



# TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR CAMEROON

## I. WHAT IS TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS?

Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, was established by Congress through the Immigration Act of 1990.<sup>1</sup> TPS is intended to protect foreign nationals in the United States from being returned to their home country if returning would put them at risk of violence, disease or death.<sup>2</sup> Under the law, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or DHS, may designate a foreign country for TPS in three scenarios:<sup>3</sup>

- A.** Ongoing armed conflict (such as a civil war) poses a serious threat to the personal safety of nationals of the affected country;<sup>4</sup>
- B.** An environmental disaster (such as an earthquake or hurricane) or an epidemic occurs, and the affected country is temporarily unable to handle the return of its citizens and has requested TPS for its nationals;<sup>5</sup> or
- C.** Other extraordinary and temporary conditions prevent people from the country from safely returning home, as long as it is not against the national interest of the United States to allow them to remain.<sup>6</sup>

TPS may be designated or extended in six, 12 or 18-month increments.<sup>7</sup> At least 60 days before the end of a designation period, the DHS Secretary must review country conditions in consultation with appropriate agencies of the government, like the U.S. State Department, and determine whether conditions warrant designation.<sup>8</sup> The decision must be published on a timely basis in the Federal Register.<sup>9</sup> Under the law, TPS may be extended as many times as necessary, as long as the dangerous country conditions continue.<sup>10</sup> A country can also be redesignated for TPS either simultaneously with an extension or independently.<sup>11</sup>

Nationals of a TPS-designated country and people without nationality who last lived in a TPS-designated country are eligible for TPS if they were physically in the United States when the designation was made and meet certain requirements.<sup>12</sup> If granted, recipients are temporarily protected from deportation and may receive work authorization to support themselves while they remain in the United States.<sup>13</sup> TPS does not provide a path to lawful permanent resident status or citizenship.<sup>14</sup>

## II. HOW MANY CAMEROONIAN NATIONALS WOULD BE PROTECTED BY TPS?

An estimated 38,790 Cameroonian nationals living in the United States could potentially benefit from a TPS designation for Cameroon.<sup>15</sup>

## III. WHY SHOULD TPS FOR CAMEROON BE DESIGNATED IMMEDIATELY?

Cameroon should be immediately designated for an 18-month TPS grant due to ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary conditions that make safe return impossible at this time. Cameroonian civilians are currently caught between multiple, deadly armed conflicts involving the government, Anglophone separatists, and Boko Haram, a terrorist group based near the Cameroon-Nigeria border.<sup>16</sup> More than 730,000 people in Cameroon have attempted to flee the violence of the conflicts in the past three years.<sup>17</sup> Boko Haram is particularly known for its suicide bombings in crowded civilian areas, such as schools, markets, mosques, churches and refugee camps, and for using children in attacks.<sup>18</sup>

According to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 3.9 million people in Cameroon are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>19</sup> Of the half a million people internally displaced, 89 percent were displaced by armed conflict, 64 percent of which are children under eighteen.<sup>20</sup> Those displaced are often to move to locations experiencing drought, floods, and epidemics of cholera and COVID-19.<sup>21</sup> Humanitarian workers are also not exempt from the conflict, with workers targeted for kidnappings and sometimes killed.<sup>22</sup> An increase of more than 350,000 refugees from Nigeria and the Central African Republic since 2017 has also overwhelmed social services and resources in eastern Cameroon, worsening the existing shortages of food, water, housing and healthcare.<sup>23</sup> Prior to the additional stressors of the pandemic, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 1.1 million people would experience severe to acute food insecurity in 2020.<sup>24</sup> Schools are purposefully targeted by Boko Haram, including the kidnapping and torture of students and teachers as well as school bombings.<sup>25</sup> More than 800,000 children in the Anglophone regions alone are out of school due to the conflict between separatists and the Cameroonian government forces.<sup>26</sup>

The humanitarian emergencies and armed conflict in Cameroon is further compounded by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Violence and heavy rains have degraded infrastructure such as roads, bridges and checkpoints that are essential to deliver humanitarian aid and pandemic relief.<sup>27</sup> As the pandemic began to intensify in March 2020, UNICEF estimated that 255 of the 7,421 health facilities in the areas of highest conflict were already not- or only partially functional due to violence.<sup>28</sup> Cameroon has one doctor for every 10,000 people.<sup>29</sup>

The violence between separatists, Boko Haram, and government forces has severely disrupted the country's COVID-19 response capacity.<sup>30</sup> The Cameroonian government has also been under criticism for lack of transparency on the misuse of millions of dollars in pandemic relief funds.<sup>31</sup> As of last fall, medical workers reported that hospitals had seen no additional aid or construction for new facilities, resulting in limited bed space, a lack of personal protective equipment and a decreased ability to treat patients.<sup>32</sup> Some attempts to distribute hand sanitizer, masks and other protective materials by non-governmental groups have been politicized and even disrupted by the ruling party.<sup>33</sup> The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have marked Cameroon as a Level 4, or "Very High Level" of COVID-19, advising people to avoid all travel to Cameroon.<sup>34</sup>

## IV. WHY IS TPS FOR CAMEROON IN LINE WITH AMERICAN VALUES AND INTERESTS?

Congress established TPS to provide life-saving protection to people who, if deported, would be at risk of harm or death.<sup>35</sup> It is a statutory embodiment of the international principle of *nonrefoulement*, a commitment that the United States will not return people to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened.<sup>36</sup> This commitment, stemming from the aftermath of World War II, also underpins U.S. refugee and asylum laws.<sup>37</sup>

By protecting people's lives and granting work authorization, TPS serves key national and regional security interests, advances moral and strategic U.S. engagement with the international community, and provides other benefits to the United States. The United States has noted the importance of partnership with Cameroon in regional stability and combating ongoing terrorism in the region.<sup>38</sup> The United States has invested hundreds of millions in aid to Cameroon, as well as resources aimed at protecting human rights.<sup>39</sup> In September 2020, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations announced a resolution condemning violence and human rights abuses by Cameroonian security forces, including suppression of free speech, detainment of government critics, sexual violence, torture, extrajudicial killings, and the burning of entire villages.<sup>40</sup> TPS would serve as a key and strategic part of our commitment to human rights and international stability, safeguarding Cameroonians in the United States from return to these dangerous conditions.<sup>41</sup>

In general, TPS holders make significant contributions to the U.S. economy, working in key industries such as health care and paying into the U.S. GDP, Social Security and Medicare.<sup>42</sup> Many TPS holders are essential workers, serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>43</sup> TPS holders also send vital remittances to family and friends in countries of origin, providing unofficial foreign aid that allows people to meet their basic needs and helps stabilize countries and regions.<sup>44</sup> Remittances to African nations are already expected to plummet by 25 percent this year due to COVID-19.<sup>45</sup> A TPS designation for Cameroon would help keep life-saving financial support flowing into the country.

Our commitment as a nation and a people to protect and welcome those in need is why Congress created TPS, and why we must use it now.

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service (April 1, 2020), [www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401\\_RS20844\\_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html](http://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401_RS20844_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html).
- <sup>2</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>3</sup> INA § 244(b).
- <sup>4</sup> INA §244 (b)(1)(A).
- <sup>5</sup> INA §244 (b)(1)(B).
- <sup>6</sup> INA §244 (b)(1)(C).
- <sup>7</sup> INA §244 (b)(2)(B).
- <sup>8</sup> INA §244 (b)(3)(A).
- <sup>9</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>10</sup> See generally INA §244.
- <sup>11</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>12</sup> INA §244 (a)(1).
- <sup>13</sup> INA §244 (a)(1)(A); INA §244 (a)(1)(B).
- <sup>14</sup> See generally INA §244.
- <sup>15</sup> Email Interview with Tom K. Wong, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of California, San Diego (Dec. 15, 2020) (on file with author). Professor Wong pulled these data from the 2019 ACS 1-YR Public Use Microdata (PUM) from IPUMS. Noncitizen foreign-born nationals from Cameroon are estimated as the weighted count of (i) foreign-born persons and who were (ii) born in Cameroon. Lawful permanent resident (LPR) status holders are also included in this count, which means this slightly overcounts the number of noncitizens who would benefit from TPS. LPRs are included because the population estimates are too small to accurately separate them from the broader non-citizen population.
- <sup>16</sup> CNN Editorial Research, *Boko Haram Fast Facts*, CNN (last updated Sept. 7, 2020), <https://www.cnn.com/2014/06/09/world/boko-haram-fast-facts/index.html>.
- <sup>17</sup> *In Pictures: Untold stories of Cameroon's war victims*, Al Jazeera (April 30, 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2020/4/30/in-pictures-untold-stories-of-camerouns-war-victims/>.
- <sup>18</sup> See *Cameroon: Boko Haram Suicide Bombers Strike Displacement Site*, Human Rights Watch (Aug. 25, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/25/cameroon-boko-haram-suicide-bombers-strike-displacement-site>.
- <sup>19</sup> *Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2020: Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (March 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cameroon%20-%20Humanitarian%20response%20plan%20-%20Issued%20March%202020.pdf>.
- <sup>20</sup> *Cameroon: Displacement Dashboard 21 (25 May - 10 June 2020)*, International Organization for Migration (July 3, 2020), <https://migration.iom.int/reports/cameroon-%E2%80%94-displacement-dashboard-21-25-mai-%E2%80%94-10-june-2020>.
- <sup>21</sup> *Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2020: Humanitarian Response Plan: Cameroon*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (March 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Cameroon%20-%20Humanitarian%20response%20plan%20-%20Issued%20March%202020.pdf>.
- <sup>22</sup> *WFP Condemns Killing of a Humanitarian Worker in Cameroon*, United Nations World Food Programme (Aug. 11, 2020), <https://cameroon.un.org/en/87726-wfp-condemns-killing-humanitarian-worker-cameroon>.
- <sup>23</sup> *European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations: Cameroon*, European Commission (June 18, 2020), [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/cameroon\\_en#:~:text=The%20humanitarian%20situation%20is%20increasingly,Central%20African%20Republic%20\(CAR\).](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/cameroon_en#:~:text=The%20humanitarian%20situation%20is%20increasingly,Central%20African%20Republic%20(CAR).)
- <sup>24</sup> *Cameroon 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan*, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Feb. 7, 2020), <http://www.fao.org/emergencies/appeals/detail/en/c/1260440/>.
- <sup>25</sup> *Cameroon Situation Report, 9 Dec 2020*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Dec. 9, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-situation-report-9-dec-2020>.
- <sup>26</sup> *Cameroon*, International Crisis Watch Group (accessed Jan. 12, 2021), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>.
- <sup>27</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>28</sup> *UNICEF Cameroon Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 - January 2020*, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (March 9, 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/unicef-cameroon-humanitarian-situation-report-no-1-january-2020>.
- <sup>29</sup> *Country Responses: Cameroon*, Global Health Workforce Alliance (accessed Jan. 12, 2021), <https://www.who.int/workforcealliance/countries/cmr/en/>.
- <sup>30</sup> Ngala Killian Chimtom, *Cameroon's deadly mix of war and coronavirus*, BBC News (May 20, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52551848>.
- <sup>31</sup> Sarah Saadoun, *In Cameroon, Government Secrecy in the Management of Funds Destined for Covid-19 Response*, Human Rights Watch (Sept. 24, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/24/cameroon-government-secrecy-management-funds-destined-covid-19-response#>.
- <sup>32</sup> *Id.*

- <sup>33</sup> Ilaria Allegrozzi, *Covid-19 Brings Out Government's Ugly Side in Cameroon*, Human Rights Watch (May 14, 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/14/covid-19-brings-out-governments-ugly-side-cameroon>.
- <sup>34</sup> COVID-19 in Cameroon, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (last reviewed Dec. 2, 2020), <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid-4/coronavirus-cameroon>.
- <sup>35</sup> Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service (April 1, 2020), [www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401\\_RS20844\\_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html](http://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200401_RS20844_234bceecdf5e83dc354590e7862953603997186b.html).
- <sup>36</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>38</sup> U.S. Relations With Cameroon, U.S. Dept. of State (Dec. 20, 2019), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-cameroon/>.
- <sup>39</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>40</sup> Press release, *Risch, Cardin Lead Colleagues in Condemning Violence in Anglophone Cameroon*, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Sept. 8, 2020), <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/chair/release/risch-cardin-lead-colleagues-in-condemning-violence-in-anglophone-cameroon>.
- <sup>41</sup> <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-cameroon/>
- <sup>42</sup> Robert Warren and Donald Kerwin, *A Statistical and Demographic Profile of the US Temporary Protected Status Populations from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti*, *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 5 No. 3 (2017), <https://cmsny.org/publications/jmhs-tps-elsalvador-honduras-haiti/>; Amanda Baran, Jose Magana-Salgado and Tom K. Wong, *Economic Contributions by Salvadoran, Honduran, and Haitian TPS Holders*, Immigrant Legal Resource Center (April 2017), [www.ilrc.org/report-tps-economic-cost](http://www.ilrc.org/report-tps-economic-cost).
- <sup>43</sup> Nicole Prchal Svajlenka and Tom Jawetz, *A Demographic Profile of TPS Holders Providing Essential Services During the Coronavirus Crisis*, Center for American Progress (April 14, 2020), [www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/04/14/483167/demographic-profile-tps-holders-providing-essential-services-coronavirus-crisis/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/04/14/483167/demographic-profile-tps-holders-providing-essential-services-coronavirus-crisis/).
- <sup>44</sup> See e.g., *Somalia's path to recovery*, Brookings Institute (Oct. 2, 2019), [www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/10/02/somalias-path-to-stability/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/10/02/somalias-path-to-stability/); Nurith Aizenmen, *What You May Not Realize About The End Of TPS Status For Salvadorans*, NPR (Jan. 9, 2018), [www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/01/09/576583550/what-you-may-not-realize-about-the-end-of-tps-status-forsalvadorans](http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/01/09/576583550/what-you-may-not-realize-about-the-end-of-tps-status-forsalvadorans).
- <sup>45</sup> Yinka Adegoke, *Remittances from migrants to African countries will plunge by nearly a quarter this year*, Quartz (April 24, 2020), <https://qz.com/africa/1844973/world-bank-remittances-to-africa-to-plunge-by-a-quarter/#:~:text=In%20South%20Sudan%2C%20remittances%20of,the%20highest%20in%20the%20region>.