

Cameroon: Civil society members arbitrarily detained in Garoua must be immediately released

The Cameroonian authorities must immediately release three supporters of the association Pouvoir au Peuple Camerounais (Power to the People of Cameroon – PPC) and their relatives arbitrarily arrested and detained for a fortnight and put an end to arbitrary arrests and detention in the country, Amnesty International said today.

On 9 September, three supporters of the PPC, Moustapha Tizi, Mohamadou Ballo and Ibrahim Oumarou were arrested allegedly for wearing t-shirts bearing the name of the organization in the town of Figuil, in the Mayo-Louti department in the North region. Hapsatou Issa, the sister of a PPC spokesperson, was also arrested on the same day. The PPC, a youth organization founded in August 2024, calls for a regime change.

“A year ahead of the presidential election in which President Paul Biya, who has been in power since 1982, plans to run, arbitrary arrests and detention of people perceived as critical against the regime are multiplying. The visit to Cameroon at the beginning of August by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who [cited](#) ‘serious concerns over restrictions on the freedom of expression and association and the right to peaceful assembly’, has not altered this trend,” said Fabien Offner, researcher at Amnesty International’s regional office for West and Central Africa.

Relatives of PPC supporters also arrested

Moustapha Tizi, Mohamadou Ballo, Ibrahim Oumarou and Hapsatou Issa were transferred to Garoua on 13 September. According to information gathered by Amnesty International, Hapsatou Issa is currently being held at the northern gendarmerie legion, Moustapha Tizi and Mohamadou Ballo at the Garoua 1 gendarmerie research brigade, and Ibrahim Oumarou at the Garoua judicial police.

Hapsatou Issa was arrested on the night of 9-10 September at her home. According to her family, she was told she had been arrested because she is the sister of a PPC spokesperson, who is currently on the run after receiving threats. Hapsatou Issa’s son, who had come to visit his detained mother to bring her food was also arrested and has since been held at the Garoua 1 gendarmerie research brigade.

Authorities must end the growing crackdown on human rights.

Fabien Offner, researcher at Amnesty International’s regional office for West and Central Africa

“In recent years, anyone who dares criticize the authorities, whether a human rights defender, a journalist, an activist for the Anglophone cause or a demonstrator, runs the risk of being arbitrarily arrested and detained, tortured and tried by military courts in violation of the country’s international human rights obligations. Unfortunately, this trend is likely to increase as the presidential election approaches”, said Fabien Offner.

“Authorities must end the growing crackdown on human rights, ensure the human rights of everyone, and uphold the country’s international human rights obligations including under the

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Cameroon is a state party.”

Two activists arrested in previous months

Cameroonian activist Yves Kibouy Bershu, known as Ramon Cotta, has also been arbitrarily detained since his arrest on 19 July 2024 in Gabon, where he was living. He was transferred to Cameroon on 23 July without any known legal or diplomatic procedure, according to his lawyers. He is being held in Yaoundé at the Central Judicial Research Department of the Secretary of State for Defence. He was able to meet his lawyers only a month after his arrest. According to them, he is charged with acts of terrorism, insurrection, financing terrorism, arms trafficking and insulting the President and members of the government. Videos of Ramon Cotta posted on social media and reviewed by Amnesty International were mainly limited to criticisms of the Cameroonian authorities and criticism of the Cameroonian embassy in Gabon.

According to his lawyers, Ramon Cotta is likely to have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment leading to a partial paralysis, and to have experienced difficulties in accessing healthcare. This would constitute violations of the Nelson Mandela Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Junior Ngombe, a 23-year-old hairdresser and activist, was arbitrarily detained from 24 July to 31 July after denouncing Ramon Cotta's arrest in a video viewed more than 218,000 times on TikTok.