

CRISIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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CRISIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2018

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The subcommittee will come to order. And good afternoon to everyone. Thank you for being here.

Our hearing today will examine human rights abuses and targeted communities in the Anglophone region of the Republic of Cameroon. We will explore the roots of this emerging crisis, and U.S. policy options for addressing human rights violations and instability in the Anglophone region, which affects not only stability in Cameroon but in the region itself.

The increased tempo of government repression is fueling secessionist sentiment leading to instability in the country in advance of Presidential elections scheduled for October. Cameroon's political stability is of great importance to the United States because the country plays a critical role in American counterterrorism efforts against Boko Haram in the West and Central Africa. And, of course, we have an overriding concern and empathy for the victims in Cameroon itself.

We also have ongoing concerns about the 85-year-old strongman Paul Biya who has either served as Prime Minister or as President since 1975, and who seems disconnected, if not at odds with, many of the people he is supposed to be serving, particularly the English speaking minority. As the United States is involved in training and equipping Cameroonian security forces to strengthen regional capacity to combat terrorism, it is necessary to reevaluate further counterterrorism cooperation with Cameroon to ensure the protection of Cameroonian citizens and respect for civil and political rights, including the most fundamental of those rights, which is the right to life.

Understanding the history of Cameroon, or rather the Cameroonians, as the choice between the single or plural form, is fraught with significance, is necessary for understanding the present crisis. While a country of great ethnic diversity, the main dividing line is linguistic, reflecting a colonial past which saw the French speaking region gain independence from France in 1960,

and union with the southern portions of the former mandate territory of British Cameroon the following year. The country that was formed was the Federal Republic of the Cameroon. And the national flag that was adopted adding two stars, signaling to the world the union of two coequal states under one constitution.

English speakers were always a minority, however. And the political and constitutional basis under which they entered into the union eroded over time.

In 1972, the then President Ahidjo abolished the Federal system of government and created a unitary United Republic of Cameroon. The flag was not changed until 1975 to reflect this new imposition of monist rule, and the two stars gave way to one.

In 1984, President Biya again revised the constitution, which changed the country's name to the present Republic of Cameroon. The current constitutional iteration dates back to 1996 and, on paper at least, restores a certain degree of federalist autonomy in response to Anglophone demands. The reality, however is different.

In 2016, the central government triggered a crisis by appointing French speaking teachers and judges in the Anglophone areas. The English speakers, to them it felt like an occupation. Certain Anglophone activists declared independence of a Federal Republic of Ambazonia in 2017, which has led to a heavy-handed response by the military.

Security forces have reportedly burned down villages, arrested and killed protestors in Anglophone areas. Though it also must be noted that French speaking teachers have been targeted by English speaking separatists.

As Congress, we need to address whether we can continue to cooperate with Cameroon's security forces, given the reported abuses. And if so, how? As the International Crisis Group, which we have one witness from that group today, has emphasized, the Cameroonian Government's use of the military against the English speaking citizens has clearly exacerbated the situation. Indeed, our U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon has criticized Cameroon's actions and expressed his concerns about the government's use of disproportionate force.

The Anglophone crisis casts a shadow upon the upcoming Presidential elections. Credibility of the elections slated for October is already under question, as the government has yet to make serious preparations. It is assumed that strongman Paul Biya will run for reelection. But given his age and frequent absences abroad, it is uncertain who will succeed him eventually.

There are also growing humanitarian concerns attributable to the Anglophone crisis. An estimated 160,000 people have been displaced within Cameroon, and over 21,000 Cameroonians have fled to neighboring Nigeria as refugees.

The continued malign presence of Boko Haram in northeastern Cameroon, attacking people in both Cameroon and in Nigeria, is a further complication which has led to an estimated 96,000 Nigerians fleeing the other way, to Cameroon. Congress must then also weigh the need to assist Cameroon in the fight against Boko Haram. Given all these spillover factors, we can also see the failure to solve the Anglophone crisis is not purely a domestic affair, but a regional one which implicates U.S. security interests.

We do have a very, very great group of witnesses, beginning with Ambassador Yamamoto. But I would like to yield to my good friend and colleague, the ranking member of our committee, Karen Bass.

Ms. BASS. As always, thank you, Mr. Chair, for holding this hearing. And I especially want to emphasize my appreciation because I think probably for about 2 years I have been hearing from the Cameroonian diaspora, what is going on? And requesting that we pay attention to it and have a hearing. I have also heard from the Embassy as well. But I think that it is the right time to have this hearing.

I, of course, want to thank our distinguished witness, Honorable Donald Yamamoto. It is always good to see you, and appreciate you coming and providing testimony to us.

And I want to thank the witnesses on panel two who will be providing a deeper look into the various dynamics playing out and contributing to the growing crisis in Cameroon. And so I look forward to this important update.

And we know that we are all here today because we are hearing, and seeing, from all the information provided, that the situation in Cameroon continues to decline. The tensions in the Anglophone region we know are not new. We know that people have felt disenfranchised and marginalized since the end of colonialism. But as we heard, the current situation arose in 2016 after the government was heavy-handed in its response to the protest movement: Killing protestors, arresting hundreds, and deploying government security forces.

Added to this, we know there have been reports of kidnappings, disappearances, and assassinations, and a crackdown on the media, and the internet has been shut down multiple times. This is one of the issues that has been continually raised by people coming to my office and meeting with myself and my staff, talking about what has happened in these protests.

On the other side, we've also heard that the Anglophone movement has transformed and is now a separatist movement. And I am hoping that the second panel will speak to that. Is that the case or not? I have heard various reports. But we have heard of security forces being attacked, as well as attacking. We have heard of schools being burned down

And I really wish that the government would see that a heavy-handed crackdown on civil liberties, especially in regard to the freedom of assembly and speech, only serve to exacerbate tensions and escalate conflict. I believe that citizens must be allowed to voice their concerns, and governments must adhere to the rule of law, all governments, including ours. And minority rights must be protected.

At the backdrop of the crisis is the ongoing security situation that includes the Boko Haram insurgency, which I know the chair has spoken to. Cameroon is in a difficult neighborhood.

The signs coming out at this point are not encouraging. It is clear to see that this situation is worsening and that we want to make sure that Cameroon is not the site of a civil war or doesn't become a humanitarian crisis. The government must recognize that it is facing a real national crisis, and that the international com-

munity is watching. And activists must realize that peaceful, non-violent protest is the only way to get people to hear their cause.

All sides need to be prepared to engage in an inclusive dialogue. Given the depth and severity of citizens' grievances, a holistic approach is needed that will address issues of governance, security, and civic engagement. I certainly encourage the region and international partners to be prepared to assist on this front.

I look forward to hearing the views, perspectives, and recommendations of the esteemed panel and witnesses that we have here today.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair. And I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. I thank the member.

I would like to yield to Mr. Garrett.

Mr. GARRETT. I would waive my time and yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Castro.

We are joined by Tim Walberg, who was kind enough to arrange for one of our witnesses to be here, Efi Tembon. So I would like to yield.

And just for background, Tim is in his fifth term. He served in the Michigan legislature as well for a large number of years. He has been a pastor. And he is chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions. But frequently travels to Africa, speaks out on African issues just as frequently, and is truly an expert in. And we are certainly glad you are here. Tim.

Mr. WALBERG. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the subcommittee as well. I appreciate the opportunity to waive on today. In Energy and Commerce it is not so kind to waive us on right in the center of the operations. They stick us at the end if you waive on in Energy and Commerce.

But I appreciate you having this hearing today. And look forward to hearing from a new friend from Cameroon who we have had the opportunity to meet and hear his story. Which brings to attention a concern that I have.

I have had the privilege of traveling to North, West, and East Africa on numerous times now. But more importantly, I have a daughter who lives in Kampala, Uganda; she has been there for 15 years. I had the privilege of performing a wedding ceremony 4 years ago for my daughter, and my son-in-law now, Prince Sabena, who is Rwandan and is a Tutsi. And so, to hear the story of how he and his family fled during the genocide has perked up my ears to concerns that go on anywhere in the world, but especially Africa.

As I consider the fact that God spared my son-in-law's life in the ability to flee during the genocide, at a time when the world for I believe too long looked on, the United Nations as well as the United States of America. And the atrocities grew greater because of inaction. In no way would I want to sit here in Congress and have the opportunity to spare Cameroon the opportunity of having the world community look on and say, "What can we do to mediate, to the very least, and to bring about peace?"

Great people need to know that there are other peoples of the world that see their need and their concerns and don't just look on and think somebody else will take care, but rather listen to both sides, listen to the concerns. And ultimately if there is a way to

provide an opportunity to bring about healing and reconciliation, that should be the case.

Just 4 weeks ago I had the privilege of being in several eastern African countries, starting out in Kenya, and seeing reconciliation begin to take place there between the Presidential candidates, the President and his opponent. And if you have had a chance to see a video of the prayer breakfast where reconciliation began, and as I understand, it continues, that is a powerful thing.

And then going to Ethiopia and seeing the efforts now, the new Prime Minister who we had the opportunity to pray with and speak with, who is committed to restoring and reconciling in that great country as well. That gives us hope.

And so I would hope, Mr. Chairman, that this hearing today would be one of those opportunities to say to the people of Cameroon on all sides, we are listening. We want to see reconciliation. We want to see peace. And we want to see human rights that go across the board. And if we can assist, if there is any way, we should consider that.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much. We also thank you for your leadership in Africa. It is greatly appreciated.

I would like to introduce our first panelist. And welcome back to Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs. Since entering the Foreign Service in 1980, his assignments have included serving as U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs where he was responsible for coordinating U.S. policy toward more than 20 countries in East and Central Africa.

He has also served as U.S. Ambassador to Djibouti and as the Deputy Director for the East African Affairs. Previously he was assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, Ambassador staff aide and human rights officer during the Tiananmen Square demonstration and massacre, in Japan at the consulate, and a number of other very important deployments over those many years.

He has studied Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and French. During his Foreign Service career he has received four individual Superior Honor Awards, two group awards, and the 2006 Robert Frasure Memorial Award for advancing conflict resolution in Africa.

We deeply appreciate his presence here today and look forward to the insights that he can provide the subcommittee.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONALD Y. YAMAMOTO,
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. But first I want to thank you, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Bass, and the distinguished members of this committee for the attention, the care, and the support you have given not only to us but also on the topics and subjects dealing with Africa. So, thank you very much for the focus on this continent.

And also to you, Congressman Walberg, thank you very much for all that you have done on the continent and your family has done. Thank you.

Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Bass, and distinguished members of this committee, it is a great opportunity to come here before you to speak on Cameroon, which has served really as a friend but also as a valuable partner in the central Africa region.

Anglophone Cameroon really represents about approximately 20 percent of the population of the country. Many have done extremely well at very senior levels of government and industry. However, many Anglophones have long expressed concerns about what they consider marginalization, neglect, and discrimination by the central government and the Francophone majority.

The frustrations of Anglophone teachers and lawyers surfaced in 2016 in the form of peaceful protests. Unfortunately, the Government of Cameroon responded to the dissent by shutting down the internet for over 3 months, conducting arbitrary arrests, shooting unarmed protestors, arresting, detaining, and imposing harsh sentences on the participants. This repression of peaceful dissent and lack of accountability, combined with a sense that the Government of Cameroon's reforms were insufficient to address their concerns, led to an outbreak of support for secession, by violence if necessary, of the Northwest and Southwest regions.

Stakeholders on both sides of the conflict consistently use sensationalism and outright disinformation to advance their agendas. Obtaining accurate information is difficult for security reasons as well. The Embassy has prohibited all but mission-essential travel to the Southwest and Northwest regions, and the State Department discourages private American citizens from traveling to these regions out of concern for their safety.

Violence continues to get worse. According to analysis using figures from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project database, violence, be it from secessionists, government forces, or armed bandits, took the lives of 108 people from December 31 to April 30 of this year, on average about 6.35 per week. However, while noting the small sample size, ACLED reported 151 fatalities in May, representing a threefold increase compared to the previous month.

The United States Government has consistently condemned the use of violence on all sides and has called for a national dialogue without preconditions. Each act of violence renders dialogue more difficult, but all the more necessary. We have offered to join with others in the international community to facilitate the start of a dialogue.

We welcomed the government's public statements on May 15 that it would investigate the filmed abuse of a secessionist commander by Cameroonian forces and punish the perpetrators. This is a sign of the government's willingness to confront the problem of human rights abuse. We also note favorably the government's granting of visas to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch researchers to meet with senior level officials in Cameroon.

It is clear that the continuing violence has created a humanitarian crisis. On May 28, the United Nations, in coordination with the Cameroonian Government, released an Emergency Response Plan that requests \$15 million to address the humanitarian needs of the 160,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Northwest and Southwest regions. The majority of these IDPs are sheltering

in the forest with no access to health facilities, clean water, or sufficient food. The U.N. has reported that more than 21,000 Cameroonians have been registered as refugees in Cross River, Benue, and Akwa Ibom States in Nigeria.

Most humanitarian actors and donors agree that the numbers of IDPs presented in the Emergency Response Plan for the Anglophone regions is underestimated, and humanitarian needs are likely to increase as displaced populations miss a full agricultural season and economic reserves are depleted. We are actively considering ways in which we can support this humanitarian response.

We will continue to press for an end to violence, broad-based dialogue without precondition, respect for human rights, and accountability. And I thank this committee and you, Mr. Chairman, for this important meeting.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yamamoto follows:]

Acting Assistant Secretary Don Yamamoto's Testimony
before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health,
Human Rights, and International Organizations
Hearing on The Roots of the Anglophone Crisis in the Cameroons
Wednesday, June 27, 2018, 2:30 p.m.

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. Let me begin by saying that we regard Cameroon as a friend and a valuable partner in the Central African region.

Anglophone Cameroonians represent approximately 20 percent of the nation's population. Some have done well, rising to senior levels of government and industry. However, many Anglophones have long expressed concerns about what they consider marginalization, neglect, and discrimination by the central government and the Francophone majority.

The frustrations of Anglophone teachers and lawyers surfaced at the end of 2016 in the form of peaceful protests. Unfortunately, the Government of Cameroon responded to this dissent by shutting down the internet for over three months, conducting arbitrary arrests, shooting unarmed protestors, and arresting, detaining, and imposing harsh sentences on the participants. This repression of peaceful dissent and lack of accountability combined with a sense that the Government of Cameroon's reforms were insufficient to address their concerns led to an outbreak of support for secession – by violence if necessary – of the Northwest and Southwest Regions.

Stakeholders on both sides of the conflict consistently use sensationalism and outright disinformation to advance their agendas. Obtaining accurate information is difficult for security reasons as well. The Embassy has prohibited all but mission-essential travel to the Southwest and Northwest Regions, and the State Department discourages private American citizens from traveling to these regions out of concern for their safety.

Violence continues to get worse. According to analysis using figures from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project database, assailants – including secessionists, government forces, and armed bandits – killed 108 people from December 31 through April 30, 2018 an average of 6.35 per week. However, ACLED reported 16 separate incidents of violence in April 2018 in contrast to an average of just 11 for each of the first three months of 2018. While noting the

small sample size, this amounts to a 45 percent increase in reported attacks. We understand May to be even worse.

The U.S. government has consistently condemned the use of violence on all sides and has called for national dialogue without pre-conditions. Each act of violence renders dialogue more difficult, but all the more necessary. We have offered to join with others in the international community to facilitate the start of a dialogue.

We welcomed the government's public statement on May 15, 2018 that it would investigate the filmed abuse of a secessionist commander by Cameroonian forces and punish the perpetrators. This is a sign of the government's willingness to confront the problem of human rights abuses. We also note favorably the government's granting of visas to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch researchers to meet with senior level officials in Cameroon.

It is clear that the continuing violence has created a humanitarian crisis. On May 28, the UN, in coordination with the Cameroonian government, released an Emergency Response Plan that requests \$15 million to address the humanitarian needs of 160,000 IDPs in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. The majority of these IDPs are sheltering in the forest with no access to health facilities, clean water, or sufficient food. The UN also reported that more than 21,000 Cameroonians have been registered as refugees in Cross River, Benue, and Akwa Ibom States in Nigeria.

Most humanitarian actors and donors agree that the number of IDPs presented in the Emergency Response Plan for the Anglophone regions is underestimated, and humanitarian needs are likely to increase as displaced populations miss a full agricultural season and economic reserves are depleted. We are actively considering ways in which we can support this humanitarian response.

We will continue to press for an end to violence, for broad-based dialogue without pre-condition, respect for human rights, and accountability. I thank the committee for its interest in the ongoing crisis in the Anglophone regions in Cameroon.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. If you could, what exactly are we doing? And, I mean, how do we define pressing the Cameroonian Government, the military? Is the military at all responsible to our treaties? What kind of full court press have we mounted?

Secondly, you mentioned 160,000 IDPs, 21,000 refugees. The amount of money you mentioned seems to be a drop in the bucket for what I think sustaining the health and well-being of those refugees and IDPs would be. What kind of assessment has been done? Are we planning any kind of U.S. major provision of funding and food and the like?

And what about the security issues relative to those individuals, do they muster largely in a few areas or are they just scatter sited everywhere, making it harder to get provisions to them?

On the issue of holding people to account, is there a sense that troops and others who have committed atrocities are at risk, as they should be, of being held to account for killings and torture? If you could speak to that issue.

How many are in prison right now? If you could also enlighten us on that as an opening.

And just do you think this is escalating, ebbing, or getting worse?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me start on what are we doing now. Our Ambassador Peter Balerin is consistently and persistently raising these issues. We also raised issues from Washington, not only with the Cameroonian Government and mission officials here, but also raising this directly with President Biya and his government at all levels.

Mr. SMITH. And how does he respond when we raise it?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Well, right now the response is not to the level that we expect and demand. And that's the issue, that we need to be more consistent and persistent in addressing this.

There are positive signs, as we have noted, about the visas to Amnesty International, ICRC getting access. But these are only initial steps and measures. We need to do much more to ensure that we are looking at. I'll give you one example. So, right now we are able to get access to prisoners that are held in the Ministry of Justice. But what about the other prisoners held in let's say other types of detention centers? We need to have 100 percent access across the board, across the country. There cannot be any openings.

The second issue to it is that, as you cite, is the humanitarian crisis that is created. So, if you have about 238,000 total IDPs in Cameroon, and of which 160,000 are in the Anglophone areas, and then you are looking at refugee flows and 21,000 going to neighboring Nigeria to seek asylum, that presents a crisis not only of what are you doing for your own nationals and people in your country, but how is it you are addressing the humanitarian assistance?

For the United States, our overall assistance levels and support mechanism is really directed toward humanitarian. So, the majority is, \$48 million is divided into food aid and assistance, and \$40 million is economic recovery. And, of course, \$59 million is in healthcare.

As far as military training, that really actually is quite small, it is about \$3.8 million. And we have another \$2.5 million that is before the Congress for notification.

But what we are doing is we are, on the security forces, where the forces that we support and train we make sure that they are getting human rights training and that they are not involved, or that the equipment that is assigned to them is not involved in any repression or support domestically, that it is used primarily in counterterrorism.

Mr. SMITH. If I could interrupt. So there is Leahy vetting?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. And is it adequate? Because I know sometimes getting actionable information is very hard in some countries to really determine whether or not that serviceman or woman has a sordid past of human rights abuse. Are you satisfied that those that we are training are adequately vetted?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Right. And then going back, so in our human rights reports we raised the same issues that Amnesty International has raised, and members of your committee have been raising, and we have raised, with the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR). We have only trained part of it. And the part that we have trained, they are improving their operability, but also that we emphasize human rights.

We cannot, we have not trained all of the BIRs, or the rest of the military forces or the gendarmes, but we are doing the best we can to train as many as we can in this context.

Going back to holding people accountable. So those are areas where you are absolutely correct, is that when we see wrong we have to right it. We need to identify those people who are perpetrators of this violence.

We can't have the continuation of, as we spoke to President Biya and his government, is that for the survival of the government, for the continuity of the strength of the country you cannot have institutions that are not strong. So if they are declining in efficiency and effectiveness, if you are not having the outreach to your community leaders and community-based groups, if you don't have that type of dialogue, then that becomes a challenge not just to the government but also to the security of the country.

And so those are areas that we have raised consistently and persistently with the President and with all sectors of government.

Mr. SMITH. Ms. Bass.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much. Again, thank you for your testimony.

I will ask you a couple of questions about elections, security, and then a couple other categories.

So, how closely is the State Department monitoring the pre-electoral environment? Is the country on track with electoral reforms? And then is there any chance for a credible election in a few months? We are talking about October, unless they are changing the date.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. And thank you, Congresswoman, that is a good point. The issue is now for we have 18 elections in the African continent this year. On the Cameroon side, you know, we don't have enough funding to meet all of the elections. In order to have valid elections you need to go way before the electoral process.

Right now USAID and in government assistance we have no plan to give electoral support. Given the government's need to imple-

ment electoral reform and their commitment to electoral reform, that really is the first basis. And that is something that we have been pushing the government on. You cannot have really open, transparent electoral process without strong institutions and commitment to those reforms. And—

Ms. BASS. So, you were saying we are not providing any direct resources? And we are not because we don't believe they would be used appropriately?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Because not appropriately, it is that the commitment to electoral reform is not there. And that is really the first step.

Ms. BASS. So you said in your testimony that the response of the government is not to the level that we request or demand.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. That is right.

Ms. BASS. And I wanted to know if you could be specific. I don't know what that means. Does that mean if you go, they don't return phone calls, they are non-responsive, or—and I am sure that you have seen some of the photos, the gruesome photos that fortunately we are not going to display here, but I am sure in preparation to come here you have seen them. And so what is their response when you confront them on that?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. So I think when we look at the, at how our approach is to Cameroon, it has to be kind of divided. One is the counterterrorism and countering violent extremism. And then the other side is the domestic political reforms and—

Ms. BASS. From my understanding, what I have seen is domestic, it is not terrorism.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Right. And that is why it is completely separate. And the domestic issues that we have seen as far as we have offered President Biya and his government that they must reach out in an open dialogue without any preconditions. And that we, the United States, will offer our good offices to help negotiate and bring both sides together.

And so, when you say what is the level of issues? In my own personal discussions with President Biya in the past we have always raised the issues, a couple of issues. First is the human rights, the need for us to reach out to have one unified—

Ms. BASS. So we raised the human rights. And I understand what we do. I am not clear what their response is. He says what?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. The response has been measured but not so that we would expect. So in other words, the issuing of the visas to Amnesty International, giving more access to ICRC is good, but that is not enough.

Ms. BASS. Does he deny that those are problems?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. He does not. The government does not accept that there is abuse in the north.

Ms. BASS. So how is the problem of Anglophone Cameroonians described? It doesn't exist? It is fake?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I think you would need to talk to the Cameroonians directly. In our conversations, and in a lot of it is probably would need to go behind, you know, the closed doors. But publicly it is that they recognize some issues and challenges but that we have not articulated it accurately.

And I think our response is that, well, tell us. If what we are seeing and what is in our human rights report is not accurate, then show us. Give us access. If we can only get access to the Ministry of Justice, well, why not the access to all the other ministries? Why not the access to the military side? Give us complete access.

Ms. BASS. So, we give Cameroon security assistance?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes.

Ms. BASS. So what do we give them and what do they use it for? We don't give them assistance for elections but we give them assistance for security, and then there are problems.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. So the amount of funding and assistance is, compared to other countries, is not as great. What we are focused on is core issues that meet the U.S. national strategic interests.

Ms. BASS. How much security assistance do we give them more specifically?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. So right now we give \$3.8 million in peacekeeping operations, education, and also in raising their capability in the Lake Chad region. The reason why is because—and we also have another \$2.5 million in congressional notification money which will go to counterterrorism and countering violent extremism.

Ms. BASS. And then, Mr. Chair, I think you were asking whether it was Leahy compliant.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Yes.

Ms. BASS. So there are weapons that we sent?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. No. These are training, basically training and making sure that they have capacity building within these units and that they are completely Leahy vetted, and that they are focused and the materials we provide is for countering terrorism.

So, right now an example is that Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad are engaged in the operation against Boko Haram. We have about 3,000 Cameroonian troops engaged in that operation.

Ms. BASS. So you are not concerned that any of the equipment or resources that we provide are used inappropriately against the population?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. And that is one of the—

Ms. BASS. You are not concerned about that?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. On the equipment and materials—we track them. And that is something that we required in our Embassy and also our DoD colleagues to do.

Ms. BASS. So let me just change, and then I will yield back my time.

So switching reels then and talking about AGOA and the economy, the private sector, I wanted to know if you could describe the environment for U.S. private sector firms in Cameroon?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I think the, the private sector—Cameroon, even though it is AGOA-eligible, has not really fully utilized the AGOA.

Ms. BASS. Not many countries have.

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Right. And as far as what our trade levels are, it is really stagnant. So we are talking, we do have a trade surplus. So when we export about \$158 million to Cameroon and import about \$117 million, it has really remained static.

And so we have American companies that are interested. We work with particularly hydroelectric power plants, power energy,

something to do with Power Africa issues. We have Boeing aircraft. But, again, the issue is that those inroads by the American companies is not to the level or significance that will make an impact or significant impact.

Ms. BASS. Do you think the crisis is impacting that or it is just the economy?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. No, I, I think because of the weak institutions and the inability to govern, that they are focused on these economic development issues, that is the problem. That is what we have dedicated from AID about \$48 million, \$40 million on economic development, programs, and projects to stimulate the economy. Because a strong, vibrant economy is really going to address a lot of the challenges of the country.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Walberg.

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Ambassador.

One question that comes to my mind is what is the response of the surrounding countries, Nigeria being one of the most important in this, in this region relative to Cameroon, the Cameroonian situation? But what is the general feeling around there and what is the involvement of the other, the other countries in trying to bring some relief to this problem? Are they involved?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. And thank you for that excellent question. So, the all the countries in this region, not only from Nigeria to Cameroon, but also going eastward toward the G5 countries, the countries that have united together, Niger, the Mauritania, the Chad, in fighting not only Boko Haram but ISIS West Africa, really raises the issue that all the countries are in the same boat, and that they have to not only support each other but ensure that each country has the capacity and the capability to confront the counterterrorism issues. That's one area.

The second thing is that in order to do that for Cameroon and the countries, they have to have strong institutions, vibrant economies, and strong, unified people within the nation that would help support the country as it fights and it defends its own security. So, when you look at the countries around them, Central African Republic is a—has tremendous difficulties as far as instability and also effect of non-state actors and violent groups going into that country. And that's on the neighbor of Cameroon.

Nigeria also faces a lot of problems in their north, in Maiduguri in the northern part. So each country does face a lot of internal security issues, also internal political issues. And so they each want each country to be strong and supportive. But how to support each other, that is, that is the issue that we are trying to work with each country now to strengthen not only the alliances, but also internally the institutions and the capacity, domestically as well as security-wise.

Mr. WALBERG. So the concern with refugees, asylum seekers from Cameroon would add to the insecurity of surrounding countries. And yet, certainly in probably many cases they don't have the means by which to prevent Cameroonians who have to flee for their lives coming into their borders.

So what other world entity, United Nations or otherwise, are taking an interest in this to, to a means of providing change, providing some efforts to end the violence at the very least?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. And ultimately and, Congressman, as you look at the continent of Africa, if you look at areas where you have the crisis of DRC, South Sudan, and even in Cameroon—and there is no comparison of DRC or South Sudan, they are in another level of violence—but these are political issues as well. Political decisions can resolve and meet the problems, even in Cameroon.

So the issues that you see is, you know, 238,000 internally displaced within Cameroon. But more important is that Cameroon, despite the challenges it faces is receiving over 258,000 refugees from neighboring Central African Republic, 96,000 from Nigeria. Yet, conversely, you have 21,000 Cameroonians going to Nigeria. So the conflict and the political problems are not only affecting the country internally but also the neighboring countries and each other.

And so what are we doing about that is the issue is that working to strengthen the institutions, working with the government, working with our allied countries, working with the United Nations, but also the African Union, and also sub-regional groups such as ECOWAS. Those are the areas that we all need to be a part of this solution and the process and working with the government and the people.

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

Just one final question. Your assessment of the Cameroonian security forces, the military forces, given the bumps that may be ahead in the elections, how confident are you that the military is committed to civilian rule, Major General Atenga and the rest of the leadership?

And, secondly, since there is a linguistic divide, as we all know, very often where there is an ethnic or some other divide in the military—we saw it in Serbia during the terrible Yugoslav War; we saw in Northern Ireland with the police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary which did not include Catholics and it had a terrible outcome for them—how would you assess the military in terms of those who comprise it? Is there a blending of both communities so that they will stand down and not err on one side or the other?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. That is a question that really has no definitive answer. But at least to say that the BIR, or the Rapid Intervention Battalion that we have trained, that portion has been effective and responsive and also accountable.

But the question comes in that we haven't done the majority of the military, and that's the overall military and the gendarmerie, and the rest of the BIR. And I think that would really rely on working with the government to ensure that the capacity and capability of the military is A) accountable to the government, accountable to authority, but more important is holding the military accountable for any types of abuse or human rights abuse.

Mr. SMITH. Have any of the military that have committed atrocities to the best of our knowledge been trained by us?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. On our area though we try to eliminate it as best we can. And, you know—

Mr. SMITH. I mean, we are not completely—

Mr. YAMAMOTO. I mean the answer is we are not completely 100 percent.

Mr. SMITH. Do we track by name those who we train?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. We do.

Mr. SMITH. And how many are we talking about that we have trained?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. So right now it is we trained 800 for the operations in the Central African Republic. And we trained most of the 3,000 that are in the operations now in countering violent extremism. So it is a very small number compared to the overall.

Mr. SMITH. Is that mostly officer corps or is that with the troops?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Oh, it is everything. So we have staff in Command College, and then we have NCO training.

Mr. SMITH. So from a strategic point of view, that is more important than anything to have the right leadership, wouldn't you say?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. That is, on the counterterrorism that is one aspect. But on the leadership, that's a separate issue. We need to do a better job on that.

Mr. SMITH. And how long is the training?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. It depends on the aspects. When they—again, on our ACOTA training program we have trained over 300,000 troops from 24 countries in Africa. And it is all very—where we train for peacekeeping operations that can take several months.

The other issue, too, is that it has to include follow-up training, but also equipment and how to use the equipment. The other issue, too, is we have small, small courses officially in support of human rights and holding the military accountable to the government, but also supporting the people as far as giving humanitarian assistance being part of that.

Mr. SMITH. And with regards to the training in human rights, is the issue of combating sex and labor trafficking fully integrated into the human rights training—

Mr. YAMAMOTO. That is correct.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Package?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. It is not all, it is part of the TIP, trafficking in persons, and also what we have in the Central African Republic which is sexual exploitive violence. We are also very much concerned about it, as well as you are, Mr. Chairman. So thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much.

I would like to now—Mr. Castro.

Mr. CASTRO. I apologize. I have been in and out running to other meetings.

But can you give us a sense of what is going on with the elections there?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. On the election is that it is right now the Presidential election is scheduled for October. But the legislative and the local elections have been delayed to 2019, which is not a good thing.

The other issue, too, is that there has not been the great effort that we expect in discussing with local leaders and community leaders on electoral and political reform, which means that the government parties need to reach out to the opposition. And I am told that that is not being done. That is why in, as I was saying earlier, we have not provided assistance to the electoral process yet.

Mr. CASTRO. Let me ask you, Ambassador, will the Department of State condemn any efforts by President Biya to extend his term or extend elections if such actions are unconstitutional?

Mr. YAMAMOTO. Right. If it is unconstitutional, then we will raise that.

Mr. CASTRO. Okay. I yield back.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Castro. And thank you, Ambassador Yamamoto again. We look forward to seeing you soon and working with you on all of these challenges.

I would like to now welcome our second group of witnesses, distinguished individuals to the witness table, beginning with Hans De Marie Heungoup, who is Central Africa Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group. He is responsible for conducting field research and providing analysis on the prevailing security, governance, and political issues in Cameroon and the sub-region, as well as proposing policy initiatives for governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental stakeholders to resolve sources of conflict.

Before joining the Crisis Group, Mr. Heungoup was a researcher at the Paul Ela Foundation on Geopolitics in Central Africa, and a consultant for the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. He has a B.A. in Law and Political Science, and M.A. in Governance and Public Policy from Catholic University of Central Africa. And also, he has been extensively published on commentaries about Cameroon and Central Africa, Boko Haram, and the Lake Chad Region.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Chairman, I am privileged to introduce Mr. Efi Tembon, who is the Executive Director of the Cameroonian Association for Bible Translation and Literacy. He also facilitates the Platform for Impact in Cameroon, an informal initiative that brings together the various denominational blocks and Bible translation agencies to serve communities in Cameroon; and the Impact Conference of Global South Organizations, which brings together organizations from Asia and Africa.

Mr. Tembon has served as President of the Forum of Bible Agencies from 2012 to 2016, on the boards of OneBook Canada, the Development Associate International-Cameroon, Audio Gospel, and the Translation Degree Advisory Committee.

He also has worked as a consultant on organizational development, community mobilization, and church engagement.

A native of Cameroon, Mr. Tembon is married to Mindy Lamberty Tembon, and they have three young children. We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Walberg.

And our third witness will be Adotei Akwei, who is the Deputy Director of Advocacy and Government Relations for Amnesty International USA. He has focused on human rights and U.S. foreign policy toward Africa since 1988, and has worked as a lawyer supporting human rights in the American Committee on Africa and the Africa Fund. We welcome his testimony as well.

I would like to now go to Mr. Heungoup and then we will proceed.

STATEMENT OF MR. HANS DE MARIE HEUNGOU, SENIOR ANALYST, CENTRAL AFRICA, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

Mr. HEUNGOU. Thank you, Chair Congressman. So, I am honored to contribute to this before this subcommittee, hoping that my contribution and my testimony will help solving the multiple crises that are affecting Cameroon. I should underline that I am not just speaking as a Crisis Group expert, but also as a Cameroonian native from the French speaking side. Grew up and was studied there, and in France as well.

I would like to stress three points. The first is what is the current political and security situation of Cameroon?

The second is how this situation, if it deteriorates further, could have regional implications and threaten U.S. interests in the sub-region.

And the third point is what the U.S. Congress, or the U.S. Government, and other international partners of Cameroon can do to prevent the current situation from escalating further.

On the security situation there are two aspects that needs to be considered. Boko Haram in the Far North and the conflict in the Anglophone region, Northwest region and Southwest region of Cameroon. As has been explained by my previous, the previous speakers, the Far North of Cameroon is, since 2014, concerned by the spreading of the Boko Haram insurgency from Nigeria to Cameroon. 1,900 citizens have been killed, and about 200 people from the security forces: Soldiers, gendarmes, and policemen.

We are not going to go deeply inside the root causes of all that, but we are just going to stress what are the urgent needs now. There is a kind of decrease of Boko Haram activities in the war region, and particularly in the front of Cameroon.

Boko Haram is no longer in the position of launching hundreds of dozens of experienced fighters against Cameroonian security forces. Most of the attacks now are soldiers in looting and banditry acts. Although the jihadist group remains a trait for Cameroonian army and for the whole population of the Far North.

And the more the conflict is decreasing, we can now look on the humanitarian situation of the region. You have 204,000 IDPs and about 90,000 refugees in this region.

Another point that I would like to mention is there is a need to discuss with the Cameroonian Government about how do you anticipate a post-conflict demobilization for the vigilante units? There are 12,000, if not more, members of vigilante groups which are local separatist groups in the region that have been recruited by Cameroonian army to support them in the fight against Boko Haram. What is going to be their fate after the conflict? That is one of our key concerns now.

Another concern is also the policy the Cameroonian Government should elaborate regarding the Boko Haram surrendees. You have roughly 200 Boko Haram who have surrendered over the last 6 months. What is the policy for them? Not just for them, but also to send a signal to the remaining about 1,000 Cameroonian members of Boko Haram in the bush so that they are encouraged to also abandon this group?

But these are the two or three key concerns that we have regarding the front of the humanitarian concern, but also the issue of the

vigilantes, the issue of Boko Haram surrendees, and also reminding that although it is a trait or a conflict which is going down, it still is still on.

Regarding the Anglophone crisis, as many of you have already expressed, so I am not going to go inside all the historical background, but as you know, two entities got together, the former British protectorate that was called Southern Cameroon, and the French side, the francophone side who was under the administration of France. And also the crises we have seen, one of the problems started even at the moment they have started being together, how the unification process has been conducted. And later everyone knows what is this trait, the abolition of federalism and different states.

So it has come up again. And in October 2016, we have cooperated demand and we have reached what we have reached now, which is a political crisis. And on top of this political crisis, now an army insurgency in the Anglophone region that is threatening the stability of the Cameroon and with a risk of turning into civil war.

We are very, very concerned because we think right now it is not just a question of insecurity in different regions of Cameroon which is the priority. The priority is the stability of Cameroon itself. It is no longer just what is going on in the front or what is going on in the Anglophone region, it is now can Cameroon sustain the 2018, for example, election? How is the central government going to manage all that?

And the last point that I will just mention is that maybe it is not coming up in the international media, but three other regions of Cameroon is Adamawa North, also exposed to insecurity particularly from militias coming from Central African Republic, highway bandits, and also butchers.

A point also in the current state of Cameroon is the political situation. And two things need to be mentioned. The first is the next election that's going to be coming.

We think that the international crisis that this election are hazardous. First, because that has always been the case for the past elections in Cameroon. The second, because what is new this time, we are going to our election with five or six of the ten regions of the country which are under insecurity.

Secondly, the level of political tension, community divide and area divide in the country is mounting the more the election is approaching. Different groups are targeted in social media or even in public media.

And thirdly, there is a high, high dispute about the electoral and the judicial process in general. The opposition, particularly on the civil society, is not okay, doesn't agree with the electoral code. And some of the things that we wanted to stress is in case it is not possible to address all the issues related to the electoral process and electoral code in Cameroon, there are two or three that will be quickly infeasible, even before October.

Like for example, a fair funding of opposition parties. Or like, for example, adopting an election with a second run for the Presidential and also for the local elections. So these are the things.

And I will just conclude this first one by saying most of the security concerns and security risks in Cameroon are intimately linked to the governance, how the governance of the country is weak, the highly centralized governance, the paternalized governance, and also corruption. So there is the political fragility of Cameroon, and also the security fragility. It is actually in most of the cases the issue of the central governance that is impacting and is creating all this crisis. And this is something that Crisis Group is highlighting since 2010.

Now, what are the regional implications? If the crisis in Cameroon deteriorates further, we have at least four points. The first is CEMAC. CEMAC is not very well known internationally but it is one of the economic zones within Central Africa that has five countries. And Cameroon contributes for 35 percent of the CEMAC zone. So if Cameroon is collapsing, it is Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Central African Republic—countries where stability depends on stability of Cameroon—who will be affected.

Another point is, as has already been mentioned by the Ambassador, which is the fight against Boko Haram and the terrorism. So I'm not going to come back on it.

You have also the Gulf of Guinea which is an important reserve of hydrocarbons in the world. And Cameroon contributes to the regional maritime architectural security of the Gulf of Guinea. What is going to happen if this country is collapsing?

And the third one is Nigeria. Nigeria is already suffering economically from the Anglophone crisis, with the issue of refugees also. And there is a risk that if this part of Cameroon is torn into a civil war, what signals is this sending to all Nigerian secessionist and separatist groups?

So, these are some of the reasons why we think that the U.S. should be very concerned if one of its key partners in Africa, Nigeria, is affected by a crisis in Cameroon, and if this crisis is affecting broadly other, other countries.

And the last, the last point is what to do. Regarding the Anglophone, it is quite difficult to have something which is, like, a consensual recommendation because both parties are sitting on the line. But we think it can start first by having an independent investigation on all the human rights agencies that have been located in the area. So that means allowing access to international investigators, but national investigators also.

Also, we recommend the National Commission for Human Rights and internationally reviewing that can conduct this investigation and name by name record who is linked to all these abuses, whether it is member, they are members of security forces or the administration, and the Cameroonian Government committing itself to punish them. And failure to do so, then the U.S. can push, or the U.S. Congress can push the Trump administration for reexamining the military cooperation, the development aid, and also sanctions against these specific individuals who are directly involved in these abuses.

We also think after that is done there is a need to go inside the deep of the issue, which is political dialogue on the form of the state. Crisis Group does not recommend a separation or secession of Cameroon, but we do think there is a need to move from the

highly centralized way the country is governed in now to something different that can be either federalism or a form of regionalism as we can observe, for example, in Germany.

And something that could be considered as a traditional solution as many of the Cameroonian officials with whom we have discussed tell us that even if we wanted to do so, there is no time to do it before the election. Then, before the election there can be a ceasefire. And for this ceasefire Cameroonian Government can do some concessions that will allow the armed groups to hold the election and decide.

And the last point, which is concerning the elections, is to push for a reform of the electoral system. Once more there are two possibilities. This is, in the perfect world, reforming all the electoral code, the judicial and things like that. But if this cannot be done, having two or three points on which it can be stressed so that it will appease tension within the opposition and they will accept to participate to the process.

But the U.S., for doing it more efficiently, should absolutely involve also international and other partners of Cameroon. Why? Because the Government of Cameroon since years now has been playing the divide and hold within the international panel of Cameroon. For example, by allocating public markets to France or to China, to the detriment of other countries who are criticizing him.

So it is important that a dialogue should be held at the state level capital to see how to harmonize the positions.

Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Heungoup follows:]

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Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations
27 June 2018, "Crisis in the Republic of Cameroon"

Cameroon is at a crucial moment of its history. For many years, its governance and security problems have attracted little international attention. But the country now faces conflicts in three of its ten administrative regions: Boko Haram in the Far North; and the conflict in the Anglophone regions (Northwest and Southwest). Added to this is insecurity in the East, Adamaoua and North where 236,000 refugees have fled from militias in the Central African Republic.

Most of the country's security threats stem from bad governance and an over-centralised political system, including highly centralized and personalized leadership, authoritarianism, vote rigging, political manipulation of ethnic tensions, widespread corruption and high scale human rights violations - which are long term and routinized practices in the country. Since 2010 Crisis Group has warned that the way Cameroon was governed was likely to sooner or later lead a frustrated population to express their anger violently with potentially dangerous consequences. This now appears to be happening, not only in the Anglophone areas, where an armed insurgency is emerging, but also in politics and wider society, where repression and communal antagonism are worsening.

The ongoing conflict in the Anglophone regions is now the biggest security threat to Cameroon stability, which if left unaddressed could turn into civil war as has occurred in other African countries. October 2018 forthcoming presidential election is another potential flashpoint. After 25 years of rigged polls, Cameroonians are cynical but angry, and the pre-electoral period has seen a striking growth in inflammatory discourse pitting ethnic or linguistic groups against each other. The elections are driving social divisions and the risk of violence is greater than for previous elections. Violence during electoral period is certain, only the magnitude remains unknown.

Cameroon's structural fragilities are worsening, with an 85 year old president in power for 36 years, whose centralized patronage model of governance has weakened opposition, but has generated huge discontent. Public liberties have been further eroded, meetings and marches of opposition parties have been systematically prohibited, leaders arrested, and journalists intimidated. Political tension is high and with elections just month away, there is no dialogue between government and opposition. Some civil society organizations and political parties are considering boycotting and expressing their discontent in the streets in Yaoundé and Douala, some with the express (but unrealistic) aim of removing Biya through popular protest. The country's economy continues to deteriorate under pressure of the war against Boko Haram, the Anglophone crisis and the drop in oil price. The age of the President and growing sense that his succession is unprepared also deepens the above mentioned ethical antagonisms within the top leadership of the regime.

The stability of the whole country is now of great concern. A collapse would have huge regional damages, impacting U.S interests. Cameroon is the leading economy of CEMAC economic zone in Central Africa, with about 35 per cent of the regional GDP. It also plays a pivotal role for the stability of countries like Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Central African Republic. Cameroon remains also a key component of the regional Multinational Joint Task Force created in 2015 to fight Boko Haram, and if its response weakens due to fundamental problems at the centre, Boko Haram and other jihadi groups could find in the Far North region a new sanctuary. Economically, the country is also an entry point for the Gulf of Guinea - an important off shore reserve of hydrocarbons - and plays an important role within the Gulf of Guinea maritime security architecture. Finally, Cameroon Anglophone regions border Nigeria. A civil war there will not only increase the current economic and humanitarian (34,000 refugees) costs of the conflict for Nigeria, but could encourage Nigerian own separatists' movements such as Biafra and Ogoni or even in the Ijaw and Ejagham communities.

In summary, the cost of leaving Cameroon plunging into civil war and collapsing is far higher than the cost of putting political, diplomatic and economic pressure to avoid it. Cameroon's partners, including the U.S. have frequently provided the regime with decisive economic and military assistance. Though this has come with low pressure for reform, and the government has read international support as a carte blanche to continue to run the country as they wish. The regime has now factored a low level of international criticism into its calculations and seems intent on pursuing its course.

Most international partners are reluctant to criticize the regime. This includes European countries who follow the lead of a few countries with strong economic interests. For nearly four decades, the Cameroon regime has managed to play the divide and rule game between western powers, and has used the growing Chinese presence to discourage western critics. While cherishing the economic interests of the former colonial power, France, it has gradually favoured economic cooperation with China to the detriment of U.S. In late May 2018, amid the 20th of May National Day celebration, the US ambassador criticised Cameroonian army for killings of civilians and burning of villages in Anglophone regions, but French president sent to president Biya a congratulatory message, without mentioning human rights violations in the Anglophone regions or in the Far North. The following weeks, Biya official twitter account published other congratulatory messages from Russia, China, and Syrian president Bashar Al Assad.

The U.S and other partners should push Cameroon government to engage in serious dialogue with Anglophone leaders, from federalists to separatists, on appeasing measures, such as the liberation of Anglophone detainees, and on the form of the State, in order to avoid a civil war. U.S should also push Cameroon government to enact comprehensive governance and electoral reforms before October 2018 to reduce electoral violence and avoid post electoral instability. U.S and other Donors should use their leverage, both financial and diplomatic, to send stronger messages to the government. If the U.S wants to act under a unified western position, it should lead talks at capital levels so as to find a common strong position.

Background

The roots of Cameroon's current problems lie in the colonial period, when "state building" was done at the expense of pluralism. In the independence era as well, an aversion to dialogue and an inability to accommodate discontent or minority views has blocked political reform. The ensuing frustrations have led to periodic explosions of violence.

In the late 1950s, there was widespread unrest when the French banned the main party opposed to colonial rule, the popular Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), leading to a bloody and protracted guerrilla war that resulted in 15 years (1956 - 1971) to dozens of thousands - if not hundreds of thousands - of deaths. France granted independence in 1960, but the insurgency persisted. President Ahmadou Ahidjo used it as a pretext to declare a state of emergency, take full executive powers and fend off calls for a national conference to decide on post-independence political arrangements. Following a UN-sponsored referendum in 1961, the southern region of British-controlled Anglophone Cameroon voted to rejoin Francophone Cameroon, while the northern region voted to remain with Nigeria.

With a weak negotiating team, Anglophone Cameroon allowed Ahidjo to impose a constitution that, while formally federal, had all the hallmarks of a French-style centralized state. It did little more than adjust the 1960 constitution of French Cameroon and allowed for direct election of the president, which Ahidjo correctly calculated would reinforce his position. There were few guarantees to enact what was to be, on paper, a "union of equal parts". The resulting frustrations linger today in Anglophone Cameroon.

By the late 1960s the civil war in the west Bamileke region was ending, but the regime was still obsessed with unity and stability. It was autocratic, and it considered pluralism and diversity unacceptable threats to the nation-building project.

The resignation of President Ahidjo in November 1982, and the handover of power to his prime minister, Paul Biya, initially went smoothly. But tensions soon emerged, culminating in a coup attempt in April 1984, blamed on Ahidjo loyalists. It was violently put down, with no process of reconciliation to follow. The trauma of this period is still a source of bitterness for many from the north, Ahidjo's home area. Equally, some from the south, including in the security forces, fear reprisals stemming from the unfinished business of 1984.

In the early 1990s, opposition parties emerged, and multi-party elections were held. The regime was seriously threatened at the ballot box and in the street, and frustrations led to widespread violence in 1991. But President Biya and his ruling party prevailed and started to restore authoritarian rule behind a façade of democratic practice.

Today, the nation-building project has frayed, as the economy has stagnated, and unemployment and inequality have risen. The economy is weighed down by corruption, a poor business climate and the low price of oil, production of which constitutes 10 per cent of GDP. The population benefits very little from what economic growth there has been, based mainly on natural resources exploitation. Opposition forces are weak, and popular anger is very high.

What is happening?

The country now faces violence in three regions: the Northwest and Southwest, where an Anglophone insurgency emerged in late 2017, and the Far North, where Boko Haram continues to mount small-scale attacks. The current crisis is the most serious and bloody internal conflict the country has known since the civil war of the 1960s. Added to this is a rampant insecurity and refugee crisis in the East and Adamaoua, which host some 236,000 people from the Central African Republic. Elections in October 2018 will be a major test, as will the eventual transfer of power away from the aging President Biya.

Armed Insurgency in the Anglophone Regions

The crisis in the Anglophone regions is now a deadly armed insurgency. While there are hardliners among the militants, the government bears a large share of the responsibility for the conflict. It failed to recognize legitimate Anglophone grievances; its security forces committed widespread abuses; and it imprisoned many peaceful activists in early 2017.

Several small "self-defense" groups now operate alongside a couple of larger armed groups: the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) and the Ambazonia self-defense Council. The armed separatist groups aggregate more than 500 active members and fighters, equipped with hunting homemade guns and modern assault rifles (AK47 and Kalashnikovs). They grow month after month and now control several portions of rural territories. Since November 2017, these groups have launched a series of attacks against military and police barracks that have killed at least 90 members of security forces, three times the number of soldiers and policemen killed in the Far North during the same period. An unknown number of separatist fighters have died in these clashes though (some military officers estimated 200 armed separatists have been killed).

The military crackdown also involved significant human rights violations. According to the International Crisis Group, security forces have killed at least 150 civilians since November 2016 and burned dozens of villages. Several Cameroonian NGOs have estimated to several hundred the civilians killed and 70 the villages destroyed by security forces. Around a thousand Anglophone activists or presumed separatists have been arrested, with 500 still in jail. 34,000 Anglophones are refugees in Nigeria and some 160,000 are internally displaced. Armed Anglophone militants have also killed more than a dozen civilians (termed "black legs"), suspected of collaborating with the Cameroonian

security services, and have burnt dozens of schools, with the aim to enforce their school boycott strategy. As result, schools are being disrupted in Anglophone areas since November 2016.

The government's refusal to launch a dialogue with peaceful Anglophone leaders has corroded the community's trust in state institutions and provoked escalating violence. A direct dialogue between the government and Anglophone community leaders (from pro decentralization to federalists and separatists) is critical to de-escalate the crisis. A wider conversation, which should include discussion of different models of federalism and effective decentralization (or regionalism such as in Germany), is also important, given the failings of the current model. The U.S. should take advantage of the government's concern about its international image and desire to preserve cooperation with them to nudge it toward direct talks and a national dialogue.

Boko Haram: still a threat to the neglected Far North

Since 2014, Boko Haram has killed about 1,900 Cameroonian civilians and 200 soldiers and gendarmes, as well as burned and looted dozens of villages. The conflict also has displaced some 242,000 people, driven 91,000 of them to neighboring Nigeria and badly disrupted the local economy. Though battered by security forces and riven by internal divisions, Boko Haram could regain strength if Cameroonian authorities—overstretched by the growing insurgency in the Anglophone regions—neglect the crisis.

The war against Boko Haram has strained local communities, given rise to humanitarian crises and highlighted the need for longer-term development. The immediate challenge is to stimulate the local economy without filling the coffers of Boko Haram, which taxes local trade and in the past has recruited in part by offering small business loans and other financial incentives. Achieving the right balance will be difficult. But support for small businesses within the formal and informal economies could undercut local backing for Boko Haram. Separately, while Yaounde has long controlled the Far North by co-opting local notables, Boko Haram's spread into Cameroon was partly facilitated by tapping into anger at local elites. Instead, the U.S. should encourage the state to reassert its presence in the north in a participatory and inclusive manner rather than through proxies, including via development projects that boost local earning potential.

The last six months, issues have emerged concerning how to deal with about 200 surrendering Boko Haram members or associates, at present the subject of only piecemeal policies. The government should elaborate a coherent de-radicalization and reinsertion strategy as well as a transitional justice program for those surrendering. We encourage more and better thought through national and international support on this issue. In the same line the decrease of the Far North conflict raises the question of the screening and DDR of the 12,000 members of vigilante groups (local self-defence groups) that were mobilized to support the security forces in the fight against Boko Haram.

The Elections and an Eventual Transition from President Biya

The 2018 elections are likely to see Biya and the ruling party retain power, but polls seen as manipulated or unfair would make it even more remote from citizens and feed greater levels of violence. Election season will be an especially risky time if, as appears likely, Anglophone militants attempt to disrupt the balloting in the Northwest and Southwest regions, and possibly elsewhere. Several political parties are designing strategy to "protect and defend" their votes, while some civil society movements are planning to boycott the elections and to express their discontent in October in the streets of Yaounde and Douala, hoping to build momentum for a popular uprising, such as occurred in Burkina Faso.

Because so much power is vested in the president and most government institutions are weak, an additional concern is the risk of major instability if the president dies or is incapacitated. The U.S. and other actors should start laying the groundwork for a peaceful transfer of power; the longer the situation deteriorates, the harder it will be to pick up the pieces. It should do so first, by supporting dialogue between the government and Anglophone leaders, as described above; and, second, by working with Cameroon's electoral commission and deploying election observers to protect the integrity of the vote, and by pushing in the best scenario for comprehensive governance and electoral

reform before the elections in October, and thus build confidence in the electoral system. In the worst scenario, the U.S should push for negotiations to at least obtain a ceasefire in the Anglophone regions during the voting week - that will probably require some government concessions such as the liberation of Anglophone detainees, and some feasible minimal reforms of the electoral code: adoption of a single ballot paper, of a two rounds polls and a fair funding of political parties. Even small gains in these areas would help mend the torn contract between the Cameroonian state and its citizens.

What can Congress and U.S Do?

The U.S. Congress should urge President Biya to pursue a peaceful solution to the Anglophone crisis and end abuses by security forces that are fueling the insurgency. More could be done to help rebuild the Far North and prevent Boko Haram from returning in force. Last, but not least, it should help protect the integrity of Cameroon's October elections.

The Anglophone Crisis

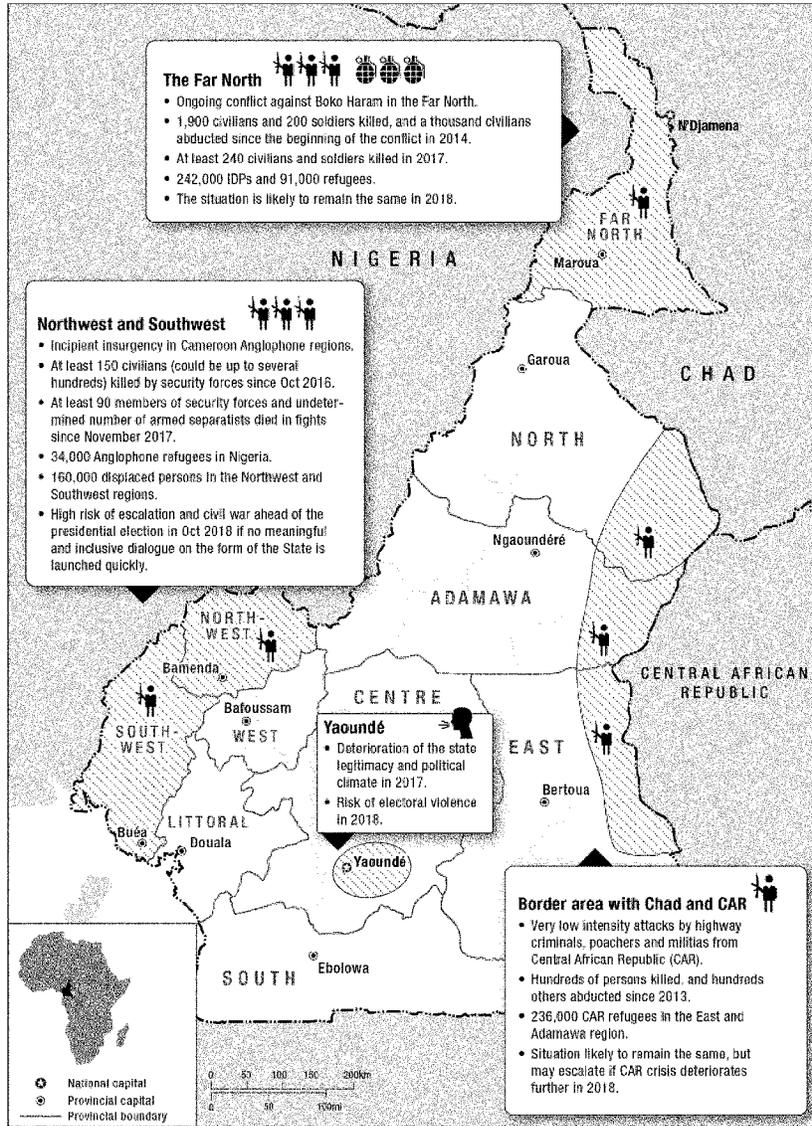
- Press the Cameroonian government to allow credible independent investigations by the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms in conjunction with an international body like the U.N or A.U into allegations of abuses by security forces and punish those responsible. Reexamine defense cooperation, development aid and examine sanction against top security officials and administrative authorities involved in these abuses, if it does not do so.
- Continue to urge the government to pursue dialogue with Anglophone leaders and not reflexively oppose any discussion of federalism. Help identify a neutral mediator, potentially the Catholic Church, to help break the dangerous stalemate.

Combating Boko Haram

- Provide more support to the humanitarian crisis and rebuilding of the Far North. But also require Cameroon to do more to stabilize the Far North. Support international assistance to Cameroonian government efforts.
- Urge the Cameroonian government to tackle the post conflict demobilization of the vigilante units, as well as the deradicalization and reintegration of ex Boko Haram members. Support efforts of the Cameroonian government in that direction.

Elections

- Sustain international support and attention to the elections. Cameroonian elites are sensitive to outsiders' judgment and their image abroad. Congress and the U.S. Administration should be positioned to intervene with one voice. The U.S and other Ambassadors in Yaoundé should coordinate their positions. This should also be done at the capital level. Try to expand pressure groups from just the "West" to include other democracies and concerned countries from the South.
- Continue to privately and publicly encourage president Biya to think about his legacy.



Mr. SMITH. Thank you. We have a vote on the floor. We have about 45 seconds to get there. So we will stand in recess for about 20 minutes, 25 minutes.

Thank you. Thank you for testifying.

[Recess.]

Mr. SMITH. The subcommittee will resume its sitting. And I apologize for the delay. We had four votes on the House floor. So, again, I do apologize.

Mr. Tembon, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF MR. EFI TEMBON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CAMEROONIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION
AND LITERACY**

Mr. TEMBON. I want to start with my recommendations before I share my story. We urge the United States to condition its military support to the Biya government on immediate redeployment of his troops to Northern Cameroon to aid in fighting Boko Haram.

And we urge for an international commission of inquiry to fully investigate the crimes against humanity and bring perpetrators to justice.

And let the United States call for an international mediation to resolve the crisis going on in Southern Cameroons to prevent further atrocities and genocide.

And for this relationship to be effective, we believe the following conditions must be met: All those arrested in connection with the crisis must first be released; trials should take place in a neutral venue; the mediator must be acceptable to both sides; and negotiations must include addressing the root causes of the crisis and self-determination for the people of former British Southern Cameroons in accordance with U.N. Declaration of Granting Independence of Colonial Countries.

Those are my recommendations.

There are horrific crimes going on, committed every single day by soldiers, government soldiers against civilian population in the regions and the villages in Southern Cameroon. And I believe these crimes amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity.

As soldiers go into villages, burn down villages, burn down—even burn people, old and elderly people in their homes who cannot escape. And it is heartbreaking to see what is going on.

We work in communities across this region. We have staff on the ground. And every single day I get stories, I see pictures of homes burning, of people killed. And it really breaks my heart to see what is going on.

And the root causes for this problem is how to deal with what Mr. Hans already said, the way the two countries came together.

The Republic of Cameroon became independent in 1960. And Southern Cameroon leaders when they went to the U.N. because they went, they went to get independence, the United Nations violated one of its resolutions by not accepting the desire of the people to become an independent country. They rather conditioned their independence by joining either Nigeria or Cameroon, which was in violation of their resolution.

And the second issue has to do with when they came together they agreed to have a two-state federation. West Cameroon and

Southern Cameroon became the state of West, the original state of West Cameroon. And the Republic of Cameroon became the Federated State of East Cameroon.

But when oil was found in Southern Cameroon, former Southern Cameroon, the state of West Cameroon was dissolved. It was dissolved. And they had elected their leaders. The Prime Minister role was dissolved. The House was dissolved. And Ahidjo, President Ahidjo would send in governors. The state was divided into two, and governors were sent in to govern the people, local administrators who had no accountability to the local people. They were accountable to the central administration.

And that is when the trouble started in 1972. And for Southern Cameroonians it was recolonization or annexation. So the Teachers' Strike, that is really just I would say a storm in a teacup. That is not an issue.

In 1984, when Paul Biya decided to go back to their name La Republique de Cameroun, it was tantamount to secession. Because it is ironic today that they call those who are fighting in Southern Cameroon secessionists when Paul Biya himself seceded in 1984 when he went back to the name. The country had an independence.

And Southern Cameroonian leaders stepped up at the time and said this is unacceptable, this is colonization. And the problem was that the name, the new name of the country still covered the territory of former British Southern Cameroon. So they asked the President to leave those territories and respect the boundaries of the Republic of Cameroon. But those people were arrested, jailed, and executed.

And so this is that Anglophone movement that had to grow. In the 1990s it did grow and it gathered some intensity. And what happened in 2016 was just another phase of the movement when the teachers and the lawyers summed up their grievances in a request to restore the state of Southern Cameroons. The mission of Paul Biya responded in a way it responds very often, with repression, and killing, and arresting the leaders who had demanded a return to the federation because there were other groups asking for independence.

And these leaders were arrested. And internet was cut off from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. And that and complete persecution and a punitive team was sent out there, soldiers sent out there to create troubles for the people of the Anglophone regions. And that weaved the hearts of Anglophones all over the world, both in the diaspora and in the homeland, to realize how their colonization, they discovered they were colonized, and they had to fight against colonization. And they had to educate the people.

And today, more than 90 percent of the people or, say, 95 percent of the people are fighting for independence. Their commitment to freedom is unbreakable, it is unbendable, what I have seen on the ground. Because on October 1 when people came from all over the different villages in Southern Cameroon, mothers, fathers, children, with branches of trees on a peaceful march to restore this independence because October, they declared independence on October 1. Government troops fired at them, killing many people.

And in the days following October 1, more and more people were killed. People were running to the bushes. The young people ran

and hid in the bushes because they realized they were being killed, and living in the bushes. And they realized if they didn't defend themselves they will be killed like chickens. And so they started to look for arms. They were in groups. Some joined groups, some formed small groups, defense groups in their communities and got hunting guns to fight back.

And when they ambushed a soldier and killed a soldier, government troops come into the area because they know the local population supports these groups, they burned down villages. I have seen people who have been burned, people burned in their homes, shot, there are mass rapes. And this is going on every single day.

If this is not genocide I don't know how we would describe genocide. It is genocide going on in Cameroon.

And when the international community failed Rwanda—and we are about to fail the people of former Southern Cameroon—I think we need to rise and see what is going on, and hold the Biya government to accountability. And listen to the cry of the people of Southern Cameroon for freedom, for an independent Southern Cameroons.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tembon follows:]

Crisis in the Republic of the Cameroon

An Overview of the Anglophone Crisis

2016-2018



Efi W. Tembon

Executive Director
Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy
Facilitator Platform for Impact

Subcommittee Hearing

06.27.2018 2:30pm 2172 Rayburn Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

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1. Introduction

As General Director of CABTAL (Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy), a grassroots non-governmental organization specializing in language-based development, I have contact with numerous community leaders throughout Cameroon. This report is based on my personal experience, having grown up in Cameroon, and having spoken with a wide range of individuals impacted by the crisis.

Cameroon, officially the Republic of Cameroon, is a Central African nation of approximately 24.68 million people (according to worldpopulationreview.com), divided into 10 regions for governance purposes. Eight of these regions have French as their national language, and two (the Southern Cameroons) have English. The central government of Cameroon is located in the francophone part of the country. This paper attempts to describe the plight of these two English speaking regions in their struggle for independence from the current government of Cameroon.

2. General Description of the Problem

Military persecution of the largely unarmed population of the Southern Cameroons has been increasing from 2016 to the present in response to peaceful protests and requests for dialogue. Several small self-defense groups have formed and are fighting back against the government soldiers. All attempts at dialogue between the Cameroon government and separatists have failed so far. Hundreds of people are being held in prisons, and many have been killed. Tens of thousands are refugees, and many more are internally displaced. It seems we are on the road to genocide.

3. Root Causes

The crisis in Cameroon is rooted in the way Cameroon became independent. Both Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon were UN Trust territories. These territories were handed to the British and the French to administer and guide towards independence. French Cameroon became independent on January 1, 1960 and became known as the Republic of Cameroon (La Republique du Cameroun). On the other hand, British Southern Cameroons was rather given only two options at the UN for independence. They had to choose to become independent by joining the already independent Nigeria or the independent Republic of Cameroon. Even though there was a push for a third option for this territory to become independent and be a country on its own, this option was turned down with the reason being that the population was only 750,000 people and was too poor to stand on its own. Rumors of vote rigging add to the sentiment that people were forced to join the Republic against their will.

The second problem lies in the illegal dissolution of the state of West Cameroon on the 20th of May 1970. On October 1, 1961, the day Southern Cameroons became independent, the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon agreed to come together to form a new country called the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The Republic of Cameroon became known as the Federated State of East Cameroon, and Southern Cameroons became known as the Federated State of West Cameroon.

But in 1972, after oil was found in West Cameroon, the Federated State of West Cameroon was abolished by President Ahidjo. Both states were together renamed the United Republic of Cameroon. The state of West Cameroon was divided into two

provinces called North West and South West provinces respectively. Governors and local administrators were sent by Ahijo to govern them. In this administrative structure, these administrators are not accountable to the people in any way. They wield a lot of power and report to their hierarchy in Yaounde. The people of the state of West Cameroon were against this move and started expressing their disapproval. Many were arrested, including a classmate and friend of my father's, Albert Mukong, who spent 6 years in prison. He describes his experience in the book "Prisoner Without a Crime", which he authored. Gendarmes (paramilitary forces) were sent to repress any form of uprising against the dissolution. Many people were brutalized and abused by these forces.

According to John Ngu Foncha, the Southern Cameroons Prime Minister who had led Southern Cameroons into unification with the Republic of Cameroon and Vice President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, this abolition of the state of Southern Cameroons and dissolution of its institutions, was annexation of the territory of Southern Cameroons by the Republic of Cameroon. So the territory was simply recolonized. According to J. N. Foncha, the Francophone dominated and controlled government started a systematic degrading of the education system, the banking system and most of the things that had been developed in the state of west Cameroon.

In 1984, the current President, who has been in power since 1975 (plus six years as Prime Minister), changed the country's name back to the Republic of Cameroon. This is the name adopted by the Francophone state at independence in 1960. It should be noted that when they agreed to come together in 1961 into a federal union, that name was given up. By reviving that name, many Southern Cameroon leaders understood it as secession from the union that was agreed upon in 1961 (See UN General Assembly resolution 1608 (XV)). What troubled Southern Cameroonian leaders was the fact that the domain of the Republic of Cameroon extended to the former Southern Cameroons. To Southern Cameroonians, this was annexation and therefore unacceptable!

Southern Cameroonian leaders led by Gorji Dinka, President of the Bar Council, challenged the Republic of Cameroon to leave the territory of Southern Cameroons which they have renamed Ambazonia. Gorji Dinka and others were arrested and charged with treason. There has been a peaceful and collective protest against this annexation since 1972. It increased in intensity in 1984 and in the 90s. Changing the country's name back to the Republic of Cameroon is tantamount to secession and legally gave the right to revive the Southern Cameroons.

In the 90s the cities of Buea and Bamenda held All Anglophone Conferences, peacefully seeking to go back to the federal form that was agreed upon in 1961. But the government of the Republic of Cameroon would not listen. They rather made a new constitution in 1996 transforming the provinces into regions. According to the new constitution, the regions are semi-autonomous. But this new constitution has never been implemented.

4. Significant Events

The Anglophone regions in Cameroon are facing what many have termed Paul Biya's dirty war against Anglophones, declared by President Paul Biya in November of 2017.

A number of groups have formed over the years in this resistance movement. The SCNC (Southern Cameroons National Council) led by Nfor Ngala Nfor, formed after the All Anglophone Conferences of the 90s, Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) led by Akwanga Ebenezer, the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) led by Cho Ayaba, the outlawed Consortium led by Tassang Wilfred and Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons (MORISC) with Boh Herbert as the spokesperson, have been very active. The Southern Cameroons Ambazonia Consortium United Front (SCACUF) formed in 2017 was formed as a governing body to unite organizations fighting for independence. The group adopted the roadmap for independence developed by MORISC. Although some groups like (MORISC), ADC and SYCL left SCACUF in late 2017 it transitioned into an Interim Government of Ambazonia under Interim President Ayuk Tabi. On October 1st Ayuk Tabi declared the restoration of the independence of Ambazonia.

The Lawyers' Protest: It started with a wave of protest initiated by lawyers and teachers of the Anglophone regions. Since the dissolution of the federal system of government, there has been a dysfunction in the legal system in Cameroon due to the fact that common law was practiced in West Cameroon and civil law in East Cameroon. They had a number of grievances pertaining to the fact that judges were trained in the civil law legal system and sent to work in the Anglophone regions that practiced common law. The lack of training for judges in the common law system in the school of magistracy and marginalization in a number of areas. They summed their demands in requesting a return to the two state federation as the best framework to guarantee the coexistence of both legal system, the culture and interest of the people. The government played deaf. When the lawyers staged a peaceful protest walk, the government sent the security forces to do what it does best! Repression! Videos of lawyers being beaten by security forces were shocking.

Three Anglophone teachers' trade unions joined the lawyers with their own grievances and summed it up with a request for a return to the federal system of government as the framework to solve these grievances. They had similar treatment from security forces as the lawyers. The teachers then initiated school boycotts. This was very disruptive and use the government as school boycotts proved very effective.

The University of Buea Student Protest: Around the same period, the students of the university of Buea staged a protest against a number of grievances. The government again did what it does best. Security forces were sent to the university for repression. This was most shocking as videos started emerging on social media on the repression. Students were beaten like snakes, girls dehumanized and made to deep their faces and mouths into very filthy mud. Student rooms were vandalized, sprayed with water canons. There were allegations of looting and rape of students by security forces. Many students were wounded and traumatized as a result of this brutality.

The Coffin Revolution: In Bamenda around the same period, Mancho Bibixy a journalist with a local radio station, stood in a coffin before a large crowd and asked accountability questions of the government. Concerning the poor conditions of roads, the garbage, filth that filled the city and government corruption. According to Mancho, this dysfunction and chronic corruption could not continue unchallenged. His coffin was his readiness to stand up and die for the cause of freedom and change for the Anglophone community. Starting

November 21st 2016, with a series of protests, the crowd stood with Mancho. But the security forces as usual used repression and brutality. Violence broke out and a number of protesters were killed, some injured and many arrested and jailed.

Government Provocation: In the midst of these tensions, the Anglophone elites in the Biya government, in an attempt to show President Biya that he still had the support of the people, decided to organize a march in support of President Paul Biya. They hired buses and shipped in people from neighboring West Region into the heart of the Anglophone protest. This was a recipe for disaster as it was viewed by the local population as provocation. Clashes between the security forces and the population led to more deaths, more people injured, property vandalized and many more arrested.

Hon. Joseph Wirba took to the floor of parliament on 13th December, 2016 and spoke out for the Anglophone community in a now famous speech. He spoke up against the violent repression, brutality of students, rape by security forces, killings etc. ““Our ancestors and forefathers trusted you to go into a gentleman’s agreement. That two people who consider themselves brothers could go to live together. If this is what you show us after 55 years, then those who are saying that we should break Cameroon are right. They are correct! the people of West Cameroon cannot be your slaves. The people of West Cameroon, are not, you did not conquer them in war.” He accused the government of using the security forces as an army of occupation. And made it clear that when the people will rise, even if the French army was added to the Cameroon army the people will not be brought down. “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes a duty” Wirba said!

Cosmetic Solutions: The Anglophone protesters had regrouped themselves into a very influential consortium made up of various trade unions including teacher, lawyers, journalist, drivers, parents teachers association etc. In December, the school boycott proving very effective and the government running out of ideas to get teachers and kids back in school, opened up for dialogue. The government made some few reforms with a department for the common law at the school of administration and magistracy and a bench for common lay at the supreme court. But completely avoided touching or discussing the root causes of the crisis. The consortium leadership stood their ground on their demand for federation as the only framework to protect the interest and rights of the Anglophone minority. The president’s end of year speech made matters worst when he declared Cameroon was one and indivisible and that the form of the state will not be discussed and will not change.

On January 16, 2017, the Cameroon Anglophone Consortium and the Southern Cameroons National Council were outlawed. An arrest warrant was issued for all the leaders of the Anglophone protest. Some went into hiding and others were arrested including, Mancho Bibixy, Justice Ayah Paul (Deputy Attorney General of the Supreme Court) and charged for terrorism and other crimes. This decision by the government was the catalyst needed to bring in the Anglophone diaspora spread around the world. Leadership of the consortium was handed to Taang Ivo and Mark Baretta both living in the diaspora. Their social media savvy along with other activists and community mobilization skills united the vast majority of Anglophones both in Cameroon and the diaspora into a common cause. The cause for freedom for the people of former Southern

Cameroons. Through their mobilization and education, the Anglophone community observed effective ghost towns, school boycotts and “adopt a teacher program” to raise funds to support teachers from private schools who were not receiving a salary. The government used money and lots of other incentives to get schools and to break the momentum of the ghost towns but failed. The government started to show signs of frustration when it decided on an internet blackout from January to April for the two Anglophone regions. In October 2017, a second targeted social media shutdown was enacted. In total, the shutdown lasted over 150 days. This internet blackout was a collective punishment on the Anglophones and cost many internet based businesses more than 38m\$ according to estimates.

Facing punitive measures, constant harassment, name calling, mockery, arrests and the francophone dominated government condescendence weaved the Anglophone community to stand stronger together. Many became aware of a history that had been hidden from them. They had been annexed but didn't know it! This knowledge and punitive actions by the government brought emancipation and the vast majority who had wanted a return to the federal system of government switched from federalists to restorationists desiring to break away from 56 years bondage and annexation. Instead crushing them, the punitive and repressive measures energized them to stand up for the restoration of their independence and against colonization. The Anglophone community worldwide join in the struggle with protest marches in western cities to create awareness about their cry for the freedom of their people and their homeland.

The Events of September 22 and October 1, 2017: On September 22, as President Paul Biya addressed the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly 6000 miles away. People in villages, towns and cities all across Anglophone Cameroon were doing a test run for the restoration of their independence on October 1, 2017. Anglophones in the US gathered in New York to stand with their people and let the world know that they mean business about their freedom. The protest brought together the elderly, children, women, men and youth singing the Ambazonian anthem and carrying the blue and white flag. It proved to be the largest protest so far and was widespread all over the Anglophone areas. This peaceful march by millions of Anglophones both at home and abroad proved the government strategy of repression, denying the existence and playing the ostrich game with the root causes of the Anglophone problem had failed. As they are accustomed to, the government used repression. And even though the protest was largely peaceful with the people holding tree branches and plants as a sign of peace, security forces fired at the population killing some protesters and wounding some. While some were arrested. The killings, repression and arrests, did nothing to dampen their determination for freedom and preparations towards October 1. The government deployed more soldiers including elite soldiers, banned the protest and any gathering on October 1. They also banned the movement of vehicles from one city to another. But on October 1, millions of people all across the Anglophone regions came out with tree branches and the blue and white flags of Ambazonia. It should be noted that at this point, there were two groups the Amazonia Governing Council (AGC) and the Southern Cameroons Youth League that propagated the use of arms and warned that sending people out to proclaim the independence will result in them being killed. This was simply brushed aside.

When they went out to march, as usual with tree branches and flags, the firepower they faced was compared to nothing the unarmed people had faced before. To the Biya government, it was war! Soldiers fired at the crowd killing many protesters in various cities. "Troops and attack helicopters opened fire on protesters at the height of separatist rallies in English-speaking areas of Cameroon over the weekend, killing and wounding people, witnesses and rights groups said. The army dismissed the reports from sources in five towns as "completely false" and said helicopters had only been used for surveillance." It is difficult to know the actual number of people killed on October 1, 2017. Following the events of October 1, the military carried out raids, hunting young men that fit the profile. The atrocities, looting, killings and arrests continued. Young boys and girls took to the bushes hiding for their lives. People realized either you defend yourself or be killed.

Defense groups entered the game following the killings of October 1 and continuous hunting and killing of young people. There were renewed calls to pick up arms against what the Anglophone activist called occupational or colonial forces. Paul Biya's idea of "L'État, c'est moi" ("I am the State"), had created this mess. His actions and intransigence give this statement by John Kennedy all its weight in gold. "Those who make peaceful revolutions impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

These young people on the run were easy recruits for groups that propagated self defense. Many came together in their communities to form their own defense groups. Young people in various communities came together to form groups to defend the community and enforce the school boycotts and ghost towns. They started ambushing soldiers, killing them and taking arms. The government tagged them terrorists.

The government of Paul Biya bears the ultimate responsibility for perpetuating the escalating violence with its total rejection of dialogue preferring repression. Instead of heeding to both international and national calls to use dialogue to solve the crisis, the government crafted a tall tale of an international conspiracy to destabilize Cameroon through the Anglophones and their diaspora. They used the media to drum up support from the Francophone public opinion for their repressive and punitive expedition in the Anglophone areas. Despite the visit of the UN Secretary General, the Common Wealth Secretary General and other international, the call of the churches and other leaders for dialogue, President Paul Biya was bent on carrying out this dirty war.

On November 10th, 2017, an administrative notice was signed prohibiting the movement of commercial motorbikes from 7PM to 6AM, and suspending all hunting activities using firearms, closure of all license armories, sales of firearms. All owners of any type of gun must present themselves for identification. Traditional rulers and quarter heads were to identify any stranger in their neighborhood and send a report twice a week to the local administration. After this was done, the President declared war in December in a speech at the Yaounde, Nsimalen Airport after returning from a trip.

On January 5th 2018, in one spectacular move, the Biya and the Buhari governments connived to lure the leaders of Ambazonia into a hotel in Abuja, Nigeria for alleged talks and there abducted the leaders. They were later flown to Cameroon against international laws. Some of these leaders had refugee status in Nigeria and others had applied for asylum. For six months, these leaders have been kept incommunicado with no access to family members or lawyers.

According to people I have spoken to on the ground, some local groups have burned schools and attacked individuals who tried to betray the school boycotts. The Principal of St. Bedes Ashing was abducted because the school was operating and released after the school was closed. But appears that the local groups are not the only ones burning schools. According to a victim who shared his story with me, soldiers used bulldozers and brought down a school he had build for the kids in his community recently. There unanswered questions with regard to who burned Secret Heart College in Mankon. But parts of the school was burned while soldiers were protecting it.

Some groups seem to be more disciplined and have protected, provided food and basic needs to populations fleeing military brutality. But with various defense groups coming up everyday, there is a real danger that the leaders may not have control over the situation on the ground.

The local groups, largely armed with hunting guns, sticks and machetes, are no match in face-to-face combat with the well equipped Cameroon military. So they have used guerrilla warfare techniques in the resistance. According to government report on June 11, 84 military personnel and police officers have been killed in 123 attacks since the crisis started. We do not have statistics of how many restoration forces have been killed. Each time a security officer is killed, the local unarmed population of the surrounding areas suffers from the vengeance and terror of the military.

5. Atrocities and Human Rights Violations

By definition, human rights are violated when actors (either state or non state) abuse, ignore or deny basic rights (including civil, political, cultural, social, and economic rights). Violations of human rights also occur when a state or non-state actor breaches the UDHR treaty or other international human rights or humanitarian law.

There have been many killings in communities in the Anglophone regions including children, women and the elderly. Homes completely burned down. Some are hiding in the forest including babies, expectant mothers and the elderly. They live there, exposed to rain, snakes, danger from government soldiers, without food or medicine.

The devastation and pain they have caused is unbelievable. The trauma, fear and hopelessness of the local population facing such atrocities is beyond description. Theses atrocities constitute crimes against humanity and needs to be investigated. As a result of these burnings, the military has cause mass displacement of people and refugees. Thousands of people have been rendered homeless, entire life investments destroyed, family members killed and hiding in the bushes for their dear lives.

What follows is a partial list of violations people have reported to me. These are examples of the kinds of activities being carried out by Biya's military, not an exhaustive list.

A. Internet shut down for the whole Anglophone community:

The Cameroon government shut down internet in the Anglophone regions for over 150 days. This took place between January and April and from October 2017. This cost more than \$38 million in lost income.

B. Mass killings:

The Cameroon military has carried out mass killings in the Anglophone territories. The most recent, was the killing of 27 youths in Mensa-Pinyin. According to Ni John Fru Cameroons main opposition leader who visited the area and spoke with eyewitnesses on the ground. One of the boys who was shot, was taken to a health center in Santa by his two brothers. Soldiers came to the health center took the three back to the village and shot and killed them. Within a period of 48 hours between May 23 to 25th over 40 youths were killed. The military went to Kwakwa and carried out mass killings of unarmed civilians and farmers.

C. Burning of private property, homes and business:

The Cameroon military has burned businesses, markets, private homes and property in more than 70 villages in the Anglophone regions. (Munyenge, Ngwo, Kwakwa, Boa Bakundu, Bole Bakundu, Dipenda Bakundu, Big Ngwandi, Bakumba, Bokosso, Nake, Kombone mission, Kake I, Kake II, Bekondo, Big Massaka, Nganjo, Foe Bakundu, Ekombe, Tadu, Keri, Mbiim, Small Ekombe, Ediki, Kuke, Ebonji, Etam, Nguti, Mongo Ndor, Bello, Anjang, Angin, Anyagwa, Azi, Kumbo, Doti Nobli, Kugwe, Ambo, Efah, Kumku, Ashong, Ngie, Kembong, Ejeke, Mbene, Bati-Numba, Kagifu, Dadi, Gurifen, Muyenge, Bafia, Ekwe, Kumbe-Balue, Ekona Mombo, Batibo, Bafut, Mbalangi, Oshie, Baingo, Bombele Mbonge, Kumu Kumu, Bangele, Konye, Guzang, Widikum, Sarnyar, Babadiehka, Djottin)

When unidentified men killed a para-military officer and wounded another on the Tadu-Oku road, the forces of law and order attacked the villages of Tadu, Keri and Mbiim. About 38 houses were attacked, some set ablaze, business premises vandalized, and it is alleged that goods and money was taken. Things like cement, rice and articles they could not take were simply destroyed.

In Mbiim and Sarnyar the forces of law and order attacked the village development community building and destroyed the chairs, window glasses, tables and took away the tool box for the community water maintenance, destroyed the pipes earmarked for the extension of the water supply to other parts of the village before proceeding to vandalize other houses in the village. One house was set ablaze while the population escaped to the bushes the forces of law and order carried away other items like generators, cutlasses, drinks etc. These villages were deserted as the population escaped to bushes to save their lives. In Tadu an old woman was brutalized and the corn in her barn set ablaze. Motor bikes were destroyed.

The soldiers have a modus operandi. When they attack a village, often they first burn the shops and businesses, then the homes of the people and kill some. It was the case in Kwakwa, in Munyenge, in Kake, in Njikwa, etc. When soldiers invade a village suspected for the support of the local restoration forces, they shops are set ablaze to cut them off from food. Their homes are burned and young people who fit the profile are shot. When soldiers came to Kwakwa, they burned down the shops and homes. Two elderly people who could escape were burned at home. It is the case of Mami Appih and Pa Dan. Miami Appih was burned almost to ashes and Pa Dan succeeded to escape with some burned, but died a few weeks later.

In Kembong village after four soldiers were ambushed and killed by restoration forces, the military invaded the village and houses were burned, farms destroyed with many allegations of rape and looting. Many young people including teenagers were killed by soldiers. The inhabitants were accused for supporting and hiding restoration forces.

According to an eye witness, on May 18, a police officer was killed the Ngwo area. On May 21, soldiers came to the Ngwo area with gun shots and burned down the market square with all the shops. On May 23rd, at about 6AM soldiers invaded the village, shooting and people ran into the bushes. The soldiers killed four men there including the husband of a Bible translation project worker, Mr. Anka Terence. It is alleged that the soldiers took his phone, his money and burned his bike. His widow, 22 with young twins and a baby in hand gathered her children and fled to the bushes. She spent some time in the bushes before they were located and helped.

Another Bible translator's business and two houses were burned. Mrs. Anyi Theodora was shot by the military but survived. Another Bible translator fled when soldiers came to his house shooting and credits God for his safety. The soldiers entered his home scattered the doors and windows and set fire to the house. He had to take refuge in the bushes with his elderly mother, wife and children and had spent many days in the bushes before they were rescued from the bushes.

Mr. Christian and Vitalise were arrested following the death of a paramilitary officer and tortured to death. Zeidin Fondzewong 18, was shot and killed by soldiers who were returning from Mbiame in Dzeng. Cosmos Wirkom was fishing on the banks of river Mbohnso when he was killed. The also break into houses in Mbohnso looted and about 1.653.000frs CFA is alleged to have been taken from the people by the soldiers.

In Ta Mbveh, Soldiers destroyed a shop, looted, arrested and locked up the wife of the shop owner with their ten month old child. The husband had to pay 800.000frs before his family was released. In Ndu, Two boys (Kevin Mburci and Kabiru) were shot and the population rushed them to the Integrated Health Center in Ndu but were later taken away by the soldiers to Nkambe. Mr. Ngala Benjamen and Moni Ivo Bantar were abducted from their homes. On October 1, four men who were in jail were shot dead with the allegation that they wanted to escape.

When soldiers invaded Munyenge shooting, people fled into the bushes for safety. One person Michael, who didn't know what was going was left behind. His leg was shattered by soldiers and left for dead! But was rescued by the Ayah Foundation and his leg was amputated and his is recovering. The soldiers proceeded to burning down the business center, shops, crops, harvested cocoa and private homes and killing some in the process. There has also been allegations of looting by soldiers.

In the Moghamo area, according to witnesses, people have been shot for not having identification papers. Some who had identification papers were also shot and killed. Soldiers took over Ambo village and local Presbyterian pastor who serves as the leader of the community organization leading the Bible translation program had to flee. His church house was taken over by soldiers who have set up a camp in Ambo village. The people and Christians in the Ambo village have fled because of gun battles between restoration forces and the military.

D. Prisoner Abuse:

The military has abused and murdered prisoners in custody. The case of Sam Soya, a disabled man in the Kom area who had a brochette business, was interrogated by soldiers and later murdered in cold blood. Videos exist of his interrogation and pictures of

his murder. On October 29, Afoni Fredoline, a third year student of the university of Bamenda was abducted by soldiers in his worksite in Shisong by the military. He was taken to the military camp in Kumbo and tortured to death. When the parents came to give him food thinking he was still alive, they were sent away. Two military trucks were sent to the compound of the deceased and caused more destruction. It is alleged that they took 25.000frs from the mother's room. On October 30th, the family went out in search of their son. They were informed by the authorities for that their son had died. They had no explanation about the death. The entire community was in shock when they heard the news. His remains were later discovered in a mortuary.

E. Extrajudicial killings, targeted killings and abductions:

On May 4th, 2018, the remains of two unidentified men were found in Kumbo. It is alleged by the neighbors that on the night of 30th April 2018, the military truck was seen heading to the area at about 9 PM, and few minutes after, gun shots were heard. This lasted for few minutes. Shortly after the shooting, the military truck drove back. Four days later, a grazer discovered the corpses already at an advanced state of decomposition and alerted the Mayor of Kumbo.

F. Targeted killing and Torture:

Another victim was arrested in Kom alleged to be an Ambazonian general, videos of his was posted by soldiers on social media. The torture and treatment in the video shock our consciences. This man was tortured to death just like countless others.

G. Brutality by security forces:

Still on that 30th of April 2018, two boys (Honore and Elvis) were arrested by the gendarmes at their residence in Vebarong, a Quarter in Kumbo, at about 2 AM the next morning and taken to Kumbo. Their houses were searched, doors broken and a motorbike taken away by the forces of law and order. At the gendarmerie, the boys were tortured and rendered weak as they sustained severe wounds. There are countless arbitrary arrests and extortion of money from civilians by the forces of law and order. Last week a video emerged allegedly filmed by soldiers themselves of two teenage girls made to swim in mud while the soldiers mocked.

Cameroon authorities have called the restoration forces terrorists. But if you look up the definition of terrorist, you will see the Cameroon military really fits that definition because they are terrorizing the population.

Through this crisis, Anglophones have been confronted with the stark realization that they are indeed second class citizens in Cameroon. The President has not addressed the problem at all except to declare war. Even when opposition parliamentarians staged a strike to discuss the issue in parliament, the Biya controlled parliament refused any discussion on the crisis. The matter has been discussed in other countries' parliaments, but not in Cameroon. The message is clear: Anglophones have no voice and are treated as a conquered people.

6. Obstacles to Resolution

The obstacles to resolution of this crisis are many:

- Rejection of dialogue and negotiations by President Paul Biya
- The use of military force

- Refusal to face the root causes of the Anglophone crisis and denial of its existence by the Biya government
- The fact that the international community, even though aware of the atrocities and crimes against humanity, has looked away
- The government use of anti-terrorism law for political purposes
- About a thousand Anglophone activists have been jailed by the government using the anti-terrorism law.

Without any form of pressure from the international community, these atrocities will continue and genocide is inevitable!

7. Role of the Church

Since the beginning of the problem, both the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), The Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), The Full Gospel Mission and the Apostolic Church have prayed. The PCC, CBC and the Catholic churches have raised money in their churches to support the refugees and the hundreds of Anglophones imprisoned because of the crisis. The churches have made calls for dialogue and expressed their willingness to mediate. But the government party has ignored those calls entirely. The church leaders have made several attempts to meet with the President over the crisis to no avail. The churches have condemned the killings and called for the demilitarization of the Anglophone regions.

When the crisis started even church schools were disrupted. Some church schools were also burned. All the churches called for prayers and dialogue as a way out of the crisis. Their calls fell on deaf ears and the government paid no attention to them. The Catholic Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province that covers the Anglophone regions, presented a memorandum to the President. The memorandum was an elaborate presentation of the Anglophone problem, its origins and impact on the Anglophone community. The church called for respect of human dignity, justice for all and constructive dialogue that addressed the root causes of the crisis as a way out of the crisis. The Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon also put out a document outlining the history and root causes of the problem. They called for dialogue but have been ignored by the government. Instead, a lawsuit was filed against the denomination leaders of the Anglophone regions by a certain consortium of parents wide seen as a way to intimidate the church leaders. After several months of hearings and adjournments, the case was finally dropped.

I have recently met with various denominational leaders in the country including Cardinal Christian Tumi, The President of the Council of Protestant Churches/PCC Moderator Rev. Fonki, the President of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Rev. Ncham and Arch Bishop Kleda, President of the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church, to find out where they see the role of the church in resolving the crisis. They were clear that the church has made clear its position as to the outcome of the crisis. Both sides need to sit on the same table and come to an agreement of the way forward. As to the role of the church in mediating the conflict, no one has approached the church and the church cannot force itself to be a mediator if they have not been invited. But the church will continue to seek to meet with President Paul Biya. The bottom line is that a third party needs to oversee the process of mediation, and discussions must take place on neutral grounds.

Cameroon needs general political sanitation; there is urgent need for political overhaul. The Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) has started a process of training and preparing pastors and other leaders in a trauma healing program to assist the people. There is a huge humanitarian crisis going on if nothing is done! It may get worse especially as the people, who are subsistence agriculturalists) have not worked in their fields to prepare a harvest.

8. Recommendations for United States

I urge the United States to communicate to President Biya that continuing US assistance in his military struggle against Boko Haram terrorists in northern Cameroon is dependent upon his complete withdrawal of Cameroon troops from the Anglophone regions. President Biya must immediately redeploy his troops to northern Cameroon to aid in fighting Boko Haram.

Extrajudicial killings, burning down entire villages, shooting unarmed civilians and forced disappearances in South West and North West Regions must be investigated. We urge for an international commission of inquiry to fully investigate these crimes against humanity and bring perpetrators to justice.

Let the United States call for international mediation to resolve the root causes of this territorial dispute and prevent further atrocities and genocide. All those arrested in connection with the crisis must be released.

Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples
Adopted by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960

The General Assembly,

Mindful of the determination proclaimed by the peoples of the world in the Charter of the United Nations to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, Conscious of the need for the creation of conditions of stability and well-being and peaceful and friendly relations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of all peoples, and of universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Recognizing the passionate yearning for freedom in all dependent peoples and the decisive role of such peoples in the attainment of their independence,

Aware of the increasing conflicts resulting from the denial of or impediments in the way of the freedom of such peoples, which constitute a serious threat to world peace, Considering the important role of the United Nations in assisting the movement for independence in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories,

Recognizing that the peoples of the world ardently desire the end of colonialism in all its manifestations,

Convinced that the continued existence of colonialism prevents the development of international economic co-operation, impedes the social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples and militates against the United Nations ideal of universal peace,

Affirming that peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law,

Believing that the process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible and that, in order to avoid serious crises, an end must be put to colonialism and all practices of segregation and discrimination associated therewith,

Welcoming the emergence in recent years of a large number of dependent territories into freedom and independence, and recognizing the increasingly powerful trends towards freedom in such territories which have not yet attained independence,

Convinced that all peoples have an inalienable right to complete freedom, the exercise of their sovereignty and the integrity of their national territory,

Solemnly proclaims the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations;

And to this end Declares that:

1. The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.
2. All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
3. Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.
4. All armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to exercise peacefully and freely their right to complete independence, and the integrity of their national territory shall be respected.

5. Immediate steps shall be taken, in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.
6. Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
7. All States shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the present Declaration on the basis of equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of all States, and respect for the sovereign rights of all peoples and their territorial integrity.

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Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Thank you very much for that testimony and for those insights.

Mr. Akwei.

STATEMENT OF MR. ADOTEI AKWEI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ADVOCACY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UNITED STATES

Mr. AKWEI. Thank you, Chairman Smith. I would like to, again, express our appreciation over your consistent leadership and also that of Representative Bass for your continued focus on Africa, human rights issues, and U.S. foreign policy.

We have written testimony, and we would ask that that be submitted into the record.

Mr. SMITH. Without objection, yours and the other witnesses' longer versions will be made a part of the record.

Mr. AKWEI. The luck of going last means that quite a few things have been covered. And my colleagues have been fairly thorough. So I am going to bear down on a couple of core issues.

I think the first, our recommendations, because there is an urgency here about this crisis in Cameroon. I do believe, and we believe that the crisis is worsening, and that with the October elections coming up the time for urgent leadership by the Trump administration and by the international community, and people who wish the best for Cameroon, the time to act is now.

In particular, we believe that the Biya government has to be pressed to launch independent, impartial, and thorough investigations into all the allegations of crimes under international law and human rights abuses and violations, either in the Far North, whether they are perpetrated by the security forces or by Boko Haram, as well as the violations committed by the security forces and acts of violence in the Anglophone regions by the security forces and by the armed separatist groups.

We feel that the government must also be pressed to take necessary measures to prevent excessive and unnecessary use of force, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances, and inhumane prison conditions.

They must also cease the arbitrary detention of the alleged members of Boko Haram.

We also call on the international community and the United States to press the Cameroonian Government to protect the rights of all of the people living in Cameroon, as guaranteed by the Cameroonian constitution and Cameroon's international human rights obligations. This includes releasing human rights defenders, civil society activists, political prisoners, journalists, trade unions, teachers who have been arbitrarily arrested or detained without charges.

And a point I think that was made by one of my colleagues was allowing unrestricted access for U.N. rapporteurs and experts from human rights organizations throughout the country to conduct a needs assessment and investigate the abuses.

We would also urge Congress and the international community to really look at the humanitarian needs that have been created, not only by the crisis in the Far North, but also in the Northwest and Southwest Anglophone regions.

The human rights situation in Cameroon is alarming and it is worsening. The government of President Biya has to date shown little inclination or political will to effectively address the crisis. It is time for the friends of Cameroon and bodies like Congress to strengthen their cause and demand credible reforms with clear benchmarks, some of which I have already outlined.

This is, of course, even more urgent with Cameroon scheduled to hold elections in October. And with a Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North and violence in major parts of the country, it is hard and dangerous to see how elections are going to be proceeding that are going to be free and fair.

I would very much like to turn my attention to the abuses around the Boko Haram insurgency. As you all know, Boko Haram has been trying to create a caliphate in the Lake Chad Basin and impose Sharia law, as well as end all forms of Western education. The group's attacks have killed more than 20,000 people regionally, and displaced 2.7 million. Amnesty International has recorded over 350 Boko Haram related incidents in the Far North, including 76 suicide bombings which have led to the loss of hundreds of lives and dozens, the destruction of dozens of properties. Over 240,000 people have been internally displaced.

We believe Boko Haram has committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, including abductions, recruitment of child soldiers, summary executions, and suicide bombings. Unfortunately, there are also ongoing violations perpetrated by the Cameroonian security forces, including use of unlawful killings, extrajudicial execution, systematic torture, use of excessive force, all of which have impacted the very people that they are mandated to protect.

The Cameroonian security forces, including the Rapid Intervention Battalion and the General Directorate of External Research, have arbitrarily accused hundreds of people of supporting Boko Haram and subjected them to torture and incommunicado detention. Amnesty documented over 100 cases of secret detention and torture between 2013 and mid-2017 at over 20 different sites, mainly illegal detention facilities such as military bases, as well as facilities belonging to the Cameroonian Secret Services in Yaounde.

Despite these reports of torture, the Biya government has yet to acknowledge or investigate those allegations and put people to justice. Although the military's response to Boko Haram's tactics have been vociferously defended by the government, there is growing concern that systematic and widespread violations by the security forces may feed radicalization, leading some to join the armed group, as well as contributing to fear and the distrust of the military.

These reports were alarming enough for AFRICOM to launch an investigation into whether U.S. troops knew about the instances of torture, in particular, at a base known as Salak. The results of the investigation have yet to be released publicly. And Congress must press for those reports to be released, not only to find out if any U.S. military personnel were aware of the torture, but also to convey to the Cameroonian authorities how seriously the United States takes this issue.

In addition to those crimes, the Cameroonian security forces have also used very similar tactics in the Anglophone regions of the

country. The Anglophone minority grievances include political and economic marginalization, and the francization of the law and education system. Let me be clear that the current crackdown follows years of an already poor human rights environment that featured arbitrary arrests, detentions, and beatings. The government has historically used force to silence dissent through Biya's term in office. However, during the last 12 months, in response to the protests and demonstrations, the level of oppression has increased dramatically.

Since October 2016, protests and strikes related to the demands from the Anglophone minority have been met with harassments, threats, arbitrary arrests, and use of excessive force. At least 20 protestors were shot by security forces in the Anglophone regions between September 22 and October 1 of 2017, and more than 500 people were arbitrarily arrested and packed like sardines in overcrowded detention centers.

Others, wounded in the protests, were forced to flee to hospitals where they sought lifesaving treatments or out of fear of arrest or being killed. Hundreds, including human rights defenders, journalists, and activists fled their homes, becoming internally displaced or seeking refuge in Nigeria. The heavy-handed response by the security forces to the initially largely peaceful protests contributed to the emergence of more radical, violent groups who have attacked Cameroonian security forces, state symbols, and have perpetrated attacks against the general population. We believe that at least 42 schools were attacked between May 2017 and May 2018.

Cameroonian separatists have also killed over 80 members of the security forces in the North and Southwest. The escalation of violence by armed separatists at the end of 2017 coincided with the militarization of the Anglophone regions, including the creation of a new military region with its headquarters in Bamenda, and the military's launch of a large-scale operation in the Northwest and Southwest regions.

The Cameroonian security forces have razed numerous villages. Amnesty International documented the destruction of the village of Kwakwa and Azi, both of which were corroborated by satellite imagery, and showed the burning and looting of the homes by the Cameroonian soldiers.

Local civil society organizations have reported that over 70 villages have been burned by the Cameroonian army. We have not been able to confirm or deny those numbers. And until access to the region is established it will be impossible to confirm those numbers.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, Cameroon is in crisis. The Biya regime appears to believe that it can weather an insurgency while also trying to crush protests by the increasingly frustrated members of the Anglophone population. The United States, Africa, and international community cannot afford to make that gamble, and the people of Cameroon deserve better.

The common factor in both these crises are the security forces and the Cameroonian Government. Cameroon security forces have a long track record of abusive conduct. We have documented numerous cases in both the Far North as well as in the Anglophone regions. The Anglophone, the violence in the Anglophone regions is

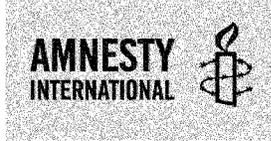
also escalating. Dozens of attacks have been perpetrated by armed separatists. And in the last 2 months the Cameroonian army has continued its brutal crackdown.

It also appears that the violence may enter a new phase of greater brutality with urban battles and the use of heavy weapons by the army, as well as more sophisticated weapons by the separatists. Failing to end the culture of impunity will leave the country stuck on a path where at best it risks losing the support of the Cameroon people in the Far North, at worst helping Boko Haram, and in the South, eliminating or marginalizing moderate voices while leaving larger parts of the country destabilized and in need of humanitarian assistance and political stability.

We urgently call for Congress to put the pressure on the Trump administration to act and to push the friends of the country of Cameroon to also act.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Akwei follows:]



CAMEROON:
ANOTHER YEAR OF DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS
Testimony from Amnesty International USA
Before the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights
and International Organizations
by Adotei Akwei
June 27, 2018

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass and other members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of Amnesty International USA I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Committee. Your consistent leadership on issues related to Africa, human rights and US Africa policy has been and continues to be essential and is greatly appreciated by Amnesty International USA and its members.

Amnesty International is a global human rights movement established in 1961 with 7 million members and supporters. We have a presence in 70 countries and have offices in Dakar, Nairobi, Johannesburg and Abuja.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking member Bass the human rights situation in Cameroon is alarming, it is worsening, and the government of President Paul Biya--who has been in power for over 30 years-- has to date, shown little inclination or political will to effectively address the crisis. While briefings like this one shine a critical spotlight on the issue, it is time for friends of Cameroon and bodies like the US Congress to strengthen their calls for the government to initiate genuine, credible reform with clear bench marks to improve the livelihoods of Cameroonians, and the stability of the region and the global community. This is even more urgent with Cameroon scheduled to hold elections in October and the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North and massive violence and unrest in the North and South West regions of the country. I know that the members of this Committee fully appreciate the difficulties of creating conditions for free and fair election at any given moment. Trying to do so with conflict and violence on two different fronts at the same time,

should give pause to all the friends of Cameroon and spur us to pressing for genuine reforms now.

3. Key human rights concerns in the last 12 months

a) Conflict between the Cameroonian security forces and Boko Haram

For the last four years, Cameroon has been in conflict with the armed group Boko Haram. The group's attacks have killed more than 20,000¹ people and displaced 2.7 million during the group's eight-year fight to carve out an Islamic caliphate in the Lake Chad region. In the last two years, from January 2016 to date, Amnesty International has recorded over 350 Boko Haram's-related incidents in the Far North region of Cameroon, including 76 suicide bombings – which led to the loss of hundreds of lives and the widespread destruction of private and public property. Because of the conflict, over 240,000 people have been internally displaced between 2014 – 2017 in the Far North region of Cameroon².

Amnesty International believes that Boko Haram has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in addition to abductions, recruitment of child soldiers, summary executions, including suicide bombings in civilian areas, looting, destruction of public and private property, forced recruitment and kidnapping of men, women, boys and girls.

b) The Government's counter insurgency

The list of atrocities committed by Boko Haram is as horrific as it is extensive³. Unfortunately, there are also ongoing human rights violations perpetrated by the Cameroonian security forces including reports of unlawful killings, extra-judicial executions, systematic torture and use of excessive force, all of which hurt the very

¹ Suspected Boko Haram fighters kill 11 in Cameroon, Al-Jazeera, August 25, 2017

² <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/06.21.18%20-%20USAID-DCHA%20Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Complex%20Emergency%20Fact%20Sheet%20%2317.pdf>

SECRET TORTURE CHAMBERS IN CAMEROON, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, JULY 11, 2017

people security forces are meant to protect. The Cameroonian security forces have arbitrarily accused hundreds of people of supporting Boko Haram and subjected them to arbitrary and incommunicado detention and torture⁴ which were documented by Amnesty International, in its reports “Cameroon’s Secret Torture Chambers”⁵, “Right Cause, Wrong Means”⁶, and Human Rights Under Fire”⁷.

Most of the victims were Muslim, Cameroonian men from the Kanuri ethnic group between the ages of 18 and 45 from the Far North region⁸. Amnesty documented over 100 cases of secret detention and torture between late 2013 – and mid-2017, at over 20 different sites (mainly illegal detention facilities, such as military bases, in the Far North Region, but also in facilities belonging to the Cameroonian secret services in Yaounde). Though the majority of victims are men, women and children have also been subjected to incommunicado detention and torture. Despite these reports of torture, the Biya government has yet to initiate investigations of those possibly involved in torture and other human rights violations.⁹ In addition to the possible involvement of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR)—Cameroon’s army elite unit—and the General Directorate of External Research (DGRE) in the reported incidents of incommunicado detention, torture and death in custody, the government has also enforced a ban on full-faced veils, periodically shut down its borders, shut down the internet and placed restrictions on movements of vehicles and people. Although the military’s response to Boko Haram’s tactics has been vociferously defended, there is growing concern that systematic and widespread human rights¹⁰ violations by the security forces may have fed radicalization, leading some to join

⁴ Cameroon: Amnesty report reveals war crimes in fight against Boko Haram, including horrific use of torture, Amnesty International, July 20, 2017

⁵ CAMEROON’S SECRET TORTURE CHAMBERS: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND WAR CRIMES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BOKO HARAM, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL,

⁶ Right Cause, Wrong Means, Amnesty International, July 13, 2016

⁷ Human Rights Under Fire, Amnesty International, September 26, 2015

SECRET TORTURE CHAMBERS IN CAMEROON

⁸ Cameroon: Amnesty report reveals war crimes in fight against Boko Haram, including horrific use of torture

¹⁰ Cameroon: Amnesty report reveals war crimes in fight against Boko Haram, including horrific use of torture

the armed group, as well as contributing to fear and distrust of the military among local communities.

The reports were alarming enough that the United States African Military Command (AFRICOM), launched an investigation into the possible knowledge of acts of torture being committed by the Cameroonian forces by U.S. military personnel that were located at the Cameroonian bases -especially the one near Maroua known as Salak- where routine torture took place and was documented by Amnesty International. The results of the investigation have yet to be publicly released, and Congress must press for that to be rectified. The report must be publicly released, not only to find out if any US military personnel were aware of the torture, but also to convey to the Cameroonian authorities how seriously the United States takes this issue. The UN Committee against Torture also echoed Amnesty's concerns and called on the Cameroonian government to put an end to the widespread use of torture by security forces fighting Boko Haram¹¹.

c) Restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly

In addition to the crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by the Cameroonian security forces in the counter insurgency against Boko Haram, since late 2016 Cameroon has also been roiled by protests, especially by the Anglophone community and activists, and the government has pursued a brutal crackdown on top of an already poor human rights environment. The government continued to try to silence journalists, human rights defenders, including civil society activists, trade unionists, lawyers, teachers and students. These human rights violations have been consistent throughout Biya's term in office but during the last 12 months the level of repression worsened dramatically.

¹¹ UN Committee tells Cameroon to put an end to torture by security forces in the fight against Boko Haram, Amnesty International December 6, 2017

Since October 2016, protests and strikes related to the demands made by the Anglophone minority have been met with harassment¹², threats, arbitrary arrests, and use of excessive and unnecessary force by security forces.

At least 10 peaceful protestors were killed by the security forces between October 2016 and February 2017¹³, with anglophone activist groups using civil disobedience tactics, including school boycotts and “ghost town” protests.

At least 20 protesters were shot by security forces in the Anglophone regions between September 22nd and October 1st of 2017¹⁴ and more than 500 people were arbitrarily arrested and packed like sardines in overcrowded detention centers.¹⁵ Others wounded in the protests were forced to flee hospitals where they sought life-saving treatment out of fear of arrest or killing. Hundreds were arrested, and thousands fled their homes, becoming internally displaced or refugees in Nigeria

The Anglophone minority have claimed political and economic marginalization and have protested for decades over the lack of opportunity, resources, and political representation. The Anglophone community are also critical of having the French language and legal standards forced on them, as well as the “francophonization” of Common Law and the educational system.

The initial, largely peaceful, protests were met with fierce and sustained repression from the Cameroonian authorities and security forces leading to the arrest of hundreds of people, including human rights defenders, journalists and activists, the banning of civil society organizations, the suspension of the internet and the cutting of cut phone lines for several months in late 2016 and 2017.

¹² Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads, International Crisis Group, August 2, 2017

¹³ Cameroon’s Worsening Anglophone Crisis Calls for Strong Measures, International Crisis Group, October 19, 2017

¹⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2017/10/cameroon-worrying-reports-of-deaths-in-protests-in-the-anglophone-regions/>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/10/cameroon-inmates-packed-like-sardines-in-overcrowded-prisons-following-anglophone-protests/>;

¹⁵ Amnesty International believes that these numbers might be very underestimated

The heavy-handed response by the security forces contributed to the emergence of more radical, violent groups, calling for secession and embracing the armed struggle. They began to attack the Cameroonian security forces and state emblems, and perpetrated violent acts that also impacted the general population.

According to government sources, armed separatists have killed over 80 members of the security forces since last year, in both the North West and South West regions¹⁶.

Ordinary citizens have been targeted as well: teachers and students accused of not participating in the boycott have been physically assaulted, and Amnesty International said that at least 42 schools have been attacked by armed separatists from February 2017 to May 2018 in both the North West and South West regions.¹⁷

The escalation of this violence by the armed separatists by the end of 2017 coincided with the militarization of the Anglophone regions, the creation of a new 5th military region with its headquarter in Bamenda, and the military's launch of large-scale security operations in parts of North West and South West regions. On December 1, 2017, for example, the Senior Divisional Officer of Manyu Division, South West region, issued a communiqué ordering people living in 15 villages of the area to "relocate to safer neighborhoods of their choice in the hours that follow, failure of which they will be treated as accomplices or perpetrators of ongoing criminal occurrences registered on security and defense forces". Before this communiqué was withdrawn the following day, residents of the cited villages had already fled. When the security forces entered some of these villages, they used excessive force to locate and arrest those who had stayed behind.

¹⁶ SEPARATISTS HAVE KILLED 84 TROOPS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2017: CAMEROON, EYEWITNESS NEWS, JUNE 21, 2018

¹⁷ A Turn for the Worse: Violence and Human Rights Violations in Anglophone Cameroon, Amnesty International, June 11, 2018

The Cameroonian security forces have also razed numerous villages¹⁸. Amnesty International documented the destruction of Kwakwa in January 2018 and Azi in April 2018 both of which were corroborated using satellite imagery used in the report. Satellite images and photographic evidence obtained by Amnesty International show the complete destruction of the village of Kwakwa, in the South West region, which was burnt to the ground by Cameroonian security forces during an operation conducted in December 2017 in connection with the killing of two gendarmes by suspected armed separatists. AI documented the destruction of Azi, in the South west, based on 5 videos that became public on April 30th and that showed the burning and looting of homes by Cameroonian soldiers in Azi. Amnesty was able to geo-locate videos and verify the incident in the video through satellite imagery. Local civil society organizations have reported that over 70 villages have been burnt by the Cameroonian army. We have not been able to confirm or deny these allegations until the regions

d) Arbitrary Detention:

The Biya government has also banned political parties, canceled hearings that critiqued or opposed government policies, revoked permits for demonstrations, and arbitrarily arrested people. Arrests have been made for peaceful protests where the detained were held in isolation, charged under the heavily flawed 2014 anti-terrorism law, without formal charges.

For example, in October 2017, a military court of law condemned [Aboubakar Siddiki](#)¹⁹, a critic of President Biya and the head of the small Cameroon's Patriotic Salvation Movement, of attempting to incite a revolution, and sentenced him to 25 years in prison after a deeply unfair trial.

¹⁸ Burning Cameroon: Images you're not meant to see, BBC News, June 25, 2018

¹⁹ Cameroon, Freedom in the World 2018, Freedom House, January 16, 2018

Another case that Amnesty has been working is that of Fomusoh Ivo Feh²⁰ a college student was arrested in December 2014 and sentenced to 10 years in prison for forwarding a private joke via text message about Boko Haram. Fomusoh, Afuh Nivelle Nfor and Azah Levis Gob were kept in shackles for four months while their hearing was delayed seven months.²¹ The three students were found guilty of ‘non-denunciation of terrorism-related information’ on November 2, 2016.

The human rights concerns that my fellow panelists and I are sharing today are echoed by the US Department of State in its 2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for Cameroon. In that report the State department highlighted “Arbitrary Deprivation of Life, Disappearance, Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Prison and Detention Center Conditions, Arbitrary Arrest or Detention, Denial of Fair Public Trial, Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence, Freedom of Religion, Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association, and Freedom of Expression, including for the Press.”²²

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, Cameroon is in crisis and the Biya regime appears to believe that it can weather Boko Haram’s insurgency while trying to crush protests driven by the increasing anger and frustration of the anglophone speaking population. The United States, Africa and the international community cannot afford to make that gamble, and the people of Cameroon deserve better.

The common factor in both the crises are the security forces and the Cameroonian government. Cameroon’s security forces have a long track record of abusive

²⁰ Cameroon: Thousands worldwide demand release of students jailed for sharing Boko Haram joke, Amnesty International May 23, 2017

²¹ Cameroon: Thousands worldwide demand release of students jailed for sharing Boko Haram joke

²² Cameroon Country Report, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, United States Department of State

conduct, both in the Far North and in the Anglophone regions. We have documented numerous cases in the Far North where the security forces have arbitrarily killed, or arrested civilians suspected of supporting Boko Haram, and made widespread use of incommunicado detention and torture. The impunity with which such acts were committed in the Far North region, may have been a significant contributing factor to the commission of similar violations in the Anglophone regions.

Members of the subcommittee, the violence in the Anglophone regions is escalating. Dozens of attacks have been perpetrated by the armed separatists in the last 2 months and the army has responded brutally. Dozens have been killed. It also appears that the violence will enter a new phase of greater brutality with urban battles and the use of heavy weapons by the army and more sophisticated weapons by the armed separatists.

Failing to end the culture of impunity will leave the country stuck on a path where it is at best at risk of losing the support of the Cameroonian people in the Far North, at worst helping Boko Haram recruit members, and in the South eliminating or marginalizing moderate voices while leaving larger swathes of the country destabilized and in need of humanitarian assistance and political instability.

Recommendations

The United States and the friends of the country must work together to press the Biya government to enact meaningful, measurable reforms including:

- Launching independent, impartial, thorough investigations into all allegations of crimes under international law and human rights violations committed in the Far North by the security forces and into the abuses perpetrated by Boko Haram, as well as into the human rights violations committed by the security forces and the acts of violence perpetrated by the armed separatists in the Anglophone regions.

- Taking the necessary measures to prevent excessive and unnecessary use of force, arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances, and inhumane prison conditions.

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- Respecting and protecting the human rights of all people living in Cameroon as guaranteed by Cameroonian Constitution and Cameroon's international human rights obligations, including releasing Human Rights Defenders, civil society activists, political prisoners, journalists, trade unionists and teachers arbitrarily arrested and / or detained without charges²³
- Allowing unrestricted access for UN Rapporteurs and experts, human rights groups and humanitarian organizations to the country to conduct needs' assessments and investigations.
-
- Strongly condemn the human rights violations committed by the government of Cameroon and its security forces, including against members of the English-speaking minority and against alleged members of Boko Haram, as well as acts of violence by armed separatist groups, and urge the Cameroonian authorities to investigate all the allegations of human rights violations committed in the Far North and in the Anglophone regions and take the necessary measures to prevent arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture, deaths in custody enforced disappearances, and inhumane prison conditions.
- Calling upon the Government of Cameroon to respect and protect the human rights of all people living in Cameroon as guaranteed by Cameroon's international human rights obligations including release Human Rights Defenders, and civil society activists, political prisoners, journalists, trade unionists and teachers arbitrarily arrested and detained without charge.²⁴

²³ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

²⁴ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

- Press the Cameroonian authorities to ensure that the security forces only use force when strictly necessary and only to the minimum extent required under the circumstances. Lethal force should not be used except when strictly unavoidable to protect life, and clear order should be issued to the military, the gendarmes and the police commanders to immediately cease the use of excessive force in the context of cordon and search operations and peaceful demonstrations and ensure security forces comply with international human rights law and standards on the use of force.

- Demand the security forces of Cameroon to cease the arbitrary arrests of alleged Boko Haram supporters, with no set charges and no due process. The Cameroonian security forces must abide by due process and respect the rule of law. All people who are arrested should have proper proof of wrongdoing and should not be in any way deemed arbitrary. The Government of Cameroon must investigate all instances of arbitrary arrests done by their security forces and appropriately enforce the rule of law on its citizens and security forces.

Thank you

Mr. SMITH. Thank you for your—
[Applause.]

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Testimony and for providing very, very sobering and distressing numbers of people are being hurt, killed, displaced, and that growing sense of impunity. So, thank you for that testimony.

I have just a couple of questions and then I will yield to my friend Ms. Bass because your testimonies were very, very thorough. And I know my colleagues appreciate that.

If you could—and I will ask questions—and then take a shot at any parts of it that you would like. Your assessment of the United States during this crisis, both the last administration and this one, my understanding is that we were silent, at least largely silent when the internet went down. Did we not see this coming? Did we try to just stand and look askance, I think as was said in the testimony a moment ago?

And also, if you could speak to what the United Kingdom and France are doing respectively. Obviously their legacies are very, very deep, and sadly have led to much of this chaos.

The U.N. and the African Union and maybe some of the regional partners, countries, are they playing a mitigating role in trying to resolve and bring some positive help? You heard earlier when Ambassador Yamamoto was here that I asked and others asked about what do we mean by “pressing”? What are we really doing in the capital? What are we doing vis-a-vis the President to really push this?

Secondly, Mr. Tembon, you talked about the church in your prepared testimony especially, and that the church can’t really go where it is not invited as a mediator. And I am wondering, if the President won’t invite, is the international community doing that? We know that in D.R. Congo and many other places around the world the church plays an enormous role in trying to bring disparate parties together to provide a venue, an atmosphere where good, positive outcomes can occur. And I am wondering if that would be something you want us to really push—the administration to push to try to get, you know, the various denominations of all the different faiths in the same room making a mediation possible?

And also, finally, on the whole issue of National Commission of Inquiry, would that be a U.N. Human Rights effort? Have they shown an interest in taking that up at the Human Rights Council, for example, or any of the, as was said, the special rapporteurs or any of these other individuals? Or should the AU take this on?

As we have all seen, the AU has really become a dominant force when it comes to peacekeeping. And I remember when that transition occurred from the U.N. to AU—very, very positive. We were all applauding it. Should the AU be taking a lead on this inquiry, or should it be a hybrid of both?

Mr. TEMBON. Thank you so much for the question. I will speak on the various questions that you have raised. What is the U.N. doing? And the U.S.—how do we perceive U.S. commitment into this work?

In December when this was growing I went to personally comment with the U.S. diplomat in Yaounde, who is a friend. And we

talked about it. And we talked about it heart to heart. And I told him what is the international community doing about this situation and are they going to intervene?

He told me the stakeholders for Cameroon had met and decided they should allow Mr. Biya to handle it. I almost fell off my chair. I was shocked.

And I asked him, I said, so the international community agrees with Biya's strategy of repression and killing? That is unfortunate.

And I know because we are a grassroots organization, we know what is going on. I said, you know, these people are ready to die. They have lived under colonization for 56 years and they want it no more. They don't want their children and their grandchildren to experience this. They are ready to die. And we see what is going on today.

And so, the British, when we saw the United Nations, I think Southern Cameroonians feel a deep sense of betrayal from the U.N. because the U.N. could have resolved this. The United National Secretary General was in Cameroon in October when the violence was going on. He condemned it and he called for a dialogue to solve the root causes. But that was all he did. And they have continuously ignored.

There's a journalist at the United Nations who has been talking about this every single day that there is an issue with press freedom even at the U.N. He is not allowed to speak about the issue. And so the U.N. has turned its back on Cameroon.

France plays into that. They are key partners. Because what is going on here is that Southern Cameroon has enormous resources. And so France plays in the back. They have accessed those resources.

Originally what we saw from the British was shocking because it helped me to see how the cycle came back together. At a public meeting in London there was a deal signed for oil in this region with New Age. And New Age is funded by a U.S. hedge fund. And that, I had doubts about that. What is U.S.'s role? What are they playing? Are they interested in resources at the detriment of the lives of thousands of people who are being killed? Some are running in the bushes more or less, and children hiding for their lives, exposed to all kinds of danger.

So, we believe that the United States, especially Congress, can push the government of the United States to play a key role.

The African Union has challenges.

So, we need support. We need an international mediation. If the U.S. can call for that, that will be very helpful to really help us come out of this crisis.

Mr. SMITH. Please continue with your answers. I have a meeting with the majority leader. I am going to have to leave. And my good friend and colleague has such time as she may consume and then to close the hearing.

But if you could, Mr. Akwei, include in your answer if you would, because I did press Ambassador Yamamoto pretty hard on this, about U.S. training. Are any of these troops committing these atrocities that we have trained? Or is it having a positive impact because of that human rights training and that professionalism

that is being conveyed to soldiers that we have trained? If you could add that to it.

And I will read your answers later on when I return. Thank you.

Mr. TEMBON. Yes. You mentioned the role of the church. The church has condemned the violence. The Catholic Church especially wrote a paper helping to express the root crisis of the problem and calling for a dialogue to solve those root crises in those ways. Now, there was a lawsuit against the church to intimidate the church. It was since dropped. And the church has made many attempts.

Last week I met with the various key denominational leaders. I met with Cardinal Tumi, I met with Archbishop Kleda who is the President of the Episcopal Council, I met with the head of the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon to just get an appraisal of where the church is in relation to the crisis. And they said their statements are out there. They couldn't really engage if nobody engaged them. They had to make many attempts to meet with President Biya, but he just ignores them.

Ms. BASS [presiding]. So when you said that you think the United States should call for international mediation, what would that look like in your mind?

Mr. TEMBON. To find a mediator that would look at the root causes. If the United States has a presence in the United Nations and through that if it can call for—

Ms. BASS. So you think the U.S. should raise it through the U.N. as opposed to raising it to President Biya?

Mr. TEMBON. I am not familiar with the strategies at that level, but if they have access, to press Biya. Because I think the U.S. is a key stakeholder with their training Biya's troops. And a few weeks ago they just took planes, warplanes to Biya. And that was a very negative message to Anglophones. And so we realized the U.S. has an influence and they can push Biya to do that.

But also just invite an international mediator. That is where things need to be so that negotiations that include self-determination for the people of Southern Cameroons it will be addressed.

Ms. BASS. So, the chairman asked you a question. He asked whether or not any of the troops that the U.S. trained have been involved in the violence that you described?

Mr. TEMBON. Well, I am not—I don't know. We don't. It is difficult to say which are the troops because Cameroon deploys troops to the northern part of the country. And they take turns. So some have been redeployed. I know people who are deployed in the northern part of the country who worked with the U.S. troops who have also been redeployed to the Anglophone areas.

Ms. BASS. So do—

Mr. TEMBON. And know one who died.

Ms. BASS. Do the other two panelists have an opinion about that? Mr. Hans De Marie?

Mr. HEUNGOU. Yeah. Just a quick word about the issue of the international reply. I would just advise the U.S. to find a common position with the other international partners interactive. Because when you are trying to analyze the way the Government of Cameroon is trying to react vis-a-vis the international pressure, they are trying putting aside the French colonial, the former colonial

power, France, who also has significant powers within the EU. And the European Union take decision collectively.

That means if one of their members is opposing a statement, it is not going to be published or they are going to lower the tone before the statement is given out. So for that reasons Biya doesn't feel enough international pressure because whatever the U.S. is doing, if EU, France, China is tolerating this behavior, he can survive. So there is a need of a talk at the capital level, not just from the Embassies in Yaounde.

Ms. BASS. So you are not saying anything about the AU?

Mr. HEUNGOU. The AU is very important definitely. But the question is beyond the legitimacy that the AU has because it is African institution, and that is difficult to just work within the African continent without them, do they have capacity, for examples, to sanction? Do they have real leverages?

If you remove the symbolical aspect of the thing, that they are Africans, do they have real leverages like that can pressure Biya government? No.

So, they are much more important when it comes to let us say legitimize or having a kind of saying Africans are part of the international community. But those who really play directly in terms of influence on how Cameroon works is the EU, France, U.S., China. And these are people that the U.S. should try to convince at the capital level and leave it off. Because even if you go further, it can bring some result, but you do not reach the expectation that you have if you don't go side by side with other international partners.

Ms. BASS. Okay. Mr. Akwei?

Mr. AKWEI. I think I would agree with what Hans just said about the need for a collective and unified approach. And that is clearly what the Biya administration has been banking on and using.

I think the question about the training is the critical one. And as you know, the counterinsurgency and the antiterrorism work against violent extremist groups has been almost like the unspoken priority for U.S. foreign policy. And I think that that has shaped the approach in Cameroon and has basically muted all of the other voices of the U.S. Government in expressing concerns about problems.

The training, it was interesting that AFRICOM did initiate an investigation, but only about what AFRICOM and the U.S. military knew, not about whether their partner, their students had done anything. A major gap in accountability.

The investigation, when are we going to get this report published so that we can actually ascertain what they knew, what they didn't know and then, of course, what do we do with the Cameroonian accountability part of it?

I believe that human rights training is incredibly important for all militaries. And you need a professional military. No one—you can't dispute that. But continue to train people and then not having consequences and accountability when they break the rules that you try to teach them seems to me to be a futile exercise.

Ms. BASS. So, could you speak to the separatist movement? Because I think that there—I mean, I think you all have made a distinction between the separatist movement versus folks that are just fighting for a more democratic Cameroon?

Hold on 1 second.

All right, go ahead.

Mr. TEMBON. Yes. What is going on is a movement of a whole people fighting against colonization. They are fighting for the decolonization of Southern Cameroons because that territory was recolonized in 1972. When the Federation was abolished, they set up Southern Cameroons. West Cameroon was abolished, yes. Institutions, state institutions were all abolished and then governed, divided into two, governors sent in, and then the local administrators.

So these people don't, they are not accountable to the local population. They are accountable to the central government.

And then in 1984 when Paul Biya changed the name to the name they had at independence before the union, to Southern Cameroons it was secession. So they are only, they are calling those fighting now in Southern Cameroons secessionists because Paul Biya did secede in 1984, but recolonized Southern Cameroons and has treated the people that way.

And so the people have arms. They are fighting. And it is scary what is going on because they believe they want freedom, and they are ready to die for that freedom. And they have been hurting the military as well.

The Cameroon military is on the back road right now in some of the areas. The local soldiers fighting have taken some areas. And they have actually been treating the local population better than the military. They have provided food. I have seen videos of them providing food. Some of our colleagues were in the Southwest recently and they shared with me how they were treated by these people.

So they are taking territory and it is creating a very serious problem. And if it is not, if there is no mediation, the whole country is going to be in chaos.

Ms. BASS. Okay. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of the witnesses for your time. And I am sorry that we had an interruption for us to go to vote. But obviously this will not be the last time we visit this issue.

And I appreciate your input. And any other recommendations that you might have you could certainly forward to the office of the chair or my office. Thank you very much.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:45 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

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**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ), Chairman**

June 22, 2018

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

DATE: Wednesday, June 27, 2018

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: Crisis in the Republic of Cameroon

WITNESSES: Panel I
The Honorable Donald Y. Yamamoto
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Panel II
Mr. Hans De Marie Heungoup
Senior Analyst
Central Africa
International Crisis Group

Mr. Efi Tembon
Executive Director
Cameroonian Association for Bible Translation and Literacy

Mr. Adotci Akwei
Deputy Director
Advocacy and Government Relations
Amnesty International United States

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations HEARING

Day Wednesday Date June 27, 2018 Room 2172

Starting Time 2:30pm Ending Time 4:45pm

Recesses 1 (3:33pm to 4:08pm) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Smith

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [x]
Executive (closed) Session []
Televised []

Electronically Recorded (taped) []
Stenographic Record [x]

TITLE OF HEARING:

Crisis in the Republic of Cameroon

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ranking Member Bass, Rep. Garrett, Rep. Castro

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

Rep. Walberg*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [x] No []

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

-Rep. Smith: Statement by the Committee to Protect Journalists

-Rep. Smith: Statement by Felix Agbor Nkongho, Founder and Chairman, Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED _____

Subcommittee Staff Associate

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH,
A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AND CHAIRMAN,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTER-
NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



**Statement before the Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations Subcommittee**

United States House of Representatives

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

“Crisis in the Republic of the Cameroon”

June 27, 2018

Submitted by Angela Quintal

Africa Program Coordinator

Committee to Protect Journalists

Thank you to the **Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Subcommittee** and Chairman Rep. Christopher Smith and Ranking Member Rep. Karen Bass, for holding a hearing to bring attention to Cameroon.

Thank you too for the opportunity to provide a written statement on press freedom in Cameroon. The Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent, nonprofit press freedom organization, continues to track media freedom violations in Cameroon and is concerned about the deteriorating conditions for journalists.

The government crackdown on the Cameroonian press deepened in late 2016 and throughout 2017 amid civil disobedience and protests in the two English-speaking regions of the country. Cameroonian authorities arrested journalists, banned news outlets, suspended journalists deemed sympathetic to the protests, shut down the internet in regions experiencing unrest, and prevented outside observers, including CPJ, from accessing the country.

As a result a pervasive culture of censorship, including self-censorship, continues to this day and has undermined citizens’ right to know. With an election set for October 2018, a diverse and vibrant press is key to ensuring a free and fair poll.

In September 2017, CPJ published a special [report](#) titled, “Journalists Not Terrorists: In Cameroon, anti-terror legislation is used to silence critics and suppress dissent.” It documented how Cameroon’s broad anti-terror law, enacted in 2014 to counter the extremist group Boko Haram, was being used to arrest and threaten local journalists who report on the militants. More recently, the law has been used against journalists covering unrest in the country’s English-speaking regions.

Journalists arrested under the act, including Radio France Internationale broadcaster and CPJ [International Press Freedom Award](#) honoree [Ahmed Abba](#), were tried in military tribunals and faced harsh sentences, including a potential death sentence. Abba and others were tortured. Abba was convicted of trumped-up terror charges. His 10-year jail sentence was eventually reduced on appeal to 24 months in prison. He was freed on December 23, 2017, after having served 29 months in jail.

Abba’s arrest was described by veteran Cameroonian journalist Elie Smith “a tool to intimidate other journalists.” It contributed to the lack of independent coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Cameroon’s Far North province, with the government able to “control the narrative,” thereby keeping citizens in the dark about the scale of the problem.

Throughout the world, authoritarian governments often use anti-terror laws to silence critics and suppress dissent. Cameroon is no exception. CPJ is aware of at least six other journalists in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon who were arrested for their journalism and charged with terrorism in 2017. They [included](#) Mofor Ndong of *Voice of the Voiceless* newspaper; the *Guardian Post*’s Amos Fofung; Atia Tilarious Azohnwi of *The Sun*; [Tim Finnian](#), the editor of *Lite Time* newspaper; and [Hans Achomba](#), a freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker. They were detained for several months and released — the majority under an August 2017 presidential decree. [Jean Claude Agborsem](#) of online magazine *Camer Veritas* was detained for 27 days in 2017 before his release on bail; the charges were eventually dropped.

Careers have been destroyed, and some journalists are in dire financial straits. One of the freed journalists has not been able to resuscitate his newspaper for lack of funds. Another journalist fled into exile fearing he too would be re-arrested, while those who returned to work have avoided risk-taking. In the process, Cameroonian citizens have been denied the right to access information from a diversity of sources.

Although there was hope for reform after scores of activists and journalists were freed by presidential decree in August 2017, the situation soon deteriorated. More arrests soon followed, including of journalists. In December 2017, U.S.-Cameroonian academic and columnist Patrice Nganang was [arrested](#) in Yaounde for a column he wrote that was critical of President Paul Biya. He was eventually released days later after an international outcry and was promptly deported.

In March 2018, a news broadcaster, Akumbom Elvis McCarthy, was also arrested. A military tribunal on April 10 ordered that he be remanded in custody for a renewable six-month period while police investigate claims that the journalist aired secessionist propaganda.

CPJ is aware of other journalists and media workers who were released from detention but still face terrorism charges. They have yet to be arraigned in a military court, effectively ensuring that they do not rock the boat and risk prosecution.

At least three other Anglophone journalists--Mancho Bibixy, Thomas Awah Junior, and Tsi Conrad--were convicted of rebellion, secession, and terrorism by a military court this year. CPJ continues to investigate whether their convictions, including on charges of propagating false information, relate to their journalism and not only their activism.

Journalists have also faced prosecution under other laws. Cameroonian journalist Medjo Lewis, the editor of *La D tente Libre*, was arrested by police in February 2017 on criminal defamation charges. He was eventually sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 10 million Central African francs (US\$16,131).

In October 2017, three other journalists who had faced prosecution since 2014 for "non-disclosure of sensitive information in their possession" had their charges altered by a military judge to one of criminal defamation for their "complicity in attempting to insult the president." F lix Cyriaque Ebol  Bola, the sub-editor of the daily *Mutations*; Baba Wam , a journalist and online journalism instructor at the University of Yaound  2; and Rodrigue Tongu , a journalist with Canal 2 Television, were eventually acquitted.

In the face of this onslaught against journalists, Cameroon's domestic press, with a few exceptions, has arguably been cowed. Many journalists are fearful and resort to self-censorship. In countless interviews with CPJ, journalists have spoken of how they resigned themselves to toeing the government line. Instead of covering hard news and current affairs, some have opted for safer topics. Others have resigned or been fired, because their media bosses pander to the government. Many media outlets rely on government advertising to survive or need their operating licenses to be renewed, and cannot afford to alienate or anger the authorities. CPJ was given examples of management interference in editorial decisions, including the vetting of talk show guests. A popular current affairs show was suddenly taken off the air after complaints from the government because of its independent and hard-hitting approach.

Cameroonian authorities have sought to restrict the broadcasting of channels operating outside the country to English-speaking regions. In addition to internet shutdowns last year in these regions, authorities also attempted to target social media users. Social media was described by a senior party leader as "a new form of terrorism ... as dangerous as a missile."

Cameroon's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in early 2017 sent mobile phone users text messages warning that they could spend between six months and two years in prison and be subject to a fine of almost US\$18,000 for sharing information about unrest.

The media regulator, the National Communication Council (NCC), is appointed by the government and loyal to it. Journalists have also accused the NCC of acting beyond its mandate. Its president, Peter Essoka, last year threatened on state TV and radio to suspend or shutdown any media outlet disseminating “seditious” content regarding protests in the Anglophone regions, as well as calls for federalism or secession. He named several independent newspapers, private broadcasters, and community radio stations as culprits. One director of a privately owned radio station told CPJ that management decided to stop broadcasting for a few weeks “as we feared we would be victimized.” The radio station has since stopped discussing socioeconomic issues or anything political for self-preservation.

Journalists reporting for international media outlets on the unrest and prosecutions of Anglophone activists are also affected. A local correspondent for the BBC, for example, was detained last year and charged as an accessory to spreading false information. The threat of prosecution continues to hang over his head to this day, acting as a deterrent.

Journalists who tone down their coverage of sensitive issues to avoid arrest or penalization of their news outlets can find that they are squeezed between factions. The *Guardian Post* newspaper tempered its coverage after the arrest of its bureau chief, [Amos Fofung](#). The newspaper was also accused by the media regulator of fueling the Anglophone crisis and was threatened with closure if it did not immediately stop publishing articles about secession. It chose to heed the warning, resulting in a backlash from some readers, who accused it of supporting the regime. Staff and their families were even threatened on social media, while calls to boycott the newspaper resulted in a drastic drop in sales, a senior newspaper employee told CPJ.

The government repression in Cameroon has worsened since October 2017, with a violent crackdown by security forces, leading to several civilian deaths and destruction of property. Secessionists are waging a bloody armed struggle and there are fears that Cameroon might descend into civil war. Moderate citizens, who used tactics of civil disobedience to protest the marginalization of English-speakers, have been drowned out by their increasingly radicalized compatriots. As a result, support for separatists, including armed groups who want an independent state, has increased. The polarization in Cameroon was reflected in media. Cameroon’s French media barely covered the Anglophone crisis last year. As attitudes harden, there have also been concerns about hate speech. More than 40 Anglophone journalists wrote to the media regulator late last year accusing a local French-speaking journalist of propagating hate speech during his television appearances. The majority of journalists in Cameroon, however, appear to be reporting responsibly.

As the unrest escalates, several journalists have complained to CPJ about increased online harassment and death threats, by government supporters and secessionists, including in the diaspora. Journalists have also raised concerns about physical and digital surveillance. Few are prepared to go on the record, speaking to CPJ on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

The Cameroonian government, through its Communications Minister Tchiroma Bakary, has rebuffed CPJ's attempts to visit Cameroon and to engage the government, journalists, and freedom of expression advocates about creating an environment conducive to media freedom and citizens' right to information. Although the minister initially agreed to our fact-finding mission in April last year, CPJ has not yet received the requisite visas.

There are fears that conditions will deteriorate even further in the run-up to Cameroon's October 2018 elections and that the press will remain caught in the cross-hairs. With President Paul Biya considering postponing the elections and the government opposed to dialogue with its detractors and the secessionists, Cameroonians need credible information, not censorship or propaganda.

It is therefore even more urgent that far-reaching press reforms are undertaken. These reforms should encourage a diversity of independent media voices, strengthen self-regulation of the press, and bolster Cameroonian citizens' right to know. Citizens have the right to receive information and make informed decisions about the challenges facing Cameroon, including whether free and fair elections can be held later this year, amid the escalating violence and President Biya's apparent efforts to prolong his 36-year rule.

CPJ's special report included several recommendations to the government and we repeat our call for these to be implemented urgently:

- Release all jailed journalists and foster an environment conducive to press freedom by revising the country's 2014 anti-terrorism laws to ensure it cannot be used to jail journalists; decriminalizing defamation; and ensuring that security forces respect the confidentiality of journalists' sources
- Ensure Cameroon's anti-terrorism law is in line with international human rights standards and end the use of military courts and the death penalty during the trials of civilians.
- Abolish detention without trial and ensure that arrests and detentions comply with international human rights law.
- Launch an independent investigation into allegations that the intelligence service tortured RFI journalist Ahmed Abba in custody. Investigate claims that journalists detained in the headquarters of the National Gendarmerie in Yaoundé faced ill-treatment and inhumane conditions.

- Order the National Communication Council to cease threatening the economic viability of critical outlets.

- Abolish the National Communication Council and establish a new independent broadcast regulator with narrowly defined powers, along the lines of the Federal Communications Commission in the U.S.

- Allow the media to establish independent self-regulatory bodies without interference from government.

- Ensure that independent and self-regulatory associations, such as the Consortium of Journalism Associations, are able to operate freely and without interference.

- Provide visas to international rights groups, including CPJ, and journalists so that they can investigate and report on conditions in Cameroon.

We also issued the following recommendations to the United States and others in the international community:

- Strongly and unequivocally condemn the ongoing detention of journalists in Cameroon and refute Cameroon's attempts to equate journalism with terrorism.

- Members of the Multinational Joint Task Force must ensure that Cameroon abides by international human rights standards and that any financial and other assistance provided through the mechanism is in line with obligations to ensure respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law as per U.N. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014).

- Ensure that recommendations related to improving press freedom feature prominently in Cameroon's Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights, for its third examination in June 2018 at the U.N. Human Rights Council.



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Crisis in the Republic of Cameroon
Written Statement by Felix Agbor Nkongho
Founder and Chairman, Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa

**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and
International Organizations**

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

June 27, 2018

Good afternoon, Chairman Christopher Smith, Ranking Member Karen Bass and Esteemed Members of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organisations. Thank you for this opportunity to make a statement before you. Thank you as well for highlighting the crisis in Cameroon. The people of Southern Cameroons and all Cameroonians will highly appreciate this hearing on the prolonged crisis.

I am Felix Agbor Nkongho, a human rights lawyer, nonviolent activist and founder of the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRNA). The views I express in this testimony are my own and will represent shared sentiments from Southern Cameroonians and Cameroonians.

Over the last 20 months, Cameroon has been the focus of a nation sliding into civil war in Africa, from what started in November 2016 as legitimate grievances by English-speaking lawyers, teachers, students and civil society over the prolonged marginalisation of Southern Cameroonians but peaceful protests turned deadly when the government military shot at peaceful protesters, wounding many and killing several. In my capacity as leader of the lawyers, teachers and civil society organisations who presented the government with grievances, we equally made ourselves available to dialogue for a quick solution. Unfortunately, during the dialogue process, the government rejected talks over a return to federalism which existed from 1961-1972 which guaranteed bilingualism, biculturalism, bijuralism, equal opportunity for all, and provided constitutional provisions for power sharing, economic independence and freedoms. To the dismay of the national, regional and international community, the Cameroon government began arresting activists and leaders including myself. Internet was shut down for 3 months and all forms of dissent were stifled, forcing hundreds into exile. I was charged before the military court with several counts including terrorism, which carried the death penalty. This sparked

radicalization of the population and reignited the quest for complete independence of the territory, Southern Cameroons. After several months of protests and calls for the release of all detainees, François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) visited the maximum security prison where we had a meeting, after which he called on the government to release leaders and other detainees.

In August 2017, President Paul Biya ordered the release of several detainees including myself but avoided dialogue prompting mass protest in September 2017 with estimated 500,000 people. The government's response was a brutal crackdown which led to a declaration of independence on October 1, 2017. While approximately 900,000 unarmed protesters were celebrating this declaration, government troops shot at thousands with automatic rifles and helicopters, this marked the start of military attacks upon villages, orders for villages to be evacuated, mass exodus of villagers into Nigeria creating 50,000 refugees and 200,000 internally displaced persons today. All of these prompted an armed campaign by civilians to defend their villages and homes, leading to full-blown armed insurgency.

Cameroon has many features of crisis ridden countries, including its hyper centralized government, weak institutions, endemic corruption, regional tensions, political manipulations, rigged elections and a personalized leadership. While Boko Haram remains a threat to stability and security, the Southern Cameroons crisis represents a more deadly and serious armed conflict which could last longer if not solved. Boko Haram has killed 200 soldiers, gendarmes and policemen including 1900 civilians in 4 years but the Southern Cameroons crisis has killed 90 soldiers, gendarmes and policemen including 3000 civilians in 8 months of armed conflict.

A solution to the Southern Cameroons crisis does not represent a solution to the Cameroon problem, likewise a solution to the Cameroon problem does not address and solve the Southern Cameroons crisis.

Background of the Southern Cameroons crisis

The birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961 marked the reunification of two territories that had undergone different colonial experiences since World War I. The erstwhile German Kamerun was partitioned between the French who practiced assimilation and the British with indirect rule. Cameroon is a country in Central Africa often described as Africa in miniature but has come to the spotlight lately due to crisis of identity and cultural assimilation of the minority English-speaking people. The Southern Cameroons problem popularly known as the Anglophone Crisis is as old as the country Cameroon. It is the expression of a poorly managed decolonisation process, that saw two distinct (British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon) people come together to form a country void of any real foundations that could

guarantee coexistence. A country that has only had two presidents since independence in 1961 with the present Head of State spending close to 4 decades in office.

Cameroon holds a strategic position in the gulf of guinea (rich in crude oil and critical for the stability of West and Central Africa) and is also the main link between these two regions of Africa. Marred with extensive corruption, authoritarian rule, absence of any form of civil rights, poor governance and innate nepotism, the call for greater autonomy by Southern Cameroonians (Anglophones) has never been this resounding as it is today. The Southern Cameroonians otherwise called by the central government as Anglophones, have come to realise that, their place in the failed union with the majority French Cameroon has been nothing less than recolonization characterised with systematic marginalisation, discrimination and subhuman treatment.

History of Southern Cameroons

The Southern Cameroons has a surface area of 43,000 sq. km and a current population of about 8 million people. It is thus demographically bigger than at least 60 UN and 18 AU Member States, and spatially bigger than at least 30 UN and 12 AU Member States. The territory was originally British from 1858-1887. It was ceded to Germany and subsequently incorporated into the contiguous German protectorate of Kamerun, which had been acquired earlier in 1884.

Relation with the British

The Southern Cameroons was thus under British rule from 1858 to 1887, and then from 1915 to 1961, a total period of nearly 80 years. That long British connection left an indelible mark on the territory, bequeathing to it an Anglo-Saxon heritage. The territory's official language is English. Its educational, legal, administrative, political, governance and institutional culture and value systems are all English-derived.

Up to 1960, the Southern Cameroons though under international tutelage was administered by Britain as part of her contiguous colonial territory of Nigeria. But its distinct identity and personality, separate from Nigeria, remained unassailable. UN Resolution 224 (III) of 18 November 1948 protected the Trust Territory from annexation by any colonial-minded neighbour. While acknowledging that the Trusteeship Agreement makes allowance for 'administrative union', the Resolution provides that "Such a union must remain strictly administrative in its nature and scope, and its operation must not have the effect of creating any conditions which will obstruct the separate development of the Trust Territory, in the fields of political, economic, social and educational advancement, as a distinct entity."

Self Rule

In 1954 the Southern Cameroons became a self-governing region within Nigeria and gradually asserted its distinct identity and its aspiration to statehood through increased political and institutional autonomy.

In 1958 the British Government stated at the UN that the Southern Cameroons was expected to achieve in 1960 the objectives set forth in Article 76 b of the UN Charter. Since the Southern Cameroons had already attained self-government status four years earlier in 1954, the objective to be attained in 1960 could only have been full independence. General Assembly Resolution 1282 (XIII) of 5 December 1958 took note of the British statement. The people of the Southern Cameroons therefore legitimately expected to be granted full independence in 1960 given that their country had been self-governing since 1954.

Basic self-government institutions were in place: a Government headed by the Premier as Leader of Government business; a bicameral parliament consisting of a House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs; an Official Opposition in parliament; a Judiciary headed by a Chief Justice; a Civil Service; and police force. The system in place was a democratic and accountable dispensation. In 1959 when the term of office of the incumbent Premier came to an end, peaceful free fair and transparent elections were organised. The opposition won and there was an orderly transfer of power to the in-coming Premier. Consistent with the parliamentary system of government the outgoing Premier became Leader of the Opposition in parliament.

On 1st October 1960 the Southern Cameroons was separated from Nigeria. The Southern Cameroons Constitution Order in Council came into force. By 1960 the Southern Cameroons had attained a full measure of self-government. Indeed, from 1 October 1960 up to 30 September 1961 it was a full self-governing territory fully responsible for all its internal affairs, except for defense over which matter, along with foreign affairs, Britain continued to exercise jurisdiction.

History of French Cameroon

On 1st January 1960, the attached territory of French Cameroon, also a class B trust territory, achieved independence from France, though with a chronic ongoing anarchy and terrorism there notwithstanding. The French had decided that 1960 was to be the year of independence for its African colonies.

French Cameroun achieved independence under the name and style of La Republique du Cameroun (Present day name of the country) with Mr. Ahmadou Ahidjo as its President. It was admitted to membership of the United Nations on 20 September 1960. The name 'Republique du Cameroun' is variously translated into English as 'Republic of Cameroon' or sometimes simply as 'Cameroon'.

Plebiscite Recommended by United Nations

On 13 March 1959 the General Assembly adopted Resolution 1350 (XIII) recommending a plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons instead of the granting of independence right away. This was followed by another General Assembly resolution, 1352 (XIV) of 16 October 1959, ordering a plebiscite to be held in the Southern Cameroons “not later than March 1961”. The people of the Southern Cameroons were to pronounce themselves on ‘achieving independence’ by the two dead-end alternatives of ‘joining’ Nigeria or Republic of Cameroon.

Still that same year, some perceptive minds in the Trusteeship Council expressed concerns that after attaining independence on 1 January 1960 Republic of Cameroon could try to annex the Southern Cameroons. The Premier of French Cameroun, Mr. Ahidjo, denied any such intention or the possibility of any such action on the part of independent Republic of Cameroon. At the 849th meeting of the Fourth Committee of the UN, Mr. Ahidjo took the floor and gave the UN the solemn assurance that Republic of Cameroon is not annexationist. He declared: “We are not annexationists. ... If our brothers of the British zone wish to unite with independent Cameroon, we are ready to discuss the matter with them, but we will do so on a footing of equality.” Of course this is the reverse on the field.

The United Nations, on April 21, 1961, voted for the independence of the British Southern Cameroons. According to the United Nations Resolution 1608(XV), the Southern Cameroons had a right to sovereignty. The UN General Assembly session voted an overwhelming 64 votes against 23 and 10 abstentions for independence of the Southern Cameroons to take effect on October, 1961. The United States voted for an independent Southern Cameroons. However, France hoodwinked the British and other state to push for the UN coordinated plebiscite.

Plebiscite Process Set in Motion

On 31 March 1960 the Trusteeship Council adopted Resolution 2013 (XXVI) requesting the UK Government “to take appropriate steps, in consultation with the authorities concerned, to ensure that the people of the Territory are fully informed, before the plebiscite, of the constitutional arrangements that would have to be made, at the appropriate time, for the implementation of the decisions taken at the plebiscite.”

The Secretary of State put forward the following interpretation as consistent with the plebiscite alternative of ‘joining’ Republic of Cameroon: “the Southern Cameroons and the Cameroon Republic would unite in a Federal United Cameroon Republic. The arrangements for the union would be worked out after the plebiscite by a conference consisting of representative delegations

of equal status from the Republic and the Southern Cameroons. The United Nations and the United Kingdom would also be associated with this conference.” Both the Southern Cameroons and Republic du Cameroon agreed to this interpretation

The signed and published Agreement between the Southern Cameroons and Republic of Cameroon provided that in the event of the plebiscite vote going in favour of “achieving independence by joining” Republic of Cameroon, the following would be the broad terms of the ‘joining’:

1. The Southern Cameroons and Republic of Cameroon would unite to create a Federal State to be called the ‘Federal Republic Cameroon’, outside the British Commonwealth and the French Community;
2. The component states of the Federation would be the Southern Cameroons and Republic of Cameroon, legally equal in status;
3. Each federated state would continue to conduct its affairs consistently with its colonially-inherited state-culture, with only a limited number of subject matters conceded to the union government;
4. Nationals of the federated states would enjoy Federal Cameroon nationality;
5. The Federation would have a bicameral Parliament consisting of a Federal Senate and a Federal National Assembly; and
6. Federal laws will only be enacted in such a way that no measures contrary to the interests of one state will be imposed upon it by the majority.

The Agreement also stipulated as follows:

1. Constitutional arrangements would be worked out after the plebiscite by a post-plebiscite conference comprising representative delegations of equal status from the Southern Cameroons and Republic of Cameroon, in association with the United Kingdom Government and the United Nations;
2. The post-plebiscite conference would have as its goal the fixing of time limits and conditions for the transfer of sovereignty powers to an organisation representing the future federation;

3. Those entrusted with the affairs of the united Cameroon would put the would-be federal constitution to the people of the Southern Cameroons and Republic of Cameroon to pronounce themselves on it; and

The phrase “to achieve independence by joining Republic of Cameroon” was therefore clearly understood by all concerned (the UN, the UK Government, the Southern Cameroons Government, and the Republic of Cameroon Government) to mean that the Southern Cameroons would attain independence and then form, on the footing of legal equality, a federal union with Republic of Cameroon under an agreed federal constitution as defined in Resolution 1514(XV).

On 11 February 1961 the UN-supervised limited plebiscite took place in the Southern Cameroons. The vote was a plebiscite on political status to enable the people of the Southern Cameroons progress from full measure of self-government to national independence. The vote went in favour of achieving independence ‘by joining’ Republic of Cameroon rather than Nigeria.

Two months after the plebiscite vote, on 21 April 1961, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 1608 (XV) to give effect to the intention expressed by the people of the Southern Cameroons at the plebiscite. Republic of Cameroon, through its Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Charles Okala, made a protest against the taking of a vote on the independence of the Southern Cameroons and then voted against Resolution 1608. It speaks volumes that the overwhelming UN vote on the independence of the Southern Cameroons did not go down well with Republic of Cameroon.

In Resolution 1608 (XV) the General Assembly:

1. Endorsed the results of the plebiscite that “the people of the Southern Cameroons decided to achieve independence *by joining* the independent Republic of Cameroon”;
2. Considered that “the decision made by them through a democratic process under the supervision of the United Nations should be immediately implemented”;
3. Decided that “the Trusteeship Agreement of 13 December 1946 concerning the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration ... be terminated, in accordance with Article 76 b of the Charter of the United Nations ... with respect to the Southern Cameroons, on 1 October 1961, upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon”; and
4. Invited “the Administering Authority, the Government of the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon to initiate urgent discussions with a view to finalizing before 1

October 1961 the arrangements by which the agreed and declared policies of the parties concerned will be implemented.”

These said 'agreed and declared policies' were not and have never been finalized.

The Present Crisis and the Federal Constitution

Article 1 of the Federal Constitution of 1961 reads

“1.1. With effect from the 1st October 1961, the Federal Republic of Cameroon shall be constituted from the territory of the Republic of Cameroon, hereafter to be styled East Cameroon, and the territory of the Southern Cameroons, formerly under British trusteeship, hereafter to be styled West Cameroon.”

Since 1961 when southern Cameroons decided to join La Republic of Cameroon to form a federation of two equal states, it has been nothing less than a nightmare for Southern Cameroonians. From systematic discrimination, institutional marginalisation, economic exploitations, the identity of the southern Cameroonian in the country has been on a steady and intentional destruction by the majority French Cameroon. The Southern Cameroonian have sought to find out in the most peaceful and civil of ways who he is in Cameroon and the response has always been heavy. Joseph B Ebune (2016) posits in his article on *the dilemma of the federal system in West Cameroon* “If there was one area where federalism was most negatively exercised in West Cameroon, it was in the economic domain. At independence, the economy of East Cameroon was based on entrepreneurship and industrialisation, and between 1967 and 1971, about 20 billion francs were invested in about 700 industrial firms which included food, chemical, textile, aluminium industries, water and electrical power production (Ekali, 2004). In West Cameroon, only 27 industrial firms mainly plants for agricultural products were operational showing that investment in the industrial sector was low (Ebune, 2016).

Immediately after the reunification process was closed on the 1st of October 1961, the then president of Cameroon Immediately launched his process to annex and recolonise Southern Cameroons.

1. He abolished all political parties in Cameroon by 1965 bringing the country to a one party system. At this time, there was no longer any legitimate organisation to carry on the aspirations of the Southern Cameroons
2. The worst and darkest day in the union, was when in March 1972, president Ahidjo declared that there would be a referendum in Cameroon in May of the same year to change the country from a federation into a unitary state.

NOTE: The preceding document has not been printed here in full but may be found at <https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Calendar/ByEvent.aspx?EventID=108492>

