

National Union of Journalists BBC World Service Branch

The Rt Hon Theresa May, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Office

29th June 2010

Dear Theresa May,

Re: Forced Removal of Charles Atangana (HO Reference A1227296)

I am writing to urge you to intervene urgently to stop the deportation from the UK of Cameroonian journalist Charles Atangana.

According to his colleagues, Mr Atangana has claimed asylum in the UK in 2004 and lived in Scotland while his case is being processed. After waiting for almost 18 months for a decision, he received today a refusal letter after which he was forcibly removed from Glasgow by the UK Border Agency before being transferred to Colnwood detention center.

Mr Atangana, a brave journalist had to flee the Cameroon after he was set upon by President Biya's security forces, arrested, strip naked, beaten up and detained for forty days. He succeeded in fleeing the Cameroon and came to England where he claimed asylum.

While in Scotland, Mr Atangana gave a lot of his time as a volunteer for the Parkhead Citizen's Advice Bureau for over three years, and played a major role helping people less fortunate than him in one of the most deprived parts of Glasgow.

Cameroon is considered one of the worst countries for journalists in the world.

In recent months the International Federation of Journalists has made numerous appeals to President Biya urging him to put an end to the harassment and abuse of scores of journalists in Cameroon. We have strong evidence that his administration routinely uses security forces and criminal laws to settle scores with the media. As a result, the number of arbitrary arrests and criminal prosecutions of journalists, and even allegations of torture of journalists has soared, raising critical questions about the rule of law and democracy in the Cameroon.

We strongly believe that the life of Mr Atangana will be seriously at risk were he to be deported back to the Cameroon. Last April, newspaper editor Germain S. Ngota Ngota died in the notorious Kondengui prison in the capital, Yaoundé. He has been detained since February with three of his colleagues because they were investigating corruption allegations involving top presidential aides.

We believe that Mr Atangana should be released and allowed to stay indefinitely in safety in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

Michael Workman
Chair,
BBC World Service Branch