

Cameroon authorities summon journalist Mimi Mefo

Authorities in Cameroon should halt their intimidation of journalist Mimi Mefo and ensure that she can work safely without fear of reprisal, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.



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On October 31, Mefo, the head of English news and a presenter for the privately owned Equinoxe television and radio station, was summoned to appear before the national gendarmerie in Douala, the capital of Cameroon's Littoral region, as part of a false news and cybercrime investigation, according to Mefo, her lawyer Tamfu Richard, and a summons document seen by CPJ.

Mefo, who also runs [Mimi Mefo Info](#), her own news website, and actively reports on social media about political unrest in Cameroon's western Anglophone regions, is scheduled to appear at the gendarmerie office in Douala on November 5 at 2 pm, according to Mefo and a scheduling document seen by CPJ.

"By summoning Mimi Mefo, Cameroonian authorities send a chilling message to the country's media community," Angela Quintal, CPJ's Africa program coordinator, said from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. "Over the last year, Cameroonian journalists have been repeatedly summoned simply for doing their work. In many instances, these summons resulted in detentions. This pattern of intimidation must end."

“ Joseph Olinga Ndoa, a journalist with the French Newspaper daily, *Le Messenger* who was arrested November 3rd in Bafoussam has just been released.

He was on an investigative coverage in Akwa, one of the busiest joints in Bafoussam Saturday, when he was...<https://t.co/QVmlnVVxQM> pic.twitter.com/S6upYyiBuT— Mimi237 (@Mimimefo237) [November 5, 2018](#) ”

The summons document does not specify any charges against Mefo, stating only that she is summoned in connection with an investigation. Richard said that the summons likely resulted from a complaint against Mefo by either the state or a private citizen and that its details would likely be revealed during Mefo's appearance at the gendarmerie office. Richard told CPJ that penalties for false news charges can range from heavy fines to several years in prison.

Mefo's original summons called for her to appear before the gendarmerie today, but the appearance was delayed to November 5 after Richard submitted a formal request for a postponement, according to Richard, Mefo, and the request document seen by CPJ. Richard told CPJ that he made the request because of the possibility that Mefo could be detained following her appearance, and if this occurred on a Friday there would not be enough time to make a legal intervention for her to be released before the weekend.

Mefo told CPJ that threats against her related to her reporting have increased in recent months. Various social media accounts have posted and shared menacing messages and images, seen by CPJ, identifying Mefo as a female journalist and threatening violence - and, in some cases, murder.

Journalists in Cameroon are [regularly arrested](#) for reporting on unrest in the country's western regions, including most recently editor Michel Biem Tong, who was [summoned and detained on October 23](#). Mefo has [previously written](#) about the importance of press freedom for peace and development in Cameroon. "I have a lot of people looking up to me for info, and I cannot let them down," Mefo told CPJ.

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