



Document #2118578

HRW – Human Rights Watch (Author)

Prominent Human Rights Lawyer Beaten in Cameroon

Ensure Impartial Investigation, Hold Perpetrators Accountable

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On November 27, gendarmes in [Cameroon](#) arrested and severely beat prominent human rights lawyer Richard Tamfu in the country's largest city, Douala. The vicious assault fits a pattern of official attacks on lawyers, presumably designed to deter them from doing their job.

On the day in question, three gendarmes came to arrest a client of Tamfu's in the Bonaberi neighborhood. Tamfu told Human Rights Watch he was there to assist her and said he challenged the gendarmes' authority, as they did not have an arrest warrant. "So, they put me in the back of their pickup truck and started beating me," he said. "They kicked me, pressed their hands on my neck, jumped on me with their boots."

A video of the incident taken by a bystander was shared widely on social media. It shows two men wearing gendarme uniforms stomping on Tamfu, who is lying in the back of the truck, while people in a crowd scream for them to stop. Tamfu confirmed the video's authenticity.

The gendarmes then took Tamfu to a gendarmerie post and released him shortly after. Tamfu, who is currently hospitalized, suffered severe injuries. On November 29, he filed a complaint against the head of the gendarmerie in the Littoral region for "complicity to torture." The previous

day, the head of the national gendarmerie had [announced](#) they would investigate the beating.

Arbitrary arrest, harassment, and other forms of police brutality, including verbal and physical assault, against lawyers are [common](#) in Cameroon. In December 2023, police [assaulted](#) Atoh Walter M. Tchemi, a prominent human rights lawyer, in Kumba, Southwest region, while he was assisting a client. In May 2021, gendarmes in Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, [arrested](#) another prominent rights lawyer, Amungwa Tanyi Nicodemus, on bogus charges of inciting terrorism because he possessed photographs showing evidence of abuses in the country's English-speaking regions. In November 2020, security forces [used tear gas and live ammunition](#) to disperse lawyers in a courtroom in Douala. The lawyers were protesting the arrest of two colleagues accused of corruption.

Cameroonian authorities should stop targeting lawyers and ensure that the promised investigation into the attack against Tamfu is credible, thorough, and impartial, and that those responsible are held accountable.

Associated documents

Document ID 2118578 Translation / language version

2 December 2024 | [HRW – Human Rights Watch](#) (Author)

Cameroon

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[Un éminent avocat des droits humains passé à tabac au Cameroun](#)

(Appeal or News Release, French)

fr

[ID 2118579](#)

ecoi.net description:

Douala: Police arrest and severely beat prominent human rights lawyer Richard Tamfu

Country:
Cameroon

Source:

Published:

2 December 2024

Original link:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/12/02/prominent-human-rights-lawyer-beaten-cameroon>

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Available on ecoi.net since:

6 December 2024

Document ID:

2118578

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Documentation	info@ecoi.net	
(ACCORD)		

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