

His Excellency Paul Biya  
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Your Excellency / Son Excellence,

I am writing to express my grave concern over the imprisonment of **Jean-Claude Roger Mbede**, who was sentenced to 3 years in prison on April 28, 2011 for homosexuality. He is currently serving his sentence at Kondengui central prison in Yaoundé and is at risk of physical attack and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely because of his perceived sexual orientation. I urge you to bring about his immediate and unconditional release from prison.

On 2 March, Jean-Claude Roger Mbede was arrested by members of the Secretary of State for Defense (SED) security service on suspicion of homosexuality. He was kept in custody at the Gendarmerie du Lac detention center in Yaoundé for 7 days before he was transferred to the Kondengui Central Prison on 9 March. The court (Tribunal de première instance) in Yaoundé found him guilty and charged him under Section 347a of the Cameroonian Penal Code which criminalizes sexual relations with a person of the same sex. According to reports, the prison conditions in Kondengui are very harsh, with inmates suffering overcrowding, poor sanitation and inadequate food. In addition, Jean-Claude Roger Mbede is at risk of homophobic attacks, as well as ill-treatment by fellow inmates or prison authorities because of his real or perceived sexual orientation.

I respectfully urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Jean-Claude Roger Mbede, as he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely because of his perceived sexual orientation. I further call on you to ensure his physical safety while in prison, and make certain that he is not subjected to any form of ill-treatment, harassment or violence.

I am deeply concerned by the endemic homophobia in the Cameroonian society and the systematic violation of individuals' rights to freedom of expression and sexual orientation in the country. As such, I urge you to repeal Section 347a of the Penal Code which contravenes a number of international and regional human rights treaties, including Cameroon's obligations under the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

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