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One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

March 11, 2019

Ambassador Tibor Nagy
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of African Affairs
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Nagy:

In advance of your upcoming trip to Cameroon, I am writing to you out of concern for Maurice Kamto, President of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement and former candidate for the Cameroonian presidency. As you know, Mr. Kamto was arrested on January 28, 2019 and is currently being held in the maximum security Kondengui Central Prison, a location which has drawn international criticism for harsh conditions and overcrowding. His arrest and subsequent hearing deferrals are part of a much wider trend of criminalizing dissent and persecuting President Biya's perceived enemies. Moreover, Mr. Kamto is but one of hundreds of political prisoners in Cameroon who could soon be facing the death penalty, which is indicative of a rapidly contracting space for free speech and political opposition.

I appreciated your March 4th interview on Radio France Internationale, in which you stated that the Cameroonian government should release Mr. Kamto due to the perception that he has been incarcerated for his political actions. I hope that you continue to challenge the merits of his arrest with President Biya and other government officials during your time in Cameroon. In your meetings, I hope that you also raise the fact that the Government of Cameroon has clearly violated the rights of Mr. Kamto and other political prisoners to assemble freely and express and disseminate their opinions, which are encapsulated in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which Cameroon ratified three decades ago.

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As you served in Cameroon earlier in your career, you may share my alarm at the country's current trajectory – with the brewing insurgency in the Anglophone region, the ban on protests and public demonstrations following the flawed October 2018 election, and the mass arrests of protestors and journalists in January 2019. I commend Ambassador Barlerin's leadership in addressing these issues during this challenging time and hope that the United States can work effectively with partners in Cameroon, the rest of Africa, and in Europe to secure a better future for the Cameroonian people.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Eliot L. Engel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eliot" being the most prominent part.

ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman