



Journalists Not Terrorists:

In Cameroon, anti-terror legislation is used to silence critics and suppress dissent



A special report by the Committee to Protect Journalists

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Founded in 1981, the Committee to Protect Journalists responds to attacks on the press worldwide. CPJ documents hundreds of cases every year and takes action on behalf of journalists and news organizations without regard to political ideology. To maintain its independence, CPJ accepts no government funding. CPJ is funded entirely by private contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations.

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About This Report

In 2014, Cameroon enacted a broad anti-terror law as part of its effort to counter the extremist group Boko Haram, but authorities are using it to arrest and threaten local journalists who report on the militants or unrest in the country's English-speaking regions. A presidential decree in August 2017 ended legal proceedings against at least four journalists, but the laws that were used against them are still in place. RFI broadcaster Ahmed Abba remains in jail. With elections due to take place next year, many of Cameroon's journalists say they are too scared to cover politics or sensitive issues.

A special report by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

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Rozen previously worked in South Africa, Mozambique, and Canada with the Institute for Security Studies, assessing Mozambican peacebuilding processes. As a research associate with ISS, Rozen wrote analyses in partnership with the think tank adelphi on links between climate action and conflict prevention in Mali, Liberia, and Kenya. He was a UN correspondent for IPS News and has written for Al Jazeera English and the International Peace Institute, among other publications.

This report is also available in French.

COVER PHOTO: A Cameroon fan cheers his team in the African Cup of Nations in 2010. Cameroon, which is due to host the tournament in 2019, has been using anti-terror laws to silence its critics. (AFP/Khaled Desouki)

CONTENTS

Journalists Not Terrorists: In Cameroon, anti-terror legislation is used to silence critics and suppress dissent	7
Map: Cameroon Press Arrests	11
Recommendations	16

Journalists Not Terrorists: In Cameroon, anti-terror legislation is used to silence critics and suppress dissent

A light breakfast of an omelet and a cup of black coffee eaten on the trot: Little did Radio France Internationale correspondent Ahmed Abba know it would be his last meal as a free man. Abba had a 10 a.m. assignment on July 30, 2015 – a security briefing in Maroua, the capital of Cameroon’s Far North region, that the governor had convened in response to attacks by the extremist group Boko Haram.

The Far North was reeling from three suicide bombings that month that left at least 34 people dead. Although such attacks occurred almost daily in Boko Haram’s base in Northeastern Nigeria, they were rare in neighboring countries. The bombings came a few days before a two-day official visit by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari to Cameroon to strengthen cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Abba had spent most of the previous day interviewing Nigerian refugees who had fled the extremist group.

As Abba left the governor’s security meeting, two police officers arrested him. He was charged under Cameroon’s anti-terror law and, after nearly two years in custody, convicted by a military tribunal of “non-denunciation of terrorism” and “laundering of the proceeds of terrorist acts.” He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. His lawyer says Abba is appealing the sentence.

The government says that the anti-terror law President Paul Biya enacted in December 2014 is part of its effort to counter Boko Haram, which has carried out kidnappings as well as attacks in Cameroon. However, CPJ found that authorities are using the law against journalists such as Abba who report on the militants, and others who have reported on unrest in Cameroon’s English-speaking regions or are critical of Biya’s administration.

In addition to detaining journalists, authorities have banned news outlets deemed sympathetic to the

Anglophone protesters, shut down internet in regions experiencing unrest, and prevented outside observers, including CPJ, from accessing the country by delaying the visa process. Journalists say that the risk of arrest or closure has led to an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship – an unhealthy climate considering that elections are scheduled for next year.

According to the editor of one English-language publication, the government conflates news coverage of militants or demonstrators with praise, and journalists don’t know what they can and cannot report safely, so they err on the side of caution.

“Publications are publishing blind because the government, out of frustration, can decide that any published report is trying to favor the agitators,” said the editor, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. “We are not told what the difference is about reporting the facts or acclaiming what is happening and we therefore run the risk of contravening the anti-terrorism law.”

Biya, who was appointed prime minister in 1975, assumed the presidency in 1982. He is one of the world’s longest-serving elected leaders. The parliament revised the constitution in 2008 to remove presidential term limits.

In addition to the Boko Haram insurgency, his administration for the past year has been grappling with



RFI journalist Ahmed Abba is serving a 10-year prison sentence on terrorism charges for his reporting on the militant group Boko Haram. (Ahmed Abba)

clashes in the Anglophone regions between police and demonstrators, as lawyers, teachers, and other groups went on strike over claims they are being marginalized. The country's language divide and calls for greater autonomy – in some cases, secession – is a hangover from the early days of independence, when regions that were under British colonial rule unified with those governed by France. Residents in the English-speaking region say that not enough official documents are translated clearly into English, and that the predominantly French-speaking government appoints teachers and judges to their region who speak little to no English.

The turmoil in Cameroon, and Biya's increasingly authoritarian response, risk more political instability and humanitarian crises in a region that has already suffered years of war. Cameroon shares a border with Chad, the Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic, among other countries.

"With elections on the horizon, many in Cameroon rightfully fear a heightened and more violent crackdown," said Jeffrey Smith, executive director of Vanguard Africa, a U.S.-based nonprofit that advocates for good governance and fair elections in Africa. "Biya is essentially drawing upon age-old lessons that authoritarians have long relied on to maintain power: kill dissent, sometimes literally, and openly target your critics so as to create a broader chilling effect in the country."

The President's Office did not respond to CPJ's written request for comment.

Cameroon has a diverse media environment, with at least 600 newspapers, 30 radio stations, 20 television stations, and 15 news websites in operation, according to the regulatory National Communication Council. But that does not mean information flows freely.

"Honestly, in Cameroon now, most of us in the private media are free to report only what the government wishes to see," said a newspaper proprietor who like many asked for anonymity for fear of retaliation. "There is an atmosphere of fear. You don't report about the issue of federalism [or] all those issues that are considered to be unfriendly to the regime – even if they are true."

Cameroon's anti-terror law is a powerful tool of fear, according to opposition parties, the media, trade unions, and civil society and human rights organizations. The law's provisions are criticized as overly broad with easy potential for abuse of political opponents and the right to freedom of expression. The law has a maximum penalty of the death

sentence, and allows authorities to detain indefinitely those accused of terrorism. It also provides for prosecution in military court, contravening Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees individuals a fair, independent, and public hearing of any criminal charges against them, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Cameroon ratified in 1989. The African Charter states, "Military courts should not in any circumstances whatsoever have jurisdiction over civilians." Civilians tried by a military tribunal are often denied their rights to a fair trial and appeals process.

Elie Smith, a journalist working for Canal 2 English, a privately owned satellite TV station based in Douala, said Abba's terror conviction was "a tool to intimidate other journalists."

The Biya administration wants to avoid a situation like in Nigeria where journalists covered Boko Haram and the government was unable to "control the narrative," Smith said. He noted that journalists wanting to report from the front lines in the fight against Boko Haram need authorization from the ministries of defense and communication and must be embedded.

In addition to Abba, CPJ was aware of at least four other journalists who faced charges under the 2014 anti-terror law for their reporting: Atia Tilarious Azohnwi, political editor of *The Sun*; Hans Achomba, a documentary filmmaker; and Tim Finnian, publisher and editor of the weekly newspaper, *Life Time*, were all detained in custody for several months until a presidential decree on August 30, 2017 secured their release. The decree also ended criminal proceedings against Jean-Claude Agbortem of online magazine *Camer Veritas*, who was on bail on accusations of inciting terrorism. All of them faced trial before a military court and, if convicted, they would have faced the death penalty.

CPJ is investigating several other cases, including Thomas Awah Junior, publisher of the monthly magazine *Ahem Messenger*, who was arrested on January 2 in Bamenda, and Fonja Hanson, editor of the privately owned *Cameroon Report* and the chief executive of the Cameroon Broadcasting Service, arrested in Bamenda on July 28, to determine if those arrests are directly related to journalism. Amos Fofung, bureau chief for *The Guardian Post*, was freed on August 5 without charge, after being detained for nearly six months.

Journalists detained under the anti-terror law face harsh treatment while awaiting trial. According to details shared with CPJ about Abba's March 24 testimony before



A Cameroonian police officer patrols in the northern city of Maroua in September 2016. RFI broadcaster Ahmed Abba was arrested there in July 2015. (AFP/Reinnier Kaze)

the military tribunal, and people familiar with his case who spoke with CPJ on condition of anonymity, Abba was detained incommunicado for at least three months after his arrest. Members of the intelligence agency beat him with machetes and sticks, and walked on his back in their boots. He also initially faced the death penalty.

The journalist's lawyer, Charles Tchoungang told the military court that Abba – who CPJ will honor with its 2017 International Press Freedom Award – was beaten by guards who tried to force him to reveal his sources. In his testimony at the tribunal in the Cameroonian capital, Yaoundé, Abba recounted how he was kept handcuffed and at times naked, during questioning and his imprisonment. The journalist said his legs were shackled and when he was transported via plane to the capital, he was muzzled.

Peter Essoka, president of Cameroon's National Communication Council – the media regulator whose members are appointed by Biya – denies that Abba's imprisonment is related to his journalism.

In a statement released when Abba was sentenced in April, RFI director Cécile Mégie said the French government-funded station had provided “irrefutable evidence” that Abba did not condone terrorism in his reporting. When contacted for comment for this report, Mégie directed CPJ to the broadcaster's statement.

France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Embassy in Washington D.C. did not respond to CPJ's emailed request for comment.

The documentary filmmaker Achomba was also treated harshly after his arrest on January 23, his wife, Lilian Shiya, told CPJ. When during questioning police discovered he had worked in South Africa, which has a large Cameroonian diaspora pushing for more autonomy, they accused him of covering riots in the Northwestern region to damage Cameroon's international image.

Shiya said that when she first visited Achomba in custody, his feet were swollen and he could hardly walk. Shiya said her husband later told her that police used

batons to beat him on the soles of his feet, walked over his stomach and groin, and threatened to cut off his fingers. “They were making comments about him getting married and told him he would not see me anymore,” she told CPJ.

The president’s office and the official government spokesperson did not respond to CPJ’s requests for comment about the treatment of journalists in custody.

SELF-CENSORSHIP FOR SURVIVAL

“For fear of the unknown, many now run away from hard news, especially if it will put their lives at risk,” a journalist for an English-language outlet, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal, told CPJ. “They prefer to avoid using certain words and have suspended very heated debate slots and programs ... that may plunge them into trouble. To many, self-censorship saves them the trouble of being monitored or from the dragnet of those who seek to silence their pens.”

Cameroon’s crackdown on the press deepened late last year amid the unrest in the English-speaking regions, CPJ research shows. The National Communication Council handed down a series of penalties on December 6, 2016, including suspensions ranging from one to six months and bans on 14 publishers and their newspapers, one radio station managing director, and 15 journalists from 10 print and online newspapers, radio, and television stations for reports that the council said included “unfounded, offensive, and insinuating allegations.”

The same month, the Ministry of Communication wrote to privately owned broadcasters instructing them to stop broadcasting political debates “concerning the current political atmosphere in the Southwest region,” according to a copy of the December 1 directive, shared on Twitter.

Authorities briefly suspended broadcast permissions for the privately owned radio stations Radio Hot Cocoa in Bamenda, the capital of the Northwest region, on January 10, and Jakiri community radio station on January 12 for their coverage. Jakiri was suspended after broadcasting a parliamentarian’s call to protest the marginalization of Anglophones, according to media reports.

Gideon Taka, manager at Radio Hot Cocoa, told CPJ that the National Communication Council blocked access to its offices and studio on January 10 for allegedly fueling the crisis in the Northwest region through its program “Biggest Breakfast Show.” Taka said that after he called the president of the council, the station was allowed to resume broadcasting within 48 hours “on the promise to continue

to be objective in handling burning issues, especially during crisis situations.”

Taka said the station is now taking a more cautious approach. “This is not censorship of any kind, but our attempt to judiciously inform our listeners,” Taka said.

On January 17, the government ordered an internet shutdown in the English-speaking regions, which lasted until April 20. The government said the move was intended to forestall a breakdown of law and order amid protests, strikes, and school closures, according to media reports. The shutdown was widely condemned, including by U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression David Kaye, who described it as “an appalling violation of [Cameroonians’] right to freedom of expression.”

On January 20, Essoka, president of National Communication Council, threatened on the state-owned Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) to suspend or shut down any media organization disseminating “seditious” content regarding demonstrations for secession or federalism in Anglophone regions, according to press reports. Essoka named the newspapers *Le Messenger*, *Cameroon Post*, *The Guardian Post*, *The Times Journal*, broadcasters Equinoxe TV, Spectrum TV, Canal 2 International, and some community radio stations as allegedly supporting the protests, the reports said.

Mokun Njouny Nelson, director of Foundation FM in Bamenda, said that his station briefly suspended broadcasts itself after the Ministry of Communications’ regional representative summoned him for questioning in April. The intelligence service sent the ministry a security report about the weekly magazine program “News Extra” that claimed the station fanned secession sentiments, Nelson said.

Nelson said that Louis Marie Megne, who is the regional communication chief and a former journalist, ruled that the broadcast was not a problem. “But since the administration is all powerful and usually acts against such professional opinion we opted to suspend the program for a month,” Nelson said. “It is this sort of administrative intimidation that has made self-censorship in Cameroon the order of the day as media organizations fear confrontation with the all-present administration.”

Another director of a privately owned radio station told CPJ that management decided to stop broadcasting for a few weeks “as we feared we would be victimized.” The station is back on air now, but has stopped discussing socioeconomic issues or anything political for self-preservation, he said.

Cameroon

Press Arrests

Journalists charged under Cameroon's anti-terror law



Ahmed Abba
 July 30, 2015
 Maroua
 Jailed: 10 year sentence

Atia Tilarious Azohnwi
 February 9, 2017
 Buea
 Jailed for 204 days

Hans Achomba
 January 23, 2017
 Bamenda
 Jailed for 221 days

Tim Finnian
 January 26, 2017
 Bamenda
 Jailed for 218 days

Jean-Claude Agbortem
 January 25, 2017
 Douala
 Jailed for 37 days

Authorities have also attempted to target social media – described by the government-run daily *The Cameroon Tribune* on November 1, 2016 as “fast becoming a threat to peace and a secret instrument of manipulation.” In a November 10, 2016 speech to parliament, Cavaye Yeguie Djibril, speaker of the National Assembly, called social media “a new form of terrorism ... as dangerous as a missile,” according to media reports.

And in January, Cameroon’s Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications sent mobile phone users text messages warning that they could face between six months and two years in prison and fines of up to 10 million Central African francs (US\$17,900) for sharing information about unrest.

Meanwhile, some journalists who tone down their coverage of sensitive issues to avoid arrest or penalization of their news outlets find that they are squeezed between factions.

A journalist from the privately owned English-language daily *The Guardian Post* said that the newspaper’s editorial line was tempered after the paper’s bureau chief Fofung was arrested in February. A warning the same month from the National Communication Council accused the outlet of fueling the Anglophone crisis and threatened to shut it down if it did not immediately stop running articles on secession and federalism. The warning was repeatedly broadcast on the state-run CRTV. *The Guardian Post* management decided to drop all reports on calls for secession and the country’s return to a two-state federation, the journalist, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal, said.

“Our readers see the change and believe we are supporting the regime,” the journalist said. “[Anglophone] agitators are now making calls [on social media] to boycott our newspaper and even threatening reporters and their families. Either way we are not free. They don’t understand the pressure we are under.”

The Guardian Post journalist said sales have dropped drastically “since we kind of shifted from tough reporting on the crisis.”

Livelihoods are also at risk. Anjianjei Constantine, who hosted “Talking Point” on the privately owned LTM satellite television station in Douala, told CPJ he was fired in January after refusing to sign a document saying that he would abide by a government directive to not discuss secession or federalism.

Constantine said his boss, Marthe Mouaha, told him that Communication Minister Issa Tchiroma Bakary had threatened in a phone call to ban the show and stop a government subsidy to the station. “After the warning from my boss, she decided to personally censor the guests that came on ‘Talking Point.’ She told me that she can’t afford to forfeit her subsidy from the government because of me,” Constantine said.

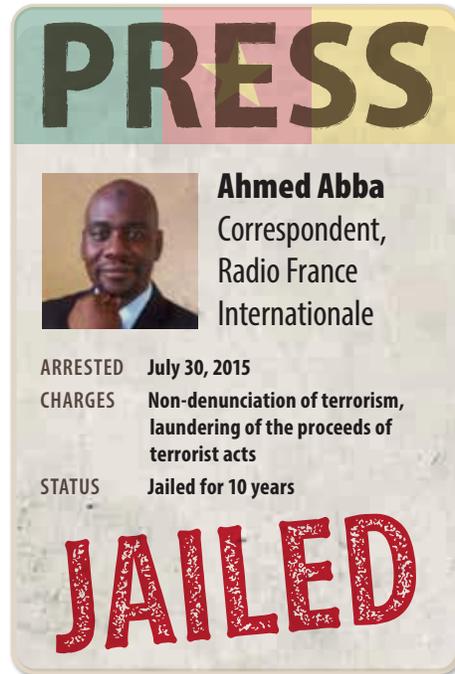
Mouaha did not respond to CPJ’s request for comment. The communication minister did not respond to CPJ’s emailed request for comment.

Journalists reporting for international outlets on the unrest and prosecutions of alleged protest organizers have also been affected. On December 12, 2016, masked security officers detained Zigoto Tchaya, a local reporter for broadcaster France 24, for one

day after he interviewed a barrister and activist based in Bamenda, according to media reports. And on February 1, BBC correspondent Randy Joe Sa’ah was arrested and his equipment seized for recording an impromptu briefing by the defense counsel of a group of activists when their trial before a military tribunal was postponed. The journalist told CPJ he was charged as an “accessory to propagate false information” and released on bail.

More recently, the National Communication Council sought to restrict broadcasting of channels operating outside of Cameroon to English-speaking regions, according to reports. Essoka told journalists in Bamenda in July that cable distributors in the Northwest and Southwest regions airing the signal of the Southern Cameroons Broadcasting Corporation would be sanctioned, without specifying the penalties. Essoka said the South Africa-based channel was out to destabilize Cameroon, reports said.

The council’s actions led several journalists to tell CPJ





President Paul Biya speaks to journalists in Paris, France in 2013. Cameroon's parliament removed presidential term limits from the constitution, allowing Biya to remain in office. (Reuters/Philippe Wojazer)

that they believe the council is acting beyond its mandate. Tatah Mentan, a former journalism professor at the University of Yaoundé who is now in the U.S., said, “The [communication council] is simply there to recommend. The law courts are there for libel and sedition, not the council.”

In a statement to CPJ, Essoka said that the National Communication Council is a regulatory and consultative organ and “has the right to take punitive action toward media organizations.” Essoka denied that the council is threatening journalists to prevent critical reporting. “When a complaint is addressed to us, we take time to investigate. We hear both parts to understand the matter,” Essoka said. “We try as much as possible to protect the journalists” and do not interfere in the editorial independence of news outlets, he said.

CPJ reached out to state-owned media outlets, including the state broadcaster CRTV and *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper, for their views on conditions for the press, but

no one responded to the requests for interview.

Press associations have tried to push back against the crackdown, with limited success. When a group of journalists attempted to form the Consortium of Journalism Associations in the Southwest region in December 2016, the governor of the English-speaking region, Bernard Okalia Bilai, threatened its leaders with arrest if they didn’t close the association, according to media reports and members of the consortium who spoke with CPJ on condition of anonymity.

The consortium had threatened, in a statement, to boycott government press conferences if English-language versions of documents were not made available.

Bilai did not immediately respond to CPJ’s call and text messages requesting comment.

Mentan, the former journalism professor, told CPJ that conditions for media freedom in Cameroon are more repressive than the 1990s when many journalists went into exile or were arrested.



A hotel destroyed by fire during protests in Bamenda. Journalists reporting on unrest in Cameroon's English-speaking regions risk being charged under the country's anti-terror law. (AFP/Reinnier Kaze)

Still, some journalists are defiant. Jean-Claude Agbortem, the co-founder of online magazine *Camer Veritas* and an opposition politician who was arrested in his office in Douala on January 25, had published several opinion articles critical of the Cameroon authorities and supportive of the Anglophone protests. He was accused of inciting terrorism and destabilizing the government, but was released on bail on March 3. Agbortem said authorities questioned him about articles in *Camer Veritas* and social media posts, as well as meetings he allegedly had with opposition politicians.

He told CPJ, "I am not afraid to stand up for the truth. I will not be silenced." Regarding the terrorism law, he said journalists like Abba were being compelled to reveal their sources, "even if it's information they don't have."

Agbortem, who had been facing a military tribunal, said that the August 30 presidential decree cleared him of all charges.

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

Local and international media and rights groups have protested Cameroon's use of the anti-terror law to target critical journalists. The Northwest chapter of the independent Cameroon Association of English Speaking Journalists and the independent Cameroon Journalists' Trade Union called for their colleagues' release earlier in the year. At the World Editors Forum in Durban, South Africa, in June, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers adopted a resolution about the lack of press freedom in Cameroon. And in May, Jovial Rantao, chairman of the African Editors Forum, released a statement condemning Abba's conviction and sentencing.

Abdulwaheed Odusile, president of the Federation of African Journalists, who was in Cameroon in May, told CPJ that "press freedom is non-existent in that country."

"The economic environment is suffocating and the administrative control [is] draconian, leaving the media

little or no room to thrive. For any media organization whether print or broadcast to survive in Cameroon today, it must toe the government line or die,” Odusile said.

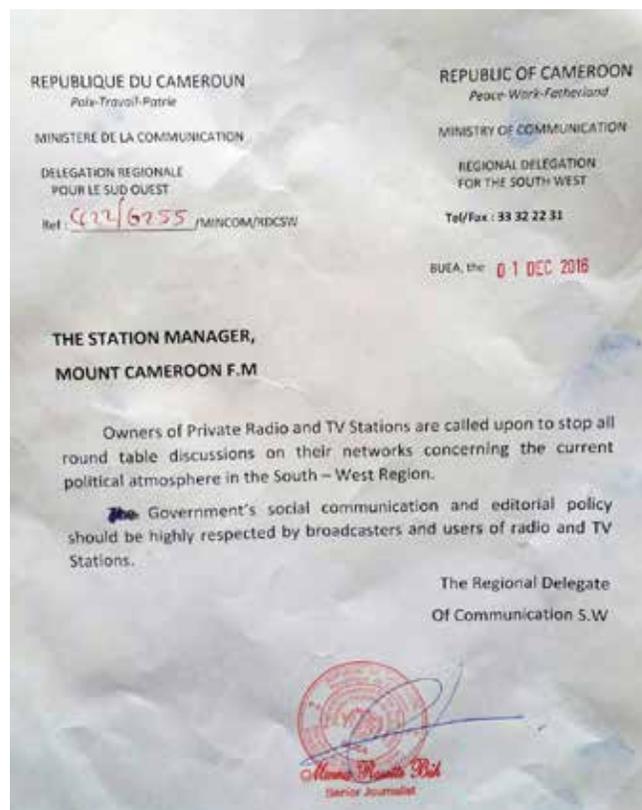
However, international bodies such as the European Union, African Union, and U.N., as well as countries partnering with Cameroon in the fight against violent extremism, have been slow to publicly condemn its actions. Cameroon is a partner in a Multinational Joint Task Force to fight Boko Haram, which is supported by the U.K., France, and other EU and AU member states. Yet besides a statement from France’s then-foreign minister condemning the treatment of Abba in December 2016 and calling for his release, none have publicly condemned the abuse of power, or made public statements to demand the journalists be released.

The U.N. Security Council also failed to publicly call out Cameroon for its failure to uphold human rights including freedom of expression. Speaking as the then-president of the Security Council, U.K. permanent representative Matthew Rycroft told reporters that the internet shutdown and rights abuses in the Anglophone areas “didn’t come up in a formal meeting” with Cameroonian officials during a trip to the country in March, which coincided with the internet shutdown.

“I think that makes sense because we were going there to look at the threat to international peace and security that emanates from Boko Haram and the related issues,” he said. Rycroft said that the rights abuses were raised in informal meetings with the Cameroonian government.

Since then, the U.N. has started to apply pressure on Cameroon and offered to mediate in the ongoing unrest. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed told a delegation from the country’s prime minister’s office in early August to ensure that justice is granted to all those detained during the unrest, according to *The Guardian Post*. The U.N. special representative for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, urged Cameroon in April to release the detainees.

In a June 2017 letter to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Congressman Donald Payne Jr. requested an investigation into human rights abuses in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. The U.S. provides troops and, as of December 2016, has allocated at least \$130 million to support the country’s fight against Boko Haram. Payne said that violence and the jailing of journalists



A copy of a directive sent from the communications ministry to privately owned broadcasters in Cameroon that warns the stations to stop showing political debates. (Handout)

contravene the U.S. Leahy Law prohibiting the country from providing assistance to foreign forces proven to have committed gross violations of human rights. Separately, in a letter to President Biya in April, U.S. Senator Richard Durbin requested that authorities release the jailed journalists and expressed concern that these arrests “are also part of a larger troubling crackdown on the press.”

A State Department spokesperson told CPJ in an email, “The Department of State takes seriously all allegations of human rights abuses by foreign security forces, and we review each allegation on a case-by-case basis to determine whether it constitutes credible information of a gross violation of human rights under the Leahy law.”

With elections scheduled for next year, and Cameroon due to host the African Cup of Nations soccer tournament in 2019, the stifling of criticism, including through the anti-terror law, are likely to come under increased international scrutiny. ♦

Recommendations

The Committee to Protect Journalists offers the following recommendations:

TO THE CAMEROONIAN GOVERNMENT

- Release all jailed journalists and foster an environment conducive to press freedom by revising the country's 2014 anti-terrorism laws to ensure it cannot be used to jail journalists; decriminalizing defamation; and ensuring that security forces respect the confidentiality of journalists' sources.
- Ensure Cameroon's anti-terrorism law is in line with international human rights standards and end the use of military courts and the death penalty during the trials of civilians.
- Abolish detention without trial and ensure that arrests and detentions comply with international human rights law.
- Launch an independent investigation into allegations that the intelligence service tortured RFI journalist Ahmed Abba in custody. Investigate claims that journalists detained in the headquarters of the National Gendarmerie in Yaoundé faced ill-treatment and inhumane conditions.
- Order the government and National Communication Council to cease threatening the economic viability of critical outlets.
- Abolish the National Communication Council and establish a new independent broadcast regulator with narrowly defined powers, along the lines of the Federal Communications Commission in the U.S.
- Allow the media to establish independent self-regulatory bodies without interference from government.
- Ensure that independent and self-regulatory associations, such as the Consortium of Journalism Associations, are able to operate freely and without interference.
- Provide visas to international rights groups, including CPJ, and journalists so that they can investigate and report on conditions in Cameroon.

TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- The U.N. and African Union's special rapporteurs on freedom of expression should independently investigate press freedom conditions in Cameroon in advance of the country's Universal Periodic Review.
- The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should investigate the arbitrary arrests and prolonged detention of journalists in Cameroon.
- The Confederation of African Football should insist that the Cameroonian government releases all jailed journalists and ensures the free movement of the press ahead of it hosting the 2019 African Cup of Nations.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Strongly and unequivocally condemn the ongoing detention of journalists in Cameroon and refute Cameroon's attempts to equate journalism with terrorism.
- Members of the Multinational Joint Task Force must ensure that Cameroon abides by international human rights standards and that any financial and other assistance provided through the mechanism is in line with obligations to ensure respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law as per U.N. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014).
- Ensure that recommendations related to improving press freedom feature prominently in Cameroon's Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights, when it comes up for its third examination in 2018 at the U.N. Human Rights Council.

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND E.U. MEMBER STATES

- Publicly condemn, in line with the E.U. Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline, restrictions against journalists in Cameroon, including raising the cases of detained journalists with Cameroonian authorities and calling for their release.
- Support the Delegation of the European Union to Cameroon, and other diplomatic missions to key E.U. Member States, to actively respond to restrictions against journalists, including ensuring comprehensive trial observation, visiting journalists in detention, and maintaining active contact with marginalized or at-risk journalists, as well as their families and colleagues.
- Call for an overhaul of Cameroon's anti-terrorism law and its National Communication Council, and offer support in helping the country make those changes.



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