

CALL FOR SUPPORT: Demand that Cameroon respect the writ of Habeas Corpus and immediately release Julius AyukTabe and his senior aides

To progressive lawyers and legal workers around the world:

Your informed support is needed to urgently demand the release of Ambazonian prisoners of conscious held for speaking up against the neocolonial occupation of their homeland.

After over 250 days of incommunicado detention, Julius AyukTabe and his colleagues were finally granted access to lawyers on June 19 [in response to grassroots advocacy](#). After this meeting, the lawyers submitted a Habeas Corpus petition demanding their immediate release on the basis of the blatant illegality of their arrest, which violated both Cameroonian and international law. [Click here to read an English translation of the Habeas petition](#).

In response to this petition, the Cameroon government imposed a team of lawyers of the regime's choosing on the prisoners, held a hearing in response to the petition without bringing them to court as is strictly required by the law, and dismissed the petition out of hand. While this display of wanton disregard to internationally recognized principles of jurisprudence is not of character for this government, the legal team had proceeded with the assumption that when presented with a succinct explanation of their errors, they would do the right thing.

AyukTabe's lawyers have appealed the flawed decision, and that is why we are seeking your assistance. We need to demonstrate to the government of Cameroon that the international community is watching their actions. Awareness of public scrutiny may prompt the court to use this opportunity to correct its error.

BACKGROUND:

On January 5, 2018, the Nigerian secret service seized Julius AyukTabe, known for his nonviolent leadership of the movement for the rights of the people of Ambazonia (also known as the Southern Cameroons) and 11 of his senior aides at the Nera Hotel in Abuja, Nigeria. The group had gathered to plan a meeting with the UNHCR to discuss the plight of thousands of Ambazonian refugees who have crossed the border into Nigeria fleeing violence at the hands of the French Cameroon military. Then, on January 26, 2018 — with no extradition treaty between Cameroon and Nigeria, and without the involvement of a judge — Nigeria forcibly handed 10 of the prisoners along with 37 other refugees to Cameroon in violation of *non-refoulement*, a fundamental principle of international law which forbids a country receiving asylum seekers from returning them to a country in which they would be in likely danger of persecution. This action drew condemnation from Amnesty International, the UNHCR, the United States Department of State, and other leading human rights advocates.

Ambazonia is an English-speaking territory located between Cameroon and Nigeria in West Africa. Since 1961 it has been under military occupation by the former French colony of Cameroon and most people consider it to be a part of Cameroon. AyukTabe and his comrades are part of a broad-based grassroots movement that has been organizing nonviolent resistance to this occupation for decades. The situation escalated in October 2016 when lawyers and legal workers took to the streets in protest of an attempt to dismantle the

Ambazonian common law–based judicial system, and to force all legal proceedings to be conducted in French. The Cameroon military responded to these entirely peaceful protests with lethal force, which has escalated steadily in the months since AyukTabe’s arrest.

This defense of their legal infrastructure cuts to the very identity of Ambazonians. Though British colonial control was hurtful to Ambazonia in many ways, set in historical context, it was by far the lesser of the evils and it left in its wake a legacy of respect for a personal-liberties based legal system that has since been utilized by legal workers to protect the dignity of the people. The Ambazonian legal community has invested in the idea that the rule of law can mitigate and correct grievances. Let us not allow the Cameroon regime to prove them wrong!

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Please consider taking the following actions:

- Submit an amicus brief to the Central Court of Appeals in Yaounde, Cameroon that emphasizes the importance of upholding the internationally recognized principles of habeas corpus, *non-refoulement*, the right to choose and communicate with legal representation. Briefs need to be submitted prior to the next hearing, which is scheduled for November 1. If you plan to work on a brief, please alert us and we will keep you informed as of updates.
- Sign and circulate this petition to your networks: <https://ambazoniapocs.net/node/19>
- Publish and blog about AyukTabe’s case — we would be happy to do interviews or provide references.

If you have additional suggestions about what actions could be taken to help in this situation, we would be grateful for your informed advisement.

Please direct all questions about this request to coop@ambazonia.mayfirst.org.

Thank you sincerely for any help you can provide.

In solidarity,

Sisiku AyukTabe & Co Solidarity (SACS)
Sam Soya Center for Democracy and Human Rights, South Africa
Ambazonia International Policy Commission, Germany
Ambazonia Prisoners of Conscience Support Network, UK and US
Southern Cameroons Bar Foundation

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