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The Global Campaign for  
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**Coalition**  
for Dialogue and Negotiations



JuventudesXLaPaz



## Open letter to United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the "Anglophone Crisis" in Cameroon

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
United States of America

April 06, 2021

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We, the undersigned human rights, civil liberties, social justice, and faith leaders, experts, scholars, and organizations, write to congratulate you for your Senate confirmation and appreciate your focused statements about democracy and human rights in Cameroon and Africa as a whole.

We write to express our deep concern with the ongoing armed conflict in Cameroon, and especially atrocities and gross human rights violations against the Anglophone minority population in the country. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Situation Report No. 25 of 30 November 2020, three million people are affected, which is approximately 50 percent of the entire Anglophone population of the country; and 1.4 million need immediate humanitarian assistance. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees reported over 70,000 refugees have fled to neighboring Nigeria, and over 711,000 IDPs now live in other regions of the country as of November 2020. Thousands of civilians have been killed, and more than 300 villages have

been burnt. As a result of the ongoing conflict, Anglophone Cameroonians have become the leading asylum seekers from Africa at the U.S. Southern border with Mexico.

The armed conflict is stressing a region already facing violent extremism in the Lake Chad basin and, if allowed to fester, would seriously jeopardize on-going international efforts to curtail cross-border terrorism and combat Boko Haram and ISWAP. It also has the potential of threatening regional peace and security in the Gulf of Guinea.

As you may be aware, attempts by the government of Cameroon to resolve the crisis have failed because of its unwillingness to address head on the root causes and its resort to military force to address otherwise political grievances of citizens. In a historic show of bipartisanship, the US Senate recently adopted Resolution 684 on January 1, 2021, calling on the government of Cameroon and the armed separatist groups to end all violence, respect the human rights of all Cameroonians and pursue inclusive dialogue to end the conflict. The Resolution further stipulates that "attempts at conflict resolution have failed to bring all parties to the table, as high levels of deaths, brutality, and suffering continue". This Resolution details valuable insights to the conflict and abuses, and recommends short and long term measures for durable peace to return in Anglophone Cameroon.

Mr. Secretary, we believe, strongly, that the Department of State and the Biden Administration should lead efforts to bring this conflict to an immediate end. We particularly believe peace can be achieved if you take the following urgent measures:

1. Name a Special Envoy to facilitate the State Department's lead within the inter-agency process and its efforts to engage all international and local stakeholders whose contributions are needed to bring an end to the conflict, as laid out in Resolution 684.
2. Impress upon the warring parties to negotiate, without any preconditions, for an end to the conflict and engage allies of the United States, notably France, to play a more constructive role in ending the conflict.
3. Engage more firmly the African Union and agencies of the United Nations system to assist Cameroon address the root causes of the conflict and to uphold freedoms and universal rights.
4. Initiate an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow unfettered access for humanitarian assistance, and protect humanitarian workers and the Anglophone civilian population who desperately need assistance. We ask that the US lead efforts by the international donor community to increase humanitarian support in order to meet the urgent and growing needs of IDPs and refugees.
5. Demand an independent international investigation by the United Nations Human Rights Council of massacres, atrocities and gross human rights abuses in Anglophone Cameroon in order to account for and hold perpetrators of rights abuses accountable, and to prevent a culture of impunity that breeds more abuses to the civilian population.
6. Champion an interagency response to sanction perpetrators of gross human rights abuses in order to curb impunity and curtail ongoing atrocities by both sides.
7. End arms sale and military assistance to the Government of Cameroon, as there is ample evidence that military equipment provided by the US has been used to commit atrocities to the civilian population in Anglophone Cameroon.

8. Grant Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for Anglophone Cameroonians currently resident in the US. This community represents the highest number of Africans fleeing violence, torture and persecution from a majority Francophone government, and reliable information confirms that many of the individuals deported by the previous Administration are currently in detention and facing abuses.

9. Capitalize on the provisions of Senate Resolution 684 of January 1, 2021, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018 and other tools at your disposal to bring the civil war in Anglophone Cameroon to a negotiated end.

Respectfully,

**Cameroon Humanitarian Relief Initiative**

**Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations**

**Consortium of Ethiopian Human Rights Organizations**

**JuventudesXLaPaz**

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**Refugee Council of Australia**

**Sam Soya Center for Democracy and Human Rights**

**The Global Campaign for Peace & Justice in Cameroon**

**Torture Abolition And Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC International)**

**World Council of Churches (WCC)**

CC:

Senator Robert Menendez, Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Senator James Risch, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Senator Chris Van Hollen, Chair, Senate Subcommittee on Africa And Global Health Policy

Senator Mike Rounds, Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Africa And Global Health Policy

Senator Tim Kaine, Chair, Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, And Global Women's Issues

Senator Marco Rubio, Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, And Global Women's Issues

Representative Gregory Meeks, Chair, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Representative Michael McCaul, Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Representative Karen Bass, Chair, House Subcommittee Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights

Representative Chris Smith, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights