



INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
ROUNDTABLE

24 September 2021

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
Office of the Executive Secretary
MS 0525
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528-0525

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We, the undersigned, are a group of individuals and organizations that advocate for human rights and religious freedom around the world. We represent diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds but are united in our goal of promoting freedom of religion or belief for all. We are also writing to you to express our concern regarding the situation in Cameroon.

We take note of the recent letter¹ that you have received from the Democratic Members of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee asking you to grant TPS (Temporary Protected Status) to Cameroon. There is merit for this request to be granted however there are several instances where freedom of religion has come under fire but not received the proper focus as other incidents that have taken place since violence erupted in 2016.

The murder of Charles Truman Wesco a missionary from the United States on October 30, 2018² was a heinous act. He had just recently arrived in Cameroon just a short time before his murder. A major concern was that his murder took place near a police checkpoint. Nobody has been prosecuted for this incident.

Pastors, priests, Bible translators have been targeted and killed in the conflict. Some churches and mosques have also been burnt. As recently as August 22, 2021, the Cameroon military killed a lady worshipping in church and shot the pastor. In some cases, the government armed Muslim Fulani

¹ "House Judiciary Dems Urge DHS to Designate Cameroon for Temporary Protected Status." *Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren*, 30 July 2021, lofgren.house.gov/media/press-releases/house-judiciary-dems-urge-dhs-designate-cameroon-temporary-protected-status.

² International, et al. "American Missionary Was Killed in Cameroon, Family CALLS ATTACK 'TARGETED'." *www.theepochtimes.com*, 1 Nov. 2018, www.theepochtimes.com/american-missionary-was-killed-in-cameroon-family-calls-attack-targeted_2705499.html.

herders to attack the local people. The arming of Fulani herders to attack local people injects a religious conflict between the local people.

Another area that is overlooked is the attacks against private education institutions. The inability of students attending class does not bode well for the future of Cameroon. There have been several incidents where students have been targeted. For example, 78 Presbyterian students were kidnapped by gunmen from a school near Bamenda³ in 2018 but were released in short order. Also in the Far North schools in that region⁴ have come under attack by the Islamist Group Boko Haram as well.

Another concern is the report of Catholic Clergy⁵ being targeted by both Government and Separatist Forces in the English-speaking region during the fighting. Muslims have also borne some hardships⁶ as well during this period of crisis. In 2020 Covid restrictions limited the number of those attending prayers and festivals to 10 people.

We offer this information to highlight our concerns as well as to see that you have the best information available when you make this critical decision.

Sincerely

CC: IRF Office US State Department

USCIRF

Rep Zoe Lofgren

Signatures

Organizations

Buddhist Solidarity Association

Center for Pluralism

Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Global Peace Foundation Kurdistan

Jubilee Campaign

No Business With Genocide

³ Press, Associated. "79 Kidnapped Christian School Students Freed in Cameroon." *CBN News*, CBN News, 7 Nov. 2018, www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/2018/november/79-kidnapped-christian-school-students-freed-in-cameroon.

⁴ "Schools in Cameroon Shut Due to Boko Haram Attacks." *Persecution*, 30 Oct. 2020, www.persecution.org/2020/10/27/schools-cameroon-shut-due-boko-haram-attacks/.

⁵ "In Cameroon's Bloody Civil WAR, Catholic Clergy Targeted by Both Sides." *Crux Now*, cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2021/07/in-camerouns-bloody-civil-war-catholic-clergy-targeted-by-both-sides/.

⁶ "Cameroon Muslims Plead for an End to Separatist Crisis." *Voice of America*, www.voanews.com/africa/cameroon-muslims-plead-end-separatist-crisis.

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