

**NO LEGAL DOCUMENT, NO JUSTICE: WHEN THE LACK OF LEGAL
IDENTITY CONDEMNS THE BEDZANG INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITY TO PERPETUAL INJUSTICE**



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Shortly thereafter, gendarmes went to the Bedzang workers, not to hear their complaint, but to intimidate and threaten them. They demanded the presentation of **National Identity Cards (NIC)**, fully aware that such documents did not exist. The

In the Bedzang community of Ngambé-Tikar, injustice is no longer an abstract concept. It is a feared situation that is lived daily, in the flesh, soul and spirit of the Bedzang Indigenous Community. Being Bedzang and lacking official identification documents has become sufficient grounds for exploitation, intimidation, and silencing. A recent testimony, among many others, starkly illustrates this alarming reality.

Members of the Bedzang community were recruited to carry out a job. They completed the work in full, as agreed. However, when the time came for payment, their employer refused to pay them. When they insisted on receiving the fruits of their labour, the situation abruptly escalated. Instead of assuming his responsibilities, the employer went to the gendarmerie post located in the area. There, according to the testimony collected, he allegedly negotiated with law enforcement officers.

absence of these documents then became a tool of coercion. The Bedzang were warned that if they continued to demand their wages, they would be arrested and taken to the central gendarmerie post in Ngambé-Tikar, to be jailed



brandished as a permanent threat. It justifies intimidation, mistreatment, and denial of justice. This climate of fear prevents any legitimate claim and keeps the community in extreme vulnerability.

It is essential to state this clearly: **not possessing identification documents is not a crime**. It is the direct consequence of decades of exclusion, the remoteness of civil registration services, and the absence of public policies adapted to Indigenous Peoples.

remote areas. Targeted community-based support initiatives are indispensable to facilitate the issuance of birth

From that moment on, any possibility of seeking justice vanished. Without an identity card, it is impossible to file a complaint. Without official documents, it is impossible to defend oneself. **The employer is protected; the victims are trapped.** This situation reveals a vicious cycle of administrative violence, where the lack of legal identity is not merely a bureaucratic difficulty, but a gateway to economic exploitation and abuses of authority.

This testimony highlights a recurring practice: the Bedzang are constantly reminded of their **“administrative non-existence.”** At every stop, at every conflict, the absence of an identity card is

Faced with these repeated abuses, structured and sustainable responses are required. The situation experienced by the Bedzang underscores the need for specific and adapted mechanisms to guarantee effective access to legal identity for Indigenous communities living in

certificates, a fundamental prerequisite for obtaining National Identity Cards. Such actions would be most effective if carried out directly within the communities, taking into account their lifestyle, vulnerability, and the existing social, geographic, and administrative barriers.

The Bedzang are not asking for charity. They are asking for justice. They are asking to be recognized as full citizens, able to work, claim their wages, and seek redress without fear of arrest or violence. As long as legal identity is denied to them, injustice will continue to prevail. Facilitating access to official documents for the Bedzang means restoring their dignity, their voice, and their fundamental right to justice.



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