

Which language would you like to use this site in?

CLOSE

ENGLISH

ESPAÑOL

FRANÇAIS

العربية

Action

CAMEROON CAMPAIGN CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION DETENTION FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION
PRESS FREEDOM UNLAWFUL DETENTION

Free people detained for expressing their opinions in Cameroon

More than a hundred people are being arbitrarily detained in Cameroon, simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Take action now and demand the end of the arbitrary detention of political activists, human rights defenders, and protesters.

In Cameroon, the crackdown on people simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly targeted supporters of the main opposition party, human rights defenders, protesters from the anglophone region, as well as members of a social movement.

Dorgelesse Nguessan is a hairdresser and a single mother to a 17-year-old boy. She was inspired to go on her first-ever march, an MRC-led protest (Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun), on 22 September 2020. This went ahead despite a ban by the authorities. The march was peaceful, but the security forces used teargas and water cannons to disperse protesters and arrested over 500 people, including Dorgelesse. Many people reported excessive use of force, torture, and other ill-treatment while in detention. Dorgelesse was first held at a police station in Douala. There, she was prevented from receiving visitors or showering for a few days and forced to sleep on a mattress with several other detainees. A police officer later attempted to sexually assault her when she was alone in the shower. She was sentenced on 7 December 2021 to five years in prison for “insurrection”, “rebellion” and “endangering state security”.

Intifalia Oben is a 29-year-old trader and MRC supporter. He was also given a five-year prison sentence by the Yaoundé military court on 27 December 2021. Intifalia was arrested on 16 September 2020 by three plainclothes gendarmes (security forces) after he fulfilled an order of custom-made political T-shirts that the gendarmes had ordered from him. He was then charged with “attempted revolution, rebellion, aggravated assembly and not possessing a national identity card”. He was reportedly subjected to torture, including beatings and mock drowning. He contracted a lung infection because of this ill-treatment and was taken to hospital on 14 May 2021. There, he remained chained to his hospital bed all day, every day, for two weeks.

for two weeks.

Penn Terence Khan is a father of four children and vice-principal of the high school of Bambili, in the anglophone region. He was arrested in January 2017 for following a call to boycott and strike action organised by a consortium of civil society activists, teachers, and lawyers. Terence was abducted from his car by 10 gendarmes in combat gear. He was reportedly tortured and subjected to ill-treatment. In April 2018, Terence was sentenced to 12 years in prison for ‘complicity in secession, financing of terrorism and complicity with the rebellion’. The only evidence provided in the judgment against him was a T-shirt bearing the slogans ‘Diaspora South Africa standing behind West Cameroonians 4 a Federal Cameroon’ and ‘We are Cameroonians We are not extremists’.

Tsi Conrad, a 35-year-old journalist from Bamenda (anglophone region) is also a documentary filmmaker and a human rights defender who reported on the protests in the anglophone region. He is known for sharing footage of the excessive use of force against demonstrators with private media as a freelance journalist. Conrad was arrested in December 2016 while reporting on a demonstration where the security forces reportedly shot at the demonstrators, after months of what amounts to harassment by the Cameroonian authorities for his journalistic work. Tsi Conrad was later sentenced to 15 years in prison for “acts of terrorism, secession, spreading false information, revolution, insurrection, contempt for public bodies and officials, and hostility against the nation”.

To this day, more than a hundred people arrested since 2016 in relation to the MRC’s protests or the anglophone crisis remain in detention. Detaining people simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, as well as detention resulting from trials without independent procedural safeguards, is arbitrary and unlawful.

Join our supporters and members in demanding that all political activists, human rights defenders, and peaceful protestors arbitrarily detained are released and all charges against them dropped.

Send an email to President Paul Biya and Minister of Justice Laurent Easo to demand an end to the crackdown on the right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.