

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 895

Strongly condemning ongoing violence and human rights abuses stemming from Cameroon's Anglophone crisis.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 1, 2022

Ms. BASS submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Strongly condemning ongoing violence and human rights abuses stemming from Cameroon's Anglophone crisis.

Whereas many Anglophone Cameroonians have long felt marginalized by official actions and policies of the Government of Cameroon, including the abolishment of a federal form of government, which was the constitutional basis under which English-speaking Southern Cameroons entered into the union, and replacing it with a unitary state dominated by the Francophone majority;

Whereas, beginning in late 2016, protests organized by lawyers, teachers, and students were violently repressed by the Government of Cameroon, leading to numerous deaths and imprisonments, including of journalists, teachers, lawyers, and an Anglophone judge on the country's Supreme Court;

Whereas the conflict escalated in late September and early October 2017, when Cameroonian security forces brutally cracked down on peaceful Anglophone civilian demonstrators, resulting in dozens of deaths and leaving over 100 injured;

Whereas, since 2017, separatists launched a campaign to pressure school officials in the Northwest and Southwest Anglophone regions to go on strike as part of a boycott against the Government of Cameroon, and have been reportedly—

- (1) burning, damaging, looting, and destroying school buildings;

- (2) killing, beating, abducting, threatening, and terrorizing students and educational professionals with violence if they did not comply with a boycott;

- (3) harassing and intimidating families into keeping their children out of school; and

- (4) kidnapping for ransom children and teachers who defied the boycott in various schools, such as Kumbo (Bui division), Fundong (Boyo division) and Limbe (Fako division);

Whereas numerous human rights monitors have documented armed separatists killing traditional leaders and targeting civilians, including women, children, and the elderly, who are perceived to be supporting or working with the Government of Cameroon, and reports indicate that armed separatists have killed scores of security force personnel;

Whereas numerous credible reports from human rights monitors, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, have documented the excessive use of force by government security forces against Cameroonian civilians living in the Anglophone regions, including the

burning of villages, the use of live ammunition against protestors, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, sexual abuse, and killing of civilians, including women, children, and the elderly;

Whereas the Department of State has expressed serious concern over the manner in which the Government of Cameroon has used force to unlawfully restrict the rights to free expression and peaceful protest that are protected under the Cameroonian Constitution and international law;

Whereas the Government of Cameroon has charged journalists, social activists, and members of political opposition parties with terrorism-related crimes and prosecuted them in military tribunals;

Whereas the indiscriminate nature of violent clashes between Cameroonian security forces and separatist groups often results in the death of innocent bystanders, including American missionary Charles Wesco, who was killed in October 2018 by crossfire in the Northwestern city of Bamenda;

Whereas the Government of Cameroon arrested over 500 members and supporters of the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) following peaceful protests in September 2020, and allegedly subjected many detainees to harsh and inhumane detention conditions, including isolated imprisonment, denial of access to lawyers, and physical abuse;

Whereas over 100 of those arrested in late 2020 remain in detention, including 47 sentenced to prison in December 2021;

Whereas the Government of Cameroon continued to place bans on MRC's attempts to hold peaceful protests, and civil society reported that security forces interfered with MRC registration processes in Yaoundé, Douala, and Bafoussam in February 2019;

Whereas the Government of Cameroon has repeatedly restricted freedoms of expression by shutting down the internet, harassing and detaining journalists, refusing licenses to independent media, and intensifying political attacks against the independent press;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that as of December 2021, more than 575,500 people were internally displaced in areas affected by the Anglophone conflict, and there were an additional 383,500 returnees to the Northwest and Southwest regions;

Whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that roughly 72,000 Cameroonian refugees have registered in Nigeria;

Whereas, on July 23, 2019, the House of Representatives unanimously passed House Resolution 358, calling on the Government of Cameroon and armed groups to respect the human rights of all Cameroonian citizens, to end all violence, and to pursue a broad-based dialogue without preconditions to resolve the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions;

Whereas, effective January 1, 2020, the Trump Administration terminated Cameroon's eligibility for African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) benefits, citing deep concerns over "persistent gross violations of human rights

being committed by the Cameroonian government against its own citizens”;

Whereas, on June 7, 2021, the United States responded to continued conflict in Cameroon by imposing visa restrictions on individuals undermining the peaceful resolution of the ongoing crisis;

Whereas a prominent Cameroonian lawyer and opposition member of the senate, Henry Kemende was shot dead by suspected separatist fighters in the city of Bamenda on January 11, 2022; and

Whereas multiple brutal massacres have taken place and allegations of rape and gross violations of internationally recognized human rights continue, and as of December 2021, Human Rights Watch estimated that at least 4,000 lives have been lost during the crisis since late 2016: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) continues to strongly condemn the abuses
3 committed in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions by the
4 Government of Cameroon security forces and armed
5 groups, including extrajudicial killings and deten-
6 tions, the use of force against nonviolent civilians
7 and protestors, and violations of the freedoms of
8 press, expression, and assembly;

9 (2) reaffirms that the United States has held
10 and continues to hold the Government of Cameroon
11 responsible for upholding the rights of all citizens,
12 regardless of political views or beliefs or the regions

1 in which they reside, in accordance with Cameroon's
2 international obligations and Cameroon's own Con-
3 stitution;

4 (3) reiterates its call to all parties, including
5 political opposition groups, to immediately exercise
6 restraint and to ensure that protests remain peace-
7 ful;

8 (4) continues to urge the Government of Cam-
9 eroon to—

10 (A) initiate broad-based dialogue without
11 preconditions and make a credible, full-faith ef-
12 fort to work with religious and community lead-
13 ers in the Anglophone regions to address griev-
14 ances and seek nonviolent solutions to resolve
15 conflict and constitutional reforms that would
16 protect minority concerns, such as reconsti-
17 tuting a Federal system;

18 (B) follow through on the initiatives devel-
19 oped to address grievances, including the Com-
20 mission of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism,
21 the Ministry of Decentralization, and the Na-
22 tional Commission for Disarmament, Demobili-
23 zation, Reintegration, that currently offer no
24 visible evidence of having played a constructive
25 role in resolving the crisis;

1 (C) respect the fundamental rights of all
2 activists and journalists;

3 (D) ensure that any security operations
4 are conducted in accordance with international
5 human rights standards, including efforts to en-
6 sure security forces only use force under appro-
7 priate circumstances;

8 (E) transparently investigate all allegations
9 of human rights violations committed in the
10 Anglophone regions and take the necessary
11 measures to prevent arbitrary detention, tor-
12 ture, enforced disappearances, deaths in cus-
13 tody, and inhumane prison conditions;

14 (F) promptly charge or release all those
15 detained in the context of the Anglophone crisis
16 and ensure that any future detainees are treat-
17 ed with due process, in accordance with Cam-
18 eroon's penal code;

19 (G) allow unfettered access to humani-
20 tarian and health care workers in accordance
21 with humanitarian principles of humanity, neu-
22 trality, impartiality, and independence;

23 (H) release the leaders and members of the
24 Cameroon Renaissance Movement party who
25 were arrested following their peaceful protests,

1 and ensure that this party, like others, can par-
2 ticipate unfettered in future elections;

3 (I) release human rights defenders, civil
4 society activists, political prisoners, journalists,
5 trade unionists, teachers, and any other citizens
6 who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained
7 without trial or charge;

8 (J) ensure that detainees are treated fairly
9 and humanely, with proper judicial proceedings,
10 including a registry of those detained by the
11 Cameroonian security forces, and with full ac-
12 cess to legal and medical resources; and

13 (K) ensure that Cameroon's antiterrorism
14 legislation is used only to prosecute offenses
15 that would be considered acts of terrorism
16 under international legal standards, and cease
17 to use this legislation to sanction activities that
18 are protected by national and international
19 guarantees of freedom of expression, peaceful
20 assembly, and association with others;

21 (5) urges the separatist groups to—

22 (A) engage with Cameroonian Government
23 officials, as well as civil society and religious
24 leaders, in a broad-based dialogue without pre-
25 conditions to peacefully express grievances and

1 credibly engage in nonviolent efforts to resolve
2 the conflict;

3 (B) immediately stop committing human
4 rights abuses, including killings of civilians, use
5 of child soldiers, torture, kidnapping, and extor-
6 tion, and to hold those responsible for such ac-
7 tions accountable;

8 (C) end the school boycott immediately and
9 cease attacks on schools, teachers, and edu-
10 cation officials, and allow for the safe return of
11 all students to class;

12 (D) end incitement to violence and hate
13 speech on the part of the diaspora; and

14 (E) immediately release all civilians ille-
15 gally detained or kidnapped in the Anglophone
16 Northwest and Southwest regions; and

17 (6) urges the Secretary of State to hold individ-
18 uals accountable for gross violations of internation-
19 ally recognized human rights and for perpetuating
20 the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions
21 of Cameroon.

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