

To Permanent Representatives of Member and Observer States of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (Geneva, Switzerland)

17 August 2021

Cameroon: Multilateral action is urgently needed

Excellencies,

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, remain deeply concerned over ongoing grave human rights violations and abuses in Cameroon. We reiterate the concerns expressed in a letter¹ sent to your delegation and others ahead of the Human Rights Council's 47th session. We urge your delegation to support multilateral action to address Cameroon's human rights crisis, at a minimum through a joint oral statement to the Council's 48th session (13 September-8 October 2021).

Cameroon is among the human rights crises the Council has failed to adequately address. Given the inaction of other bodies (including the African Union and the UN Security Council) and increasing concerns over Cameroon's low level of engagement with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), it is vital for the Council to send a clear message by stepping up its scrutiny and engagement.

The Council's 48th session will provide States with more opportunities to raise concerns about human rights violations and abuses in country-specific contexts, in particular given the resumption of general debates.

As outlined in the May 2021 civil society letter, a joint oral statement should include benchmarks for progress, which, if fulfilled, will constitute a path for Cameroon to improve its situation. If these benchmarks remain unfulfilled, then the statement will pave the way for more formal Council action, including, but not limited to, a resolution establishing an investigative and accountability mechanism.

We thank you for your attention and stand ready to provide your delegation with further information as required.

Sincerely,

1. AfricanDefenders (Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network)
2. CIVICUS
3. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
4. DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)
5. Franciscans International
6. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
7. Human Rights Watch
8. West African Human Rights Defenders Network / Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (ROADDH/WAHRDN)

¹ Available at DefendDefenders *et al.*, "Multilateral action is needed to address the human rights crisis in Cameroon," 29 June 2021, <https://defenddefenders.org/multilateral-action-is-needed-to-address-the-human-rights-crisis-in-cameroon/> (accessed on 27 July 2021). 62 organisations joined the letter, dated 12 May 2021.