

CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION IN CAMEROON

FONDEMOS' VIEW:



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On Saturday 5 April, Cameroon's parliament voted 200 to 18 in favour of a constitutional amendment reintroducing the position of vice president.

The bill, boycotted by the main opposition party, grants **President Paul Biya, 93 years old and in power for over 42 years, the sole authority to appoint and dismiss the person who would replace him in the event of a vacancy.**

Under the new text, should the presidency become vacant, the appointed vice president would automatically take over as head of state until the end of the current term in 2032 without any election

being called. **In practice, the Cameroonian people could find themselves governed for years by someone they never chose.**

The vote itself raises a further question of legitimacy: **the deputies who approved this amendment did so after having extended their own mandate by nine months in March.** They voted to remain in office until December 2026.

Opposition Member of Parliament Cabral Libii noted that since 2007, legislative elections have been systematically delayed by twelve to eighteen months. For Edith Kah Walla, leader of the Stand Up for Cameroon movement, this unilateral decision by the presidential camp constituted "*a denial of democracy*", depriving citizens of a channel through which to express their desire for change.

It is these same deputies of contested legitimacy who rewrote the rules of succession. Several opposition MPs were calling for a referendum before any constitutional reform proceeded.

On the substance of the amendment, the condemnation has been swift.

MP Jean Michel Nintcheu denounced a "*constitutional coup d'état*" and "*the consecration of nominative succession*". MP Fusi Namukong stated plainly: "*This is not democratic. **In a republic, those who wield power at the highest level should be elected and not appointed.***"

Civil society has echoed these concerns. The Cameroon Bar Association warned of an "*infringement on the principle of electing a president by universal suffrage*". Economist and activist Rebecca Enonchong was blunt: "*The people are pushed aside. The same regime stays in power.*"

This is Cameroon's first major constitutional revision since 2008, when presidential term limits were scrapped, a move met with a violent crackdown.

When electoral competition threatens those in power, the rules are rewritten to avoid it.