



Plenary sitting

B8-0247/2019

16.4.2019

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on Cameroon
(2019/2691(RSP))

Miguel Urbán Crespo, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Barbara Spinelli, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Tania González Peñas, Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Kostadinka Kuneva, Stelios Kouloglou, Patrick Le Hyaric, Luke Ming Flanagan
on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

B8-0247/2019

**European Parliament resolution on Cameroon
(2019/2691(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Cameroon,
- having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, of 1981,
- having regard to the African Charter of Democracy, Elections and governance, adopted by the African Union in January 2007,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- having regard to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols thereto,
- having regard to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol,
- having regard to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reviews Cameroon's report, 21 February 2019,
- having regard to the statement of the United Nations Independent Experts on "Cameroon: UN experts concerned by crackdown on protests after election", 11 December 2018,
- having regard to the Statement by DROI Chair Panzeri on the situation in Cameroon, 7 March 2019,
- having regard to the Declaration by the High Representative, Federica Mogherini, on the deteriorating political and security situation in Cameroon, 5 March 2019,
- having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas on October 7 presidential elections were held in Cameroon; whereas the elections were marked by suspicions of fraud and the reporting of irregularities, in the absence of international observers; whereas President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982; whereas the government eliminated the limits of the presidential mandate several years ago;

- B. whereas on October 22, the Constitutional Council of Cameroon validated the re-election of Paul Biya with 71.82% of the votes; whereas the Council's decision was impugned by the main leader of the opposition, Maurice Kamto of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC); whereas Kamto states that the results were altered;
- C. whereas Biya swore his seventh term as president on November 6; whereas in response to the alleged irregularities dozens of demonstrations were called and then were repressed by the State forces and hundreds of people were arrested throughout the country; whereas 200 people were arrested after the protests promoted by the MRC on January 26; whereas Maurice Kamto the opposition leader and presidential candidate, and other members of the MRC were arrested on charges of rebellion, hostility to the homeland, incitement to insurrection, crime against the President of the Republic and destruction of buildings and public property, for which they may face the death penalty; whereas some of the detainees are being tried in military courts;
- D. whereas international and regional human rights bodies, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, consider that military courts should not, under any circumstances, have jurisdiction over the civilian population;
- E. whereas on April 5, the Ministry of Territorial Administration banned the demonstrations to be held between April 6 and 13; whereas, since the end of 2016, the government has repeatedly blocked peaceful protests using force, arbitrary arrest and detention of demonstrators;
- F. whereas in 2016, demonstrations and strikes by teachers and lawyers in the Anglophone / South-west and North-West regions were held; whereas they called for the equal use of English in the courts and colleges, a greater voice in the Government and the cessation of the marginalization of the English-speaking minority, which constitutes one fifth of the Cameroonian population; whereas the State forces violently repressed the protests and imprisoned the activists and some detainees were subjected to torture and ill-treatment;
- G. whereas the Anglophone regions unilaterally proclaimed the Republic of Ambazonia on October 1, 2017; whereas the government reacted by deploying the army, which used live ammunition against the demonstrators - to the point of shooting them from helicopters -, in addition to carrying out sacking, fires and violations against the locals; whereas the massacre left at least 40 dead, more than a hundred injured and dozens of people arrested in five days, as well as 20,000 displaced persons; whereas, as a result of the repression, the population increased in favour of the independence;
- H. whereas violence has increased in the Anglophone regions after the October 2018 elections; whereas hate speech in the media has increased; whereas according to national and international NGOs, the State forces have killed dozens of civilians, used force indiscriminately, carried out arbitrary detentions, tortured detainees and attacked hundreds of homes and medical facilities; whereas armed secessionist groups have attacked and kidnapped dozens of people including children, and set fire to and occupied school facilities;

- I. whereas, since October 2017, as a result of the conflict in the Anglophone regions, more than 500 people have died (more than 170 civilians since October 2018), 437,000 have been internally displaced and 30,000 are refugees in Nigeria;
- J. whereas the Bakassi peninsula is part of the South-West region and it's a strategic and very important place for Cameroon because it contains 90% of the country's oil reserves and its waters contain the highest concentration of prawns and fish in the world;
- K. whereas in the Far North region, the armed group Boko Haram continued to commit serious violations of International Humanitarian Law such as: looting, destruction of property and killing and kidnapping of civilians; whereas under the umbrella of the fight against terrorism, the State forces commit human rights violations and crimes under international law such as extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, torture and deaths in custody; whereas under the 2014 Anti-Terrorist Law, death sentences continued to be imposed, in unfair trials held before military courts; whereas, on November, the United Nations estimated that more than 244,000 civilians were displaced from this region;
- L. whereas according to the UN around 4.3 million Cameroonians, mostly women and children, are now in need of urgent assistance and protection; whereas the aggravation of the conflict in South-west and North-West regions, the increase of armed attacks in the far north, and new refugees coming from the Central African Republic, have increased the demand for urgent aid;
- M. whereas the last months have also caused an increase in violence against women; whereas have been documented: arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and detention, including of pregnant women; whereas women and girls are being victims of sexual exploitation; whereas 80% of kids in the South-west and North-West regions, have been out of school for more than two years and dozens of schools have been attacked;
- N. whereas the penal code of Cameroon punishes sexual relations between persons of the same sex with up to five years of imprisonment; whereas the police and gendarmes continue to make arrests and harassment against LGTBIQ people;
- O. whereas impunity in the prosecution for crimes committed by the State forces has protected those responsible for the abuses and encourages these acts to continue to be committed;
- P. whereas the EU has supported the Multinational Joint Task Force - MNJTF for the fight against Boko Haram; whereas the United Kingdom and France provide Cameroon with military training, logistical assistance and delivery of military and security equipment; whereas Members States as Spain and France, supply arms to Cameroon; whereas in February 2018 the EU called for a proportional use of force and accountability for abuses in the Anglophone region;
- Q. whereas the current conflict in the North-West and South-West regions is a direct consequence from the colonial distribution of the territory between Great Britain and France; whereas the country is deeply affected by neo-colonialism and imperialism,

in particular by France and international institutions; whereas Cameroon is an important French political and economic partner; whereas French exports to Cameroon amounted to € 537 million in 2017, and imports from the country € 476 million in 2018;

R. whereas the public demonstrations in several African countries and in the Paris region demanded the disappearance of the CFA Franc, a currency imposed on 14 African countries by France and which, far from promoting cooperation, is in fact a tool of domination of the former colonial power and an obstacle to the development of its member countries;

1. Strongly condemns the multiple attacks on the right of citizens to peaceful assembly and demonstration throughout the Cameroonian territory, as well as attacks on freedom of expression; in this sense demands respect for the right to freedom of expression, assembly, association and expression guaranteed by international norms and United Nations treaties and conventions ratified by Cameroon and refrain from use of force to disperse protests;
2. Calls for the release of all political prisoners and for the end of the repression, arbitrary trials and harassment towards civil society, political parties, and people critical of the outcome of the elections;
3. Reminds that military courts should not, under any circumstances, have jurisdiction over the civilian population; reminds Cameroon of its international obligations under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Commission on Human Rights and People's Rights to uphold the right to a fair trial for all citizens before independent courts of law;
4. Condemns the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators and sponsors of the massive and serious human rights violations; calls for an immediate, independent and impartial investigation into all allegations of use of force against peaceful demonstrators, as well as about the ill-treatment and torture of detainees by the State forces; insists that the results of these investigations be made public and that those responsible appear before an independent and impartial tribunal; stresses that any alleged information obtained as a result of torture and ill-treatment should never be admitted as evidence in a judicial proceeding;
5. Condemns the use of violence against civilians by any party to the conflict or by terrorists or other armed groups, as such acts have led the country into a severe humanitarian crisis, and resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries and displaced more than 500.000 of people; deplors the massacre of women, men and children, the rapes, the extrajudicial executions, the use of torture; urges the Cameroonian authorities to put an end to these acts in accordance with their repeated commitments for many years and stands with the people of Cameroon in their determination to fight all forms of violence in their country;
6. Supports the requests to the UN experts for a review of the 2014 antiterrorism law to

ensure it is not used to restrict fundamental freedoms, such as the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association;

7. Insists on the fact that the fight against terrorism could be efficient only if we address the causes and specifically problems related to inequality, the control of fertile farmland, unemployment and poverty; highlights the fact that the current situation shouldn't be a pretext to restrict human rights and fundamental freedoms or to commit crimes;
8. Suggests to the Cameroonian authorities to comply with all binding international obligations of human rights and humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians in areas of armed conflict;
9. Condemns the Cameroonian State forces for using disproportionate force in its pursuit of Boko Haram and the armed secessionist groups; calls for an independent and transparent investigation for any human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, torture, rapes, children abuses, arbitrary arrests, and extortion-related abuses; considers that actions of this kind cannot be justified as a means to combat the threat posed by Boko Haram or other armed organizations;
10. Considers that the peaceful resolution of conflicts can only take place through respect for human rights, especially the inalienable right of the people to dispose of themselves and their resources; encourage Cameroonian's authorities to address the long-standing grievances of the communities in the North-West and South-West regions and to support and work with civil society organizations and community based groups to introduce platforms for peace-building initiatives that encourage peaceful engagement, dialogue, reconciliation and co-existence amongst all the stakeholders;
11. Believes that only through a constructive and inclusive dialogue that a sustainable solution can be found to the ongoing crisis in the North-West and South-West regions;
12. Calls the Cameroonian's authorities to protect every women in the country, especially in the conflict areas and to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through boosting women and women rights organisations participation in public and political life; calls for a comprehensive EU approach on violence against women and girls with increased efforts and resources to prevent and eliminate all discriminatory practices against women as well as to combat and prosecute all forms of violence including gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations; calls for the development of specific EU actions to strengthen the rights of different groups of women, with a special attention to youth, migrants, women living with HIV, LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities;
13. Calls for all abuses against children's rights to be stopped and for their education not to be interfered with;
14. Urges Cameroonian's Authorities to implement the moratorium on death penalty in view of its abolition;
15. Calls on the UN Human Rights Council to request relevant UN experts to conduct a fact-finding mission on allegations of human rights abuses in Cameroon;

16. Calls on the EU and its Member States to increase their financial support and humanitarian aid to meet the urgent needs of the Cameroonian population, including displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries; calls for EU and its Member States to provide aid in the form of grants and not in the form of loans not to increase the debt burden; deplores the fact that the majority of EU Member States have not achieved the target of 0.7% GNI for official development assistance and that some have even reduced their percentage of development aid;
17. Calls on the EU and its Member States for an immediate suspension of arms transfers to Cameroon in line with the Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP;
18. Urges the EU and its Member States, in particular France, to suspend any cooperation with the Cameroonian State Forces, in particular by sending military advisers, financing and equipment used by State forces responsible for abuses; calls on the EU and its member states to ensure that any support to the Cameroonian authorities does not contribute to or facilitate human rights violations;
19. Stresses the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination without external interference and condemns consequently the neo-colonial attempts of France and other Western powers, not only on the economy of the country but also in the support and maintenance of the political influence;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the African Union, the President, the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Cameroon, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Council and the ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly -EU.