

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

October 13, 2020

Tony H. Pham  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
1500 12<sup>th</sup> St., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Mr. Pham:

We are deeply concerned about recent reports that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is planning to remove over 200<sup>1</sup> Cameroonian asylum seekers despite recent allegations that many of these individuals were coerced into signing travel documents effectuating their removal.<sup>2</sup> Concerns have also been raised regarding the validity of the travel documents obtained by ICE after a separate recent occurrence where documents for other Cameroonian detainees were deemed invalid.<sup>3</sup> We urge you to appropriately investigate and resolve these allegations before taking action with respect to any affected individuals, including those reportedly scheduled to be removed on a flight later this afternoon.

On October 7, 2020, eight advocacy groups submitted a complaint to ICE, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office for Civil Rights & Civil Liberties, and the DHS Office of Inspector General detailing the accounts of eight Cameroonian asylum seekers at the Adams County Correctional Center in Natchez, Mississippi.<sup>4</sup> According to the advocates who interviewed the eight detainees mentioned in the complaint, ICE and contract employees deployed pepper spray, physical restraints, and other use of force measures to obtain the signature or fingerprint of detainees on travel documents for their removal from the U.S. Advocates also stated that this is not an isolated incident and believe similar incidents to have occurred at other facilities within

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Morrissey, Cameroonian asylum seekers fear looming deportation flight means certain death, The San Diego Union-Tribune, Oct. 12, 2020. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/immigration/story/2020-10-12/cameroonian-asylum-seekers-fear>

<sup>2</sup> Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officers' Use of Torture to Coerce Immigrants Into Signing Immigration Documents at Adams County Correctional Facility, Southern Poverty Law Center and Freedom for Immigrants, Oct. 7, 2020. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/5f7f17f39e044f47175204fb/1602164723244/Re+CRCL+Complaint+ICE%27s+Use+of+Torture+to+Coerce+Immigrants+to+Sign+Immigration+Documents+at+Adams+County+Correctional+Facility.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Joe Penney, Pauline Binam Says She Never Gave ICE Doctor Consent to Remove Her Fallopian tube, The Intercept, Oct. 2, 2020. <https://theintercept.com/2020/10/02/ice-irwin-amin-obgyn-cameroon-women/>

<sup>4</sup> Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officers' Use of Torture to Coerce Immigrants Into Signing Immigration Documents at Adams County Correctional Facility, Southern Poverty Law Center and Freedom for Immigrants, Oct. 7, 2020. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/5f7f17f39e044f47175204fb/1602164723244/Re+CRCL+Complaint+ICE%27s+Use+of+Torture+to+Coerce+Immigrants+to+Sign+Immigration+Documents+at+Adams+County+Correctional+Facility.pdf>

ICE's New Orleans Field Office Area of Responsibility. If confirmed, these accounts would not only violate ICE's detention standards, but also the law.

The complaint also questions the validity of travel documents obtained for the Cameroonian detainees.<sup>5</sup> According to reporting, travel documents ICE obtained last month for a Cameroonian detainee were deemed invalid by the Cameroon Embassy in Washington, D.C.<sup>6</sup> While it is unclear whether the travel documents for the 200 Cameroonians slated for removal are similarly affected, these are serious allegations and must be investigated thoroughly.

Again, we urge you to halt the removal of Cameroonians until a fair, thorough, and transparent investigation into the allegations outlined in this very troubling complaint is complete.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson  
Chairman  
House Committee on Homeland Security



Karen R. Bass  
Chairwoman  
Congressional Black Caucus

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<sup>5</sup> P. 10, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officers' Use of Torture to Coerce Immigrants Into Signing Immigration Documents at Adams County Correctional Facility, Southern Poverty Law Center and Freedom for Immigrants, Oct. 7, 2020.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/5f7f17f39e044f47175204fb/1602164723244/Re+CRCL+Complaint+ICE%27s+Use+of+Torture+to+Coerce+Immigrants+to+Sign+Immigration+Documents+at+Adams+County+Correctional+Facility.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Joe Penney, Pauline Binam Says She Never Gave ICE Doctor Consent to Remove Her Fallopian tube, The Intercept, Oct. 2, 2020. <https://theintercept.com/2020/10/02/ice-irwin-amin-obgyn-cameroon-women/>