

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST IN NEED OF URGENT MEDICAL CARE

Political activist Serge Branco Nana, member of the opposition party Cameroon Renaissance Movement (Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun - MRC) is serving a two-year prison sentence for “mutiny” in Mfou Prison, southern Cameroon, having been accused of inciting a riot whilst in pre-trial detention. He is at risk of further torture and requires urgent medical care.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mr Laurent Eso, Minister of Justice

Secrétariat Général

Quartier ministériel

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Your Excellency,

I am deeply concerned about the wellbeing of political activist Serge Branco Nana.

Serge Branco Nana is a member of opposition party MRC. He was arrested in January 2019 in Bagangté, western Cameroon, during peaceful demonstrations. He was then held in pre-trial detention in Kondengui Prison in Yaounde. In July, he was accused of inciting a riot that happened in the prison and was subsequently sentenced to two-years in prison for “mutiny”.

Following the riot, Serge Branco Nana was taken to the State Secretariat for Defense (SED) where he was allegedly tortured for hours, severely beaten and his genitals were electrocuted. He was then transferred to Mfou Prison, 30km from Yaounde and more than 300km from Bagangté, with wounds and in a very deteriorated physical condition. He has since been complaining about pain in his abdomen, back and feet. Despite his complaints he has received no medical care.

On 1 February 2020, Serge Branco Nana’s brother was denied access to him. He is reportedly chained in his cell.

Cameroon is a party to three international treaties that prohibit torture, as well as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Moreover, Cameroon’s Constitution, Penal Code, and Criminal Procedure Code forbid the use of torture and other treatment that violates human dignity and integrity. The treatment undergone by Serge Branco Nana amounts to torture or ill-treatment that is prohibited by those texts.

As a principle, no human being should be submitted to torture and other ill-treatment. In light of the above, I urge you to order the penitentiary administration to immediately do the following:

- *Unchain Serge Branco Nana, if those allegations are verified;*
- *Grant him urgent medical care;*
- *Allow his family and lawyers to visit him;*
- *Ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 January 2019, opposition party Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon (MRC), the party of Maurice Kamto, who came second at the October 2018 presidential election, called for public protests or “marches blanches” across the country to contest alleged mass irregularities during the electoral process. In response to the unauthorized protests, security forces used excessive force against demonstrators. Seven people were shot and injured in the coastal city of Douala, while other protesters were beaten. The Government spokesperson denied the use of live ammunition against protesters but social media shows sequences of automatic gunfire in Douala and a member of the riot police shooting at the legs of a protester.

More than one hundred protesters were arrested in Douala, Yaoundé, Dschang, Bafoussam and Bafang. Approximately 50 were released the following day and the remaining protesters were placed under administrative custody. Opposition leader Maurice Kamto was arrested on 28 January 2019 and high-profile member of the party, lawyer Michele Ndoki was also arrested in February. They were charged along with 130 other persons with offences including rebellion, hostility against the nation, incitement to insurrection, and sent to pre-trial detention.

In October 2019, following an order by President Paul Biya to release some opposition members arrested during the demonstrations, hundreds of political activists, including Maurice Kamto and Michele Ndoki, were released. Amnesty International had campaigned on the cases of Michele and hip-hop artist Valséro.

Serge Branco Nana could not benefit from that measure as he got caught up in another case. On 22 July a riot was reported in Kondengui prison in Yaoundé. According to reports, detained armed separatists from the Anglophone regions and opposition members took possession of the prison yard to denounce overcrowding, judicial delays and deplorable conditions. Serge Branco Nana who was detained in that prison was accused of being among the initiators and sentenced in August to two years' imprisonment. Following the riot, he was taken from the prison and sent to the State Secretariat for Defence (SED) where he reported being severely beaten for hours and his genitals electrocuted. He was then transferred to the prison of Mfou, 30km from Yaounde and around 300km from the West region which makes visits very difficult for his family, relatives and lawyer to visit.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 20 March 2020

Please check with Amnesty regional office if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Serge Branco Nana (he/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a