

Conditions in Cameroon Warrant Temporary Protected Status Designation

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a temporary protection that allows people from a designated country to remain in the US while conditions in their home country make safe return impossible. The Secretary of Homeland Security can designate a country for TPS if the country is experiencing ongoing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. TPS allows its beneficiaries to stay and work in the United States during the designation period. It is a life-saving protection, especially for those who are ineligible for or who have been denied asylum.

While countries such as Myanmar, Syria, and Venezuela have recently been designated or redesignated for TPS, several equally-deserving majority-Black countries have been left behind. The chart below demonstrates that conditions in Cameroon, a West African country experiencing multiple armed conflicts, are similarly dire to those in Myanmar, Syria and Venezuela. As such, Cameroon deserves to be designated for TPS, giving life-saving protection to Cameroonians who are otherwise being deported en masse back to extreme danger.

	Cameroon	Myanmar	Syria	Venezuela
Armed Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two armed conflicts: a Boko Haram insurgency in the north and armed Anglophone separatists fighting the government in the west.¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread attacks by military leaders have led UN to warn of increasing “possibility of civil war at an unprecedented scale.”² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protracted civil war with targeting of civilians and use of chemical weapons.³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paramilitary groups fighting border war with Colombia, resulting in violence, displacement, child recruitment, other abuses.⁴
Forced Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of 2021, there were 1,032,942 IDPs.⁵ Fighting in the north has displaced 560k since December 2020.⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of 2019, there were 1.03 million refugees, and 47,500 in “refugee-like situations.”⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.6 million internally displaced, 5.58 million refugees in 2020.⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.4 million Venezuelans have been displaced abroad since 2014.⁹

Unstable or Corrupt Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officials engage in corruption with impunity, mismanage Covid funds, and impede human rights investigations.¹⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military seize power in a coup in Feb. 2021, imprisoning elected leaders, declaring state of emergency, and unleashing brutal violence.¹¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government forces attack civilian infrastructure, killing and displacing people, including by chemical warfare.¹² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government leaders elected in fraudulent elections, widespread corruption in basic services e.g. food distribution.¹³
Inability/ Unwillingness to Prosecute Crimes Effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government fails to investigate or prosecute attacks on human rights defenders and journalists, rapes, and other human rights abuses.¹⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military operates with impunity, using lethal tactics without repercussions.¹⁵ Authorities fail to investigate grave abuses against Rohingya.”¹⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most courts are not functioning and lack independence and credibility to fairly try cases.¹⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorities have committed crimes against humanity and the judiciary contributes to “arbitrary arrests, impunity for egregious abuses, and denial of justice to victims.”¹⁸
Abuses by Security Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security forces commit forced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Prison conditions are life-threatening.¹⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forces have killed >700 people since the coup, targeting protestors and even killing children. Forces have arbitrarily detained over 3,000, denying counsel or medical care. Credible reports of torture in detention.²⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military bombs civilian areas including homes, medical facilities, and schools. Forces attack civilians in hospitals, homes, schools, and refugee camps, sometimes with chemical weapons. They massacre, rape, and starve civilians.²¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government officials target political dissidents for detention, enforced disappearances, and torture.²²
Crackdowns on Freedom of Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictions on freedoms of assembly, association, movement, press, and privacy.²³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military imposes heavy internet restrictions, blocks access to social media. Speaking out against the military can be a criminal offense.²⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech that “weakens the national sentiment” or criticizes the regime is criminalized.²⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regime stringently restricts free expression, internet use, and privacy, blocks privately owned media. Forces suppress protests with violence.²⁶
Crackdowns on Freedom of Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government arrests and retaliates against organizations that criticize it. Journalists are often censored, arrested, and prosecuted.²⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military criminalized publication of comments that “cause fear” and spread “false news,” rounding up and detaining journalists on a massive scale.²⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing content criticizing the regime is punishable by 15 years in prison. Government maintains strict control of media outlets.²⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regime deems unfavorable reporting of its policies to be slander, incitement to violence, and terrorism, criminalizing unfavorable press.³⁰

Election Corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election irregularities included lack of equal access to media and campaign spaces, registration restrictions for opposition candidates, ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, inconsistent use of ID cards, and lack of expertise among local polling officials.³¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Rohingya are denied citizenship and cannot vote. Government arbitrarily prosecutes government critics and limits access to the media. There is no independent electoral commission.³² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent parliamentary elections were riddled with fraud, corruption, ballot stuffing, and political interference. Citizens were coerced to vote and ballots were pre-filled.³³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions on political participation including intimidation, harassment, abuse, and denial of due process.³⁴
Forced Labor and Human Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranked Tier 2 Watch List on the State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report.³⁵ Political and financial instability contributed to rising human trafficking. Children used in cocoa production, hazardous agricultural work, and sex trafficking.³⁶ Anecdotal reports of hereditary servitude in the north.³⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranked Tier 3 (worst) on the TIP Report. Military uses children in some battalions. Ethnic minorities are especially vulnerable to sex and labor trafficking.³⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranked Tier 3 on the TIP Report. Government actors routinely participate in human trafficking, contribute to citizens' vulnerability to trafficking, and fail to hold traffickers criminally accountable.³⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranked Tier 3 on the TIP Report. Women and children are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking due to Venezuela's economic deterioration.⁴⁰
Recruitment of Child Soldiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added to State Department list of governments responsible for recruitment of child soldiers in 2020.⁴¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child recruitment is still a problem, but the government has created policies to demobilize child soldiers and protect their rights.⁴² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government continues to forcibly recruit and use child soldiers.⁴³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government has made little effort to prevent child soldier recruitment by Colombian armed groups.⁴⁴
Terrorist Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boko Haram heavily present in the north and recently stepped up civilian attacks, killing 80 since last December.⁴⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Advisory Council for Myanmar recently dubbed Myanmar's military a "terrorist group" for its extreme violence after the coup.⁴⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorized as state sponsor of terrorism with ties to Hezbollah. ISIS conducts frequent attacks⁴⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regime has financial ties with terrorist and paramilitary groups, "promotes and protects terrorism."⁴⁸

Persecution of LGBTQ+ Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same-sex sexual relations criminalized by up to 5 years in prison. Police harass and arrest LGBTQ people.⁴⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same-sex sexual relations are punishable by up to 10 years in prison.⁵⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ persons are subjected to sexual violence and torture in detention.⁵¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police block LGBTQ persons from public spaces, trans persons are denied legal recognition, anti-LGBTQ hate crimes are prevalent.⁵²
Ethnic and Religious Persecution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of President Biya's Beti/Bulu ethnic group hold many key positions and are disproportionately represented in the government, state-owned businesses, and security forces.⁵³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government conducted ethnic cleansing against Rohingya population in 2012, forces Rohingya into detention camps where their basic rights are violated. Persecution in the camps amounts to a crime against humanity.⁵⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic minorities restricted from conducting cultural activities. Kurdish people are tortured, beaten, denied food and water, and interrogated about their faith. Activists routinely detained, tortured, and killed.⁵⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government restricts indigenous persons' representation in legislature, abuses indigenous lands, makes policies that negatively impact indigenous communities.⁵⁶
Impunity for Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape cases rarely investigated, and the law does not explicitly prohibit spousal rape or domestic violence. FGM exists in rural areas.⁵⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forces perpetrate sexual violence. Female Rohingyas vulnerable to sexual violence, forced marriage, forced pregnancy. Government Commission to investigate GBV dismissed all allegations against security forces.⁵⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties to the conflict have committed >11,500 sexual assaults since 2011. Regime uses sexual violence for torture. Violence against women and children is "pervasive."⁵⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police rarely intervene and are not properly trained to handle domestic violence. Enforcement of GBV laws is limited.⁶⁰
Poverty Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate is 37.5%⁶¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate is 24.8%.⁶² Myanmar's GDP is expected to contract by 10% in 2021.⁶³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate is 35.2%⁶⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate 33.1%,⁶⁵ with hyperinflation, high unemployment and poverty, food and medicine shortages, collapse of basic services.⁶⁶
Natural Disasters and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent flooding leading has displaced tens of thousands and destroys crop yields.⁶⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranked #2 out of 187 countries on the Global Climate Risk Index for 2000-2019. It is "one of the world's most disaster-prone countries."⁶⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suffers increasingly severe droughts, including one from 2006-2010 that killed 85% of the country's livestock and led to income loss for 800,000 people.⁶⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent drought has led to rationing of water and electricity.⁷⁰

Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cameroon at “very high” risk for infectious disease. 17th highest HIV prevalence rate in the world, and <1 doctor per 10,000 people.⁷¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPs and minority groups are restricted from accessing healthcare. Government “impose[s] coercive birth-spacing” in certain regions under the guise of healthcare.⁷² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half of all health facilities closed or partly functioning, hundreds of healthcare workers have been killed, general lack of access to healthcare.⁷³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant and maternal mortality have increased. Health system conditions “worsening drastically” with severe shortage of medicines and supplies.⁷⁴
Food Insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classified by the UN and WFP as 1 of 20 “acute food insecurity hotspots.” 2.1 million people facing food crisis or emergency (expected to reach 4.9 million in 2021).⁷⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.8 million suffered some level of food insecurity before the coup. Number is expected to increase to 3.4 million by October 2021.⁷⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classified by the UN and WFP as 1 of 20 “acute food insecurity hotspots” of the world, with over 1 million severely food insecure.⁷⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classified by UN and WFP as 1 of 20 “acute food insecurity hotspots” with 2.3 million severely food insecure. 86% of Venezuelans have unreliable water service.⁷⁸
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waters in the Niger Delta and Gulf of Guinea at very high risk for piracy and armed robbery of ships.⁷⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human trafficking, crimes targeting minority groups, and child labor are prevalent and rarely prosecuted.⁸⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of corruption and bribery, violent and property crimes. Army and rebel groups commit widespread war crimes.⁸¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the highest homicide and crime victimization rates in the region.⁸²

¹ “Cameroon.” International Crisis Group (Apr. 2021), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon>.

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⁵ “Cameroon.” CIA The World Factbook (May 10, 2021), <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon/>.

⁶ “Cameroon: Humanitarian Dashboard (January to December 2020).” UN OCHA (Apr. 30, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-humanitarian-dashboard-january-december-2020>.

⁷ “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.” UNHCR (2020), <https://www.unhcr.org/be/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2020/07/Global-Trends-Report-2019.pdf>.

⁸ 86 Fed. Reg. 14946.

⁹ “Venezuela Humanitarian Crisis.” UNHCR (last visited May 19, 2021), <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/venezuela/>.

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- ¹³ 86 Fed. Reg. 13574 (Mar. 9, 2021), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/03/09/2021-04951/designation-of-venezuela-for-temporary-protected-status-and-implementation-of-employment>.
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- ¹⁹ "2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon." U.S. Department of State (2021).
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