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The Honorable President Joe Biden  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Vice President Kamala Harris  
Vice President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Ambassador Susan Rice  
Director of the Domestic Policy Council  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Cedric Richmond  
Senior Advisor to the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Jake Sullivan  
National Security Advisor  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
301 7th St, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Assistant Secretary Molly Phee  
Bureau of African Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

February 25, 2022

**RE: OVER 280 ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR IMMEDIATE DESIGNATION OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS) FOR CAMEROON**

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Ambassador Susan Rice, Secretary Mayorkas, Secretary Blinken, Assistant Secretary Molly Phee, and Senior Advisor to the President Cedric Richmond:

Today, the 281 undersigned organizations write to urge the Biden Administration to immediately designate Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Cameroon is eligible for an immediate designation of TPS under INA § 244(b)(1)(C), due to “extraordinary and temporary conditions” impacting most regions of the country, which combined make safe return to Cameroon impossible. These “extraordinary and temporary conditions” include three concurrent humanitarian crises, one of which (in the Far North region) constitutes an “ongoing armed conflict” under INA § 244(b)(1)(A). Both the conflict in the Far North and a second, separate humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions are characterized by widespread violence and human rights abuses by both government forces and armed groups, as well as massive internal displacement. A third crisis is the Central African Republic refugee crisis in the East, where over 300,000 refugees are hosted and access to food, safe water and sanitation services, education and livelihood remain limited for refugees and their host communities. The UN has stated that “nine out of ten regions of Cameroon continue to be impacted by [these] three complex humanitarian crises.”<sup>1</sup> An overarching context of state-sponsored human rights violations, such as restriction of freedom of expression and association, crackdowns on political opposition and dissent, and frequent use of incommunicado detention and torture, also make return to Cameroon unsafe.

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<sup>1</sup> UN OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2022: Cameroon (Feb. 2022), Available at: <https://gho.unocha.org/cameroon>

Furthermore, given the numerous formal complaints and allegations of violence and other human rights abuses against Cameroonians in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, all affected individuals should be protected from deportation in order to remain available to participate in ongoing investigations by the United States government.<sup>2</sup>

Congress established TPS to provide life-saving protection to people who, if deported, would be at imminent risk of harm or death.<sup>3</sup> These protections are grounded in the principle of *non-refoulement* under international law: the obligation not to return people to countries where they would face threats to their lives, safety, freedom, or other serious human rights abuses.

Citing risks linked to armed conflict, crime, kidnapping, armed robbery and carjacking, the U.S. State Department has issued “Do Not Travel” warnings for six regions of Cameroon: the North, Far North, North-West, South-West, and parts of Adamawa and the East.<sup>4</sup> In its most recent human rights report on Cameroon, the U.S. State Department identified an extensive catalogue of human rights abuses against Cameroonian civilians, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, violence against women and children, and targeted attacks against members of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>5</sup> The State Department and Congressional officials have also called for the Cameroonian government to comply with human rights norms and laws. For example, in September 2020, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations announced a resolution condemning violence and human rights abuses by Cameroonian security forces, including suppression of free speech, detention of government critics, sexual violence, torture, extrajudicial killings, and the burning of entire villages.<sup>6</sup>

The United Nations estimated in its 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview that 4.4 million people in Cameroon were in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup> According to the latest available updates, as of December 2021, over 1 million people were internally displaced in Cameroon,<sup>8</sup> over 72,000 Cameroonian

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., July 2021 Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (“CRCL”) Complaint filed with the Department of Homeland Security, alleging that ICE personnel at Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center and Allen Parish Public Safety Complex threatened Cameroonian and other Black immigrants in detention with punitive solitary confinement in retaliation for peacefully expressing their rights and for their support of the Black Lives Matter movement, available at [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/28\\_july\\_2021\\_complaint\\_and\\_call\\_to\\_close\\_pine\\_prairie\\_and\\_allen\\_prairie.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/28_july_2021_complaint_and_call_to_close_pine_prairie_and_allen_prairie.pdf); June 2021 CRCL Complaint filed by Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights and 15 other organizations on abusive solitary confinement at Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center, including testimony from Cameroonian and other Black migrants who alleged they experienced physical and psychological abuse, available at <https://rfkhr.imgix.net/asset/REFK-Human-Rights-Pine-Prairie-DHS-Complaint.pdf#asset:190280>; and October 2020 CRCL complaint by SPLC and other groups, with testimonies from Cameroonians detained at Jackson Parish detention center in Mississippi alleging that ICE officials used violence and excessive force and attempted to force them to fingerprint deportation-related documents, available at: [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/crcl\\_complaint\\_ice\\_s\\_pattern\\_of\\_torture\\_in\\_signing\\_of\\_deportation\\_documents\\_for\\_cameroonian\\_migrants.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/crcl_complaint_ice_s_pattern_of_torture_in_signing_of_deportation_documents_for_cameroonian_migrants.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Congressional Research Service Report, Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues (Updated April 1, 2020), available at [http://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401\\_RS20844\\_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html](http://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401_RS20844_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html)

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Cameroon Travel Advisory (August 9, 2021), available at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Cameroon 2020 Human Rights Report (March 2021), available at <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1387181/download>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “Risch, Cardin Lead Colleagues in Condemning Violence in Anglophone Cameroon” (September 8, 2020), available at <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/risch-cardin-lead-colleagues-in-condemning-violence-in-anglophone-cameroon>

<sup>7</sup> UN OCHA Cameroon 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (March 2021), available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cameroon%20Humanitarian%20Response%20Plan%20%28March%2021%29.pdf>; OCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Bulletin Issue N°23 (August 2021), available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cameroon%20Humanitarian%20Bulletin%20Issue%20N%C2%B023%20-%20August%202021.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, Cameroon Multi-Country Office (MCO) global statistics - September 2021 (published October 2021), available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89030>; Reported figures for the total number of IDPs in Cameroon varied during 2021, with estimates ranging from approximately 1 to 1.5 million IDPs across all regions depending on whether the returnees the UN classifies as “ex-IDPs” were included in the totals. UNHCR reported that there were 933,000 IDPs and over 518,000 “ex-IDPs” as of December 2021. UNHCR, “Cameroon Multi-Country Office (MCO) global statistics (December 2021): Persons of Concern in Cameroon,” January 6, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90327> (accessed January 20, 2022).

refugees were displaced in Nigeria,<sup>9</sup> and over 35,000 refugees had fled to Chad from the Far North region.<sup>10</sup>

## **I. TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS)**

TPS is a statutory status given to nationals of a certain country who are currently living in the United States if conditions in that country make safe return impossible. The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may designate a country for TPS if conditions in that country meet requirements regarding ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent safe return. Section 244(b)(1)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) permits DHS to designate a country for TPS if there is an “ongoing armed conflict” such that the return of nationals to that country would “pose a serious threat to their personal safety.” Likewise, Section 244(b)(1)(C) permits the designation of TPS when other “extraordinary or temporary conditions” prevent people from safely returning home, as long as it is not against the national interest of the United States to allow them to remain. Those granted TPS are eligible for a work permit and a stay of deportation for as long as their home country remains designated for TPS.

## **II. ONGOING ARMED CONFLICT IN THE FAR NORTH REGION**

The Far North region of Cameroon has been severely impacted by an armed conflict between government forces and the armed Islamist group Boko Haram and its splinter faction, the Islamic State in West Africa Province. The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in Nigeria in 2009 and spread to Cameroon in 2014, has led to the deaths of more than 3,000 Cameroonians and has resulted in the internal displacement of over 340,000.<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch has stated that “Boko Haram’s attacks are often indiscriminate, including suicide bombings in crowded areas,” such as schools, mosques, and refugee camps, “that appear designed to maximize civilian deaths and injuries.”<sup>12</sup> Such attacks constitute war crimes under international law. The organization also noted a rise in violent incidents in the Far North Region since the beginning of 2021, with almost daily killings, kidnappings, thefts, and destruction of property attributed to Boko Haram, which has also used child soldiers in violation of international law. A spike in Boko Haram attacks in the last two years has resulted in Cameroon suffering more attacks against civilians than Nigeria, Niger, and Chad combined in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

In connection with this ongoing armed conflict, the government has accused many residents of supporting Boko Haram, meaning that Cameroonian civilians from the Far North risk arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, other inhuman and degrading treatment, and harassment if forced to return. Amnesty International has documented how Cameroonian security forces have arbitrarily arrested hundreds of individuals accused of supporting Boko Haram, detained them in inhumane conditions, and subjected hundreds to torture, incommunicado detention, or enforced disappearance.<sup>14</sup>

## **III. OTHER EXTRAORDINARY AND TEMPORARY CONDITIONS WARRANTING A TPS DESIGNATION**

### **A. Humanitarian Crises**

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<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, “Cameroonian Refugees Overview – December 2021,” January 7, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90342>

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, “UNHCR Tchad: personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR - décembre 2021,” January 14, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90448>

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations, Cameroon (Updated August 31, 2021), available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Cameroon: Boko Haram Suicide Bombers Strike Displacement Site” (August 25, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/25/cameroon-boko-haram-suicide-bombers-strike-displacement-site>

<sup>13</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Boko Haram Violence Against Civilians Spiking in Northern Cameroon” (November 13, 2020), available at <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/boko-haram-violence-against-civilians-spiking-in-northern-cameroon/>

<sup>14</sup> Amnesty International, “Secret Torture Chambers in Cameroon” (2021), available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/07/cameroon-torture-chambers/>; Amnesty International, “Cameroon: Right cause, wrong means: human rights violated and justice denied in Cameroon’s fight against Boko Haram” (July 14, 2016), available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/4260/2016/en/>

Cameroon is facing three separate humanitarian crises affecting nearly all of the country's ten regions: conflict with the armed Islamist group Boko Haram in the Far North region, as described above; a political and humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions, with cholera now on the rise throughout the regions; and a refugee crisis in the East, near the border with the Central African Republic.

### ***Political and Human Rights Crisis in the Anglophone North-West and South-West Regions***

Since late 2016, Cameroon, a bilingual country with eight Francophone and two Anglophone regions, has faced a protracted human rights crisis in its Anglophone North-West and South-West regions resulting in the internal displacement of more than 573,000 civilians and the displacement of over 72,000 Cameroonian refugees across the border in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup> In October and November 2016 Anglophone lawyers, teachers and activists took to the streets to protest against what they perceived as the central government's attempts to marginalize and assimilate Anglophone courts and schools into the Francophone system. In response, government security forces cracked down on protests. Moderate voices began to fade, and armed separatist groups were formed. Both government forces and armed separatist groups have committed serious human rights abuses. As a result of this crisis, at least 4,000 civilians have been killed in the Anglophone regions alone.<sup>16</sup> Human rights organizations have documented how government security forces have killed civilians,<sup>17</sup> raped women,<sup>18</sup> and arbitrarily arrested and tortured alleged members of armed separatist groups;<sup>19</sup> while armed separatist groups have attacked aid workers and schools,<sup>20</sup> and killed, tortured, assaulted, and kidnapped civilians,<sup>21</sup> and both groups have destroyed civilians' homes and property.<sup>22</sup> In October 2020, unidentified gunmen killed 7 children and injured at least 13 others at a school in Kumba, in the South-West region. No one claimed responsibility for the killings, but the government has accused armed separatist groups who have called for a boycott of education in the Anglophone regions since 2017.<sup>23</sup> This violence in Cameroon's Anglophone regions severely escalated in early 2021, taking an increasingly heavy toll on civilians with renewed attacks against schools and a series of recent extrajudicial killings and incidents involving improvised explosive devices

<sup>15</sup> UN OCHA, "Cameroon: North-West and South-West: Situation Report No. 37," January 2022, available at <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/cameroon/>

<sup>16</sup> Jess Craig, "Violence in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis Takes High Civilian Toll," Al Jazeera, April 1, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/1/violence-in-cameroon-anglophone-crisis-takes-high-civilian-toll-text=At%20least%204%20000%20civilians%20have.an%20armed%20campaign%20since%202014>.

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon Security Forces Kill Civilians, Rape Woman" (July 22, 2019), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/22/cameroon-security-forces-kill-civilians-rape-woman>; Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Civilians Massacred in Separatist Area" (February 21, 2021), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/25/cameroon-civilians-massacred-separatist-area>

<sup>18</sup> Jess Craig, "Sexual Violence Pervasive in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions" (April 29, 2021), available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/29/gender-based-violence-pervasive-in-camerouns-anglophone-regions>

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Routine Torture, Incommunicado Detention" (May 6, 2019), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/06/cameroon-routine-torture-incommunicado-detention>

<sup>20</sup> UN OCHA, "Cameroon: North-West and South-West: Situation Report No. 32," June 30, 2021, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-north-west-and-south-west-situation-report-no-32-30-june-2021>; Human Rights Watch, "Renewed Attacks on Aid Workers in Cameroon" (June 4, 2020) available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/04/renewed-attacks-aid-workers-cameroon>; Human Rights Watch, "Targeted for Going to School in Cameroon" (March 12, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/12/targeted-going-school-cameroon>

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Video shows Separatists Torturing Man" (June 24, 2019), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/24/cameroon-video-shows-separatists-torturing-man>; Human Rights Watch, "Kidnappings Endemic in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions" (July 11, 2019), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/11/kidnappings-endemic-camerouns-anglophone-regions>

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: New Abuses by Both Sides" (August 2, 2021), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/02/cameroon-new-abuses-both-sides>; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2021: Cameroon" (2021), available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/cameroon>; UNHCR Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations, Cameroon (Updated August 31, 2021), available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmri>; UNHCR Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations, Nigeria (Updated August 31, 2021), available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/nga>

<sup>23</sup> The New York Times, "At Least 6 Children Killed in Attack on School in Cameroon" (October 24, 2020), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/world/africa/cameroonian-school-killing.html>; Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Gunmen Massacre School Children" (November 2, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/02/cameroon-gunmen-massacre-school-children>

(IEDs).<sup>24</sup> In September 2021, in a series of attacks in the North-West, eight students were kidnapped and a girl's fingers were chopped off after she tried to attend school.<sup>25</sup> Five public school principals were also kidnapped, including one who was then killed.

### ***Refugee Crisis and Insecurity in the East Near the Border with Central African Republic***

Conflict in the neighboring Central African Republic (CAR) has also impacted Cameroon, which currently hosts over 343,000 refugees from the CAR in its East, Adamawa, and Northern regions, after a new wave of refugees crossed the border following election-related violence in CAR in late 2020.<sup>26</sup> The influx of refugees has put significant pressure on the already limited natural resources and basic social services in host communities, severely exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and leading to increased incidents of criminality, kidnappings, and inter-communal violence.<sup>27</sup>

### **B. Other Issues Creating Risks For Returnees**

In addition to the above three humanitarian crises, other contexts and issues create risks and threats to safety across the country. Inter-communal violence has affected at least two regions (the Far North and North-West). The Cameroonian government's continued crackdowns on political opposition and dissent, as well as security forces' documented use of incommunicado detention and torture, create risks for anyone deported to Cameroon. Notably, deportees from the United States risk being targeted by authorities for actual or imputed opposition to the government,<sup>28</sup> and have experienced arbitrary detention and other abuses upon return, as detailed below.

### ***Documented Human Rights Abuses in Cameroon Against Cameroonians Deported from the United States***

In 2019 and 2020, ICE deported an estimated 190 or more Cameroonians. Approximately 80-90, nearly all asylum seekers, were deported in October and November 2020 alone.<sup>29</sup> Cameroonians recently deported from the United States have suffered persecution and other serious human rights violations post-return. On February 10, 2022, Human Rights Watch released a report documenting how Cameroonian authorities subjected dozens of asylum seekers deported by the United States to serious human rights violations between 2019 and 2021, including arbitrary arrest and detention; enforced disappearances; torture, rape, and other violence; extortion; unfair prosecutions; confiscation of their national IDs; harassment and threats.

The report states that Cameroonian authorities detained or harmed at least 40 Cameroonians deported from the United States between 2019 and 2021, noting that additional cases may have gone unreported. Human Rights Watch found that authorities detained deportees in jails, prisons, military camps, or other detention facilities, both legal and illegal, for periods ranging from days to months. In multiple cases, people were held without due process or in inhumane conditions. The report documents 13 cases of

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<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Armed Separatists' Attack on Education," December 15, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/15/cameroon-armed-separatists-attack-education>; Jess Craig, "Violence in Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis Takes High Civilian Toll," Al Jazeera, April 1, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/1/violence-in-cameroon-anglophone-crisis-takes-high-civilian-toll>

<sup>25</sup> United Nations News, "Violence in Cameroon, impacting over 700,000 children shut out of school," (December 2, 2021), Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107072>

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situations, Cameroon (updated January 31, 2021), available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>; UNHCR, "Number of Central African refugees soars as violence intensifies" (January 15, 2021), available at

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/1/600152d24/number-central-african-refugees-soars-violence-intensifies.html>

<sup>27</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cmr\\_hno\\_2020\\_print1.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cmr_hno_2020_print1.pdf);

<https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/86262>

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch, "US: Protect Cameroonians from Deportation" (December 18, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/18/us-protect-cameroonians-deportation>

<sup>29</sup> Julian Borger, "US to send asylum seekers home to Cameroon despite 'death plane' warnings," The Guardian, (November 9, 2020) available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/nov/09/us-to-send-asylum-seekers-home-to-cameroon-despite-death-plane-warnings>

torture, other abuse, or assault of deportees by state agents. Perpetrators included Cameroonian police, gendarmes, military personnel, and other officials. Armed separatists also beat at least one deported person and threatened the relatives of others. The report notes that Cameroonian authorities targeted people in many cases because of their deportation from the United States and their assumed opposition to the government. Authorities also targeted or harmed the families of deported people. In seven documented cases, state agents beat, abducted, detained, harassed, and in one case reportedly killed, relatives in connection with deportees' returns.<sup>30</sup>

Under Cameroonian law, failure to possess an identity card is a punishable offense resulting in up to one year imprisonment and fines.<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch documented how the confiscation by Cameroonian authorities of the identification documents of many people deported from the US in 2020 led to cases of threats, arrests, and abuse by state agents, connected to their lack of IDs; it also created barriers to freedom of movement, obtaining employment, registering for a SIM card, sending or receiving money, and finding housing.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Inter-Communal Violence in the Far North and North-West regions***

In August 2021 in the Far North Region, clashes between ethnic Choa Arab herders and ethnic Mousgoum fishermen and farmers killed at least 32, injured at least 74 people, and burned down at least 19 villages, representing the worst inter-communal violence recorded to date in Cameroon. The violence internally displaced 7,300 people and forced 11,000 people from both groups to flee to Chad, 85% of whom are women and children.<sup>33</sup> Similar tensions between the Mbororos (ethnic Fulani nomadic herders) and non-Mbororos (local farmer communities) in the North-West Region have led to increasingly violent clashes.<sup>34</sup> Intercommunal clashes displaced thousands more people within and from the Far North between August and December 2021.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Government Repression of Political Opposition and Dissent***

The government has continued restricting freedom of expression and association and has become increasingly intolerant of political dissent.<sup>36</sup> In particular since 2020, authorities have cracked down on opponents of President Paul Biya and his ruling party, limiting political space. Hundreds of opposition party members and supporters were arrested in September 2020 following demonstrations calling for, among other things, a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Anglophone regions. The government charged hundreds of peaceful protestors with "terrorism and rebellion," using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to silence opposition and prevent dissent.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Government Security Forces' Use of Torture and Incommunicado Detention***

Human rights groups have documented use of torture by government forces in official and unofficial detention centers, including military bases, where many people have been held incommunicado. Security forces have severely beaten and used near-drowning to extract confessions from detainees suspected of

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, "How Can You Throw Us Back?: Asylum Seekers Abused in the U.S. and Deported to Harm in Cameroon," (February 10, 2022). Available at: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2022/02/us\\_cameroon0222\\_web\\_1.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2022/02/us_cameroon0222_web_1.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Loi no 90-42 du 19 décembre 1990 instituant la carte nationale d'identité, art. 5, <https://www.grelevel.fr/index.php/2016-03-14-13-30-24/2016-03-14-13-59-43/file/185-loi-n-90-42-du-19-dec-1990-instituant-la-carte-nationale-d-identite?start=20>

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch, "How Can You Throw Us Back?: Asylum Seekers Abused in the U.S. and Deported to Harm in Cameroon," (February 10, 2022). Available at: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2022/02/us\\_cameroon0222\\_web\\_1.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2022/02/us_cameroon0222_web_1.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/intercommunal-clashes-cameroon-force-11000-people-flee-chad>; [https://www.voanews.com/a/africa\\_cameroon-says-fight-over-water-leaves-many-dead-or-wounded/6209578.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_cameroon-says-fight-over-water-leaves-many-dead-or-wounded/6209578.html); <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/fisher-herder-conflict-northern-cameroon-kills-least-12-2021-08-12/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19376812.2020.1720755?journalCode=rafq20>

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR, "UNHCR External Update – Far North Cameroon – Chad Emergency," January 6, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90347>; UNHCR, "Cameroun: Statistiques des personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR" (December 2021), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90330>.

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch, World Report 2021, "Cameroon: Events of 2020," available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/cameroon>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid; Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Opposition Leaders, Supporters Detained" (October 19, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/19/cameroon-opposition-leaders-supporters-detained>

ties to armed separatist groups.<sup>38</sup> In its latest human rights report on Cameroon, the U.S. State Department listed arbitrary arrests, “torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government” (among others), and “harsh and life-threatening prison conditions” among the “significant human rights issues” in Cameroon.<sup>39</sup>

### ***The COVID-19 Pandemic***

The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified the above humanitarian crises and human rights issues in Cameroon, where violence and heavy rains have catastrophically degraded infrastructure essential to the delivery of humanitarian aid and pandemic relief. Citing limited medical resources and a high risk of contracting the virus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have warned against all but essential travel to Cameroon.<sup>40</sup> The Cameroonian government has also been criticized for its lack of transparency on the misuse of millions of dollars in pandemic relief funds.<sup>41</sup> Medical workers report that hospitals have seen no additional aid or construction for new facilities, resulting in a lack of personal protective equipment, limited bed space, and an inability to treat patients.<sup>42</sup> Some attempts to distribute masks, hand sanitizer, and other protective materials by non-governmental groups have even been politicized and prevented by the ruling party.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Cameroon is in the midst of multiple humanitarian crises, including an armed conflict in the Far North and widespread violence in the North-West and South-West, characterized by war crimes, massive internal displacement, serious human rights abuses by both government forces and armed groups, and critical shortages of essentials including water, food, housing, and healthcare. Additionally, dozens of people deported from the United States have been subjected to serious human rights violations by Cameroonian authorities upon return. Because these conditions make safe return to Cameroon impossible, we call on the United States government to act immediately to extend protection from deportation to Cameroonians living in the U.S.

Please contact Daniel Tse at [dtse@haitianbridge.org](mailto:dtse@haitianbridge.org) and Sarah Decker [decker@rfkhumanrights.org](mailto:decker@rfkhumanrights.org) to discuss this urgent matter at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

1. ABISA: African Bureau for Immigration and Social Affairs
2. ACLU- People Power Fairfax
3. Adelanto Visitation & Advocacy Network
4. Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice
5. Advocate Visitors with Immigrants in Detention (AVID) in the Chihuahuan Desert
6. AFL-CIO
7. African Bureau for Immigration and Social affairs
8. African Communities Together
9. African Diaspora for Good Governance

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/cameroon/report-cameroon/>;  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/07/cameroon-opposition-members-tortured-by-security-forces/>;  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/6536/2017/en/>;  
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/06/cameroon-routine-torture-incommunicado-detention>

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Cameroon 2020 Human Rights Report (March 2021), available at <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1387181/download>

<sup>40</sup> CDC, COVID-19 in Cameroon (August 9, 2021), available at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid-1/coronavirus-cameroon>

<sup>41</sup> Moki Edwin Kindzeka, “Cameroon Investigates Missing \$335 Million in COVID Funds,” *VOA News* (May 31, 2021), available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-cameroon-investigates-missing-335-million-covid-funds/6206445.html>; Sarah Saadoun (Human Rights Watch), “In Cameroon, Government Secrecy in the Management of Funds Destined for COVID-19 Response,” *Le Monde* (August 2020), available at

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/24/cameroon-government-secrecy-management-funds-destined-covid-19-response>

<sup>42</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Cameroon: Investigate, Distribute Health Fund” (June 12, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/12/cameroon-investigate-distribute-health-fund>

10. African Legal Concierge, PLLC
11. AFSC Colorado
12. Ahri Center
13. Al Otro Lado
14. Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice
15. Alamo Bay Press
16. Aldea - The People's Justice Center
17. Alianza Americas
18. America's Voice
19. American Friends Service Committee
20. American Immigration Lawyers Association
21. American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)
22. Amnesty International USA
23. Arizona Justice for Our Neighbors
24. Arriba Las Vegas Worker Center
25. Asian American Pacific Islanders - Christians for Social Justice
26. Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
27. Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
28. ASISTA
29. Asylum Seekers Advocacy Project (ASAP)
30. Asylum Seekers Sponsorship Project
31. A.Y.U.D.A. INC
32. Baltimore Action Legal Team
33. Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture
34. Black Alliance for Just Immigration
35. Black and Brown United in Action
36. Black Diaspora Voices
37. Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project - BLMP
38. Black Lives Matter San Diego
39. Blumenau Law, PLLC
40. Border Organizing Project
41. Border Organizing Project
42. Brooklyn Immigrant Community Support
43. Broward for Progress
44. California Immigrant Policy Center
45. Cameroon Advocacy Network (CAN)
46. Cameroon American Council
47. Cameroonian Association of Northern New England
48. Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition (CAIR)
49. CASA
50. Casa Ruby
51. Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
52. Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico
53. Causa
54. California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice
55. Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
56. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
57. Center for Popular Democracy
58. Center for Victims of Torture

59. Center for Worker Justice
60. Central American Resource Center for Northern CA (CARECEN SF)
61. Central Washington Justice for Our Neighbors
62. Charo - Young Bhutanese of New York
63. Chicago Refugee Coalition
64. Chicago Jewish Coalition for Refugees
65. Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
66. Church World Service
67. Church Women United in New York State
68. Citizens Policing Project
69. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
70. Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
71. Community Justice Exchange / National Bail Fund Network
72. Comunidades Unidas
73. Comunidades Sin Fronteras CSF-CT INC
74. Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement
75. Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible
76. Contigo: An Interfaith Ministry for Immigration Justice
77. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
78. Courageous Resistance of the Desert
79. DC Volunteer Lawyers Project
80. Deported Asylum Seekers Assistance Project
81. Detention Watch Network
82. Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
83. Dominican Development Center
84. Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House
85. DREAMers Resource Center, Portland Community College
86. East Bay Sanctuary Covenant
87. Engagement for TPS
88. Equal Justice Center
89. eQuality HomeCare Coop
90. Equity Matters
91. Espacio Migrante
92. Faith in New York
93. Faith in Public Life
94. Families Belong Together
95. Families For Freedom
96. FANM: Family Action Network Movement
97. Fellowship Southwest
98. First Focus on Children
99. Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
100. Fòs Feminista
101. Free Black Mamas DMV
102. Free Migration Project
103. Freedom for Immigrants
104. Freedom Network USA
105. Friends of Angola
106. Friends Committee on National Legislation
107. Friends of Immigration

108. Global Justice Clinic, Washington Square Legal Services
109. Global Social Work, LLC
110. Granite State Organizing Project
111. Guadalupe Presbyterian Detention Ministry
112. Guatemala Presbyterian Church
113. Haitian Bridge Alliance
114. Helping Ourselves to Transform
115. HI Coalition for Immigrant Rights
116. HIAS
117. Hispanic Federation
118. Hope Border Institute
119. Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
120. Human Rights Campaign
121. Human Rights First
122. Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
123. Human Rights Watch
124. Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
125. Immigrant Defenders Law Center
126. Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
127. Immigrant Legal Resource Center
128. Immigrants Rising, a Project of Community Initiatives
129. Immigration Hub
130. Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
131. Immigration Support Circle
132. Immigration Working Group of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod
133. Immigration Working Group, SWPA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
134. Indivisible Chicago Alliance
135. Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
136. Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
137. Interfaith Committee on Latin America
138. Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants
139. Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
140. Interfaith Welcome Coalition
141. International Association of Black Lawyers
142. International Mayan League
143. International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
144. Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice (Iowa MMJ)
145. ISLA: Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy
146. Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western MA
147. Just Neighbors
148. Justice Action Center
149. Justice at Work Pennsylvania
150. Justice for Migrant Women
151. Justice for Our Neighbors El Paso
152. La Raza Community Resource Center
153. Leadership & Advocacy for Women Africa Fellowship Program
154. Legal Aid Justice Center
155. Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition
156. Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention

157. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
158. MA Jobs with Justice
159. Mainers for Accountable Leadership Action
160. Mainers for Humane Immigration
161. Make the Road Nevada
162. Make The Road New York
163. Making Changes LLC
164. Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
165. Michigan United
166. Migrant Center for Human Rights
167. Mississippi Center for Justice
168. MomsRising/MamásConPoder
169. Morongo Basin Coalition for Social Justice
170. Mothers on a Move
171. MoveOn
172. MPact: Global Action for Gay Health & Rights
173. National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations In America
174. National Council of Jewish Women
175. National Domestic Workers Alliance
176. National Employment Law Project
177. National Immigrant Justice Center
178. National Immigration Law Center
179. National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
180. National Partnership for New Americans
181. Nebraska Appleseed
182. Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)
183. NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
184. New American Leaders Action Fund
185. New Bridges Presbyterian Church
186. New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)
187. New Life Christian Church of Fontana
188. New York Immigration Coalition
189. New York Annual Conference Board of Church and Society
190. NH Conference United Church of Christ Immigrant and Refugee Support Group
191. NH Helps Immigrants
192. Nikkei Progressives
193. Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
194. NYCD16 Indivisible
195. Oasis Legal Services
196. OneAmerica
197. Orange County Equality Coalition
198. Orange County Rapid Response Network (OCRRN)
199. Oregonizers
200. Organizing Black
201. Out for Justice Inc.
202. Oxfam America
203. Pax Christi New Jersey
204. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
205. Pennsylvania Council of Churches

- 206. Power Inside
- 207. Presbyterian Church USA
- 208. Presbytery of the Pacific
- 209. Presbytery of San Francisco
- 210. Presente
- 211. Progressive Leadership Alliance Of Nevada
- 212. Project Blueprint
- 213. Public Counsel
- 214. Pulso
- 215. Quixote Center
- 216. RAICES
- 217. Rainbow Beginnings
- 218. Rapid Defense Network (RDN)
- 219. Refugee Action Network
- 220. Refugee Congress
- 221. Refugee Council USA
- 222. RefugeeOne
- 223. Refugees International
- 224. Respond Crisis Translation
- 225. Rights and Democracy
- 226. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
- 227. Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
- 228. Sanctuary Now!
- 229. San Fernando Valley Indivisible
- 230. Seattle Immigrants Rights Action Group
- 231. Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
- 232. Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore
- 233. SIREN
- 234. Southern Poverty Law Center
- 235. Southeast Immigrant Rights Network
- 236. Southwest Asylum & Migration Institute "SAMI"
- 237. Sojourners
- 238. Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice
- 239. St. Francois Foundation
- 240. Sunflower Community Action
- 241. Sur Legal Collaborative
- 242. Tahirih Justice Center
- 243. TASSC International
- 244. The Advocates for Human Rights
- 245. The Barrier Law Center
- 246. The Office of New Americans of Miami-Dade
- 247. The Resurrection Project
- 248. The Rhizome Center for Migrants
- 249. The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
- 250. Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center
- 251. Transcend Arizona
- 252. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
- 253. UCOM
- 254. UndocuBlack Network

255. Unidad Latina en Acción CT
256. Unidos MN
257. Unitarian Universalist Association
258. Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
259. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
260. Unite Here
261. Unite Oregon
262. United African Organization
263. United Stateless
264. United We Dream
265. Vecindarios 901
266. Venice Resistance
267. Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights
268. Virginia Coalition for Latino Organizations
269. Voice for Refuge Action Fund
270. Washington West African Center
271. We All We Got San Diego
272. We Are All America
273. Welcoming America
274. Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
275. Witness at the Border
276. Women's Refugee Commission (WRC)
277. Women Working Together USA
278. Woori Juntos
279. World Refugee Day Chicago
280. World Relief
281. Youth Rise Texas



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

April 28, 2022

Daniel Tse  
dtse@haitianbridge.org

Dear Mr. Tse:

Thank you for your February 25, 2022 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding a request to designate Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and to protect thousands of Cameroonians from returning to ongoing armed conflict. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf, and I apologize for the delay.

On Friday, April 15, 2022, DHS announced the designation of Cameroon for TPS for 18 months. The United States recognizes the ongoing armed conflict in Cameroon, and we will provide temporary protection to those in need. Cameroonian nationals currently residing in the United States who cannot safely return will be able to remain and work in the United States until conditions in their home country improve.

Individuals eligible for TPS under this designation must have continuously resided in the United States since April 14, 2022. Individuals who attempt to travel to the United States after April 14, 2022, will not be eligible for TPS. Cameroon's 18-month designation will go into effect on the publication date of the forthcoming Federal Register notice. The Federal Register notice will provide instructions for applying for TPS and an Employment Authorization Document. TPS applicants must meet all eligibility requirements and undergo security and background checks.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the other organizations that cosigned your letter. Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ur M. Jaddou" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director