

March 29, 2024

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 12:48 pm, Apr 01, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

RE: Urgent Request for Special Humanitarian Parole for Cameroonian Refugees

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

We, the undersigned representatives of the Cameroon American Council (CAC), Cameroon Muslimahs of North America (CAMNA), Cameroon Muslim Students Union (CMSU), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), and other concerned parties, are writing to reiterate our urgent appeal for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's consideration in granting Special Humanitarian Parole to Cameroonian refugees – who deeply impacted by the ongoing armed conflicts in Cameroon.

Since we sent our last letter in December, we are heartened to inform you that our cause has garnered the support of esteemed members of Congress: Representatives Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), Glenn Ivey (MD-04), C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD-02), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14), Emanuel Cleaver II (MO-5), James P. McGovern (MA-02), Jamaal Bowman (NY-16), Jamie Raskin (MD-08), and David Trone (MD-06). Their endorsement emphasizes the severity of the situation and the critical need for immediate action.

As part of our continued advocacy efforts, we wish to draw your attention to Representative Espaillat's March 1 introduction of [House Resolution 1048](#). This resolution aims to express the House's view that the plight of Cameroonian immigrants and the ongoing turmoil and instability in Cameroon justify a designation of humanitarian parole. It calls upon the Department of Homeland Security to establish a humanitarian parole program specifically for Cameroonians fleeing the severe violence in their homeland.

The introduction of this resolution emphasizes the growing recognition within Congress of the dire circumstances faced by Cameroonian refugees and the necessity for decisive action to alleviate their suffering. We believe that the establishment of Special Humanitarian Parole for Cameroonians fleeing from severe violence and persecution aligns with the principles of compassion and humanitarianism that the United States has long championed.

We again urge the Department of Homeland Security to take concrete steps by:

1. Addressing anti-Africanness and anti-Blackness within immigration policies. Over the past 70 years, U.S. Humanitarian Parole has never been extended to any African nation. In

contrast, countries such as Cuba and Haiti [have been recipients of parole on multiple occasions](#). This glaring discrepancy requires a critical analysis of systemic biases and discriminatory practices within immigration frameworks.

2. Acknowledging that Special Humanitarian Parole has been granted for countries with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), such as Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Ukraine. However, similar consideration has not yet been given to Cameroonian refugees despite their profound vulnerability due to the five ongoing armed conflicts in Cameroon.
3. Grant Special Humanitarian Parole specifically to Cameroon. Given the staggering volume of displacement in Cameroon resulting from ongoing conflicts, the need for a tailored Special Humanitarian Parole is paramount. This specific designation recognizes the unique vulnerability of Cameroonians and ensures they receive expedited assistance and protection, enabling them to escape the harrowing violence and persecution they face.
4. The Department of Homeland Security's separate but similarly constructed February responses to Representatives [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) and [David Trone](#) did not break down how many refugees from Africa were from Cameroon. We would like to know how many Cameroonian nationals have been received by the U.S. as refugees.

Therefore, we request the Department of Homeland Security implement robust tracking measures to monitor the number of Cameroonian refugees applying for asylum and the subsequent granting of refugee status. Such a comprehensive data collection process is essential for gaining insights into the gravity of the situation and understanding the extent to which Cameroonian refugees are receiving the necessary protection. This data can inform targeted interventions and policy adjustments aimed at ensuring fair and timely adjudication of asylum claims, particularly for populations facing severe persecution like Cameroonian refugees.

We note that March 28, 2024, marks the first anniversary of a deadly boat accident of Cameroon migrants near St. Kitts on the Atlantic Ocean. Cameroon migrant survivors, along with 900 other Cameroonians, are stranded across the Caribbean; Cameroonians like Dahiru, a Cameroonian Muslim youth, fled the armed conflicts and, out of desperation, got into a migrant boat that capsized during Ramadan of 2023. We urge the Department of Homeland Security to carefully consider our plea and take prompt action to address the urgent needs of Cameroonian refugees.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We eagerly await your response and stand ready to provide any additional information or support necessary to facilitate the implementation of a humanitarian parole program for Cameroonian refugees.

To respond to this request and meet with concerned Cameroonian organizations and allies, please contact CAC President and Founder Sylvie Ngassa Qwasinwi Bello at

Cameroon.American.Council@gmail.com and CAIR Director of Government Affairs
Department Robert S. McCaw at Rmccaw@cair.com.

Sincerely,
Cameroon American Council (CAC),
Cameroon Muslimahs of North America (CAMNA),
Cameroon Muslim Students Union (CMSU),
and Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

May 3, 2024

Sylvie Bello
Chief Executive Officer
Cameroon American Council
916 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
Cameroon.American.Council@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Bello:

Thank you for your March 29, 2024 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am responding on behalf of the Department.

We acknowledge your request that DHS review its practices to ensure fairness within the immigration system. We continue to implement policies that decrease barriers to access and address equity in immigration, including President Biden's 2021 Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States and Executive Order 14012 on Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans.^{1,2} Through these policies, DHS is working to ensure our laws and policies are fairly applied and nondiscriminatory.

In your letter, you also requested DHS consider a parole process for Cameroonians. At this time, DHS continues to evaluate the circumstances in countries for which there may be urgent humanitarian or significant public benefit reasons for establishing parole processes. The conditions and concerns you raise in your letter regarding current conditions in Cameroon will be considered as part of this process.

As noted in our previous letter, humanitarian parole is generally not intended to be used to avoid established refugee processing channels or to provide protection to individuals at generalized risk of harm around the world. Also note that USCIS is currently receiving an extremely high number of requests for humanitarian parole for individuals outside the United States. While we are taking numerous steps to process all requests quickly and efficiently, noncitizens outside the United States have experienced significant processing delays. For more

¹ [https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/proclamation-ending-discriminatory-bans-on-entry-to-the-united-states/?ct=t\(AgencyUpdate_012120\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/proclamation-ending-discriminatory-bans-on-entry-to-the-united-states/?ct=t(AgencyUpdate_012120)).

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/02/executive-order-restoring-faith-in-our-legal-immigration-systems-and-strengthening-integration-and-inclusion-efforts-for-new-americans/>.

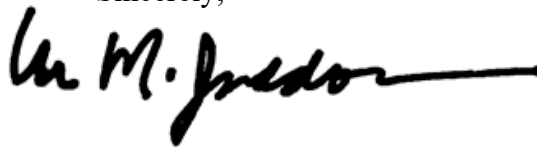
information about the humanitarian parole process, including evidence that should be included in support of a parole request, please visit our website at https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian_parole. The USCIS webpage "Immigration Relief in Emergencies or Unforeseen Circumstances" lists existing options that may be available upon request to eligible individuals.³

Persons who believe they need protection due to persecution or fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion should contact the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assess the protection issue and determine whether resettlement is the best solution for an individual or family. For more information, please go to www.UNHCR.org. For further information on access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), please visit the Department of State Refugee Admissions website at <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/>.

In your letter, you also requested DHS implement mechanisms to monitor the number of Cameroonian refugees applying for asylum and the subsequent granting of refugee status to inform policy decisions. DHS and USCIS already have tools in place to monitor the number of Cameroonians applying for asylum in the United States and to track the decisions on their cases. You also requested statistics on the number of Cameroonian refugees who have been resettled in the United States. Refugee admissions, including the number of refugees admitted from specific nationalities, are tracked and reported by the Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). DOS maintains a public website that provides reports on the number of refugees admitted each fiscal year.⁴ According to the latest report, 29 refugees from Cameroon were admitted last fiscal year and 97 have been admitted so far this fiscal year. For DHS statistics on refugees and asylees, please see the DHS Office of Homeland Security Statistics Refugee and Asylees webpage.⁵

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the other organizations that cosigned your letter. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director

³ <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/immigration-relief-in-emergencies-or-unforeseen-circumstances>.

⁴ <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>.

⁵ <https://www.dhs.gov/ohss/topics/immigration/refugees-and-asylees>.