



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION No.: **421-04809**

BY: **Ms. RAMSEY (ESSEX)**

DATE: **JUNE 19, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSIA FREELAND**

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Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Cameroon**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

Canada is deeply concerned about the evolution of the political and security situation in Cameroon, including the ongoing crisis in its Northwest and Southwest regions. Advancing human rights and democracy are key parts of Canada's foreign policy agenda. As it does in countries around the world, Canada fully supports the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly as well as democracy in Cameroon.

During his visit to Cameroon in April 2018, the former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with the Cameroonian authorities, representatives from opposition political parties and from the Anglophone community as well as human rights defenders. Overall, this visit allowed the Government of Canada to encourage an inclusive dialogue and respect for human rights. He also reiterated Canada's openness to share its technical expertise and experience related to bilingualism and multiculturalism. Canada's High Commissioner in Yaoundé and Global Affairs Canada officials have also met several times with Cameroonian authorities to discuss the situation in the country and Canada's concerns.

In April 2019, Canada announced \$6.65 million in humanitarian assistance funding to Cameroon for 2019. This includes support to experienced humanitarian partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations (UN) High

Commissioner for Refugees and International NGOs, to provide life-saving assistance to crisis-affected communities, including displaced populations in the Anglophone regions. This funding includes a \$1 million contribution to the Norwegian Refugee Council to implement a multi-sectoral initiative in the North-West and South-West regions. Since 2015, Canada's humanitarian assistance to Cameroun amounts to more than \$31 million.

Canada has raised its concerns through public statements made on September 18, 2018, October 24, 2018, and February 1, 2019. On September 18, 2018, Canada raised its concerns regarding the continuing violence in the northwestern and southwestern regions of Cameroon and called on all parties to respect human rights and to find peaceful solutions to the crisis. On October 24, 2018, Global Affairs Canada issued a statement in which it seized the opportunity of President Paul Biya's reelection to encourage the authorities to implement necessary reforms to strengthen the electoral legal framework. The statement also raised the alarming situation in the Northwest and Southwest regions, calling on the authorities and all stakeholders to engage firmly in an inclusive dialogue. On February 1, 2019, Canada publicly raised its concerns on the excessive reaction of the Cameroonian security forces during peaceful demonstrations and the arrests of numerous protesters, including opposition members. Canada also called on all parties to exercise restraint and engage in a genuine dialogue.

On March 21, 2019, in partnership with 38 other countries, Canada supported a joint statement on Cameroon at the United Nations Human Rights Council. The statement called on the Government of Cameroon to accept offers of assistance from regional and international partners to prevent further erosion of the human rights of those living in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, resulting from the conflict between armed separatists and the Government of Cameroon.

During Cameroon's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which took place on May 16, 2018, Canada made the following three recommendations to the Cameroonian government: expressly engage in a sustained dialogue with the representatives of the Anglophone community on the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest of the country to reach a consensual solution that upholds human rights; amend the 2014 anti-terrorism legislation to bring the definition of terrorism in line with international human rights obligations and standards related to human rights, repeal the death penalty, and end the use of military tribunals to try civilians; and take the necessary legal measures, before the next elections, to enable electoral judges to consider as admissible copies of minutes submitted to representatives of parties in polling stations.

Canada encourages efforts made by Switzerland and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) in facilitating an inclusive negotiation process regarding the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Canada is a long-standing donor of the HD Centre on its mediation efforts in Africa, including in Cameroon. Moreover, from June 23 to July 2, 2019, Canada welcomed the visit of Cameroon's National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism and shared its technical expertise and experience in these fields.

Canada will continue to work with international partners in joint efforts to find peaceful solutions to the crisis and also seize every opportunity to call for Cameroon authorities to respect human rights, including reminding them of their commitment to follow up on reports of abuses and violations by security forces. Canada will also continue to follow the situation very closely and to strongly promote dialogue as the preferred means of resolving the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon.