

# Cameroon editor charged over leaked official document

NEW YORK: The Committee to Protect Journalists has expressed its concern for the safety of a Cameroonian editor who is being prosecuted in connection with a leaked official document, according to local journalists and news reports.



On 24 February 2011, a public prosecutor in Yaoundé charged Raphaël Nkamtchuen, editor of the periodical *La Boussole*, with "unauthorised communication with a detainee" and "possession of administrative documents labeled 'confidential,'" according to local journalists.

## Alleged leaked letter

The charges are based on an October 27, 2009, letter that allegedly leaked from the office of top presidential adviser Laurent Eso. Guards found the letter on Nkamtchuen as he left Yaoundé's Kondengui Prison following an interview with jailed former finance minister Polycarpe Abah Abah on February 17. Nkamtchuen told CPJ the letter was leaked to him and that he carried it into the prison.

The alleged letter from Eso informed the vice prime minister for justice Amadou Ali that President Paul Biya had approved the minister's proposal to arrest a number of officials for corruption, including Abah Abah, Nkamtchuen told CPJ. Eso has not publicly reacted to the allegations, according to local journalists. Abah Abah, who was convicted of embezzling public funds, is one of several top officials arrested or accused of corruption since the launch of an official anti-graft investigation called Operation Sparrowhawk, according to news reports.

Nkamtchuen, was detained for six days by Cameroonian military police before he was charged. He was free pending trial on March 24, but he told CPJ he has gone into hiding after receiving threatening phone calls.

## Concern for Nkamtchuen's safety

"We are concerned for the safety of Raphaël Nkamtchuen, who has gone into hiding after being charged in connection to his investigation into possible government abuse of power," said CPJ Africa advocacy coordinator Mohamed Keita. "We hold the government responsible for his safety and well-being."

Nkamtchuen disputed the charges, saying it was the third time he had visited Abah Abah in Kondengui Prison and that prison guards had never required any special authorisation to communicate with a detainee previously, he told CPJ. However, a prison guard was arrested on charges of conspiring to facilitate his entry, he said.

In February 2010, Easo ordered the arrests of four journalists after another document purported to have been leaked from his office detailing a kickbacks scheme surfaced, according to CPJ research. The arrests lead to the death in custody of one of the journalists, Germain Cyrille Ngota.

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