

that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1327. An act to extend authorization for the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund of 2001 through fiscal year 2092, and for other purposes.

**CALLING ON GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON AND ARMED GROUPS TO RESPECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL CAMEROONIAN CITIZENS**

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 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.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

**H. RES. 358**

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 Cameroonians 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, in 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 reportedly began burning school buildings, threatening education officials with violence if they did not comply with a boycott, and kidnapping for ransom children and teachers who defied the boycott;

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 the security forces of the Government of Cameroon have attacked medical facilities and health workers in the Northwest and Southwest regions;

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

Whereas the Government of Cameroon arrested opposition leader Maurice Kamto and roughly 150 members of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement party following peaceful protests on January 26, 2019, charging them with crimes that could result in the death penalty and handling their cases at the Military Tribunal even though they are civilians;

Whereas the Government of Cameroon continued to place bans on Cameroon Renaissance Movement'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 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated in April 2019 that more than 530,000 people were internally displaced in areas affected by the Anglophone conflict;

Whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that more than 32,000 Cameroonian refugees have registered in Nigeria;

Whereas the Department of State has expressly called on the Government of Cameroon to respect the rights, including the right to due process, of 47 Cameroonians forcibly returned in January 2018 from Nigerian custody to Cameroonian authorities, many of whom had reportedly submitted asylum claims in Nigeria; and

Whereas ten of the 47 Cameroonians forcibly returned from Nigeria now face charges before a military court punishable by the death penalty, while the other thirty-seven reportedly remain in detention without charge; Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) strongly condemns the abuses committed in Cameroon's Anglophone regions by the Government of Cameroon security forces and armed groups, including extrajudicial killings and detentions, the use of force against nonviolent civilians and protestors, and violations of the freedoms of press, expression, and assembly;

(2) affirms that the United States continues to hold the Government of Cameroon responsible for upholding the rights of all citizens, regardless of political views or beliefs or the regions in which they reside, in accordance with Cameroon's international obligations and Cameroon's own Constitution;

(3) urges all parties, including political opposition groups, to exercise restraint and to ensure that protests remain peaceful;

(4) urges the Government of Cameroon to—

(A) initiate broad-based dialogue without preconditions and make a credible, full faith effort to work with religious and community leaders in the Anglophone region to address grievances and seek nonviolent solutions to resolve conflict and constitutional reforms that would protect minority concerns, such as reconstituting a Federal system;

(B) follow through on the initiatives developed to address grievances, including the

Commission of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, the Ministry of Decentralization, and the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, that currently offer no visible evidence of having played a constructive role in resolving the crisis;

(C) respect the fundamental rights of all Cameroonian citizens, including political activists and journalists;

(D) ensure that any security operations are conducted in accordance with international human rights standards, including efforts to ensure security forces only use force under appropriate circumstances;

(E) transparently investigate all allegations of human rights violations committed in the Anglophone regions and take the necessary measures to prevent arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, deaths in custody, and inhumane prison conditions;

(F) promptly charge or release all those detained in the context of the Anglophone crisis, including the Cameroonians forcibly returned from Nigeria, and ensure that any future detainees are treated with due process, in line with Cameroon's penal code;

(G) allow unfettered access to humanitarian and health care workers in accordance with humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence;

(H) release the leaders and members of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement party who were arrested following their peaceful protests, and ensure that this party, like others, can participate unfettered in upcoming municipal, parliamentary, and regional elections;

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

(J) ensure that detainees are treated fairly and humanely, with proper judicial proceedings, including a registry of those detained by the Cameroonian security forces, and with full access to legal resources; and

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

(5) urges the separatist groups to—

(A) engage with Cameroonian government officials, as well as civil society and religious leaders, in a broad-based dialogue without preconditions to peacefully express grievances and credibly engage in nonviolent efforts to resolve the conflict;

(B) immediately stop committing human rights abuses, including killings of civilians, use of child soldiers, torture, kidnapping, and extortion;

(C) end the school boycott immediately and cease attacks on schools, teachers, and education officials, and allow for the safe return of all students to class;

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

(E) immediately release all civilians illegally detained or kidnapped in the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 358.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this measure.

I want to start by thanking Ms. BASS and Mr. SMITH for bringing forward this resolution, which calls 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 anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Since October 2017, the region has been mired in conflict, with both the Government of Cameroon and armed separatists fighting one another and perpetrating human rights abuses.

While armed actors refuse to pursue a negotiated settlement to the conflict, innocent civilians continue to suffer. According to UNICEF, more than 80 percent of the schools in the anglophone regions of Cameroon remain closed, putting at risk the future prospects of children who are being denied access to education. In addition, 1.3 million people, including approximately 650,000 children, are in need of humanitarian assistance.

This resolution urges the Government of Cameroon to respect the fundamental rights of all Cameroonian citizens and follow through on initiatives developed to address grievances in the anglophone region. It also urges separatist groups to engage with Cameroonian government officials, civil society, and religious leaders to express grievances and engage in efforts to resolve the conflict and to stop committing human rights abuses and inciting violence.

For several months, the Swiss Government has been attempting to mediate a peaceful resolution to this crisis, and I am pleased this resolution demonstrates Congress' strong support for a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to support this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 358, calling on the Government of Cameroon and armed groups to respect fundamental human rights and pursue dialogue to resolve the crisis in the anglophone region of that country.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to thank Congresswoman KAREN BASS, the chairwoman of the Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Subcommittee, of which I serve as the

ranking member, for this resolution. It is a bipartisan resolution, and, again, I thank her for her leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I would note that in the last Congress, I chaired a hearing on this Cameroon crisis as it was festering, seeking a way forward for peace. Sadly, that effort and all efforts made by the international community have been elusive thus far.

The conflict in Cameroon has its roots in long-simmering tensions between that country's francophone majority and the anglophone minority, concentrated in the northwest and southwest regions.

In 2016, protests by anglophone teachers and lawyers over marginalization and the lack of government services were met with a heavy-handed response. The government failed to genuinely address those legitimate grievances, which further inflamed tensions.

Brutal fighting between government security forces and local armed groups who called for separatism continues.

Today, there are over 500,000 displaced persons in the anglophone region.

Mr. Speaker, entire communities have been burned to the ground. Humanitarian convoys struggle to reach local populations or are even blocked and attacked by armed groups. Over half of the health facilities and hospitals have been damaged and forced to close. Children have been out of school for over 2 years.

According to the U.S. Department of State's Human Rights Report on Cameroon from 2018: "Government security forces were widely believed to be responsible for disappearances of suspected anglophone separatists, with reports of bodies dumped far from the site of the killings to make identification difficult."

This, in turn, is fueling resentment and separatist violence.

This resolution reiterates the U.S. position that all parties must immediately cease fighting and come to the negotiating table without preconditions. The Swiss-led mediation process is a hopeful step in that direction, which deserves support.

I would also note the critical role that has been played by the Catholic church, in particular Cardinal Tumi, in trying to reach common ground, and the need to support such efforts.

Hopefully, by weighing in, Congress can help promote the cause of peace and justice in the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I again want to thank Ms. BASS and Mr. SMITH for their hard work. Again, as I mentioned before, Mr. SMITH is always working very, very hard to be on the side of justice.

For too long, the people in Cameroon's anglophone region have been

marginalized by the Cameroonian Government, and since 2017, conflict between the government and separatists have brought chaos and fear to those living in the region.

This resolution supports a negotiated settlement to the conflict that respects the basic human rights of its citizens, so Cameroon can become a country that is more peaceful and stable.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to join me in supporting this bipartisan piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 358.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### PROVIDING BENEFITS INFORMATION IN SPANISH AND TAGALOG FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2943) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make all fact sheets of the Department of Veterans Affairs in English and Spanish, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2943

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the "Providing Benefits Information in Spanish and Tagalog for Veterans and Families Act".*

#### SEC. 2. FACT SHEETS.

(a) **LANGUAGES.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make versions of all fact sheets of the Department of Veterans Affairs in English, Spanish, and Tagalog.

(b) **WEBSITE.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and maintain a publicly available website of the Department of Veterans Affairs that contains links to all fact sheets of the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration, and of the National Cemetery Administration. The website shall be accessible by a clearly labelled hyperlink on the homepage of the Department.

(c) **REPORT.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit a report to Congress regarding fact sheets described in subsection (a) and details of the Language Access Plan of the Department of Veteran Affairs. The report shall include the following:

(1) What the Secretary determines constitutes a fact sheet of the Department for purposes of this Act.

(2) How such fact sheets are utilized and distributed other than on and through the website of the Department.

(3) How such Language Access Plan is communicated to veterans, family members of veterans, and caregivers.

(4) The roles and responsibilities of patient advocates in the coordination of care for veterans with limited English proficiency, family members of such veterans, and caregivers.