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Celestin Njamen Launches New Party

By Vubem Fred | April 22, 2021

The Cameroonian political landscape has been enriched with the creation of a new political party. The Patriotic and Republican Alliance, APAR, legalized on April 6th, was launched in a press conference of Wednesday April 21st at La Chaumiere restaurant in Douala by the president of the party, Celestin Djamen. Speaking on the occasion, Celestin Djamen said he decided to create a political party in order to fill a vacuum in the opposition in Cameroon. He said, the APAR which is the 319th party to be legalized in Cameroon will not be a party only on paper. "We are going to be very active and make concrete proposals", he said. APAR, he said stands for one and indivisible Cameroon and advocates for the creation of a Cameroonian official language different from English or French, which he said was the language of colonial masters. He equally called for a reform of the educational and judicial system and for Africa to embrace industrialization as a means of combating neo-colonialism. He said his ambition to make APAR the second political party in Cameroon by 2025. He said his party will never boycott elections but said APAR will have a secretariat of cooperation with other political parties to discuss issues related to the reform of the electoral code. He shunned tribalism saying there is so place for tribalism in his party and that the motto of APAR is "Fatherland before the tribe". He also advocated for the involvement of Cameroonians in the diaspora in the development effort of the nation saying Cameroonians achieve great things outside the country and could do better back home. APAR, he said, is a respecter of State institutions and defender of republican values. APAR, he said incarnates the new opposition as according to him, the old opposition has failed. He condemned the platform put in place by some opposition party to press for a reform of the electoral law, saying the meeting was convened by people who wanted to boost their image after facing internal criticisms from their political parties.

Trade Between Chad and Cameroon Falls After Deby's Death

By Moki Edwin Kindzeka | April 26, 2021

Trade between Cameroon and its landlocked neighbor Chad has come to a virtual standstill, with Chad refusing entry to hundreds of trucks carrying essential supplies for its capital. Chadian military authorities sealed the border last week after the death of longtime president Idriss Deby amid threats from armed rebels.

Hundreds of trucks with goods meant for Chad's capital, N'Djamena, are sitting idle in Kousseri, a town on Cameroon's northern border with Chad. Another long line of trucks sits and waits on Chadian side of the border. Only a few vehicles said to be transporting humanitarian aid and hospital equipment are being given access to N'djamena by Chad's border security men. Cameroon's Ministry of Transport says at least 700 trucks bound for Chad's capital have been asked to delay their trips. Nana Seini transports rice from Cameroon's coastal city of Douala to N'Djamena. He says movement between Kousseri and N'djamena has been halted for about a week now. Landlocked Chad relies on Cameroon for 80 percent of its imports, while Cameroon buys food staples such as sorghum, onions and groundnuts from Chad. Zacharie Roger Mbarga is a researcher in regional integration and free trade in Central Africa at the University of Yaounde. He says Chad's military council is preoccupied over the security of the capital. Speaking by telephone from Douala, he said by closing the border, Chad's Transitional Military Council is indicating that its immediate preoccupation is to stop rebels from advancing towards N'djamena. He said the council wants to secure N'djamena for the 18 months before examining if it can hand Chad to civilian rule. He said the border closure is already



Trucks transporting goods are at a standstill in Kousseri, a town on Cameroon's northern border with Chad, Apr. 25, 2021. (Moki Edwin Kindzeka/VOA)

[Rights Groups Demand Records on Trump Admin's 'Death Flight' Deportations of Cameroonian Asylum Seekers](#)

By Julia Conley | April 26, 2021

Accusing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement of "crimes against humanity," civil rights attorneys with three organizations filed Freedom of Information Act requests on Monday, demanding information on the federal government's use of excessive force and coercion to deport asylum seekers. The requests were submitted by lawyers at the Center for Constitutional Rights, Project South, and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) on behalf of several refugees from Cameroon. The Alliance in Defense of Black Immigrants worked with the groups to file the requests. "The government's mass deportations of Cameroonian and other Black immigrants [are] inhumane and targeted," said Samah Sisay, an attorney and Bertha Justice Fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights. According to the asylum seekers' complaints, ICE agents used pepper spray and, in some cases, methods of torture, to force them to sign deportation paperwork between August 2020 and January 2021, in the last months of the Trump administration. "I said I didn't want to sign a deportation order," one Cameroonian asylum seeker wrote in a civil rights complaint (pdf) filed with the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) and DHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG). "I said I am afraid to go back to my country. [An ICE agent] promised me he would torture me... He pressed my neck into the floor. I said, 'Please, I can't breathe.' I lost my blood circulation." Last year, the U.S. government deported an unknown number of Cameroonians and other African refugees, sending them back to their home countries to potentially face violence and persecution. Many of the asylum seekers had pending trials in immigration court. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and tens of thousands have been displaced in the past several years amid violence perpetrated by separatists and the armed group Boko Haram. According to Human Rights Watch, people who are deported to Cameroon "face a serious risk of abuse by government security forces because they may be assumed to have links to separatists, or from the separatists themselves." "The government must atone for the appalling human rights abuses it has committed within its abominable immigrant prison and deportation apparatus. Black asylum seekers, many of whom faced political persecution in their home countries, referred to their deportation as a 'death flight,'" said Azadeh Shahshahani, legal and advocacy director of Project South. "These crimes against humanity are unforgivable, and we must never allow them to happen again." In February, more than 40 members of Congress wrote to President Joe Biden and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, calling on them to grant temporary protected status to Cameroonians and place an 18-month pause on their deportations. "Country conditions in Cameroon are both extraordinary and temporary, making return untenable and warranting immediate protections for Cameroonians living in the United States," the letter said. Although former President Donald Trump's term is over, the attorneys said Monday, President Joe Biden must take responsibility for ensuring that asylum seekers from Cameroon and other countries are not put in harm's way. The abuse of Black immigrants by the U.S. "cannot simply be swept under the rug with the change in government," said Luz Lopez, a senior supervising attorney with the SPLC. "If we are to take the new administration at their word that they are creating a more fair and humane immigration system, they must exercise transparency, cooperate with a full investigation, and work to ensure these abuses cannot occur in the future," she added.

stifling economic liberty and the free movement of people and goods which are not good signs for a country where people live in poverty. Marsa Success, a Chadian opposition leader, says security will be threatened in Chad until the Transitional Military Council created after Deby's death hands power to civilians. Speaking by telephone from Chad, he said it's high time Chad's military, the civil society and the rebels meet at a dialogue table and immediately hand power to civilian rule. He said Chadians are angry that after Deby's 30 years in power, the military unconstitutionally decided to hand Chad to General Mahamat Idriss Deby, the 37-year old son of the former leader. He said a majority of Chad citizens are disgruntled with the confiscation of power by Deby and his family. He said civilians are ready to sacrifice to free their country, even if they go hungry because of the border closure. On Sunday, Chad's ruling military council in a statement read on state TV said it will not negotiate with rebels whom they accuse of killing Deby. The military said Mahamat Mahadi Ali, the leader of the rebels known as the Front for Change and Concord in Chad, had fled into Niger and asked its neighbor to help track Ali down. The council has promised to fully reopen the border in the days ahead if the security situation improves.

[Reporter Jailed Since August, Abandoned by Justice System](#)

By Reporters Without Borders | April 23, 2021

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls for the release of Emmanuel Mbombog Mbog Matip, a journalist who has been imprisoned without trial in Cameroon since last August and who is being held in an entirely illegal manner. The editor of the newspaper Climat Social and president of the National League for the Defence of the Rights of Disadvantaged Persons, Emmanuel Mbombog Mbog Matip has been forgotten by the judicial system ever since his arrest more than eight months ago on a charge of spreading fake news. Six armed men arrested him at his home on 17 August 2020, when he was investigating two stories involving various senior Cameroonian officials. One was about an alleged coup plot, the other about the theft of luxury cars from Togo. He had received several threats and had been the target of an intimidation attempt shortly before his arrest. Matip, whose feet were amputated after a road accident in 1992, says he was physically mistreated and humiliated at the time of his arrest and in the hours that followed. After initial interrogation at military intelligence headquarters, he was held without an arrest warrant at the defence ministry for three weeks before being brought before a military court in Yaoundé and then taken to Kondengui prison, where Covid-19 is out of control. He is still being held in Kondengui, although his provisional detention order expired on 7 March. "This journalist has been treated in a disgraceful manner that has included a heavy-handed arrest, being hauled before a military court and being subjected to an arbitrary provisional detention that has already expired," said Arnaud Froger, the head of RSF's Africa desk. "The entirely illegal prolongation of his detention is clearly motivated by a desire to prevent him from continuing his investigative reporting. We call for his immediate release." The head of the

Cameroonian Independent Journalists Union (SYNAJIC), Alex Koko à Dang, told RSF that Matip's arbitrary detention was the latest of many attempts to "gag the press" in Cameroon. Matip, who has submitted many release requests that have gone unanswered by the authorities, is not the only journalist currently being subjected to arbitrary prolonged imprisonment in Cameroon. Cameroon Web reporter Paul Chouta has been held for more than two years in Yaoundé's main prison on a fake news charge. After 26 hearings, an outcome to his trial is expected on 6 May. The former director-general of the state-owned radio and TV broadcaster CRTV, Amadou Vamouké, 71, has been held for nearly five years in the same prison as Matip without being convicted on any charge. Instead he is being subjected to an absurdly prolonged trial that has so far seen 65 hearings, which is unprecedented for a Cameroonian journalist. Cameroon has fallen another place in RSF's 2021 World Press Freedom Index and is now ranked 135th out of 180 countries.

Recurrent Fighting Further Endangers Country's Wildlife Resources

By Che Azenyui Bruno | April 22, 2021

For the past five years and more, the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon have been the centre of a prolonged armed conflict that has reportedly claimed the lives of more than 300,000 persons and left hundreds of thousands internally displaced. While urban cities like Buea, Bamenda and Limbe have witnessed less intense fighting in the past five years, most rural and semi-rural communities have recorded intense and fierce confrontations between armed groups and elements of Cameroon's defence forces, pushing large population groups to flee into the bushes and forest zones to seek refuge. According to international conservation group Global Forest Watch, in 2020 Cameroon lost 201kha of natural forest, equivalent to 83.0Mt of CO₂ emissions. The organization further reports that from 2001 to 2020, Cameroon lost 1.53Mha of tree cover, equivalent to a 4.9% decrease in tree cover since 2000, and 603Mt of CO₂ emissions. The Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERuDeF), a conservation non-profit in Cameroon, reports that the fighting has sent more than 90% of the population of Lebialem division in the South West region fleeing into forests, resulting in increased human pressure on wildlife and biodiversity in the area. The effect of this mass displacement, ERuDeF states, has been the large-scale conversion of animal habitats into makeshift human settlements and the poaching of protected wildlife species for food. "Most conservation activities in the Lebialem Highlands have been totally halted so that conservators, village forest management committees, local rangers and eco-guards face difficulties in carrying out their activities. Some activities have been completely quarantined in the area," a recent ERuDeF report states. The Lebialem Highlands is one of several conservation hotspots in the South West region that host some of Cameroon's treasured and endangered wildlife species like Cross River gorillas, forest elephants, chimpanzees and other endemic primates. Other biodiversity hotspots in the North West and South West regions have also been ravaged by the conflict, one for which many believe there is no ready-made solution in sight. ERuDeF Cameroon reports that more than 14 biodiversity hotspots in the North West and South West regions have been affected by the armed conflict plaguing the two regions. The effects of the crisis on biodiversity, it says, range from encroachment into protected areas by fleeing refugees and armed groups, setting up of fighter camps, indiscriminate killing of wildlife for food, destruction of forest cover for construction of makeshift settlements, attacks on conservation workers by fighting groups and discontinuation of livelihood initiatives in adjacent communities due to rising insecurity. Samuel Nguéping, Landscape Officer of the Bakossi National Park in the South West region, recounts that since the onset of the current crisis they have barely been able to cover as much as 40% of their projects initiated within the 34 villages that make up the park. ... At the Mount Cameroon National Park Service, the head of unit for collaborative management, Ikomey Nelson, said less than 30% of the park's activities within its protected areas and its adjacent communities are still in operation. Longsi George Ngwa, conservator at the Banyang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary in the South West region, said almost all his eco-guards had fled their project sites as a result of escalating fighting between armed groups and defence forces in the area. "Our conservation office was set on fire and almost all our eco-guards were forced to flee the area for safety. Most of the community members were relocating to other regions as a result of increasing insecurity. Virtually all 34 communities adjacent to the sanctuary were affected by the crisis," Ngwa said, adding with optimism that activities are fast resuming in almost all villages adjacent to the sanctuary.