this edition. English separatists, the declared independence unilaterally a thousand days ago, but at independence now seems as far away as the hostilities. In Cameroon's English, south, which they refer to as Ambazonia images of slaughter pepper, the internet Catholic bishops in the UK have even intervened making a call for an end to what they're calling human rights abuses in Canberra precedent.

[00:00:47] President be as military, it's been called into question, the separate us government and XL, even accusing beers, forces of genocide. Western Cameroon is the scene of a four year bloody conflict between armed Anglophone [00:01:00] groups and the army.

[00:01:06] **Nangamso Kwinana:** Hello and welcome to “Let’s Talk Human Rights“. We are glad to have your company on our audio journey through Africa. My name is Nangamso Kwinana and I am delighted that you have tuned in again. In our previous episodes, we met experts from West, East and Southern Africa who shed light on the human rights’ situation on the ground and shared their stories. If you missed those episodes, do take a listen!

[00:01:32] Our next series of episodes will introduce you to the very people who actively stand up for human rights in Africa despite strong headwinds, and the work they do as Human Rights Defenders. We will meet Human Rights Defenders from different countries, listen to their stories, and learn what motivated them to become Human Rights Defenders in the first place.

[00:02:05] N Now, before we reveal which part of Africa we are going to today, we have invited an expert who will first explain the concept of Human Rights Defenders in more detail.

Dr Michaela Lissowsky (Lissofsky) is a Senior Advisor for Human Rights, Politics and the Rule of Law at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Welcome Dr Michaela Lissowsky, it’s great to have you with us today – let’s get started.

- Michaela, you are currently working on a publication on the topic of "Human Rights Defenders – Fighting for Democracy and Freedom". Please explain to us, what qualities define a person as a Human Rights Defender?

[00:02:48] **Dr Michaela Lissowsky:** [00:02:48] Well, human rights defenders promote the rights of others individually or in a team. They strive for the protection of human. They are highly [00:03:00] motivated. They raised their voice for the realization of human rights and they stand up for justice. What defines defenders privately their human rights actions. However often they do not receive the proper acceptance and adequate recognition in society.

[00:03:21] Defending human rights is quite often dangerous because they received. Often they are intended to intimidate and silence them. Most of the time, human rights defenders fight an uphill battle to convince both. The citizens on the one side, as well as the governments on the other sides that human rights are crucial. Always crucial in a developing and sustainable society.

[00:03:51] **Nangamsso Kwinana:** [00:03:51] Thank you very much for elaborating and defining those qualities for us. Now, I'd like to also find out [00:04:00] I'm aware that you've taken part in a recent workshop, organized by FNF Africa that brought together human rights actors from across Africa. One very important message to me is that the UN general assembly has passed a special UN declaration dedicated to the work of human rights defenders more than 20 years ago. That declaration respect human rights defenders as vulnerable groups. Could you please elaborate on this declaration and also its implications.

[00:04:41] **Dr Michaela Lissowsky:** [00:04:41] So on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights in 1998, that UN declaration, you have mentioned that was adopted by the UN General Assembly. It's a special declaration dedicated [00:05:00] on human rights defenders and their right. The declaration itself applies existing standards of international law to the protection of human rights defenders. The declaration itself recognizes on the other side, the right to promote and to protect universally recognized human rights.

[00:05:22] And the declaration says that each state has a responsibility and duty to implement human rights and especially. To protect human rights defenders and then national law. The legal concept of human rights defenders is not focused on a specific professional group, only so such as you imagine, journerlists and bloggers or lawyers, but the concept is rather applied more broadly. Human rights defenders work in different fields in order to combat violence, [00:06:00] address human rights abuse. And improve the human rights situation on the ground.

[00:06:06] **Nangamsso Kwinana:** [00:06:06] Thank you very much, Michaela. It's clear that the declaration is very important. I think it's a very important point for human rights defenders across the globe. Do you have any advice that you would like to give to our listeners and human rights defenders that may be tuned in?.

[00:06:25] **Dr Michaela Lissowsky:** [00:06:25] Well, human rights. As I've said, human rights defenders raise their voice for the realization of human rights and they stand up for justice. They raised their voice for their own human rights, but also for yours and for mine. Even so I do live far away in Germany. I did not therefore greater recognition for their work and for their contribution to peace and sustainable development.

[00:06:54] Human rights, defenders shape, immediate and longterm future of societies. We need them [00:07:00] and we need their work everywhere. Worldwide. Thank you.

[00:07:04] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:07:04] Thank you very much for sharing these highly interesting insights with us, Dr. Michaela Lissowsky it's been amazing engaging with you this day.

[00:07:16] With this clear definition of Human Rights Defenders in mind, I am already looking forward to what our two guests are going to share with us today. Elvis and Nora are from Cameroon and are committed to human rights.

Cameroon is a country in West Central Africa. It is bordered by Nigeria to the west and north, Chad to the north-east, the Central African Republic to the east and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo to the south. The official languages of Cameroon are French and English.

1. In Cameroon security forces and armed groups keep violating human rights.
2. The government is cracking down on peaceful dissenters and on critics - and Amnesty International reports that torture and other ill-treatment of people in detention is occurring.

After the controversial election in 2018, when President Paul Biya, aged 86, won his seventh term, Freedom of expression, association, and assembly continued to be curtailed.

According to the Human Rights Watch Report, the government denied entry to the country to a Human Rights Watch researcher.

There have been numerous attacks on the civil population by the terrorist group Boko Haram in the past. Thousands of people died in clashes between the terrorist militia and armed forces.

In addition, the so-called "anglophone crisis" has prevailed since 2016. Cameroon achieved independence in the 1960s. There are *still* formally two official languages, two education systems and two legal systems, even though the French-speaking and English-speaking territories were officially merged by the government all those years ago.

This has created a number of discrepancies and injustices in the country, where Francophones have received preferential treatment by the government. In 2016 English-speaking minorities protested their unfair treatment. The military was deployed against the protesters, people were killed and imprisoned. Thousands of refugees left the country. This is an ongoing human rights crisis.

Today, we would like to paint a picture of the current situation on the ground.

To this end, we are very happy to **welcome Nora Shuyeh and Elvis Wepngong.** (Weapongong)

Nora holds a bachelor degree in Sociology and Anthropology from the University of **Buea (Boya)** Cameroon. She has been working with the Organization for Gender, Civic Engagement and Youth Development (**OGCEYOD**) (Okseyod), since 2017 as an Administrative Assistant, Field Project supervisor and now as Project Officer. It has been an incredible journey working with women and youths in communities. Nora has organized and coordinated training and workshops to sensitize women and girls to the realities of Gender based violence and abuse, menstrual hygiene, leadership and human rights as well as train women on Entrepreneurship. So far, she has reached out to more than 1 000 women and girls in **Limbe**, Cameroon.

Elvis holds a Master of Science in International Development Management and a PRINCE2 Certified Professional degree from the University of Westminster, London. He also holds a Bachelor of Science in Management from the University of **Buea (Boya)**, Cameroon.

Elvis has more than 16 years of work experience in development management, occupying the position of the Executive Director of the "Organization for Gender, Civic Engagement and Youth Development " (OGCEYOD), a National Non-governmental Organization located in Cameroon since July 2005. The organization receives an average of 13 interns and volunteers each year and has received 10 international volunteers since 2010, who he trains and mentors.

His crowning achievement includes a successful application on behalf of OGCEYOD to obtain a special consultative status with the economic and social department of the UN (ECOSOC).

He initiated the expansion of OGCEYOD human rights activities to Eastern and Northern regions of Cameroon where early marriages, female genital mutilation, trafficking of persons especially children and other forms of gender-based violence are common.

[00:12:30] Elvis and Nora, we are very glad that you have found the time to talk to us. We already mentioned the so-called Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Now I'd like to find out from both of you. And if you could please answer first Elvis, do you belong to the Francophone or Anglophone citizens of Cameroon? And could you briefly recap what has happened since late 2016? [00:13:00] How did this conflict become the root of instability that plagued the country up to, to date?

[00:13:08] **Elvis:** [00:13:08] Thank you very much. Um, well I would say that I am a bilingual version of Cameroon because, uh, my father is from the Francophone region of one of the Francophone regions of Cameroon and my mom from the one of the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

[00:13:25] But I grew up in the English speaking part of Cameroon. So most of my attributes and manner of doing things reflect the cultures of the Anglophone part of Cameroon. Um, then, uh, talking about, uh, the roots of that is on the phone problems. It is traced, but I would say it's been traced back to the colonial era.

[00:13:50] After the First World War we know that Cameroon, then the German come in room a was shared between France and Britain. The British [00:14:00] territory comprise of the Southern Cameroons and northern Cameroons. And in there, uh, the referendum held on the 1st of February, 1961, northern Cameroon choose Nigeria while the southern, Cameroon choose the Republic of Cameroon. Fast-forwarding to the independence, to the

Constitutional Conference that took place on July 17, uh, 1961, which, uh, was organized to create a constitution for a new Federation states of, uh, British Cameroon and the Republic of Cameroon. They, the federal Republic of Cameroon came up into fusion in 1st of October, 1961.

[00:14:44] But it was converted to a unitary system in, uh, 1972. Uh, uh, so I'm giving that background, that history, because that is where this whole thing started, this whole problem, because the, [00:15:00] when the, these two, uh, the southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon sat together, the decision was to create a federal Republic of Cameroon.

[00:15:08] But along the line, this was changed, uh, you know, without really consulting with the Cameroons and that has not been working. So the English speaking regions have always felt oppressed and marginalized until, you know, they couldn't take it anymore. Reasons why the conflict escalated in 2016, starting with the teachers who came out, you know, not, uh, Uh, enjoying the way the educational system has been put together.

[00:15:38] Uh, and the later on the lawyers also came, you know, up and they started revolting. So the root of this crisis lies in the badly organized reunification that was based on centralization and assimilation. Um, in the economic and administrative marginalization of these [00:16:00] Southern Cameroonians. So the marginalization can be seen in institutions that have been created by the states, not reflecting the bilingual nature of the country.

[00:16:10] The failure to keep the promise is made at the . Uh, conference is amongst the grievances of the Anglophone militants. So those dots is like the base, and that is what has really built what we are seeing today, full blown crisis, where we have, uh, now, um, the Ambazonian forces labelled as the, the terrorist at the moment. And they have been op and they have not been able to give up. And there is insecurity in board regions at the momment.

[00:16:41] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:16:41] Thank you very much. All of us for sharing that brief description with us. If you could please come in Nora and give us an indication, how does the 2016 crisis affect you and your families, and also you work?,

[00:16:57] **Nora:** [00:16:57] uh, thank you for that. [00:17:00] Um, so far it has really been challenged. Because, uh, 2016, that's when I left the university, I graduated and. Getting a job. At that time, it was very challenging because with the open down with the lock downs, the every thing was just tough, stagnant. So getting a job at that time was very difficult. And so we also had PE companies shutting down. So it, it, it played a lot on myself and my family as well as every other person in Cameroon. And so that's how I got to get to OGCEYOD. And then I said, I can just be at home, doing nothing, instead of just waiting for when the crisis is going to stop. And then start getting, trying to see how I can find a job.

[00:17:56] I got now into OGCEYOD and started with a volunteer [00:18:00] to volunteer and later that's how I grew to where I am now. So it has really been challenging for myself and for my family, with my mom. Um, my mom is a single mother and we had two of us. I have a younger brother, and so I intended going in for a master's program, but I could not go because my younger brother got to the university.

[00:18:26] Finishes high school. I had to get in university and struggling on her own. She could not afford to send both of us to school. So I had to withdraw for him to get into his

own, uh, getting to the university, at least half a degree. While I struggled to see how I can get some funds and support her so I can enroll into a master's program.

[00:18:48] So it has really been challenging for me. And up to this moment because things are not the same since my mom is a teacher. Sometimes with the shutdown, there are no schools. So we [00:19:00] dealt with the fact that schools cannot function normally they don't get the pay, they have the same. So sometimes there are monster you go on, we know salary.

[00:19:13] And so it affects even the wellbeing at home. I was getting, so get some of the things that we actually want to have.

[00:19:22] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:19:22] Thank you very much for sharing your personal relay with us, in your opinion, what are the potential solutions to the conflict and what would you say should the government do? Is there a principal need for reform?

[00:19:39] **Nora:** [00:19:39] I will say that, um, there should be another dialogue because we had the, the national dialogue that took place 2019. Uh, many people don't see that dialogue as, as see it as a way that the government wanted to use [00:20:00] to solve the problem. They just saw it as some kind of camouflage. So to just entice the people so the crisis could stop it. At this point nothing concrete has come out yet though people give, give their opinions and they are trying to work on certain solutions, but nothing concrete is really coming out of it. So I think that another dialogue should be held so that they involve everybody. If some people are not included.

[00:20:31] In the first dialogue, it should be included in this next dialog so that everybody can speak and they shouldn't come with one mind like I shouldn't come on say this and my, the other party should just accept it, but it should come with an open mind where there'll be room for collaboration. There should be able to think, come with valid solution solutions that will be permanent. And [00:21:00] that will be beneficial to everybody. In that way I think that gradually we are going to come to an end of the crisis. And also, I think that the ... should be able to make some changes in some policies that the folks are feeling left out or they're feeling suppressed.

[00:21:19] So some district make some changes in this policies in that way. I think that its going to be like a breakthrough so that everybody can start coming together. And then we can all get to the peace that we have been so looking forward to.

[00:21:36] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:21:36] Thank you very much, Nora. I sincerely, also hope that the reach of our conversation today does extend to some of the government service in Cameroon.

[00:21:47] **Elvis:** would you come in as the bilingual speak of both English and French how can a country in which the population does not speak a mutual [00:22:00] language prevents such conflicts in the future?

[00:22:04] **Elvis:** [00:22:04] Well, uh, thank you. Uh, would, uh, start by just saying that, uh, you know, Cameroon half over 250 ethnic groups and they are. Uh, 24 major tribal languages, uh, groups used in the country alongside French and English. You already mentioned as the official language, the multiplicity of this ethnic conflict. That is, uh, uh,

both armed and unarmed. The crisis of the tribalistic orientation of the states, tensions between communities and the emergency of it. No regional social movements are all indicators of these, uh, present crisis that we are facing right now. Fostering cultural tolerance through capacity-building and cultural exchange visits. Yeah, will give, uh, Cameroonians, especially, [00:23:00] um, because I would say that, uh, when we in the country, when you see an Anglophone, somebody somebody's English speaking, part speaking, you know, uh, in any forum out in the Francophone region, they classify them or

[00:23:18] They, they call them like people from the Northwest. So it's a way of insult, you know, but what did they do that they generalize all the time, you know? But they don't actually know, uh, the culture of these people are times if they get to come and they get to see the similarity. So if this forum something like this it's been created, and I think it's in one of the projects we are working on recently, you know, because we think that if we have this, it would help to foster is full coexistence. This can be, you know, it can be accomplished, you know, right now the government has created the bilingualism. Which, uh, it's there to foster [00:24:00] this. It's not just English and French, but to make sure that there is peaceful coexistence between the different, uh, tribes, the different languages, different cultures.

[00:24:10] So if they can work together with the civil society to make sure that there is this understanding, I think it's a potential way forward to prevent in future conflicts.

[00:24:20] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:24:20] Thank you very much, Elvis. You both work for the Organization for Gender, Civic Engagement and Youth Development. You carry out projects in the area of human rights and your target groups are women, children, and youth.

[00:24:38] Moreover, you do what you do because you want to improve the quality of living of vulnerable children, youth and women. Nora if we could please start with you. Could you tell us more about what your job looks like? What is your story and why do you work for a human rights [00:25:00] organization?

[00:25:00] **Nora:** [00:25:00] Oh, I got to this level. My job is very interesting. I must say it's really interesting to me. I just enjoy doing it. Um, how I, I started my journey. When I was most younger, I think when I was in secondary school, I realized that I had friends who shared a lot of, of their problems with me. The intimate things, send your families, which they will not discuss with that person.

[00:25:37] So I don't know. I just kind of, when they share those stories for me, I just keep them, I never discussed them with any other person. I just kept it on. So when I got to the university, then I understood that when you get to do counseling, uh, Being able to be reserved [00:26:00] about people's stories. It doesn't talk about it to other people.

[00:26:05] It's it's something that it's, it's good. People get to want to share their problems with you because they know that they won't hear it from other people. So gradually I was so interested in becoming a social worker and helping other people give them solutions to their problems. So gradually when I, when I got into the university, by the time I was leaving, I was looking at the bigger picture of how can I help, not just a few people around me, how can I help other people?

[00:26:40] I started looking at, um, one of my concerns was the issue of rape because rape is something that happens here and many people don't talk about. It's only when you get

closer to somebody. Who has gone through that experience. And maybe [00:27:00] the person has observed that, oh, we, this person, I can discuss this. I can't discuss that.

[00:27:05] And the person who will not talk about it. And so that's when they have that level of this find that, oh, this person, this level of level of confidentiality. And so they come close to talk about it. Then I was just so worried about seeing when I hear cases of young children being raped. I was like, no, no, no. How does this happen? And people are quiet and those who are able to talk about they don't get the closure that they need. Well, sometimes when you talk to them, they'll be like, they do see the need to even talk to somebody in an organization working there because they won't get that closure. Or when they report to the police station, they won't get the closure because if the perpetrator comes from the family, it's rich.

[00:27:56] And so they'll tend to close it off. So it [00:28:00] got me worried. I was like, how do I help these people get the closure that they saw me? That's how I got into to OGCEYOD.

[00:28:08] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:28:08] Thank you for sharing your story with us, Nora and Elvis. If we may please hear from you what motivated you to become a human rights defender and stand up for the rights of others and those of yourself.

[00:28:24] **Elvis:** [00:28:24] Really for me growing up from a very low income family, you know, uh, got me thinking from my childhood, you know, seeing other kids, uh, their parents are able to buy them bicycle toys and you know, my own parents can, they can afford that for, for me or my siblings. And, you know, we have these, we have the desire for.

[00:28:51] Uh, things like items like that, they, we couldn't get them. So I, I started thinking what, you know, what can be done so [00:29:00] that every parent, they are able to, uh, have the, the means to purchase this for their children. So I, from that early age, I started looking at any policy, you know, um, I started wishing that, you know, things would change and as I grew up.

[00:29:19] I came to realize, uh, that, uh, equal opportunity can be a reality with the right capacity building and an environment, having the right opportunities to enable change while in the university. I concluded that to be part of a change I wish to see, uh, I need to devise a strategy to empower communities, to maximize opportunities around them.

[00:29:47] So, uh, defending the rights of the press was at the foundation and center of my goals. I have been serving humanity since after my undergraduate, uh, [00:30:00] program in 2004, um, together with a group of proactive, uh, and like-minded childhood, uh, you know, people who had the same, like like-minded childhood as mine.

[00:30:14] You know, that's how we founded the Organization for Gender Civic Engagement and Youth Development. And we have been focusing our activities on women and youth, uh, you know, and, um, since the inception, you know, we have been carrying out activities just like, uh, Nora has already said, we, we look at these two groups because we know they are the two most vulnerable groups in our society.

[00:30:40] Not that the men are not going to move by the year. Uh, you know, when we are looking at everything happening around, even to deal with a crisis and everything, it impacts more on the children, the youth and the women, you know? So we, these are the groups

that we thought we should work with. And, um, uh, we, we do a lot of projects on, [00:31:00] uh, gender based violence focusing on, especially on rape. We are part cases in court. So you think that is. Really part of my motivation, you are able to have these cases and I don't care. And I don't, I'm not afraid of the perpetrators. They might come with all the money they have, you know, they always have this thing on the poorer people. Those are the victims, the children from the poorer families.

[00:31:29] So we tend to stand and, you know, put the resources forward and see that we can get the justice that it deserves. That is, you know, being, being able to put a smile on people's face. You know, being able to give them a solution a way forward. At times it's just counseling in the office. At times we put our resources at times when we just sit and we'll give them a shorter, you know, as a human rights defender, those are the things that we need to do.

[00:31:57] The small things. Those are the things that really matter. So [00:32:00] just being there for other people, you know, that is the motivation for doing this, knowing that you can uplift somebody by just giving a shorter, by just helping out with some resources. So that is the motivation. And that's what has gotten me right to where, where I am right now.

[00:32:18] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:32:18] Thank you to both you Elvis and Nora. Now we have already noted at the beginning of this episode, that it is often difficult for human rights defenders to find acceptance in society. You address topics that are uncomfortable. And that sometimes may criticize the people and the habits. Being a human rights defenders, often an uphill battle to convince both the citizens as well as the governments, that human rights are crucial for a developing and sustainable society.

[00:32:59] Elvis. Please, could you [00:33:00] come back and tell us what does your family, and what do your friends say about the work that you do? Have you ever been in a situation where you was strongly criticized or even threatened?

[00:33:14] **Elvis:** [00:33:14] What my family and friends? They do think about my work. Uh, I would say that, um, my family and friends are really supportive. Uh, what I do, um, back in the past, you know, they, they all thought I would get myself into trouble by doing that and have unnecessary on. But I tend to always, uh, I really have built my skills in advocacy and lobbying. So reduce a lot of those, uh, uh, situations where my life would really be in so much danger.

[00:33:51] Tho you can always, uh, be 100% sure. But when it comes to, um, attend some of the cases with that, we do work with, [00:34:00] especially on sexual violence on, on trafficking. It that's where it becomes, it becomes challenging with the perpetrators because they do feel you might get calls. You are being threatened. You know, that if you keep on with this case, they are going to come up after you personally.

[00:34:17] So there's that trade that comes at times. The, the perpetrators of violence or when, uh, you know, these people, they have the means to pay the magistrate and cases are been thrown out of court. And you have to take them back to court and people start saying that they'll use other means to follow you up.

[00:34:35] So you, you are in this place where you are in a title. But the thing is, you know, you are doing what is right. I know I'm doing what's right. So I always keep to it. And I always

push forward. I encourage the, the, the family of the, of the victims teams that we need to push on and get the, the, the, the justice that, you know, the children they should have. Then.

[00:34:58] And that is it. [00:35:00] It goes with, um, um, Even at times doing economic empowerment programs where you are trying to get women empowered in their..., their husbands comfortable for that to happen because they want to be the ones giving to their wives. And it's difficult telling them that if your wife has to start making enough income as well, it will be good for the family.

[00:35:24] So there are those, sufficients where they come at you. So it's mostly not from family and friends. But from the communities that we work with at times dates, they are innocent. They don't allow us access. It been in situations where we have been followed from your house. Because we went there to provide help, but the family that we had to run for our lives. So it, that is how it has been life threatening at times. But we just keep on,

[00:35:50] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:35:50] I want to thank both of you for sharing your stories with us. And I want to appreciate you for also sharing. The journey of how [00:36:00] you initiated OGCEYOD, the Organization for Gender, Civic Engagement, and Youth Development. Thank you so much for sharing what has been an enlightenment engagement for me? And I do also hope for the listeners that have tuned in.

[00:36:19] As the two final questions before we part, I'd like to find out from you, Nora. Just as a final parting shot. Why do you think it is important for the average citizen to care about human rights?

[00:36:35] **Nora:** [00:36:35] I think like the average citizen should care about human rights, because it's always said that ignorance is not an excuse in the law. So sometimes people don't understand that they have, this right they don't even know about it. And so they don't care. And that's why when people find themselves in certain situations, they can't get out of it [00:37:00] because they don't know anything about their rights. So I think that. It's important for an average citizen to have some knowledge on human rights so that when they get into certain situations, they can know what to see and say confidently.

[00:37:16] So nobody overrides them in that way. People don't trample on others because they feel that they are on top. They can do anything and get it to them. Because, well, somebody knows that you do not know your rights. The person can trample on you at any time, but the moment you understand your rights people, don't, don't treat you anyway way because they know that if they are going against our rights, you know what to do to defend yourself.

[00:37:46] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:37:46] And lastly, Elvis, in your opinion, how can we achieve a fair, peaceful and free Africa?

[00:37:56] **Elvis:** [00:37:56] I, I think the first point I have, uh, we [00:38:00] can do that through collaboration. Now I understand that we already have a lot of collaboration happening, but, um, I think that the kind of collaboration that really gets us, you know, to come together and look at how we can make, do, and use of our, our resources that we have, because, uh, what I have noticed over the years, Um, we have this resources in Africa, but most often we choose to send them out of, uh, to European countries or to the Western

world for them to do the processing and they now send finished product and it's more exciting. When we have all it takes to, to, uh, process this product. So, uh, this, uh, so that is one of the things is collaboration and Africa needs to define a system that will sustain this partnership. It has to be what works for them. Yeah. [00:39:00] I have had meetings with a lot of people who say, oh, the way it looks like democracy is in walking. I'm not saying that it's, but the host, it didn't work in what can work for us. That will still make sure that the, human rights is being respected, make sure that the opportunities are equal economic growth on every other thing. So we should look for a system that can sustain the partnership that I want to build the collaboration that will be.

[00:39:25] So then the last thing is do AF African countries have independence. Most are still being remotely controlled by the ex uh, colonial masters. I'll take an example, uh, you know, French still interfere in affairs of their ex colonies. That is one thing I may assume, you know, France accepted only on independence on paper for his colonies, but sign binding corporation accord detailing the nature of the, our relations with France in [00:40:00] particular ties to France and colonial currencies, France educational system. Military and commercial preferences, Africans have the capacity to flourish better. If the invisible hands on their leaders are removed for them to be accountable to the public.

[00:40:20] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:40:20] Thank you Elvis. And thank you, Nora, for sharing insights, for sharing knowledge and for painting the picture on the ground and Cameroon for us today. Thank you to both of you.

[00:40:31] **Elvis:** [00:40:31] Thank you.

[00:40:32] **Nora:** [00:40:32] Thank you very much.

[00:40:34] **Nangamso Kwinana:** [00:40:34] T This has been another jam packed episode and has certainly shed some light on human rights issues in Cameroon as well as the importance of Human Rights Defenders. These are some of the things that really stood out to me in today's episodes.

Take home points:

- Personal motivation and a value for human rights is a really important aspect when it comes to being a Human Rights Defender and as Nora said, there is no excuse for ignorance. How would you like to become a Human Rights Defender in your own context?
- I really enjoyed what Elvis mentioned about collaboration being a key factor in a free and fair Africa.
- As Dr Michaela Lissowsky said - Human Rights Defenders represent the rights of others. And with human rights violations occurring daily, we can see that in order for us to move forward as a continent - human rights defenders need to be respected and protected.

This was the Cameroon episode of "Let's talk human rights - the FNF Africa podcast exploring human rights issues". If you enjoyed the podcast, listen to our previous episodes!

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