

# Center for Constitutional Rights

## Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

**<https://ccrjustice.org/human-rights-organizations-urge-members-congress-support-cameroonian-migrant-women-0>**

### Policy Issue Resources

*On August 19, 2021, the Cameroon American Council, #CameroonTPS Coalition, and the Center for Constitutional Rights sent a letter to women members of Congress urging them to support a designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Cameroon and to all Cameroonians currently residing in the United States this Black August.*

Dear Congresswoman,

We write to urge the Congresswoman to support a designation of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Cameroon during [Black August](#). The Congresswoman must escalate House Judiciary Committee Democrats recent [letter](#) urging the Department of Homeland Security to designate Cameroon for TPS. We ask that the Congresswoman introduce a resolution and host a briefing to strongly encourage President Biden and DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to extend TPS to Cameroon.

Since 2016 three presidential administrations and four congressional sessions the Cameroon American Council, led members of the Cameroonian diaspora and advocates in promoting #CameroonTPS as *urgent relief to civilians fleeing conflicts in Cameroon*. Today, conditions are increasingly dire, as five armed conflicts have overtaken 8 of the 10 regions in Cameroon. Civilians are facing a humanitarian crisis due to political turmoil following the 2018 presidential election and 2020 local elections, as well as [ongoing violence](#) stemming from the 2016 Anglophone Crisis, the invasion of Boko Haram and Seleka/Anti-Balaka militias, as well as government repression of political opposition and gender and sexual minorities. As a result of their intersecting identities, Cameroonian women have been disparately impacted.

Of the 3.9 million Cameroonians in need of humanitarian assistance, an astounding [40,000 people](#) are seeking refuge in the United States. Migrants are entitled to seek refuge from rampant human rights violations under international law. Civilians [fleeing Cameroon](#) as a result of [torture](#), arbitrary imprisonment, and targeted violence undoubtedly qualify as refugees or asylees under both U.S. and international law. Still, 38.4% of Cameroonian asylum claims were [denied](#) in FY 2020.

The United States [criminalizes Cameroonians who seek asylum](#) within its borders, which is a violation of both U.S. and international law. In U.S. detention centers, persons from Cameroon face degrading anti-Blackness and anti-Africanness. Some detained Cameroonians were even [forced to sign](#) deportation paperwork despite concerns of persecution or torture following forced repatriation, while others have been [assaulted](#) or [transferred](#) for demanding humane treatment.

In ICE facilities, Cameroonian women face additional repression: discrimination that sits at the intersection of [sexism](#), [anti-Blackness](#), and [anti-Africanness](#).

Black migrant women at the Karnes family immigration facility reported receipt of inadequate medical care for Black pregnant women and infants to their attorneys at The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES). Since Black women from Cameroon, as well as, Angola, Haiti, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo comprise 79% of pregnant migrants detained at Karnes, multiple organizations jointly filed a [complaint](#) to the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and Office of Inspector General.

In September of 2020, a [whistleblower complaint](#) revealed an alarming pattern of coerced or forced [sterilizations](#) of migrant women. [Pauline Binam](#), a Cameroonian national who has called the U.S. home since age two, was nearly deported after filing her own complaint regarding the non-consensual removal of one of her fallopian tubes.

Even under duress, Cameroonian women have fought to improve detention conditions across the U.S. Of the 500 total women held at the Don Hutto facility, approximately 140 Cameroonian women held a [mass action](#) to protest the abhorrent treatment they receive in immigration detention. During Black August the annual month-long commemoration of Black political prisoners and their efforts to improve prison conditions it is imperative that we remember the unique plight of Cameroonian women.

Few alternatives to TPS are available to Cameroonians and even fewer are viable for Cameroonian women. A 2017 Pew Research Center [study](#) found that less than 5% of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program recipients came from the combined total of all countries on the entire continent of Africa, and fewer than 0.1% (130 individuals) of Cameroonian origin were [DACA recipients](#). Additionally, Cameroonians are unlikely to receive protections under legislation such as The Migrant & Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act. Cameroonian women are more improbable recipients of [farmworker](#) protections, as only 22% of farmworkers are women and less than 1% of farmworkers are from Cameroon.

TPS is the only viable option for Cameroonians to safely reside in the U.S. Referencing the plight of Cameroonian migrants, former Center for Constitutional Rights Legal Fellow Aya Saed asserted, The ONLY call to action is the [release of immigrants](#) held in detention

(emphasis in original).

The U.S. must fulfill its humanitarian, ethical, and legal duties to the people of Cameroon. The situation is harrowing for both civilians in Cameroon and Cameroonians in U.S. detention centers. After surviving armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in Cameroon, only to find harsh conditions in the United States, Cameroonians need the peace and stability that TPS provides even if temporary.

We urge the Congresswoman to do everything in her power to secure a TPS designation for Cameroon, including by hosting a congressional briefing or hearing, and introducing a bill during Black August. We also implore the Congresswoman to demand that the Biden administration extend TPS to all Cameroonians residing in the United States.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Sylvie Ngassa Qwasinwi Bello ([cameroon.american.council@gmail.com](mailto:cameroon.american.council@gmail.com)) at 202.902.3283 or email Tabitha Mustafa ([tmustafa@ccrjustice.org](mailto:tmustafa@ccrjustice.org)).

Thank you,

Cameroon American Council  
#CameroonTPS Coalition  
Center for Constitutional Rights

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