

URGENT ACTION

RISK OF TORTURE FOR UNLAWFULLY DETAINED MEN

On 11 September, the Equatorial Guinea authorities unlawfully arrested Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane, accusing them of “breaking a mirror” at a hotel in Malabo, where the two had been arbitrarily held since they were unlawfully removed by the US to Equatorial Guinea earlier this year. Police officers covered the two men’s heads with a bag and beat them in their heads, backs and ribs. Amnesty International believes that police officers targeted them in reprisal for reporting the authorities’ violent threats to coerce them to agree to return to their countries of origin. Since then, the two men have been held in an overcrowded police cell, in inhumane conditions, unable to speak to their lawyer. The authorities must immediately release them, inform them of any charges against them and allow them unimpeded access to counsel.

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

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Dear Vice-President,

*I am extremely concerned about the unlawful imprisonment of **Ahmed Soliman**, an Egyptian national, and **Samson Birhane**, from Eritrea, and the risk that they may be tortured.*

Both individuals were beaten and violently taken by police officers from the Hotel Bamy in Malabo, the capital, and have since been held in unlawful detention. Amnesty International believes that they were arrested as a reprisal for reporting the appalling treatment and threats they are receiving at the hands of the authorities of Equatorial Guinea. I fear their lives and physical and psychological integrity are at risk.

On 11 September 2026 police officers arrived at the Hotel Bamy, where the two individuals and dozens of others have been arbitrarily held since their transfer to the country by US authorities, as part of the US policy of third country removals; Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane were removed by US authorities to Equatorial Guinea in April and June 2026, respectively. The police were searching for phones and threatening the group. They targeted Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane, covered their heads, beat them in their heads, backs and ribs, and took them to the Malabo gendarmery station known as “La Luna”, accusing them of “breaking a mirror”. Since then, they have not been informed of the charges against them, nor allowed to speak to their lawyers and are held in an overcrowded police cell, in inhumane conditions. I am concerned that they are at heightened risk of torture.

Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane were previously granted protection from refoulement to their countries of origin by US immigration courts. Despite this, police officers and guards in Equatorial Guinea have subjected them to repeated threats and ill-treated them, to force them to accept returning to their countries of origin. Neither of the two men can be returned to their countries of origin, as it would not be safe for them. Forcing them back would breach Equatorial Guinea’s international obligations.

*I urge you to ensure **Ahmed Soliman** and **Samson Birhane** are immediately released, informed of any charges against them and allowed unimpeded access to counsel. I also urge you to stop the threats and intimidation to coerce anyone transferred from the US to Equatorial Guinea to agree to return to their country of origin; and refrain from any reprisals against individuals for reporting and protesting their treatment in the country.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmed Soliman, an Egyptian national, and Samson Birhane, an Eritrean national who arrived in the US as a refugee when he was 13 years old, are part of a group of dozens of individuals unlawfully removed by the US to Equatorial Guinea. Removals from the US to Equatorial Guinea started in November 2025, following an opaque \$7.5m USD deal with the Trump administration for the transfer of third country nationals, concluded by the two countries in October 2025.

Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane were transferred by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) flights, departing from Alexandria, Louisiana, and landing in Malabo, on 29 April 2026 and 19 June 2026, respectively. US authorities removed them despite having been granted protection against refoulement to their countries of origin by US immigration courts. Since their transfer to Equatorial Guinea, together with other individuals removed to the country, they have been arbitrarily held at Hotel Bamy in Malabo. Ahmed Soliman had publicly denounced the authorities' treatment of individuals transferred from the US, and international media have published the videos showing how on 5 September, a police officer pointed at him and another man with a weapon. Following the publication of the video, police officers confiscated several phones from those held at the hotel. On 11 September, police officers targeted Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane, in reprisal for sharing the videos and talking to journalists. They arrived at the hotel, arrested them, reportedly for "breaking a mirror", and took them away. Later during the day police officers went back to the hotel, bringing Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane back with them, who had their heads covered with bags tied with a rope. Police officers beat them in their heads, backs and ribs with their elbows, knees and guns, asking them where they hid the phones. They pushed one of the men down the stairs of the hotel and said to others that they may never see Ahmed Soliman and Samson Birhane again.

Other people transferred from the US have also reported being victims of verbal and physical abuse by the police officers in charge of their custody. Amnesty International believes that these actions aim to coerce them into accepting being sent back to their countries of origin and frighten them to silence any reporting of their conditions to journalists, lawyers and independent organizations.

Notwithstanding Equatorial Guinea's appalling human rights record, the US has continued transferring individuals to the country. Until September 2026, at least six ICE flights removed other dozens of people, men and women from the US to Malabo. Those transferred were nationals from different countries such as – Angola, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Uganda, or Senegal. According to reports, most, if not all, had been granted protection by U.S immigration judges. Despite this, many of those transferred to the country have been coerced to agree to repatriation or forcibly removed to their countries of origin by Equatorial Guinea authorities, in breach of the international law principle of non-refoulement.

While there are a few references to asylum in domestic legislation, Equatorial Guinea does not have a legal framework for the determination of refugee status nor a formal asylum system. Decisions on asylum applications depend on the government. Reportedly, none of the asylum requests filed by individuals removed by the US to Equatorial Guinea have received any response by authorities so far.

In May 2026, a group of UN experts issued a public appeal to Equatorial Guinea, urging its government to comply with international human rights law and standards and refrain from refoulement. The statement was also co-signed by a representative of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). In June 2026, a group of NGOs filed a legal case before the ACHPR, accusing the government of Equatorial Guinea of refouling people sent there from the United States to their home countries. In July 2026 the ACHPR requested Equatorial Guinea to adopt provisional measures and refrain from further deportations and transfers, ensuring that no person transferred to the country is further expelled to a country where they risk the death penalty, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Equatorial Guinea has ratified the Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment, and is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OUA Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. It is bounded by the absolute prohibition of torture and by the legal principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits States from transferring anyone to a place where they would be at real risk of persecution or human rights violations.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish and English
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 18 March 2027

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ahmed Soliman, Samson Birhane (Both he/ him)