

Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union
for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy
Vice President of the European Commission

Brussels, 7 February 2013

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Our Ref: B1409

Dear Baroness Ashton,

EU MUST PRESS CAMEROON TO MAKE HUMAN RIGHTS A REALITY

Amnesty International has released a new report, [Cameroon: Make human rights a reality](#), which documents human rights violations by the Cameroonian authorities that are allowed to take place with impunity. The EU must use all the means it has available to press Cameroon to stop these violations, end impunity, and enforce human rights.

The Cameroonian authorities heavily restrict freedom of expression, association, and assembly. They have persecuted journalists, trade unionists, human rights defenders, opposition politicians, and other critics. The peaceful activities of the Southern Cameroons National Council, for example, have been entirely criminalised. The authorities use arrests, detention, violence, judicial harassment, and intimidation to suppress criticism and dissent. We are also concerned about possible prisoners of conscience, some of whom may have been subject to unfair trials on criminal charges, including corruption.

Detention conditions in Cameroon are deplorable. There is evidence of inadequate health services, overcrowding, poor food, and ill-treatment. There are also reports of escaping detainees being killed. Although Cameroon has not executed anybody on death row for 25 years, the government must now abolish the death penalty in law.

Many girls in Cameroon are subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM). We are also concerned about inadequate legislation to prevent and punish rape. Cameroonian law penalises acts of rape against women, but allows the exoneration of perpetrators who marry their victims.

Violence, arbitrary arrests, detention, and other human rights violations which target people because of their real or perceived sexual orientation are commonplace. Cameroonian law criminalises same-sex sexual acts. LGBTI people have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms on account of their perceived sexual orientation. The authorities have allowed people to target or attack LGBTI rights defenders.

In the light of the above, we call on the EU to:

- Urge Cameroon to end excessive restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly
- In line with the EU LGBT Toolkit and your statement of 20 December 2012 about the case of Roger Jean-Claude Mbédé, urge Cameroon to end the criminalization of homosexuality
- In line with the EU Guidelines on Violence Against Women and Girls, press Cameroon to ensure that both FGM and rape are criminalised, without exception
- Urge Cameroon to improve conditions of detention and investigate killings of escaping detainees
- In line with the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, press Cameroon to abolish capital punishment
- Urge Cameroon to end impunity and ensure accountability for human rights violations

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger
Director

CC:

Nicholas Westcott, European External Action Service, Managing Director for Africa

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Raul Mateus Paula, EU Ambassador to Cameroon

Fiona Lunny, Chair of the Council Working Party on Africa