

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 23, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to request that your Administration immediately designate Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Cameroon is currently experiencing multiple, worsening humanitarian crises, including an armed conflict in the Far North and widespread violence in the North-West and South-West. The insecurity in nine of ten of the country's regions and nationwide government repression of political dissent and use of torture and incommunicado detention make safe return for Cameroonian nationals in the United States impossible.

Conditions in Cameroon warrant an initial 18-month TPS designation. As you know, TPS is a form of statutory relief made available to nationals of a designated country living in the U.S. when return to their home country would be unsafe due to ongoing armed conflict, the temporary effects of an environmental disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. TPS provides life-saving protection from deportation and permission to work in the U.S. for the duration of the designation.

Cameroon meets the standard for immediate designation of TPS due to ongoing armed conflict and the extraordinary and temporary conditions of the related humanitarian crises, which combine to impact most regions of the country and make safe return to Cameroon impossible. Ongoing armed conflicts in the Far North as well as the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions are characterized by widespread violence and human rights abuses by government forces and armed groups, as well as massive internal displacement. Ongoing conflict in the neighboring Central African Republic has caused a further humanitarian crisis in Cameroon's East, Adamawa, and North regions, where an influx of 346,000 refugees has increased pressure on limited natural resources and social services in host communities. The United Nations has stated that "nine out of ten regions of Cameroon continue to be impacted by [these] three complex humanitarian crises."¹ An astounding 4.4 million Cameroonians are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.6 million Cameroonians experiencing acute food insecurity.² As of December 2021, over 1 million people were internally displaced in Cameroon,³

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

² UN OCHA Cameroon 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (March 2021), available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-humanitarian-response-plan-march-2021>; OCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Bulletin Issue N°23 (August 2021), available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-humanitarian-bulletin-issue-n-23-august-2021>

³ 8 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>

over 72,000 Cameroonian refugees were displaced in Nigeria,⁴ and over 35,000 refugees had fled to Chad from the Far North region.⁵ 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.

The State Department has issued a “Do Not Travel” warning for six regions: The North, Far North, North-West, South-West, East, and parts of Adamawa.⁶ In its most recent human rights report on Cameroon, the State Department catalogued a troubling series of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, violence against women and children, and targeted attacks against members of the LGBTQ+ community.⁷

Deportees from the U.S. are at the highest risk of being targeted by authorities for actual or imputed opposition to the government and have experienced arbitrary detention and other abuses upon return. The Cameroonian government’s continued crackdowns on political opposition and dissent and security forces’ documented use of incommunicado detention and torture create risks for anyone deported to Cameroon. Human Rights Watch released a report on February 10, 2022, describing the unspeakable horrors that await Cameroonian returnees.⁸ Returnees and their families have been raped, tortured, beaten, arbitrary arrested, extorted, and threatened by law enforcement, military personnel, other agents of the state, as well as by armed separatists.⁹ They have also been detained in inhumane, unsanitary, and degrading conditions. Many were targeted because of their deportation to Cameroon from the U.S. and presumed opposition to the Cameroonian government.¹⁰ These documented harms demonstrate the critical need for U.S. protection from deportation for Cameroonian nationals.

In light of the armed conflict and other extraordinary and temporary conditions engulfing the nation, American principles and international law compel the United States to protect the safety of Cameroonian nationals present in this county by ensuring that they are not forced to return to Cameroon. Only a limited number of individuals will be eligible for TPS: an estimated 40,000 Cameroonians, over 7,000 of whom are children, are currently in the United States.¹¹

As we applaud your Administration’s swift implementation of TPS protections for people from another war-ravaged nation, Ukraine,¹² we cannot overlook the urgent need to designate TPS for Cameroon as the armed conflict there has worsened and violent death tolls continue to mount. A designation of TPS for Cameroon would serve as a key and strategic part of the U.S.

⁴ UNHCR, “Cameroonian Refugees Overview – December 2021,” <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90342>

⁵ UNHCR, “UNHCR Tchad: personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR - décembre 2021,” January 14, 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90448>

⁶ “Cameroon Travel Advisory,” U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, October 18, 2021, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>.

⁷ “Cameroon 2020 Human Rights Report,” U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cameroon/>.

⁸ How Can You Throw Us Back?: Asylum seekers abused in the U.S. and deported to harm in Cameroon, Human Rights Watch (Feb. 10, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/02/10/how-can-you-throw-us-back/asylum-seekers-abused-us-and-deported-harm-cameroon>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Backgrounder: TPS for Cameroon,” CLINIC, Jan. 25, 2021, <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/humanitarian-relief/temporary-protected-status-and-deferred-enforced-departure-4>

¹² <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/03/03/secretary-mayorkas-designates-ukraine-temporary-protected-status-18-months>

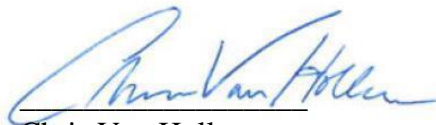
government's commitment to human rights and international stability, safeguarding Cameroonians in the U.S. from a return to these dangerous conditions.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your timely reply.

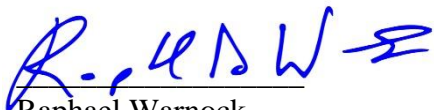
Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



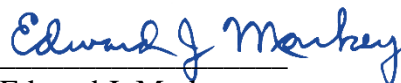
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



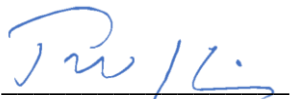
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



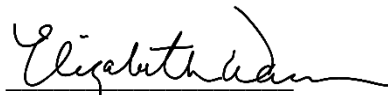
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



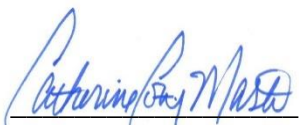
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



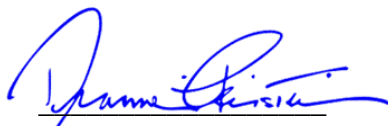
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



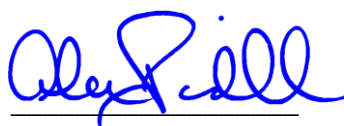
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



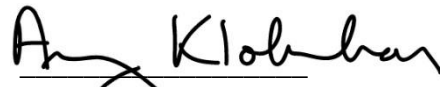
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator

cc: Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken
National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan
Domestic Policy Advisor Susan Rice