



Plenary sitting

B9-0558/2021

23.11.2021

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 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the Human Rights situation in Cameroon
(2021/2983(RSP))

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Hannah Neumann, Bronis Ropé, Piernicola Pedicini, Ignazio Corrao
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the Human Rights situation in Cameroon
(2021/2983(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolution on Cameroon,
 - having regard the statement of the UN Special Representatives on Children and Armed Conflict, Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Violence Against Children, as well as the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on 21 February 2020;
 - having regard to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights of June 1981,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 1948,
 - having regards to the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement ('Cotonou Agreement'),
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Cameroon faces a number of simultaneous political and security challenges, including threats from Boko Haram in its Far North region, cross-border threats along its eastern border with the Central African Republic and the Lac Chad Basin, and for almost 5 years, an internal armed separatist rebellion in its Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions;
- B. Whereas ethnic tensions have raised in the country since the presidential elections of 2018 where President Biya was re-elected; whereas President Biya has been in power since 1982; whereas the constitution of Cameroon was amended in 2008 to remove term limits;
- C. whereas since Anglophone separatists proclaimed independence in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon in October 2017, armed separatists and Cameroonian security forces have continued to clash, resulting in widespread abuses against the civilian population; whereas the security situation has deteriorated since the beginning of 2021 due to increased fighting between government forces and armed separatist groups;

- D. whereas since the start of the conflict, national security forces have perpetrated extrajudicial killings, destroy properties and subjected individuals with alleged separatist ties to torture and ill-treatment; whereas security forces have also been accused of widespread sexual and gender-based violence;
- E. whereas armed separatists have perpetrated abuses, including kidnapping and killing of civilians with at least 3,500 civilians and hundreds of members of the security forces being killed in the Anglophone regions; whereas separatists have also banned government education and frequently attack schools and teachers, resulting in 80 percent of schools in the two Anglophone regions being closed or destroyed and 700,000 children denied an education;
- F. whereas approximately 30% of health facilities are now unable to operate in the country, with at least 29 reported attacks on facilities in the north-west and south-west regions between January and June 2021; whereas targeted attacks on humanitarian workers have increased over the past year have resulting in restriction in the delivery of vital aid;
- G. whereas in 2020, only 50% of the required funding for the UN Humanitarian Response Plan in Cameroon was secured, notwithstanding the additional vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving millions of people without critical humanitarian assistance and protection, and exacerbating vulnerabilities and violence;
- H. Whereas since the 2018 elections, political tensions have turned into hate speech based on ethnicity which gets amplified through social media platforms;
- I. Whereas freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are restricted throughout the country and the English speaking part of the population has repeatedly made claims that there is a lack of equal representation for the English speaking population;
- J. whereas in the recent months civil society activists, journalists, have been arrested and some face trial before military courts;
- K. whereas Cameroon's penal code punishes sexual relations between persons of the same sex with up to five years of imprisonment; whereas numerous cases of arrest and harassment of LGBTQ people have been reported the past years and months;

- L. whereas in the Far North region violent clashes broke out between Shao Arab cattle herders and Mousgoum fishermen in Kousseri on 10 August, resulting in 36 people killed while more than 18,000 fled; whereas in the north-west tensions between the Muslim Mbororo/Fulani herders and Christian farming communities, has led to violent clashes, while armed separatist groups have also perpetrated attacks on Fulani communities, forcing 12,000 people to flee and killing 250 since 2016; whereas Fulani vigilante committees, established in response to these attacks, have allegedly collaborated with the government's military operations against Anglophone separatists;
- M. Whereas Boko Haram continues to commit serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law in the Far North region, including looting and destroying properties and killing and abducting civilians; whereas since December 2020 at least 80 civilians have been killed by Boko Haram;
- N. whereas according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) Cameroon is the 2d country that is most affected by the Lake Chad Basin conflict, in terms of population displacements and insecurity related to attacks by non-State armed groups, which has led to the internal displacement of some 322,000 people as of March 2021; whereas as of February 2021, the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions had caused the internal displacement of more than 1.1 million people; whereas, as of 3 March 2021, 6,692 Central African individuals had arrived in Cameroon fleeing election-related violence, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR);
- O. Whereas in 2019 the Major National Dialogue between the government and opposition parties, aimed at resolving the Anglophone crisis; whereas right after the conclusion of the dialogue, President Biya ordered the dropping of the cases of some supporters of the main opposition party, Cameroon Renaissance Movement, including its leader Maurice Kamto; whereas the conflict in the Anglophone regions intensified in the weeks following the dialogue, due to the military approach of the government to resolving the crisis, notably via the creation of local vigilante groups to fight the separatist guerilla;
- P. whereas in February 2021 Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Vatican, visited Cameroon with intention to facilitate a dialogue between the government and separatist groups;

Q. whereas for several month main cities in Cameroon suffer from strikes from the personnel of the household waste collection claiming its unpaid salary; whereas this overcrowding of rubbish has consequences for circulating on road and for public health as it brings pollution, air contamination as well as diseases;

1. Reiterates its serious concerns on the high-level of instability Cameroon is facing due to the persistence of several crises in parallel;
2. reiterates its calls for an immediate cease-fire and calls on both security forces and separatist groups to end all attacks and killings of civilians and ensure that the human rights of the population are equally protected, regardless of cultural identity and origins;
3. Underlines that what began as a political dispute in the Anglophone regions is now a complex armed conflict and major humanitarian crisis; calls on the immediate end of attacks against humanitarian and health workers and facilities; calls on the government of Cameroon to grant unhindered access to independent monitors, as well as humanitarian organizations, across the country, including in the Anglophone regions;
4. calls for and independent and impartial investigation into violence perpetrated by security forces and armed separatists groups in violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and for those responsible to be held accountable;
5. condemns any attacks perpetrated on schools and children which deprive hundreds of thousands of children of their education if not their lives; calls on the authorities to hold effective impartial and independent investigations in such attacks and that those responsible are brought to justice; calls for an immediate end of the boycott on education enforced by separatists in the Anglophone regions since 2017;
6. deplors that the government of Cameroon has so far failed to uphold its responsibility to protect its people given the failure of the Major National Dialogue which did not succeed in stopping the conflict in the north-west and south-west regions; calls on both the government and the Anglophone separatists to hold a new inclusive dialogue, aiming at a comprehensive resolution of the conflict in the Anglophone regions;
7. calls upon the international community to help facilitate this dialogue by offering a mediating role; in this regard, urges the African Union (AU) and the Economic

Community of the Central African States to push for the organisation of such talks and calls on the EU to stand ready for supporting this process;

8. calls for urgent humanitarian support of the international community, including the EU and its member states, with focus on critical humanitarian response operations providing life-saving assistance and protection to affected populations, and strengthening early recovery and community resilience;
9. Underlines that for the first time since the beginning of the anglophone crisis four men found guilty of a deadly shooting at a school in Kumba, in December 2020, have been sentenced to death after a trial by a military court marked by procedural irregularities; condemns the use of death penalty as punitive tool to address conflicts; calls on the Government of Cameroon to confirm its commitment to abolition of the death penalty by ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming to abolish the death penalty, and by supporting the UN Resolution on establishing a universal moratorium on application of the death penalty;
10. Recalls its strong support for all human rights and environmental defenders in Cameroon and their work; calls on the EU delegation and Member States' representations in the country to strengthen their support for civil society in their engagement with authorities in Cameroon, and to use all available instruments to increase their support for human rights and environmental defenders' work, and, where appropriate, to facilitate the issuing of emergency visas, and provide temporary shelter in the EU Member States; urges the EU to use the political leverage provided by development aid and other bilateral programmes to enhance the defence of human rights in Cameroon;
11. calls for granting the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights immediate and unfettered access to the north-west and south-west regions to investigate potential violations and abuses of IHRL;
12. Urges the Government of Cameroon to free all those arrested solely on politically or culturally motivated charges;

13. urges foreign governments including EU member states as well as regional organizations to suspend all military assistance and arm exports to Cameroon at least until its security forces have made demonstrable progress towards upholding the human rights of the whole population;
14. Recalls that the contested presidential election in 2018 raised a new layer of political tensions; calls therefore on the Government to convene all political stakeholders for a consensual review of the electoral system, with the aim of ensuring a free, transparent and credible electoral process and to outlaw ethnic discrimination; calls for this process to take place before any further elections are held in order to allow a peaceful and inclusive campaigning and electoral processes and avoid post-electoral crises; calls for the EU to step up technical assistance to support Cameroon in its efforts to strengthen its electoral procedures;
15. calls on social media platforms in particular Facebook, the most popular in Cameroon, to work with the government, opposition and civil society to ensure their pages are verified and limit inflammatory content or misinformation which further break down intercommunal relations;
16. Calls for the due process rights of people based on sexual orientation or gender identity; calls on the government of Cameroon to repeal its anti-homosexuality laws;
17. Encourages the work of the EU, in the framework of the "UNESCO heritage for sustainable cities" project, and other relevant programmes, to improve the governance of waste management services in major cities in Cameroon, with the aim to prevent pollution and related health problem and ensure its personnel is paid for the work performed;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the European External Action Service, the Government and Parliament of Cameroon, the African Union, the Pan-African Parliament and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.