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By ESEC at 10:04 am, Sep 14, 2023



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

The Honorable Antony Blinken
U.S. Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

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

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Neera Tanden
Director of the Domestic Policy Council
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

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

September 13th, 2023

RE: Extension and Redesignation of Temporary Protected Status for Cameroon

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Blinken, and Secretary Mayorkas:

Today, the undersigned immigration, human rights, and faith-based organizations write to ask that the Biden Administration urgently extend and redesignate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Cameroon. The country is marked by political instability, multiple armed conflicts, and unrest. Citing risks linked to kidnapping, gun violence, and carjacking, among others, the U.S. Department of State has [issued](#) “Do Not Travel” warnings for six regions in Cameroon: the North, Far North, North-West, South-West, and parts of Adamawa and East. In its report on Cameroon, the U.S. Department of State [contended](#) that “Cameroon faces ongoing violence in the Northwest, Southwest, and Far North from separatists and insurgent groups, as well as the resurgence of longstanding intercommunal conflict in the Far North region.” The country’s government has also consistently violated the basic human rights of Cameroonians. These instances of state-sanctioned violence are inflicted by Cameroon security forces, who suppress the right to free speech and arbitrarily detain critics of the government. The security forces also inflict sexual violence, torture, and extrajudicial killings on political opponents and dissenters, as well as the burning of entire communities suspected of harboring any sentiments of dissent towards the government.

Much of the human rights violations in the country’s Far North region can be credited to Boko Haram, a group the U.S. Department of State recognizes as a terrorist organization that originated in Nigeria and spread to neighboring countries such as Cameroon. A [report](#) by Human Rights Watch 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.” The report also asserts that there are almost daily killings that can be attributed to the regime, which has contributed to the internal displacement of over [400,000](#) Cameroonians.

In addition to the conflicts brought about by Boko Haram in the Far North Region, a political and humanitarian crisis still exists in the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions. The Anglophone population in Cameroon has a history of experiencing marginalization in the predominantly Francophone country. This crisis escalated as a result of Anglophone lawyers, teachers, and activists taking to the streets to protest against what they perceived as the central government’s attempts to impose the French language and legal system on the Anglophone regions, which have their own English-based education and legal systems. As a result, armed separatist groups were formed and both government forces have committed serious human rights abuses. The situation escalated further, with the declaration of the independence of Ambazonia (a self-declared breakaway state) by some separatist groups in 2017, leading to violent clashes between the government's security forces and armed separatist groups. The human rights crisis in the country’s Anglophone North-West and South-West regions has [resulted](#) in the internal displacement of more than 712,000 civilians and the displacement of over 67,000 Cameroonian refugees across the border to Nigeria.

The eastern regions of Cameroon, particularly those near the border with the Central African Republic (CAR), continue to deal with various challenges, including a refugee crisis and insecurity. The ongoing conflict and instability in the CAR have led to a significant flow of refugees into neighboring countries, including Cameroon. The internal conflicts in CAR have spilled over at the border between Cameroon and CAR, enabling the movement of rebel/armed groups and militias across the border. These groups often attack civilians and clash with local security forces.

As described above, Cameroon is facing three separate humanitarian crises affecting nearly all of the country’s ten regions: conflict with the armed group Boko Haram in the Far North region; a political and humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions; and a refugee crisis in the East, near the border with the Central African Republic. In addition to the above three humanitarian crises, other 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 also continues to crack down on political opposition and dissent, and there is documented use of incommunicado detention and torture by security forces, creating risks for anyone deported to Cameroon.

Among the significant human rights issues in Cameroon are torture cases of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government, and harsh and life-threatening prison conditions, among others. Notably, Cameroonians returned to the country from the United States risk being targeted by authorities for their alleged opposition to the government and have experienced arbitrary detention and other abuses upon return. Members of the LGBTQ+ community face additional risks. Government forces have used force and torture 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 tactics to extract confessions from those returned, under the notion that they have ties to armed separatist groups.

Congress established TPS to provide life-saving protection to people who, if deported, would be at imminent risk of harm or death. 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, or freedom, or other serious human rights abuses. On April 14, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the designation of TPS for Cameroon for 18 months, benefiting only individuals who are already residing in the United States as of April 14, 2022, if all other eligibility requirements are met. The press release of the [announcement](#) cites that the designation is based on “...the

extreme violence between government forces and armed separatists and a significant rise in attacks from Boko Haram, the combination of which has triggered a humanitarian crisis.” The press release continues to state that “extreme violence and the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure have led to economic instability, food insecurity, and several hundred thousand displaced Cameroonians without access to schools, hospitals, and other critical services.” These particular issues remain unchanged.

The current TPS designation for Cameroon will expire on December 7, 2023. By statute, the Secretary of Homeland Security must extend and redesignate TPS by October 8, 2023, if conditions meet requirements that prevent safe return and pose a serious threat to the personal safety of nationals of that country. Given the deteriorating security and humanitarian crises as described herein that present extraordinary and temporary conditions that make a safe return to Cameroon very unlikely, the Administration should extend and redesignate for Cameroon. This will allow protection against removal and eligibility for work authorization to all eligible Cameroonians currently in the United States. These individuals, living among us, comprise families that encompass approximately 22,000 U.S. citizens. Their collective contributions to the U.S. economy have reached a noteworthy sum of over [\\$460 million annually](#).

Furthermore, consistent with Sec. 241 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and the accompanying regulations at 8 CFR Sec. 241, Cameroonians should be released from immigration detention if they pose no threat to public safety or national security because there is no significant likelihood of their removal in the reasonably foreseeable future. Attorney General Merrick B. Garland restored the authority of immigration judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals to administratively close deportation proceedings nationwide. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) attorneys should be instructed to join motions to administratively close the cases of Cameroonians in removal proceedings since they cannot be safely removed under current conditions.

We strongly urge the Biden administration to (1) extend and redesignate TPS for Cameroon, (2) swiftly release the Federal Register Notice, (3) provide a minimum 180-day registration period for both current TPS holders and new beneficiaries under redesignation, (4) release all Cameroonians currently in immigration detention centers, and (5) halt any forthcoming deportation flights and to Cameroon. We look forward to working with you on this issue over the coming days and weeks.

Please contact Daniel Tse at dtse@haitianbridge.org and Guerline Jozef at guerline.jozef@gmail.com to discuss this urgent matter at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

Cameroon Advocacy Network
Haitian Bridge Alliance
UndocuBlack Network
ABISA: African Bureau for Immigration and Social Affairs
Accountability Lab Nigeria
Africa Working Group IRF Roundtable
African Communities Together (ACT)
African Human Rights Coalition
African Immigration Initiative of the Courageous Resistance
Al Otro Lado
Alianza Americas
America's Voice
Americans for Immigrant Justice

Amnesty International USA
Arab American Association of New York
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Black Immigrants Bail Fund
California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition (CAIR Coalition)
CASA
Catholic Charities of SW Kansas
Center for Victims of Torture
Central American Resource Center - CARECEN
Central American Resource Center of Northern California - CARECEN SF
Christ Church United Methodist of Tucson
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office Washington, DC
Church Women United in New York State
Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
Comunidades Sin Fronteras CFS - CT INC
Connecticut Shoreline Indivisible
Contigo Immigration Justice Initiative
Deported Asylum Seekers Assistance Project
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Family Action Network Movement
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Florida Immigrant Coalition
FWD.us
Guadalupe Presbyterian Church, USA
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Human Rights First
Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE)
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigration Hub
Immigration Law & Justice New York
InReach
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
InterReligious Task Force on Central America and Colombia
Justice Action Center

LEAH FOUNDATION

Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants (LORI)
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)
National Council of Churches
National Employment Law Project
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
National Partnership for New Americans
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New York Immigration Coalition
Ohio Immigrant Alliance
Peggy J. Bristol
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
Refugee Congress
Refugee Council USA
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
SAMI
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Social Workers for Immigration Justice and Human Rights
Southern Poverty Law Center
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Campaign for Hong Kong
TPS-DED AAC
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United African Organization
United We Dream
USC Law Intl. Human Rights Clinic
UUHFCT of San Juan TX.
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Witness at the Border
Women Watch Afrika



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

October 23, 2023

Daniel Tse
Asylum Coordinator
Haitian Bridge Alliance
dtse@haitianbridge.org

Dear Mr. Tse:

Thank you for your September 14, 2023 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requesting an extension of Cameroon's Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation and redesignation of Cameroon for TPS. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

I appreciate the concerns you have outlined regarding the situation in Cameroon and your interest in its extension and redesignation for TPS. On October 10, 2023, DHS published a *Federal Register* notice (FRN) extending and redesignating Cameroon for TPS for an additional 18 months, from December 8, 2023, through June 7, 2025.¹ The redesignation of Cameroon for TPS enables Cameroonian nationals (and individuals without nationality who last habitually resided in Cameroon) who have been continuously residing in the United States since October 5, 2023, to file applications to register for TPS.

Pending applications that are approved after publication of the FRN announcing the extension and redesignation will be approved through June 7, 2025. Those who have initial applications pending with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as of the date of publication of the FRN do not need to file a new application under the redesignation.

I also note the additional requests you made to swiftly release the FRN, provide a minimum 180-day registration period for both current TPS holders and new beneficiaries under redesignation, release all Cameroonians currently in immigration detention centers, and halt any forthcoming deportation flights to Cameroon. The FRN provides a 60-day re-registration period for current TPS beneficiaries and the full designation period for initial applicants. I will share your additional requests with the appropriate agencies at DHS.

In addition to TPS, USCIS may, upon request, grant immigration relief to eligible noncitizens affected by emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. Such relief may include:

¹ [federalregister.gov/documents/2023/10/10/2023-22375/extension-and-redesignation-of-cameroon-for-temporary-protected-status](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/10/10/2023-22375/extension-and-redesignation-of-cameroon-for-temporary-protected-status)

- Change or extension of nonimmigrant status if eligible noncitizens are currently in the United States, even if the request is filed after the authorized period of admission has expired;
- Expedited processing of requests for advance parole documents;
- Expedited adjudication of requests for off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students experiencing severe economic hardship;
- Expedited adjudication of employment authorization applications, where appropriate;
- Assistance if applicants received a Request for Evidence or a Notice of Intent to Deny and were unable to appear for an interview, submit evidence, or respond in a timely manner due to the circumstances; and
- Replacement of lost or damaged immigration or travel documents issued by USCIS, such as a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card).

More information is available at uscis.gov/newsroom/immigration-relief-in-emergencies-or-unforeseen-circumstances.

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 require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director