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United States Senate

November 6, 2020

COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS

BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN
AFFAIRS

BUDGET

ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

Acting Secretary Chad F. Wolf
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

I am writing to follow up on the enclosed October 28, 2020 letter that I led along with several of my Senate colleagues regarding ICE's practice of deporting individuals to Cameroon despite the escalating violence in that country.

I was deeply troubled to learn of another flight that is scheduled to remove more asylum-seekers to Cameroon on Tuesday, November 10, 2020. I have been advised that at least three individuals expected to be on the flight have pending legal motions that would not be adjudicated before the individuals' forcible removal from the U.S. I urge you to halt these deportation actions until the surge in violence in Cameroon has subsided and any appeals can be heard. Otherwise, you will be putting the lives of these Maryland residents at risk and undermining the core rationale of our asylum laws – providing refuge for people facing politically inspired persecution and violence.

My office has received a flood of calls from community members, legal advocates, and individuals from around the country who are deeply concerned about the potential fate of those scheduled to be on this flight. As you may be aware, the unrest in Cameroon is escalating and is becoming increasingly volatile and dangerous. In fact, just last weekend gunmen attacked a school and murdered several children in the city of Kumba.¹ Based on news reports, it appears that killings in Cameroon are now occurring indiscriminately.

I have also been advised that a number of those on the October 13, 2020 ICE flight to Cameroon either now live in hiding for fear for their lives or have not been heard from since leaving the U.S.² The situation is so dire that some of the family members of those being removed tell me that their loved ones "would rather die in ICE custody than be deported to Cameroon." Many of those scheduled to be removed on November 10th have lost family members in Cameroon at the hands of the police because they dared to seek asylum in the U.S.

I again urge ICE to immediately halt any and all deportations to Cameroon until the violence has abated and any pending legal motions are heard.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

¹ Human Rights Watch, 11/2/2020. *Cameroon: Gunmen Massacre School Children.* <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/02/cameroon-gunmen-massacre-school-children#>

² Mimi Mefo Info, 11/2/2020. *Cameroon: Repatriated Asylum-Seekers 'Missing.'* <https://mimimefoinfos.com/cameroon-repatriated-asylum-seekers-missing/>

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