

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 11, 2020

The Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Dr. Cuffari:

We write to request an immediate investigation into reports of physical abuse of detained people of Cameroonian origin in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody for the purpose of unlawfully coercing them to sign deportation orders. These allegations assert that ICE and contract employees used pepper spray, physical restraints, and other coercive measures to obtain the signatures and fingerprints of detainees on travel documents for their removal from the United States. We share the deep concerns of our colleagues in the House of Representatives who have contacted you on this matter.

Our offices have received a deluge of calls from community members, legal advocates, and individuals from around the country who are desperately worried about the potential fate of these asylum-seekers. These people sought asylum in the United States because they were fleeing a violent and dangerous conflict that is still ongoing. They are targets of government forces and armed separatist groups and their lives will be at risk if they are deported.

Roughly 700,000 people have been displaced and several thousand have been killed since the conflict in Cameroon began, with over 3.9 million in desperate need of humanitarian support. ICE detainees who would be returned to Cameroon face a high risk of being detained, beaten, disappeared, tortured, or killed. The use of coercion to force detainees to sign deportation orders against their will, to deport them to a country where they face a high risk of torture or death, is unconscionable.

Several of us have written separately to Acting Secretary Wolf urging the Department to halt the deportation of Cameroonian asylum-seekers. We now urge you to investigate these allegations of abuse. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator