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United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1504

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Ambassador Joseph Charles Foe-Atangana  
2239 Massachusetts Ave, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Foe-Atangana:

I am writing to request information on the detentions of Pierre Roger Lambo Sandjo, Lewis Medjo, and Michel Mombioi. I am very concerned that these detainees appear to have been arrested for political reasons and are being treated in a manner that falls short of the minimum international standards for fairness and due process of law.

Pierre Roger Lambo Sandjo, a well-known singer-songwriter, was arrested in April 2008 and charged with fomenting mass demonstrations. He has been sentenced to three years in prison. Reportedly, he is being held at New Bell Prison and is in deteriorating health. Several human rights groups have expressed concerns about his prosecution and Amnesty International characterizes his trial as "unfair."

Lewis Medjo, a journalist, was arrested on September 22, 2008 and charged with dissemination of false news following an article critical of President Paul Biya. He was sentenced on January 7, 2009 to three years in jail and fined two million West African francs. While in prison, he has reportedly suffered two heart attacks and concerns have been raised about the medical attention he has received.

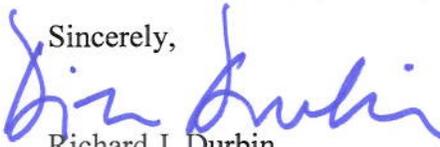
Michel Mombioi has been held without trial for over a year at Yaoundé's Nkondengui central prison. He is the editor of a bimonthly publication and was arrested on September 4, 2008 following the publication of a column critical of Scientific Research Minister Madeleine Tchuinté. He was transferred without hearing to Yaounde and is still awaiting trial.

The Committee to Protect Journalists considers both Medjo and Mombioi to be wrongfully imprisoned. Executive Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists Joel Simon wrote to President Biya in January, "These journalists should never have been prosecuted."

The United States and Cameroon cooperate in many important areas. For example, we are working together on reforestation projects, including some in the area near Lake Chad. The United States is also one of the largest investors in Cameroon. Cameroon plays an important role in international peacekeeping and in combating wildlife trafficking. Cameroon and the United States have much to gain from continued cooperation.

At the same time, our State Department and several prominent non-governmental organizations have raised troubling concerns with your government regarding human rights issues, including evidence of arbitrary arrest, detention, harassment, and intimidation of political activists and members of the media.

I urge you to use your influence to uncover the circumstances of Mr. Sandjo, Mr. Medjo and Mr. Mombioi's detentions. Your help in addressing this matter would be an important step in resolving the troubling allegations about these men and human rights conditions in Cameroon.

Sincerely,  
  
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator