

Cameroon security forces obstructing journalists

NEW YORK: Cameroon's government is obstructing journalists from reporting on issues of public interest, the Committee to Protect Journalists said on Friday, 25 February 2011. Security forces detained a journalist without charge for six days after he interviewed a jailed former official. They also seized footage from reporters covering the brutal repression of a banned opposition march on Wednesday.



Late on Wednesday, military police in the capital, Yaoundé, provisionally released Raphael Kamtchuen, editor of the private monthly *La Boussole*, after six days of detention without charge on accusations of possessing a classified official document, according to local news reports and local journalists. The nature of the document was not immediately clear. Kamtchuen was arrested by prison guards at Yaoundé's Kondengui Prison while leaving the facility after interviewing jailed former finance minister Polycarpe Abah Abah, who is serving a sentence for corruption. Kamtchuen was summoned to appear before a prosecutor on Friday.

"Cameroonian authorities must clarify why they detained Raphael Kamtchuen," said CPJ Africa advocacy coordinator Mohamed Keita.

Also on Wednesday, security forces prevented at least eight journalists from filming police brutally dispersing a protest march in the commercial city of Douala, according to local journalists. Plainclothes security agents picked up Agence France-Presse correspondent Reinier Kaze and held him overnight, defense lawyer Levi Deffo told CPJ. Police confiscated or destroyed footage or photographs taken by cameramen Warren Nzedeu of private Equinoxe TV and Charles Talom of pan-African satellite station Vox Africa, according to the Cameroon Journalists' Trade Union. Riot police used a water hose against another journalist, freelancer Aron Agien Nyangkwe, the union reported. Three other journalists, Equinoxe TV's presenter Polycarpe Essomba, and reporters Alain Tchakounte with the state daily *Cameroon Tribune* and Assongmo Necdem with daily *Le Jour*, were also harassed, according to union.

"We call on the authorities to hold to account members of the security forces and government who abuse their powers to prevent journalists from documenting their activities," Keita said.

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