



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

CAMEROON

16 MARCH 2009

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1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Cameroon has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 1 March 2009. It was issued on 16 March 2009.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Cameroon is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

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Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- vii The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UKBA's country of origin information material. The APCI reviewed a number of UKBA's reports and published its findings on its website at www.apci.org.uk. Since October 2008, the work of the APCI has been taken forward by the Chief Inspector of UKBA.

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2. Background information on Cameroon

Full Country Name: Republic of Cameroon.

Area: 475,440 sq km

Population: 18,467,692 (July 2008 est).

Capital City: Yaounde.

Languages: French and English are the official languages; 24 major African languages are spoken.

Religion(s): indigenous beliefs 40%, Christian 40%, Muslim 20%.

Currency: CFA franc, which is fixed to the Euro.

Major Political Parties and leaders: Cameroonian Democratic Union (UDC), Adamou Ndam NJOYA; Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC), Paul BIYA; Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR), Dakole DAISSALA; Movement for the Liberation and Development of Cameroon (MLDC), Marcel YONDO; National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), Maigari BELLO BOUBA; Progressive Movement (MP); Social Democratic Front (SDF) John FRU NDI; Union of Peoples of Cameroon (UPC) Augustin Frederic KODOCK.

Chief of state: President Paul Biya.

Head of government: Prime Minister Ephraim INONI (since 8 December 2004).

Cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president from proposals submitted by the prime minister.

Elections: president elected by popular vote for a seven-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held 11 October 2004 (next to be held by October 2011); prime minister appointed by the president.

Election results: President Paul Biya reelected; percent of vote - Paul Biya 70.9%, John Fru Ndi 17.4%, Adamou Ndam Njoya 4.5%, Garga Haman Adji 3.7%. (Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, dated 24 February 2009) [1]

GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile dated 7 January 2008, noted that:

“Cameroon lies in the Gulf of Guinea and borders Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. The country is a mixture of desert plains and savannah in the north, mountains in the central regions and tropical rainforest in the south and east.” [3]

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MAP



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plmbar 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Map of Cameroon weblink:
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/cameroon.pdf>
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RECENT HISTORY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile on Cameroon (7 January 2008 version) stated:

“Modern Cameroon was created as the German protectorate of Kamerun in 1884. In 1919, under League of Nations Mandates, France was awarded administration of Eastern Cameroon, and Britain Northern and Southern Cameroons. These mandates were converted in 1946 to UN Trusteeships. In 1960, French administered Cameroun became independent and Ahmadou Ahidjo was elected as President. In February 1961 the populations of British administered Cameroons were asked to decide their future in a UN organised plebiscite. While the territory of Northern Cameroon voted to join Nigeria, the population of Southern Cameroon voted to join the newly independent Republic of Cameroon. Cameroon thereby became a federal republic encompassing East Cameroon (the former French territory) and West Cameroon (the former British territory). In 1972, following a referendum in West Cameroon, Cameroon became a unitary state, the United Republic of Cameroon.

“Ahidjo made Cameroon a one-party state in 1966, following a major rebellion in the centre of the country, and concentrated power in presidential hands. In 1982 he resigned on grounds of ill health, handing power over to his Prime Minister Paul Biya, but retaining chairmanship of the ruling party, the National Union of Cameroon. A power struggle ensued between the two men. In 1984, factions of the army seen as close to Ahidjo staged a coup. Biya survived, and later reasserted control over the army and ruling party, stating that his intention to reform and reinvigorate Cameroonian politics and the omnipresent Cameroonian state. The ruling party’s name was changed to the Cameroonian People’s Democratic Movement. In 1990, in response to domestic and international pressure, Biya approved the introduction of a multi-party system.

“The constitution which brought in multi-partyism was adopted in 1992, and substantially amended in 1996. It provides for a limit on Presidential tenure to 2 terms of 7 years, while the 180-member National Assembly is elected every 5 years. It also provides for an upper chamber, the Senate, which has yet to be set up. Cameroon has elected local councils, but constitutional provisions for Provinces to become Regions with their own elected regional councils have not been implemented.

“...in the early days of multi-party democracy the regime was seriously shaken by widespread protest and an emboldened opposition lead by the SDF. The first presidential election under a multi-party system in October 1992 was fiercely contested and controversial. President Biya was elected by a narrow margin (39-36%) over the leading opposition candidate, John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front (SDF). However, since then, the CPDM and President Biya have managed to reassert their dominance over the Cameroonian political scene. The legislative elections of May 1997 were won by the CPDM and [the] presidential elections of October 1997 were won by Biya with 81% of the vote according to the official results. Again the electoral process was denounced by the opposition.

“Legislative elections of 2002 and Presidential elections of 2004 followed a similar pattern - the CPDM consolidated its grip on the national assembly and Biya won the Presidential elections of 2004 with 75% of the vote according to the official result.” (FCO Country Profile 7 January 2008) [3]

The CIA World Factbook, dated 24 February 2009, noted:

“Cameroon has generally enjoyed stability, which has permitted the development of agriculture, roads, and railways, as well as a petroleum industry. Despite a slow movement toward democratic reform, political power remains firmly in the hands of an ethnic oligarchy headed by President Paul Biya.” [1]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on Cameroon (7 January 2008 version) stated:

“Legislative and local elections were held on 22 July 2007. The CPDM further consolidated its grip on power, eventually gaining 153 out of 180 parliamentary seats once elections were re-run in five districts in September. The SDF won 16 seats. The electoral roll was computerised which has aided transparency but there remain widespread concerns about the low turnout.

“...under pressure from the international community to separate electoral organisation from the highly partisan administration, the government, on 29 December 2006 established a body to supervise elections (ELECAM). This body has not yet become operational and the elections of July 2007 were run by the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

“In the last 2 years [2006 and 2007] President Biya has acted to discourage corruption in his government. A law has been adopted on declaration of assets by officials and ministers. In December 2007, former minister and former General Manager of the Port of Douala, Alphonse Siyam Siwe, was sentenced to 30 years in prison for corruption. Others in the same case, including the former port Chairman and Government Delegate in Douala Colonel Eduard Etonde Ekoto, were also given substantial prison sentences. A new anti-corruption commission, CONAC, has been established and its members sworn in.” [3]

In April 2008, the Cameroonian parliament amended the constitution to allow President Biya to run for a third term in 2011. The opposition condemned the move as a “constitutional coup”. (BBC News Cameroon Timeline 7 November 2008) [36h]

In August 2008, the Nigerian government handed over the Bakassi peninsula territory to Cameroon, ending a long-standing dispute. Although the majority of the Bakassi population consider themselves to be Nigerian, a 2002 international court ruling deemed the territory to be part of Cameroon. The ruling was based on a 20th century colonial agreement between Britain and Germany. The Nigerian government challenged the 2002 ruling but in 2006 agreed to hand over the territory to Cameroon. This was finally achieved in August 2008. (BBC News Online report “Nigeria cedes Bakassi to Cameroon”, 14 August 2008) [36e]

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ECONOMY

GDP (official exchange rate): US\$25 billion (2008 est)

GDP growth rate: 4% (2008 est)

GDP per capita: US\$2,400 (2008 est)

Inflation: 4.4% (2008 est)

Major Industries: Crude Oil, timber, cocoa, coffee, aluminium, rubber

Major trading partners: France, Italy, Nigeria, Spain, Germany, United States.

(CIA World Factbook, dated 24 February 2009) [1]

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on Cameroon (7 January 2008 version) stated:

“Cameroon has for decades relied on agriculture and timber for its export earnings, including extensive cocoa and rubber plantations in the south of the country. Petroleum has been exported from the 1970s and now accounts for 49% of export earnings. However, production has now levelled off at around 85,000 bpd, despite some new but small production sites coming on stream. Exploration for new off-shore reserves continues, but unless new discoveries are made, current reserves could be depleted within a decade.

“While Cameroon’s agricultural exports are subject to the vagaries of the international market, exchange rate stability and manageable inflation rates are maintained through its membership of the Franc Zone. Cameroon is currently just over half way through its current 3-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Programme negotiated with the IMF.

“Cameroon became heavily indebted in the 1980s. In October 2000 the country became eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). HIPC completion point was achieved in May 2006 after several lengthy delays. These delays were due to concerns over the Government of Cameroon’s financial management which have been partly addressed by a series of reform drives, including moves against corruption. Achievement of HIPC has led to significant debt relief, including £106m cancellation of bilateral debt from the UK Government.” [3]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

GENERAL

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profile on Cameroon (7 January 2008 version) stated that:

“Cameroon's human rights record has been poor but has improved recently. NGOs and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture have highlighted extra-judicial executions, protracted detention without trial, torture of detainees and appalling prison conditions in recent years. In some rare cases the victims are political activists, but in many cases they are victims of racketeering by the security forces. It is probably fair to say that the number of cases highlighted has declined in the last 5 years.

“Although there is a free press, journalists are often harassed. The international community (through the European Union, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and bilaterally) has been pressing the Government of Cameroon to implement reforms of the judicial system and put an end to the culture of impunity in the security forces. The government set up a Human Rights Commission in 1992. A presidential decree, passed by the National Assembly in June 2005, confirms its official status and should ensure regular funding. The government has recently made other moves to improve the human rights situation, for example starting building new prisons to relieve overcrowding and implementing a new Criminal Procedure Code in 2007 which enshrines key legal principles such as habeas corpus and the presumption of innocence. Over time, one of the effects should be to bear down on the prison population since less people will be held on remand for such long periods.” [3]

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon, published on 25 February 2009, stated in its introductory section:

“The government's human rights record remained poor [in 2008], and it continued to commit numerous human rights abuses, particularly following widespread February [2008] riots to protest increased food and fuel costs. Security forces committed numerous unlawful killings. Security forces also engaged in torture, beatings, and other abuses, particularly of detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening. Authorities arrested and detained anglophone citizens advocating secession, local human rights monitors and activists, persons not carrying government-issued identification cards, and other citizens. There were incidents of prolonged and sometimes incommunicado pretrial detention and infringement on citizens' privacy rights. The government restricted citizens' freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, and harassed journalists. The government also impeded citizens' freedom of movement. Other problems included widespread official corruption; societal violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation (FGM); trafficking in persons, primarily children; and discrimination against pygmies, ethnic minorities; indigenous people, and homosexuals. The government restricted worker rights and the activities of independent labor organizations. Child labor, hereditary servitude, and forced labor, including forced child labor were problems.”
[2a] (Introduction)

The Freedom in the World 2008 Report published by Freedom House in July 2008 stated:

“The constitution guarantees free speech, but genuine freedom of expression remains elusive. Private radio and television stations operate, and dozens of independent

newspapers are published. Although the 1996 constitution ended prepublication censorship, the charter's Article 17 imposes a serious restriction on free expression by giving administrative officials the power to seize and ban newspapers based on a claimed threat to public order. There are no legal provisions guaranteeing equal access to information, and libel and defamation remain criminal offenses. Judicial harassment, arrests, detentions, and torture of journalists have engendered fear and self-censorship, especially within the state-owned media.

"...freedom of religion is generally respected. Although there are no legal restrictions on academic freedom, state security informants operate on university campuses, and many professors exercise self-censorship.

"The requisite administrative authorization for public meetings is often used to restrict freedom of assembly and association. Meetings of the banned SCNC are routinely disrupted. Trade union formation is permitted, but it is subject to numerous restrictions and government interference.

"The courts are subject to extensive political influence and corruption. The executive controls the judiciary and appoints provincial and local administrators. Military tribunals exercise jurisdiction over civilians in cases involving civil unrest or organized armed violence. Various intelligence agencies operate with impunity. Torture, ill-treatment of detainees, and indefinite administrative or pretrial detention under extremely harsh conditions are routine. The absence of habeas corpus as a fundamental principle in Francophone civil law further undermines due process." [21a]

An Amnesty International report about human rights abuses in Cameroon, published in January 2009, stated:

"For more than 10 years, Amnesty International has received reports of human rights violations that were ordered, condoned or perpetrated by the Cameroonian authorities in contravention of their national and international human rights obligations. These violations include: arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions; extrajudicial executions; threats against and ill-treatment of human rights defenders and journalists; denial of the rights to freedom of expression and association; harsh prison conditions; torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; failure to protect the human rights of women and girls; and persecution of men and women on the grounds of their actual or imputed sexual orientation." [11c] (p1)

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PRISON CONDITIONS

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

"Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening [in 2008]. Prisons were seriously overcrowded and unsanitary. The government did not provide funds to improve serious deficiencies in food, health care, and sanitation, which were common in all prisons.

However, following significant press coverage of prison conditions and subsequent riots and escape attempts, the government financed the construction of new prisons across the country including one in Yaounde and one in Moulvoudaye, Far North Region, both of which were operational by year's end [2008].

"Prisoners were kept in dilapidated, colonial-era prisons, where the number of inmates was as much as four to five times the intended capacity. Overcrowding was exacerbated by the large number of long pretrial detentions. Government officials accused of corruption were held in separate quarters and received special treatment. Some NGOs released a report claiming the cells meant for 30 or 40 persons held more than 100 detainees.

"Health and medical care were almost nonexistent in prisons and detention cells located in gendarmeries and police stations. There were reports that prisoners died due to a lack of medical care." [2a] (section 1c)

WOMEN

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

"The law prohibits rape, although [the] police and the courts rarely investigated and prosecuted rape cases. The media reported at least seven rape cases during the year [2008], although no one was arrested. Due to social taboos associated with sexual violence, many rapes likely went unreported.

"A 2005 survey cited by the *Cameroon Tribune* [italics in text of source] indicated that 39 percent of women living with a man (married or unmarried) were victims of physical violence, and 28 percent were victims of psychological violence. The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence, although assault is prohibited and is punishable by prison terms and fines. Women's rights advocates asserted that penalties for domestic violence were insufficient. Spousal abuse is not a legal ground for divorce.

"...while the law prohibits sexual harassment, very few cases were reported or prosecuted during the year [2008]. The government did not conduct any public education campaigns on the subject and there were no statistics available on its occurrence.

"Despite constitutional provisions recognizing women's rights, women did not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men. Some points of civil law were prejudicial to women.

"The law allows a husband to oppose his wife's rights to work in a separate profession if the protest is made in the interest of the household and the family; a husband may also end his wife's commercial activity by notifying the clerk of the commerce tribunal of his opposition based upon the family's interest.

"Customary law is far more discriminatory against women, since in many regions a woman traditionally was regarded as the property of her husband. Because of the importance attached to customs and traditions, civil laws protecting women often are not respected." [2a] (section 5)

CHILDREN

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

“During the year [2008] the government made some efforts to protect children’s rights and welfare, including participation in seminars on children’s rights. During the year [2008] the minister of social affairs made statements and presented government action plans regarding the improvement of the condition for children.

“The law provides for a child’s right to education, and schooling was mandatory through the age of 14 and free in public primary schools. Since parents had to pay uniform and book fees for primary school, and because tuition and other fees for secondary education remained costly, education was largely unaffordable for many children. The government took measures during the year [2008] to improve access to schools, such as the construction of new classrooms, recruitment of new teachers, and provision of water fountains.

“...the law does not prohibit FGM, which was practiced in isolated areas of the Far North, East, and Southwest regions.

“Internal migration contributed to the spread of FGM to different parts of the country. The majority of FGM procedures were clitorectomies. The severest form of FGM, infibulation, was performed in the Kajifu region of the Southwest Region. FGM usually was practiced on infants and preadolescent girls. Public health centers in areas where FGM is frequently practiced counseled women about the harmful consequences of FGM; however, the government did not prosecute any persons charged with performing FGM.

“...while the minimum legal age for a woman to marry is 15, many families facilitated the marriage of young girls by the age of 12. Early marriage was prevalent in the northern regions of Far North, Adamaoua, North, and particularly the remote Far North Region, where many girls as young as nine faced severe health risks from pregnancies. There were no statistics on the prevalence of child marriage.”
[2a] (section 5)

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

“Homosexual activity is illegal, and punishable by a prison sentence of six months to five years and a fine ranging from approximately 20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs (\$40 to \$400. While [the] authorities did not prosecute persons under this law during the year [2008], homosexuals suffered from harassment and extortion by law enforcement officials. False allegations of homosexuality were used to harass enemies or to extort money.” [2a] (section 5)

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FREEDOM OF RELIGION

The United States State Department 2008 International Religious Freedom Report on Cameroon, published on 19 September 2008, stated:

“Forty percent of the population is Christian, 20 percent Muslim, and 40 percent practices traditional indigenous religious beliefs. The Christian population is equally divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

“Christians are concentrated primarily in the southern and western provinces and Muslims reside in every province. Large cities have significant populations of both groups. The two Anglophone provinces of the western region are largely Protestant and the Francophone provinces of the southern and western regions are mostly Catholic. In the northern provinces, the locally dominant Fulani (or Peuhl) ethnic group is mostly Muslim, but the overall population is fairly evenly divided between Muslims, Christians, and animists. The Bamoun ethnic group of the West Province is largely Muslim. Traditional indigenous religious beliefs are practiced in rural areas throughout the country, but are rarely practiced publicly in cities, in part because many of these groups are intrinsically local in character.

“The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The law at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.

“The Government is secular in both name and practice and does not favour a particular religion.

“...the ‘Law on Religious Congregations’ governs relations between the Government and religious groups. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD) must approve and register religious groups in order for them to function legally. It is illegal for a religious group to operate without official recognition. The law prescribes no specific penalties for violations, however, and there are numerous unregistered small religious groups that operate freely. There were no reports that the Government refused to register any group.

“...the practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense under the national penal code, punishable by a 2- to 10-year prison term. Witchcraft is defined under law as ‘any act of magic or divination liable to harm another in his person, property or substance’. People are generally prosecuted for witchcraft only in conjunction with some other offense such as murder; however, there were no reports of convictions of witchcraft under this law. The Government distinguishes between witchcraft and traditional indigenous religious practices. Witchcraft is defined by the law as attempts to do harm by spiritual means.

“The Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the Government during the period covered by this report.

“...there were few reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Established churches denounced new unaffiliated religious groups, most of which are Protestant, as ‘sects’ or ‘cults,’ claiming that they were detrimental to societal peace and harmony. In practice, such denunciation did not inhibit the practice of the unaffiliated religious groups.” [2d]

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE MEDIA

The Freedom House Freedom in the World 2008 Report on Cameroon, published in July 2008, stated:

“The constitution guarantees free speech, but genuine freedom of expression remains elusive. Private radio and television stations operate, and dozens of independent newspapers are published. Although the 1996 constitution ended prepublication censorship, the charter’s Article 17 imposes a serious restriction on free expression by giving administrative officials the power to seize and ban newspapers based on a claimed threat to public order. There are no legal provisions guaranteeing equal access to information, and libel and defamation remain criminal offenses. Judicial harassment, arrests, detentions, and torture of journalists have engendered fear and self-censorship, especially within the state-owned media. The lack of structural and editorial independence at the state-owned *Cameroon Tribune* [italics in text of source] and Cameroon Radio & Television (CRTV) has transformed them from public-service outlets into propaganda organs of the ruling party.

“...although there are no legal restrictions on academic freedom, state security informants operate on university campuses, and many professors exercise self-censorship.” [21a]

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

“The law provides for [the] freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government continued to restrict these rights in practice. The government arbitrarily arrested and detained journalists. Senior members of the government and the CPDM used their positions to harass journalists and encourage their arrest and detention. The government enforced media regulations irregularly, often implementing arduous requirements selectively to regime critics. This often created an environment of self-censorship for journalists and media outlets. Government officials used expansive libel laws to persecute journalists who criticized them.

“...individuals generally were able to criticize the government publicly and privately without being subjected to government reprisal. However, there were numerous examples where government officials threatened, harassed, or denied equal treatment to individuals or organizations who criticized government policies or expressed views at odds with government policy.”

“...the government and government officials used strict libel laws to suppress criticism. These laws authorize the government, at its discretion and the request of the plaintiff, to criminalize a civil libel suit or to initiate a criminal libel suit in cases of alleged libel against the president and other high government officials; such crimes are punishable by prison terms and heavy fines. The libel law places the burden of proof on the defendant. Government officials abused this law to keep local journalists from reporting on corruption and abusive behaviour.” [2a] (section 2a)

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FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

“The law provides for freedom of assembly; however, the government restricted this right in practice, particularly during and after the February [2008] demonstrations and riots.

“The law requires organizers of public meetings, demonstrators, or processions to notify officials in advance but does not require prior government approval of public assemblies and does not authorize the government to suppress public assemblies that it has not approved in advance. However, officials routinely have asserted that the law implicitly authorizes the government to grant or deny permission for public assembly. Consequently, the government often did not grant permits for assemblies organized by persons or groups critical of the government and used force to suppress public assemblies for which it has not issued permits. [2a] (section 2b)

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATION

The United States State Department 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

“The law provides for freedom of association, but the government limited this right in practice.

“The conditions for government recognition of a political parties, NGOs, or associations are arduous, interminable, and unevenly enforced. The process forced most associations to operate in uncertainty, in which their activities were tolerated but not formally approved.

“The law prohibits organizations who advocate for any type of secession, leading government officials to disrupt meetings of the SCNC on the grounds that the purpose of the organization rendered their meetings illegal.” [2a] (section 2b)

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TRAFFICKING

The United States State Dept 2008 Human Rights Report on Cameroon stated:

“The law does not prohibit all forms of trafficking in persons, and there were reports that persons were trafficked to, from, and within the country. The law criminalizes child

trafficking and slavery and prohibits prostitution, forced labor, and other crimes related to trafficking in persons.

“...women and children traditionally have faced the greatest risk of trafficking generally for sexual exploitation and forced labor. Most trafficking in children occurred within the country’s borders, while most trafficked women were transported out of the country.”
[2a] (section 5)

The United States State Department 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report, published on 4 June 2008, stated:

“Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Most victims are children trafficked within the country, with girls primarily trafficked for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Both girls and boys are also trafficked within Cameroon for forced labor in sweatshops, bars, restaurants, and on tea and cocoa plantations. Children are trafficked to Cameroon from Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, Benin, and Niger for forced labor in agriculture, fishing, street vending, and spare-parts shops. Cameroon is a transit country for children trafficked between Gabon and Nigeria, and from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia. It is a source country for women transported by sex trafficking rings to Europe.

“The Government of Cameroon does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so, despite limited resources...while Cameroon reported some arrests of traffickers, none of them was prosecuted or punished.

“...the Government of Cameroon made modest but inadequate efforts to combat trafficking through law enforcement means during the last year. Cameroon does not prohibit all forms of trafficking, though it criminalizes child trafficking and slavery through its 2005 Law Combating Child Trafficking and Slavery, which prescribes a penalty of 20 years’ imprisonment - a punishment sufficiently stringent and commensurate with penalties prescribed for rape. Government and NGO representatives report, however, that many judges and lawyers in the provinces are not aware of the 2005 law against child trafficking.

“The Government of Cameroon demonstrated minimal efforts to protect trafficking victims over the last year. The government does not operate trafficking victim shelters, but does refer victims to NGOs...the government reported that it operated nine centers for vulnerable children, some of whom were trafficking victims. Government officials do not follow procedures to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups, such as street children. The government interviews victims for evidence to assist with investigations or prosecutions. The government does not provide legal alternatives to the removal of foreign victims to countries where they face hardship or retribution. Victims may be inappropriately incarcerated or fined for unlawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked.” [2b] (Cameroon section)

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KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[1]	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Factbook: Cameroon, last updated 24 February 2009 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cm.html
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