

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 13, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

We write to express our concern regarding the widespread corruption in the government of Equatorial Guinea and to urge your attention to the delay in the return of \$10 million in corruptly obtained assets forfeited to the United States in 2014. These assets were forfeited after the Department of Justice won a landmark case against assets in the United States purchased by the President's son, the Second Vice President Teodoro Nguema Obiang ("Nguema Obiang") of Equatorial Guinea.

Equatorial Guinea has been ruled by an authoritarian and kleptocratic regime since 1979, when President Teodoro Obiang Nguema ("President Obiang") came to power. With total command of all branches of government, he has established a nepotistic and patronage-based system that ensures control of the military and of private industry. Accounts of his gross human rights violations and endemic corruption have been regularly recorded in the [State Department's Human Rights Report](#) and by international organizations.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Investigations in both [2004](#) and [2010](#) found that President Obiang and his son Nguema Obiang had illegally moved millions of dollars through U.S. financial institutions. With the help of U.S. lawyers, accountants, and real estate agents, they violated the U.S. Patriot Act and U.S. banking and anti-money laundering regulations. Nguema Obiang then used these illegally obtained assets to fund a lavish lifestyle in the United States while the people of his country suffered.

We applaud the Department of Justice's prosecution in critical cases against corrupt officials, and we welcomed the [2014 settlement](#) with Mr. Nguema Obiang. We are also encouraged by the Department's recent announcement that \$26.6 million of the funds from the settlement will be used to fight COVID-19 in the country. However, seven years later, we are concerned about the Department's lack of progress on determining the purpose of and distributing the \$10 million in forfeited assets to the United States, which were intended for the use of the people in Equatorial Guinea.

While we want the assets to be returned in a way that would not be rediverted by the currently corrupt government, we urge the Department devise and share a plan with Congress to return such assets so that the people of Equatorial Guinea may ultimately benefit.

Therefore, we request that you report to Congress the status of the forfeited assets and urge the Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section to work with independent civil society organizations in Equatorial Guinea to define the process of the assets return so to help counter further corruption, and to support the growth of democracy, rule of law, and human rights.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

/s/

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/

Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

/s/

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

/s/

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress



María Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress

/s/

John Curtis
Member of Congress

/s/

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

/s/

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

CC:

Antony Blinken, Secretary
U.S. Department of State

Samantha Power, Administrator
United States Agency for International Development